

Language and Communication Policy

Every child has the right to an education that develops their talents. This education must nurture a child's respect for themselves, others and their environment.

(UNCRC Article 29)

Supporting Children's Speaking and Listening Skills.

The ability to talk and develop communication skills has a huge impact on each child's overall development in all areas of learning. It impacts on the ability to make social connections with friends and people and to make connections with the world in which they live.

Children learn to communicate well before their first words are spoken. Adults are the vital key to developing these skills through important early interaction and communication right from the very start of their life. Young babies learn to understand and decode non-verbal communication as they begin to use it themselves to communicate their needs and wants. These are vital skills to master, as 50% of our communication is delivered through non-verbal communication. Children also need to develop their attention and listening skills as they tune in to the noises, sound patterns and words around them that will later develop into their own speech and language patterns. The rate of vocabulary development is influenced by the sheer amount of talk that they hear.

Language is a cognitive process that develops in a social context, so interaction and communication from caring and responsive adults is fundamental for supporting every child's communication development.

Children need to be able to understand language, both non-verbal and spoken, this includes developing their ability to look and attend, listen and hear, and remember, as well as developing their understanding of words and sentences and their meanings.

Children also need to be able to use expressive language and this includes choosing words as they decide what to say, being able to compose and order their sentence structures, be articulate in their ability to pronounce and be able to speak appropriately and with confidence and fluency.

The development of children's communication skills is therefore a very complex process and children need support to practice and master these skills within a supportive stimulating environment. Staff require sensitivity towards each child's individual language development needs.

It is essential that this continuity of support and understanding is developed in partnership with the child's family. We encourage parents to inform school of any speech and language difficulties or concerns right from the beginning of the academic year, when completing an initial profile even before the pupil has started school.

We work closely with families to ensure that they too have the confidence and understanding to support and develop their child's ability to communicate.

We aim to develop parental awareness of the importance of talking and sharing in communication within the family environment and the community, through providing information both generally and specifically and creating exciting home activities that they can enjoy sharing and communicating with as they play, talk and have fun learning together.

We also provide a wealth of stimulating activities and experiences that promote communication, language and literacy within the nursery. Our aim is to draw on the strengths and skills of individual team members to deliver and develop essential communication skills relevant to the needs of the children within each activity.

The role of teaching staff is to identify individual children who require additional support in relation to:

Listening and Attention

Understanding (Receptive Language)

Talking (Expressive Language)

Social Communication

All staff members are encouraged to extend pupils language and communication skills by using open ended question, prompting or commenting.

Children identified as having a specific difficulty will be monitored throughout their time at nursery and strategies put in place to help and support their communication skills. These children will be reassessed each term and work planned and evaluated accordingly.

Small group time both informally or formally supports, challenges and extends language with children. It may simply be sharing a book in the classroom with a few interested children, or while playing a turn taking game with a particular focus for learning such as a preposition game developing the children's understanding of over/under/ in front or behind.

Topical Global events such as the Olympic Games/ or local events such as the circus coming to town or a trip to the beach or local places of interest offer natural opportunities to develop language and communication skills. Such conversations enable children to talk about and share their thoughts, feelings, ideas, personal experiences while also developing an awareness of the local community and the world around us.

Singing and developing a sense of rhythm/beat is another important and essential aspect of language development and the children have opportunities for developing their singing/music skills in nursery and with Jo Jingles.

For some children struggling with the confidence to vocalise, or those that have difficulty in sentence structure or have minimal language, or English as an additional language often find singing can make a huge difference to them because the word finding and sentence structure is already done for them. They may have the confidence to sing within a group as the attention on them is lessened and they can explore with their voices, listening and learning within their peers extending their pitching and vocalisation skills. We regularly observe children who are reluctant to talk but----- when singing they participate with vigour and from the bottom of their hearts. Clearly enjoying being successful in their communication through song.

The importance of singing is communicated with families of children who would benefit from singing more within the family and resources have been provided

to help some families to achieve this at home. Loan of musical instruments/ nursery rhyme or Jo Jingles Cd's,

We have monthly song, poem and rhyme sheets which are posted on our nursery website, to help encourage parental participation and to extend the children's repertoire of songs, poems and rhymes. These are sung and recited during large group story time and informally during play.

We understand that children come to school at all different stages of development. We recognise that some children communicate more through gestures or have limited verbal skills.

Occasionally we have pupils whose preferred and more prominent communication style is Makaton or use of PECS (picture exchange communication system) to enable them to communicate their needs, feelings and play choices. Staff are aware of both these communication methods and would readily use these forms of communication when required.

We welcome newcomer pupils and families. We work closely with the Inclusion and Diversity service to create an environment where English as an additional language is respected and celebrated and that pupils have the opportunity to extend their knowledge, ability and confidence to speak English.

Staff are aware of the need for more gesture and visual cues when interacting with pupils whose first language is different to English. We ensure as a school that all newcomer children are treated equally and that our pre-school curriculum is accessible to all.

