

## **Communications and Language (Development Matters 2021)**

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, story-telling 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.

### **ELG: Listening, Attention and Understanding**

Children at the expected level of development will: - 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.

### **ELG: Speaking**

Children at the expected level of development will: - 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.

### 3 – 4 Years Old

<p>Enjoy listening to longer stories and can remember much of what happens. Pay attention to more than one thing at a time, which can be difficult.</p>	<p>Offer children at least a daily story time as well as sharing books throughout the session. If they are busy in their play, children may not be able to switch their attention and listen to what you say. When you need to, help young children to switch their attention from what they are doing to what you are saying. Give them a clear prompt. Suggestion: say the child's name and then: "Please stop and listen".</p>
<p>Use a wider range of vocabulary.</p> <p>Understand a question or instruction that has two parts, such as: "Get your coat and wait at the door". Understand 'why' questions, like: "Why do you think the caterpillar got so fat?"</p>	<p>Extend children's vocabulary, explaining unfamiliar words and concepts and making sure children have understood what they mean through stories and other activities. These should include words and concepts which occur frequently in books and other contexts but are not used every day by many young children. Suggestion: use scientific vocabulary when talking about the parts of a flower or an insect, or different types of rocks. Examples from 'The Gruffalo' include: 'stroll', 'roasted', 'knobbly', 'wart' and 'feast'. Provide children with a rich language environment by sharing books and activities with them. Encourage children to talk about what is happening and give their own ideas. High-quality picture books are a rich source for learning new vocabulary and more complex forms of language: "Excuse me, I'm very hungry. Do you think I could have tea with you?" Shared book-reading is a powerful way of having extended conversations with children. It helps children to build their vocabulary. Offer children lots of interesting things to investigate, like different living things. This will encourage them to ask questions.</p>
<p>Sing a large repertoire of songs. Know many rhymes, be able to talk about familiar books, and be able to tell a long story.</p>	<p>Consider which core books, songs and rhymes you want children to become familiar with and grow to love. The BookTrust's 'Bookfinder' website can help you to pick high-quality books. Activities planned around those core books will help the children to practise the vocabulary and language from those books. It will also support their creativity and play. Outdoor play themed around 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt' might lead to the children creating their own 'hunts' and inventing their own rhymes.</p>
<p>Develop their communication but may continue to have problems with irregular tenses and plurals, such as 'runned' for 'ran', 'swimmed' for 'swam'. Develop their pronunciation but may have problems saying: • some sounds: r, j, th, ch, and sh • multi-syllabic words such as 'pterodactyl', 'planetarium' or 'hippopotamus'.</p>	<p>Children may use ungrammatical forms like 'I swimmied'. Instead of correcting them, recast what the child said. For example: "How lovely that you swam in the sea on holiday". When children have difficulties with correct pronunciation, reply naturally to what they say. Pronounce the word correctly so they hear the correct model.</p>
<p>Use longer sentences of four to six words.</p>	<p>Expand on children's phrases. For example, if a child says, "going out shop", you could reply: "Yes, Henna is going to the shop". As well as adding language, add new ideas. For example: "I wonder if they'll get the 26 bus?"</p>
<p>Be able to express a point of view and to debate when they disagree with an adult or a friend, using words as well as actions. Start a conversation with an adult or a friend and continue it for many turns. Use talk to organise themselves and their play: "Let's go on a bus... you sit there... I'll be the driver."</p>	<p>Model language that promotes thinking and challenges children: "I can see that's empty – I wonder what happened to the snail that used to be in that shell?" Open-ended questions like "I wonder what would happen if...?" encourage more thinking and longer responses. Sustained shared thinking is especially powerful. This is when two or more individuals (adult and child, or children) 'work together' in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities, extend a narrative, etc. Help children to elaborate on how they are feeling: "You look sad. Are you upset because Jasmin doesn't want to do the same thing as you?"</p>

