

Practice Guidance for Spoken Language and Vocabulary

Why is Spoken Language and Vocabulary important to the children in our school?

The development and use of speech, language and communication are at the heart of young children's learning. Children's later achievements are dependent on their ability to communicate effectively. It is vitally important to ensure that we do everything that we can to help all children to become skilful and competent learners. Language is the vehicle for learning. It enables understanding and expression through thought, problem solving and reasoning and it is critical to cognitive development. Poor language puts children at risk of poorer reading, writing, behaviour and attainment.

Speech, language and communication supports children to;

- Develop social and emotional skills;
- Make friends;
- Learn appropriate behaviour skills;
- Access play and learning opportunities;
- Further develop language skills;
- Develop skills in literacy, mathematics and other areas of the curriculum.

What is Spoken Language and Vocabulary?

Speech refers to the sound system of a language as well as how sounds are made in the mouth to form spoken words. All languages have different sound systems. Some children may have well developed communication and language skills but have difficulty using the correct speech sounds.

Language is the structure in which words are used. The language system is made up of several components:

- *Grammar* – how words can be combined to make sentences, and how words change to indicate things such as the past tense, for example 'I'm playing' changing to 'I played'.
- *Vocabulary and semantics* – vocabulary is the set of words that are used – children's earliest words are labels for familiar people, objects and animals, the things that are around them; as their language develops they begin to understand that words can have different and wider meanings and can be used in many different ways (semantics). Vocabulary is key for learning. Research indicates that the level of children's vocabulary at age 5 is a very strong predictor of the qualifications achieved at school leaving age and beyond.
- *Pragmatics* – the appropriate use of language in different situations, for example beginning to understand what a question is and that it requires an answer. Pragmatics support verbal storytelling and narrative skills.

Communication describes the different systems that we use to pass on messages to other people, have a conversation and interact socially. The information can be conveyed with words or sounds. You can also communicate using pictures or symbols, or using non-verbal communication such as gestures or a signing system.

Receptive language is about understanding, or comprehending, the words and sentences that are used. Receptive language development is the foundation for all language and communication skills. Without well-developed skills for attention and listening, children will struggle to understand and respond appropriately.

Expressive language is the use of words and sentences in agreed structures and forms.

Our approach to planning Spoken Language and Vocabulary:

There is a whole school focus on teaching vocabulary and sentence structure across the curriculum using the Word Aware approach.

Long and medium term planning

We plan using Early Years Foundation Stage Outcomes for nursery and reception aged children and National Curriculum objectives for Key Stage 1.

See Appendix 1 – English Intent and Implementation 2020

Vocabulary is taught across the curriculum and is identified in the medium term plans for each year group.

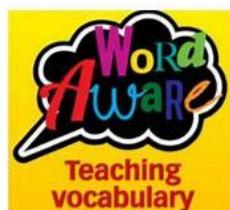
Short term planning

Modelled language and taught vocabulary is identified on the weekly English plan.

Our approach to teaching and learning in Spoken Language and Vocabulary:

Speech, language and communication is taught and learned everyday through structured tasks and free play situations. Our School Pedagogy is set out in our Teaching and Learning Handbook.

We teach vocabulary using the Word Aware Approach which consists of four parts.



- **Make words count;** is about providing an enriched word-learning environment. Children need to know that spoken and written words are important and need to be exposed to many words via many different methods.
- **'Teaching vocabulary'** is based on 'select, teach, activate and review' (STAR) process.



- ‘**Word detective**’ strand teaches children how to learn new words. This applies to both spoken and written words
- ‘**Fun with words**’ encourages play with words through word games to re-inforce new vocabulary and word-learning skills
See Word Aware STAR strategies - *Appendix 2*



Daily opportunities through every subject area enables;

- Children to learn how to listen using the 5 skills for good listening and to identify good listening in themselves and others.
- Children to learn new vocabulary and link new words to words they already know.
- Children to learn explicit structures for supporting narrative skills
- Children to learn social interaction skills which support collaborative learning and emotional well-being.

Essential resources for Spoken Language and Vocabulary:

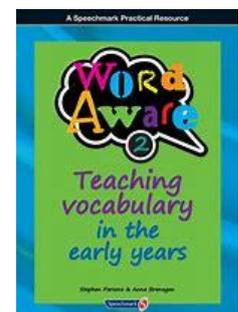
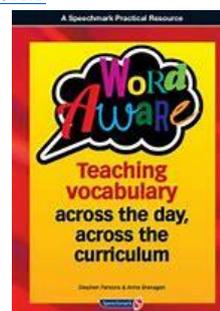
Adults who are good communicators, who model language and have quality interactions with every child regardless of the child’s level of communication are the most effective resource to support and develop children’s speech, language and communication.