Home School Links

To support and promote language and communication skills:-

- Daily slide show of digital photographs are available to view in the nursery hallway to stimulate conversations and discussions;
- Parent sessions such as rhythm and rhyme, Big bedtime read, Education Works, Ages and Stages are offered;
- Music and movement sessions with Jo Jingles;
- Weekly Lending library for parents and children;
- Regular Tapestry and web site updates to encourage parent/child involvement (Translator facility on the nursery website);
- Special Prompt notes are sent home and award stickers;
- Information leaflets outlining the library services are sent home and available in the nursery reception;

The nursery have a "We love to read board " for parents to add their child/children's photograph of them reading/ sharing books at home. The staff have their photographs of them reading on the wall display;

The nursery wall displays are current and relevant to the focus of interest to stimulate conversations between parents/ carers/childminders/ grandparents and the children;

Family members and visitors are invited into nursery to speak/ sing in their native language;

Dual language books and posters are displayed;

Close links with the local children's librarian who is invited into school to share stories with the children and outline available services to the parents.

In Ballymena Nursery School we are committed and strive to inspire rich, meaningful communication with our children within nursery and we endeavour to influence the quality of language and communication at home through such initiatives as "Getting Ready to Learn" and "Education Works".

We deliver key messages to parents to 'Get involved with their children', 'Read and share books/ Sing with their child/ren', 'Ditch the Dummy'/ and 'Less screen time.'

We want every child to have the best start that they can on their journey with developing sound language and communication skills.

Development of LANGUAGE

- ✚ Understands and can follow simple instructions
- ✚ Enjoys listening to stories
- ✚ Takes part in conversation with adults/other children
- ✚ Sings/recites rhymes, poems, jingles
- ✚ Talks about experiences / stories / thoughts / feelings
- ✚ Retells stories in their own words
- ✚ Understands and responds to questions
- ✚ Asks questions to gain information
- ✚ Enjoys browsing in the book corner
- ✚ Knows how to hold a book and turn the pages appropriately
- ✚ Knows that the printed word has meaning
- ✚ Recognises own first name
- ✚ Can re-tell a story from pictures

- ✚ Draws and paints pictures which have recognisable figures and objects in them
- ✚ Creates representational pictures which are precise and detailed
- ✚ Makes marks on paper to "write" ideas
- ✚ Holds pencils and other implements in an appropriate way
- ✚ Prefers to use left / right hand

ART and CRAFT

- ✚ Increase vocabulary
- ✚ Talk about what they and others are doing/have done
- ✚ Describe colour, pattern, texture
- ✚ Talk about their plans/intentions
- ✚ Talk about what they have drawn from their own experience
- ✚ Talk about feelings conveyed in pictures
- ✚ Listen to and follow instructions
- ✚ Ask and answer questions
- ✚ Use a story/book/natural item as a stimulus
- ✚ Tell a story from their work
- ✚ Make their own labels

BLOCK PLAY

- ✚ Increase vocabulary
- ✚ Describe the properties of blocks
- ✚ Describe their actions and the actions of others
- ✚ Describe the positioning of blocks etc in relation to each other
- ✚ Explain what is happening
- ✚ Ask and answer questions
- ✚ Recall and report what they have done
- ✚ Record experiences in photos and drawings
- ✚ Make labels for models
- ✚ Refer to books when planning what to build
- ✚ Predict what will happen
- ✚ Talk about experiences in relation to display or books about block play

COMPUTER

- ✚ Increase vocabulary, mouse/ mat/ click and drag
- ✚ Listen attentively to instructions
- ✚ Explain what they are doing to another child or adult
- ✚ Use programmes that associate sounds with patterns in rhyme, words, letters
- ✚ Become familiar with the letters on the keyboard
- ✚ Know that words and pictures carry meaning on the screen

CONSTRUCTION

- + Increase vocabulary
- + Describe their actions and the actions of others
- + Describe the relationship of pieces of the equipment to other objects
- + Listen to and follow instructions
- + Make and follow plans
- + Use books or workcards/ site plans as a source of ideas
- + Make or read own labels
- + Describe to others what they have made

COOKING/SNACK

- + Increase vocabulary
- + Talk about what they make, do, their skills and abilities
- + Relate experiences in school to experiences at home
- + Listen attentively to instructions
- + Look at books about food and cooking
- + Incorporate discussion about recipes into working with dough
- + Talk about what is happening when they are cooking

GROUP TIME

- + Increase vocabulary
- + Recall and explain their experiences
- + Listen to other children and adults talking
- + Participate in listening games
- + Learn and join in songs and rhymes
- + Listen to a range of stories
- + Respond to stories and join in telling them
- + Develop confidence in speaking in a group situation

LARGE APPARATUS

- + Increase vocabulary/ Positional language/ at top-bottom/ under/over/beside/behind/comparisons/fast/slow
- + Describe where they are and what they are doing on apparatus
- + Use language to negotiate and share use of apparatus. First/ then/my turn/ your turn.
- + Create imaginary play situations
- + Ask and answer questions. Observational/seasonal changes
- + Talk about what they have done
- + Talk about their experiences as depicted in photos or in books
- + Listen carefully to instructions from an adult

