



New Hartley First School

Communication and Language Statement

“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.” EYFS Statutory Guidance 2024

“Around 10% of children in the UK have language difficulties, rising to 40% in the most socially disadvantaged areas. Research has consistently shown that children who do not recover from such difficulties are at risk of adverse longer-term outcomes such as unemployment and poorer economic and psychological wellbeing.” Newcastle University 2024

At New Hartley First school it is important to us that children are supported to develop their language and communication skills during the Early Years. Early support and intervention has the potential to prevent many later difficulties with learning, socialisation and wellbeing in children with language difficulties.

By 5 years old a child should know and be able to use between 2000 and 2500 words.

There are many ways that we support children’s speech and language and communication skills in Early Years at New Hartley First School. These can be split into three different levels of support;

- 1) Universal - this is the approach we take to all of the children within the Early Years Unit to have appropriate speech, language and communication skills through developing a robust language environment and identifying key vocabulary we would like the children introduced to throughout their time in Early Years.
- 2) Targeted - this is when we give additional support to children who have been identified as having difficulties with speech, language and communication
- 3) Specialist - this is when we refer to external professionals, such as speech therapists, to support children with specific speech, language and communication needs

Our Universal Approach -

This is what most children need in order to thrive and is based on high quality interactions leading to robust language development.

- Children are exposed to high quality language input throughout the day

- Through a range of contexts and interactions
- These can be peer to peer, adult to child

Examples include;

- Book sharing - adult led, child led, story time, story voting time, core books, books linked to the theme
- Planning and Review time for our 'Do' Play to learn session - modelled sentences, guided extensions of vocabulary
- Role play
- Outdoor play

The adult role is paramount to the child's development. Adult responses to a child's attempt to communicate should be reliable and frequent.

Adults are to copy and slightly extend the language to develop it further for example if the child says 'car' the adult can copy and extend 'yes a red car.'

Adults are intentional in the language they choose to use with a child. The adults think ahead about the activities in our Early Years setting and the type of language they could use in that activity; this is evidenced through our planning and team discussions.

During activities, adults will consider the type of language to use when interacting with a child, varying the type of language they are using to be tailored to the level of the child.

Types of language used within our setting:

Concrete - e.g. labelling (table, chair, leg),

Imitating (copying 'splish splash splosh')

Describing (heavy, light, big, little),

or

Abstract, e.g. predicting ('I think this one is going to sink/float'),

Modelling ('I need the big cup this time, not the little cup')

Reasoning (getting children to wonder and to think why particular things happened. - 'why did this one sink/float?')

In addition, there is an importance of using repetitive language. Repetition across contexts increases learning and retention and is particularly helpful for children with difficulties learning language.

Adults within our setting will ensure they are face to face with the child where possible and use the child's name to gain their attention before talking or giving an instruction.

We continue to work hard to create a 'language rich environment'

"A language-rich environment promotes and encourages the enhancement of children's communication and language development, taking into account both the physical and emotional environment, including positive and responsive interactions with adults." Teach Early Years

Alongside language to aid communication visuals are used.

- Visual timetable
- Makaton signs
- Photos

Visual timetables feature in both Nursery and Reception (in fact our whole school) and can support children's understanding of routines, developing skills for anticipating what will happen next, as well as develop their understanding of time. Now, next, finished. Makaton signs can help support a child's communication as it slows your rate of speech, makes language more visual, helps emphasise key words, encourages language learning, understanding and use - it does not stop children talking - it encourages them to join in.

Key language learning opportunities are;

- Snack time
- Circle PSED time
- Register time
- Tapestry - photos from home
- Special box (Reception)
- Take home bear (Nursery)
- Role play areas
- Story telling/Reading areas
- Problem solving areas
- Plan time
- Review time

Using books, stories and nursery rhymes, which are a big part of our Early Years curriculum, help children learn new words. Our Nursery children have a nursery rhyme as their peg label. Books and nursery rhymes use the same repetitive language. This makes learning new words and ideas easier for children. We have very interactive story times not just reading the words of the books, but talking about the pictures, using different voices, facial expressions and stressing key words which are sometimes identified together as a team prior to reading.

Here are some ways we are using books and stories to support language development:

- A group of core books that help children engage at a deeper level with the story
- Use a word in writing, in play – taken from stories
- Children are asked questions, join in with repetitions, etc. • Story Sacks
- Special box - Favourite stories, favourite pages - joining in with repeated refrains
- Sharing photos of events/activities within school (trips, workshops etc)
- Photo books (Events, activities, the children)

Our Targeted Support

Some children need additional support for their language development and we need to ensure targeted intervention is in place.

In Nursery we use a SALT toolkit assessment for the children on baseline and then at points throughout the year to support use to understand where a child is and progressing.

Early Talk boost - identifying key groups of children and works with home too
SALT tool kit - identifying specific sounds children struggle with and identifying if these are developmental or not.

Literacy Launchpad helps us to identify key developmental steps to support and extend children's language development.

Specific language reports

Specialist

When we and/or parents are worried about a child's speech, language and/or communication skills, we would refer to specialist services to get appropriate assessment and support for the child. We can refer to Paediatric Speech and Language, the LA SEND Outreach Service and/or Educational Psychology.

We work closely with professionals during any assessment of need and interventions are delivered as required.

CPD

Kirstie Page CPD - Launchpad - SENCO- Laura McAthey (2024)

Early Talk Boost - Tracy Thompson (TA)

Christine Lamb (TA) (2024)

Kelly Nelson (EYFS Leader/Reception teacher) (2024)

Engaging Parents

For our Nursery children we have home visits and at this point we ensure we talk about the children's early speech and how parents feel. We ask if there has been any worries at their child's 2 year check or if SALT have previously or currently involved.

We use Tapestry, an on-line learning journey, to enable parents to share information, photos and videos from home to ensure we have a clear understanding of each child's language ability at home as well as at school.

We regularly invite parents for 'stay and play' sessions enabling parents to have time to play with their children. This is a great opportunity for the parents to observe how staff support language development through play by modelling, repeating, recasting and extending.

We hold a range of parent meetings at the start of the academic year, from coffee mornings to curriculum events, to build a relationship with the families and engage parents with the activities happening at school

If we have concerns about a bilingual child's language skills, we will ask parents about their home language usage. Is it the same in their home language? If so, it's a definite sign they need referring.

Actions and priorities for 2024-25

- Identifying areas of need in cohort from baseline,
- Identifying children with specialist involvement and those who need referral for specialist support,
- Develop CPD plan based on need of cohort,
- Upskill new staff,
- Makaton CPD to support pre-verbal children,
- Visits to other settings to observe good practice.