The resources below support **understanding and good practice** in developing speech, language and communication;

- Speech, Language and Communication Framework (SLCF) outlines what adults need to know and be able to do in order to support children’s communication. <https://www.slcframework.org.uk/>
- ‘Universally Speaking - The ages and stages of children’s communication and development from birth to 5’ [https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk Birth to 5](https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/Birth%20to%205).
- ‘Universally Speaking - The ages and stages of children’s communication and development from 5 to 11 years by The Communication Trust’. [https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk 5 to 11](https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/5%20to%2011)
- ‘Every Child a Talker’ practice guidance https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/ecat_guidance_for_practitioners_12.pdf
- Language Builders - Advice and activities to encourage children’s communication skills-Elklan
- ‘Think About Questions’ poster – Elklan *Appendix 3*
- Interaction Poster – Elklan *Appendix 4*
- National Literacy Trust website <https://literacytrust.org.uk/>

The resources below support the **teaching** of speech, language and communication skills within the classroom;

- Letters and Sounds Phonics programme
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letters-and-sounds>
- Talk Boost whole class teaching resources
- Word Aware



The resources below support **identification** of speech, language and communication difficulties and speech, language and communication interventions;

- National Strategies – EYFS ‘National Strategies – ‘Early Communication and Language Monitoring Tool’ https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2011/10/ECAT_child_monitoring_tool1.pdf
- WellComm Big Book of Ideas; Activities for building children’s language skills – Sandwell Primary Care Trust
- Talk Boost resource box and teacher file
- Early Talk Boost resource box and teacher file



- Speech Link programme
- Language Link programme
- Referral forms for Speech and Language Therapy. Please see online for current referral advice and forms <https://www.speech.derby.nhs.uk/>

Spoken Language and Vocabulary in the learning environment:

We need to reflect on the learning environment we provide and consider how it impacts on children’s learning.

All environments need careful planning and needs to consider the following;

The physical environment, both indoors and outdoors

- Noise level. Noise is managed so children can concentrate on what is being said in the classroom.
- Smaller spaces. Spaces are created in the classroom to encourage children to communicate. Children need cosy, welcoming areas, indoors and outdoors, where they can go if they want to have quiet conversations or share a book.
- Visual support. Visual timetable, signs and symbols to help support a child’s understanding and use of language to communicate. Vocabulary is illustrated and displayed for children to see and resources children can access are labelled clearly. We follow the strategies for the ‘Make Words Count’ strand of Word Aware. (See pages 22 to 26 ‘Word Aware’ Teaching vocabulary across the curriculum).
- Classroom environments follow the ‘Communication Friendly Spaces approach by Elizabeth Jarman <https://elizabethjarman.com/action-research/>

The conditions for learning; the emotional environment

- Positive relationships with adults. It is vital that all children feel comfortable, confident, and secure and welcome and that they have a strong sense of belonging and well-being. This relies on adults who are sensitive to their needs and understand how important children’s well-being is to their learning
- Positive relationships with peers. Planned activities that encourage children to work in pairs or small groups.
- Quality interaction. Encourage an ‘asking friendly’ environment where children are encouraged to say when they don’t understand or need help. Use strategies for effective interaction and display the in the classroom. Give plenty of time for children to think and respond to questions.
‘Think About Questions’ poster – Elklan [Appendix 3](#)
Interaction Poster – Elklan [Appendix 4](#)

- Labelled resources and well organised classroom. Children will be confident about where things are and feel more secure.

The home environment; Parents as partners.

Research evidence tells us that, particularly before the age of seven, children’s vocabulary growth is largely determined by parental practices. Children mainly use words that parents and other adults use with them in conversations. Encourage parents to model and promote good listening skills.

The following websites are suitable to share with parents;

- Hungry Little Minds - <https://hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk/> gives ideas for activities from birth to 5
- Tiny Happy People - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people> helps to develop children’s communication skills

We have many resources in our parent library to support parents understanding of the importance of talking to their children.



Training opportunities for parents

‘Let’s Talk’ and ‘Talk at Home’ Elklan parent training programmes are delivered at Audrey Drive Children’s Centre and are suitable for parents with children under 5. Families can be referred by Caroline Howett.