## Children in Reception

Understand how to listen carefully and why listening is important.	Promote and model active listening skills: "Wait a minute, I need to get into a good position for listening, I can't see you. Let's be quiet so I can concentrate on what you're saying." Signal when you want children to listen: "Listen carefully now for how many animals are on the broom." Link listening with learning: "I could tell you were going to say the right answer, you were listening so carefully."
Learn new vocabulary	Identify new vocabulary before planning activities, for example, changes in materials: 'dissolving', 'drying', 'evaporating'; in music: 'percussion', 'tambourine'. Bring in objects, pictures and photographs to talk about, for example vegetables to taste, smell and feel. Discuss which category the word is in, for example: "A cabbage is a kind of vegetable. It's a bit like a sprout but much bigger". Have fun saying the word in an exaggerated manner. Use picture cue cards to talk about an object: "What colour is it? Where would you find it? What shape is it? What does it smell like? What does it look like? What does it feel like? What does it sound like? What does it taste like?"
Use new vocabulary through the day.	Model words and phrases relevant to the area being taught, deliberately and systematically: "I'm thrilled that everyone's on time today", "I can see that you're delighted with your new trainers", "Stop shrieking, you're hurting my ears!", "What a downpour – I've never seen so much rain!", "It looks as if the sun has caused the puddles to evaporate", "Have you ever heard such a booming voice?" Use the vocabulary repeatedly through the week. Keep a list of previously taught vocabulary and review it in different contexts.
Ask questions to find out more and to check they understand what has been said to them.	Show genuine interest in knowing more: "This looks amazing, I need to know more about this." Think out loud, ask questions to check your understanding; make sure children can answer who, where and when questions before you move on to why and 'how do you know' questions: "I wonder why this jellyfish is so dangerous? Ahh, it has poison in its tentacles."
Articulate their ideas and thoughts in well-formed sentences.	Use complete sentences in your everyday talk. Help children build sentences using new vocabulary by rephrasing what they say and structuring their responses using sentence starters. Narrate your own and children's actions: "I've never seen so many beautiful bubbles, I can see all the colours of the rainbow in them." Build upon their incidental talk: "Your tower is definitely the tallest I've seen all week. Do you think you'll make it any higher?" Suggestion: ask open questions - "How did you make that? Why does the wheel move so easily? What will happen if you do that?" Instead of correcting, model accurate irregular grammar such as past tense, plurals, complex sentences: "That's right: you drank your milk quickly; you were quicker than Darren."
Connect one idea or action to another using a range of connectives.	Narrate events and actions: "I knew it must be cold outside because he was putting on his coat and hat." Remind children of previous events: "Do you remember when we forgot to wear our raincoats last week? It poured so much that we got drenched!" Extend their thinking: "You've thought really hard about building your tower, but how will you stop it falling down?"
Describe events in some detail.	Make deliberate mistakes highlighting to children that sometimes you might get it wrong: "It's important to get things in the right order so that people know what I'm talking about. Listen carefully to see if I have things in the right order: 'last week...'. Use sequencing words with emphasis in your own stories: "Before school I had a lovely big breakfast, then I had a biscuit at break time and after that I had two pieces of fruit after lunch. I'm so full!"
Use talk to help work out problems and organise thinking and activities, and to explain how things work and why they might happen.	Think out loud how to work things out. Encourage children to talk about a problem together and come up with ideas for how to solve it. Give children problem solving words and phrases to use in their explanations: 'so that', 'because', 'I think it's...', 'you could...', 'it might be...'
Develop social phrases.	Model talk routines through the day. For example, arriving in school: "Good morning, how are you?"

Engage in storytimes.	Timetable a storytime at least once a day. Draw up a list of books that you enjoy reading aloud to children, including traditional and modern stories. Choose books that will develop their vocabulary. Display quality books in attractive book corners. Send home familiar and good-quality books for parents to read aloud and talk about with their children. Show parents how to share stories with their children.
Listen to and talk about stories to build familiarity and understanding.	Read and re-read selected stories. Show enjoyment of the story using your voice and manner to make the meaning clear. Use different voices for the narrator and each character. Make asides, commenting on what is happening in a story: "That looks dangerous – I'm sure they're all going to fall off that broom!" Link events in a story to your own experiences. Talk about the plot and the main problem in the story. Identify the main characters in the story, and talk about their feelings, actions and motives. Take on different roles in imaginative play, to interact and negotiate with people in longer conversations. Practise possible conversations between characters.
Retell the story, once they have developed a deep familiarity with the text, some as exact repetition and some in their own words.	Make familiar books available for children to share at school and at home. Make time for children to tell each other stories they have heard, or to visitors.
Use new vocabulary in different contexts.	Have fun with phrases from the story through the day: "I searched for a pencil, but no pencil could be found." Explain new vocabulary in the context of story, rather than in word lists.
Listen carefully to rhymes and songs, paying attention to how they sound.	Show your enjoyment of poems using your voice and manner to give emphasis to carefully chosen words and phrases. Model noticing how some words sound: "That poem was about a frog on a log; those words sound a bit the same at the end don't they? They rhyme." In poems and rhymes with very regular rhythm patterns, pause before the rhyming word to allow children to join in or predict the word coming next. Encourage children to have fun with rhyme, even if their suggestions don't make complete sense. Choose a few interesting longer words from the poem, rhyme or song and clap out their beat structure, helping children to join in with the correct number of 'claps'.
Learn rhymes, poems and songs.	Select traditional and contemporary poems and rhymes to read aloud to children. Help children to join in with refrains and learn some verses by heart using call and response. When singing songs by heart, talk about words in repeated phrases from within a refrain or verse so that word boundaries are noticed and not blurred: "Listen carefully, what words can you hear? Oncesuppona time: once – upon – a – time."
Engage in non-fiction books.	Read aloud books to children that will extend their knowledge of the world and illustrate a current topic. Select books containing photographs and pictures, for example, places in different weather conditions and seasons.
Listen to and talk about selected non-fiction to develop a deep familiarity with new knowledge and vocabulary.	Re-read some books so children learn the language necessary to talk about what is happening in each illustration and relate it to their own lives. Make the books available for children to share at school and at home.