

Communication & Language – Prime Area of Learning

The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added; practitioners will build children's language effectively. Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, storytelling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures

Aim

At Glebe Trust we aim to develop, extend and enrich the skills of communication which the child has, in order to enable the child to function effectively as a member of society. Communication and language permeate all areas of the setting. The setting as a whole is organised in order to promote and enhance development in communication and language and to promote positive images and role models for the children.

Learning will be achieved via a mixture of structured, adult directed and free-play activities, delivered through cross-curricular activities using 'Letters and Sounds' as guidance at times. We value linguistic diversity and where possible provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in their play and learning.

The following Early Learning Goals are used as guidance whilst caring and educating for the children within our setting:

Listening, Attention and Understanding
Speaking

Objectives

To provide a stimulating environment in which communication and language skills can be nurtured and developed. To provide visual, auditory and tactile experiences which will provide stimuli for all children.

Speaking

Our programme of activities will provide opportunity for the children to use, explore and develop skills in verbal communication.

The activities will support the children in forming relationships with both peers and adults in their ability to interact with others and in the expression of thoughts and feelings. The children will experience the spoken word as a means of conveying information, sharing and receiving of ideas, and as a means of gaining insight into the world of imagination.

Listening, Attention and Understanding

To provide the children with opportunities to develop skills in listening in order to be able to process information, interact with others and begin to share in other's feelings and thoughts.

The activities will help the children to develop imagination and aesthetic awareness, and to develop the ability to respond to their own experiences and those of others.

Operating Policy

The setting will be organised in order to facilitate the development of children aiming to reach the following Early Learning Goals:

Listening, Attention and Understanding

- Listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments and actions when being read to and during whole class discussions and small group interactions
- Make comments about what they have heard and ask questions to clarify their understanding
- Hold conversation when engaged in back-and-forth exchanges with their teacher and peers.

Speaking

- Participate in small group, class and one-to-one discussions, offering their own ideas, using recently introduced vocabulary
- Offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems when appropriate
- Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions, with modelling and support from their teacher.

Based on these goals a programme of activities around structured free-play and staff directed work will be implemented and there will be opportunity for the children to communicate with peers, staff, other adults and visitors to the setting.

The children will also experience the use of gesture and expression as a means of conveying information. Where appropriate, staff will support children in developing alternative strategies (such as signing) as a means of communication and lots of role modelling.

For children whose first language is not English, the setting will aim to offer support and show respect for the home language and culture of the child through the use of labels, books, pictures and other equipment which reflects and values their home language and culture. If possible, parents will be encouraged to come into the setting to share their knowledge with children and staff, and offer support to the bilingual learner. Speaking more than one language has lots of advantages for children, so it is important to encourage families to use their home language for linguistic as well as cultural reasons.

Where there are already significant delays in the development of language when a child starts the setting (as noted by parents, health visitor, doctor etc) or where a child does not appear to be making progress (as noted by staff and parents) then the setting will consult

with outside agencies such as speech therapists or the educational psychologist in order to ensure that the child receives the support that he/she needs, but only with parental/carer consent. In the case of a child whose first language is not English it is typical for them to go through a quiet phase when they do not say very much and may then use words in both languages in the same sentence, so it is essential to communicate to parents about their language development at home before confusing them as having a developmental language delay in English.

The programme of activities will help all children to develop an awareness of how language is constructed and the children will be encouraged to listen to and form sounds and letters.

Equipment will be carefully selected to represent the setting's commitment to equal opportunity and will provide positive images for all the children.

Programme of Work

The setting will provide a wide range of opportunities and experiences through which language skills can be developed and promoted. These opportunities and experiences will be gained through a programme of activities based upon children's interests and general group needs. There will be a mixture of individual, group and adult directed activities which will be based on structured play. Staff may use 'Letters and Sounds' as a baseline for many of the adult led activities on a daily basis.

Programmes of work will be based upon a mixture of children's interests and adult focused activities. The children may participate in such activities as an individual or as part of a group and in free-play or adult-directed situations.

The programme will aim to include some or all of the following types of activity:

Speaking

- One-to-one discussions.
- Group discussions.
- Role play.
- Reciting poems as a group.
- Singing nursery rhymes and songs as a group.
- Encouraging children to make up and tell stories based on pictures.
- Story telling followed by discussion about the story.
- Circle time:
 - to encourage children to respond to what they have heard with relevant comments, questions and actions.
 - to extend vocabulary through adult example.

Listening, Attention and Understanding

- Storytelling to individuals.
- Storytelling to groups.
- Sound lotto games.
- Sound walks focusing on what can be heard around the school or on a walk in the grounds.
- Giving the children simple instructions to follow.
- Asking the children to listen for a particular character or event in a story.
- Listen to songs, rhymes and poems.
- Letter and sounds activities, inc phonics as appropriate

Planning, recording and assessment

Individual targets and activity planning occurs on a daily, weekly or half termly basis. The individual targets and activity planning sheets used by the setting are laid out to identify each of the areas of learning; however, staff should recognise that some areas of learning may not fit into children's individual interests and therefore need to be planned separately.

Planning also occurs on a daily or weekly basis whereby staff select a specific language activity for the children to experience – there is a different activity out each day which may be enhanced and kept out for longer periods than a day to build upon children's interests and learning. Items are rotated so that all resources are used, providing broad experience for the children, however it is also important that children can follow their interest in their chosen activity and extend their knowledge through repetitive play with enhancements

Staff are able to observe the children and records of such observations can be made on the children's personal profile sheets, individual records or assessment folders.

Samples of the children's work which relate to communication and language, and literacy are kept in the child's individual folder as appropriate.

Assessment is conducted through a mixture of informal observation, interaction with the child, the use of the information on record sheets and discussion during regular staff meetings. The information gathered during the assessment process is then used for future planning of activities for each child.

However, assessment should not entail prolonged breaks from interaction with children, nor require excessive paperwork. When assessing whether an individual child is at the expected level of development, staff draw on their knowledge of the child and their own expert professional judgement and should not be required to prove this through a collection of physical evidence.

Information gained through recording, assessment and professional judgement will be shared with parents, other school staff and outside agencies as appropriate to address any learning and development needs.

Resources

Resources available for communication and language are located in the Resources file.

WellCom – the complete speech and language toolkit, from screening to intervention

Letters and Sounds – Phase One, Two and Three

Documentation

It is available to any person who wishes to read it and pass a comment. The policy is to review and amend the above as and when appropriate, minimum period two years.

Reviewed: January 2024.