Our approach to assessment in Spoken Language and Vocabulary:

Formative assessment

Assessment for learning is ongoing and central to effective classroom practice. During interactions with individual children, groups or the whole class, assessments are being made. Children’s learning is observed and then matched against expectations. This informs future planning and identifies where children are in their learning and what their next steps are. Misconceptions are addressed as they occur. Teachers use appropriate Blank level language and interaction strategies.

All staff working with children need to accurately describe a child’s speech, language and communication development, track progress and identify delay. To support knowledge around age related expectations please refer to;

- ‘Universally Speaking - The ages and stages of children’s communication and development from birth to 5’ [https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk Birth to 5](https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/Birth%20to%205).
- ‘Universally Speaking - The ages and stages of children’s communication and development from 5 to 11 years by The Communication Trust’. [https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk 5 to 11](https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/5%20to%2011)
- National Strategies – EYFS ‘National Strategies – ‘Early Communication and Language Monitoring Tool’ https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2011/10/ECAT_child_monitoring_tool1.pdf
- Appendix 5 - ‘What’s Typical Talk?’ poster – Universally Speaking

Summative assessment

Speech, language and communication is formally assessed at three assessment points over the year for all year groups and on entry for all children new to school using;

- SLC Assessment Record for EYFS - [Appendix 6](#)
- Speech, Language and Communication Assessment Grids for KS1 - [Appendix 7](#)

Children's understanding is assessed on entry to nursery and reception using the

- Blank Level Assessment Record' Elklan - [Appendix 8](#)

To support end of year judgements for EYFS please refer to Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Exemplification - STA

EAL children are assessed by Mrs A Roberts (HLTA) each term using;

- The Bell Foundation – EAL assessment framework - [Appendix 9](#)

Intervention in Spoken Language and Vocabulary:

If there are any concerns regarding a child's development in Speech, Language and Communication talk to parents to gain further information. For children with EAL it is useful to use the Speech Link 'Parent Information Form for Children with EAL'. [See Appendix 10](#). Any concerns can then be discussed with the SENCO or the SLC leader. Children with speech, language and communication delay need to be identified early and receive the right kind of intervention to minimise the impact of poor language and communication skills.

The following interventions take place in school. The adults responsible for leading and managing the interventions will offer support and give advice as needed.

- **Early Talk Boost in FS1** - Mrs Howett
- **Talk Boost in FS2, Y1 and Y2** - Mrs Howett
- **Speech Link** - Mrs Smalley (HLTA)
- **Language Link** - Mrs Smalley (HLTA)
- **SALT** – NHS

Mrs Smalley completes ongoing assessment of children with Speech Link and Language Link intervention. Class teachers support assessment by completing the following assessments at the start and end of each academic year for children who are having Speech Link and Language Link intervention.

- 'Progress Measures: Teacher Rating of Pupil Engagement' – Language Link and
- 'Progress Measures: Speech Intelligibility Rating' – [Appendix 11](#)

If there are still concerns about a child's development after a child has received 'quality first teach' alongside an appropriate intervention a possible referral to Speech and Language Therapy may be needed. The SENCO or SLC leader will support this referral.

Spoken Language and Vocabulary across the curriculum:

Speech, language and communication skills underpin all learning and are required to support all other subjects. Research shows a focus on developing oral language skills is especially important for the development of a range of reading and writing skills (EEF Improving Literacy in Key Stage 1 - 2018)

The Word Aware STAR approach is used to select and teach topic vocabulary which is applied across the curriculum.

Enrichment opportunities in Spoken Language and Vocabulary:

All enrichment activities in school, including after-school clubs provide speaking and listening opportunities which support the development of Speech, Language and Communication skills.

Spoken Language and Vocabulary Appendices:

- *Appendix 1* – English Intent and Implementation 2021
- *Appendix 2* – Word Aware Strategies
- *Appendix 3* - ‘Think About Questions’ poster – Elklan
- *Appendix 4* – Interaction poster; Traffic Lights– Elklan
- *Appendix 5* - ‘What’s Typical Talk at Primary?’ Poster
- *Appendix 6* - SLC Assessment Record for EYFS
- *Appendix 7* - Speech, Language and Communication Assessment Grids for KS1
- *Appendix 8* - ‘Blank Level Assessment Record’ - Elklan
- *Appendix 9* - The Bell Foundation – EAL assessment framework
- *Appendix 10* - Speech Link ‘Parent Information Form for Children with EAL’.
- *Appendix 11* - ‘Progress Measures: Language Link and Speech Link

This Practice Guidance was created by:

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Date: Reviewed December 2021

This guide and appendices can be found on ‘Teachers’ Drive under English Practice Guidance – Spoken Language and Vocabulary Practice Guidance