LOOKING AT BOOKS/ Self Registration/ Visual Time Lines/ Visual daily schedules

- + Increase vocabulary
- + Word association with symbol/ picture
- + Direction. Left to right/ top to bottom
- + Sequence of events/ first/ then/last/before/after
- + Listen to and enjoy stories, rhymes and poems
- + Share books with another child or adult
- + Enjoy books and handle them carefully
- + Talk about why they enjoy a particular story
- + Retell favourite stories, perhaps using props
- + Make up and tell stories
- + Know that words and pictures carry meaning
- + Develop an understanding of the concepts of print
- + Use books to find information
- + Recognise familiar letters/words
- + Read/recognise familiar labels/captions

MALLEABLE MATERIALS

- + Increase vocabulary
- + Describe the properties of the materials
- + Describe their actions and the actions of others
- + Describe similarities, differences and changes in the materials
- + Explain what is happening
- + Ask and answer questions
- + Recall and report back
- + Predict outcomes

MUSIC

- + Increase vocabulary
- + Listen attentively to a variety of music
- + Recognise patterns and rhymes in music and song
- + Retell the words of a song
- + Talk about what music they like and why

OUTDOORS

- + Increase vocabulary
- + Describe the outdoor environment and the weather
- + Talk about features of the natural world

- ✚ Use language of negotiation to share outdoor equipment and to develop outdoor games
- ✚ Talk about their experiences in relation to trips etc
- ✚ Play games involving repetition, songs and rhymes
- ✚ Make up stories in their play
- ✚ Create environments to encourage Imaginative play
- ✚ Talk about experiences and observations
- ✚ Predict outcomes
- ✚ Explain choices

PUZZLES AND GAMES

- ✚ Increase vocabulary
- ✚ Describe their action and the actions of others
- ✚ Describe shape, colour, pattern, size and position on puzzles and games
- ✚ Negotiate turn-taking
- ✚ Agree rules
- ✚ Be aware of print in written instructions
- ✚ Discuss what is happening with friends/adults
- ✚ Predict outcomes
- ✚ Explain choices simply and clearly

ROLE-PLAY

- ✚ Increase vocabulary
- ✚ Use language to assign roles
- ✚ Talk in the language of different roles
- ✚ Use language to plan and create real-life or imaginary situations
- ✚ Listen to and respond to what others are saying
- ✚ Make signs, lists, menus, posters etc
- ✚ Talk on the telephone

SAND

- ✚ Increase vocabulary
- ✚ Describe the properties of sand - rough, smooth, sticky, wet etc.
- ✚ Describe the features of the environment they have created
- ✚ Describe their actions and the actions of others
- ✚ Describe differences and similarities
- ✚ Explain what is happening as they work
- ✚ Ask and answer questions about how things work and why they happen
- ✚ Recall and report back at group times
- ✚ Use language imaginatively
- ✚ Talk about their experiences in the sand as depicted in photos

- ✚ Explore books about sand play, beaches, etc

SMALL WORLD/TABLE ACTIVITIES

- ✚ Increase vocabulary
- ✚ Talk about their model world in relation to experiences
- ✚ Represent/act out stories
- ✚ Make up and verbalise stories as part of their play
- ✚ Use books to develop their knowledge about the play environment
- ✚ Negotiate
- ✚ Take turns and share

WATER

- ✚ Increase vocabulary
- ✚ Describe the properties of water
- ✚ Describe their actions and the actions of others
- ✚ Describe similarities, differences and changes
- ✚ Explain what is happening
- ✚ Ask and answer questions
- ✚ Recall and report back
- ✚ Record experiences in photos and drawings
- ✚ Talk about experiences in relation to photos on display
- ✚ Explore books about water

BUILDING/CONSTRUCTION PLAY

- ✚ Increase vocabulary
- ✚ Describe the properties of wood and other materials
- ✚ Describe their actions and the actions of others- digging/ hammering/ sawing
- ✚ Talk about the position of pieces on a model in relation to each other
- ✚ Explain what is happening
- ✚ Follow instructions
- ✚ Ask and answer questions
- ✚ Refer to books
- ✚ Record experiences in photos or pictures/ Tapestry/ Ipad

WRITING

- ✚ Increase vocabulary
- ✚ Develop the language of print
- ✚ Discuss opportunities for different types of writing
- ✚ Understand that writing conveys a message
- ✚ Develop knowledge of letters and their names through play experiences

- ✚ Observe adults writing
- ✚ Refer to books, catalogues, postcards, diaries, phone directories
- ✚ Use a wide variety of writing tools to develop skills
- ✚ Develop awareness of letters and numerals on a keyboard
- ✚ Work with other children to make books/ write birthday cards
- ✚ Look at calendars/ Road Safety Calendar/Chinese Calendars