Reviewed June 2025

Strong Close Nursery School

Communication and Language Policy

Rationale

Communication and Language is an essential feature of every individual's schooling and their subsequent adult life. It is through communication and language that children will begin to communicate, socialise and achieve confidence and cognition. The implementation of language across the curriculum should reflect the importance it has for the development of all individuals. Language is the tool that enables communication and can be the spoken word or non-verbal communication in various forms including facial expression, multi-sensory approaches, body language, gesture, sounds, sign language and mark making. Evidence demonstrates that early spoken language skills are the most significant predictor of literacy skills at age 11.

"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."

Statutory Framework for the EYFS Educational Programme.

To provide effectively for the learning, interests and needs of all our children we will use the 'Statutory Framework for The Early Years Foundation Stage' to inform our practice. The seven key features of effective practice from the non-statutory Development Matters will be at the heart of our day-to-day practice. We recognise the individuality of all children and the need to nurture their confidence, capabilities, and independence. Our curriculum will reflect the needs and interests of our children and we will develop more in depth learning through schemas, projects, real world experiences and repeated and motivating activities. To this end we will ensure that our practice reflects the characteristics of effective teaching and learning; playing and Exploring, Active Learning and Creating and Thinking Critically. Our children that are on or being assessed for our resourced places are assessed using the Developmental Journal resources.

Aims

Our aim is to ensure our practice gives children the best communication and language opportunities and for children to work towards achieving the early learning goals for Communication and Language.

Our aims set out how we intend to deliver a high-quality curriculum

- To provide a cross-curricular and whole school approach to the teaching of communication and language, which is grounded in knowledge and understanding of the subject matter and the most effective ways of teaching and learning.

- To have a particular focus on the aspects of communication in our planning and assessment
  - Listening, Attention and Understanding
  - Speaking

- To ensure that all adults value and respect the range of languages and experiences which children bring with them from home and their wider communities.

- Recognise that children whose first language is not English should have confidence and pride in using their first language whilst having opportunities to use English when appropriate.

- Closely liaise with parents and to share information with them. We recognise that a great deal of children's talk refers to home experiences.

- Develop children's confidence in themselves as speakers.

- Have adults at hand to extend the child's language and to be a good listener.

- Provide space and time for listening and talking in all areas of the curriculum.

- Monitor and record children's spoken language and to use this information for curriculum planning.

- To ensure that all children are supported through the best possible opportunities to embed strong language and communication skills, helping children in making progress, consolidating their learning over time and narrowing the achievement gap.

Objectives

Our objectives set out how we implement our aims

- We will ensure that we develop and extend children's existing skills and concepts by providing a rich and varied range of high-quality play and language experiences in all areas of the school

- We will create a well organised language rich environment that will engage, encourage and inspire children to communicate.

- We will use the indoor and outdoor environment, stories, songs, poems, rhymes, visitors, trips and outings as sources of language, extending experiences, communication and learning

- We will help children develop and extend the skills of listening, attention and understanding, and speaking by ensuring that all adults are aware of the main focus of particular experiences and are skilful in supporting and extending interactions with children. Adults will be highly tuned in to the children's capabilities and motivations

- We will develop children's vocabulary skills by providing meaning in context to new words and deepen their understanding of meaning through real life experiences

- We will nurture children's confidence and engagement through settled and trusting relationships with adults and by developing children's independence towards self-scaffolding

- We will develop children's conversational turn taking skills

- We will offer many opportunities for children to extend their oral language skills through listening to stories and talking about them

- We will ensure children have opportunities to role play and make believe as they explore their interests

- We will ensure all children have equal access to all the curriculum

- We will involve and support parents/carers in our work by sharing individualised, specific and relevant activities from our Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) toolkit, Schema toolkit, Family Matters workshop, dummies and bottles leaflets and workshops, 50 Things to do Before You're 5 app and the Tiny Happy People website.

- We will provide targeted interventions to children who are experiencing barriers to learning and, in particular, delays in the development of their communication and language skills, through our SALT toolkit sequential and specialised activities and our Let's Talk enhancement programme by supporting a programme of real-world experiences and responsibilities including cleaning, gardening, composting, shopping and food preparation.

- We will support non-verbal children through a range of strategies dependent on their need and including Verve and Intensive Interaction strategies to develop trust, selective mutism support, and Let's Talk and Let's Move interventions.

- We will endeavour to ensure that children learning English as an additional language have the opportunity to work with an adult who speaks their first language, researching a range of key words with parents/carers and celebrating multilingualism in our setting. Children will then learn English from a strong foundation in their home language.

- We will ensure we provide targeted support to children with special educational needs, through next steps or Individual Support plans with parents and carers.

- We will provide a total communication approach for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This will be done using intensive interaction techniques, Makaton, visual aids, objects of reference, picture exchange and by referring to Speech and Language Therapy as appropriate to the needs of the child. Children with more complex needs will be assessed using the Developmental Journal materials.

- We will ensure that the literature and displays present in the school reflect the diverse cultures and abilities represented in school.

- We will discuss children and their interests weekly to inform planning, and share at home with parents and carers through our What's Happening to help support and deepen children's learning through play. Half termly planning newsletters are also developed by staff and shared with parents/carers.

- To ensure that children are making the best progress, over time, we will assess their progress and interests termly using Development Matters and the key observational checkpoints including the Developmental Journal materials for those children on specialist places, supported to make smaller steps of progress. The results of these, will inform future planning both at an individual level and also at a curriculum level.

The following support the **implementation** of this policy and ensure we monitor **impact**

a. Learning and Teaching Policy

b. Communication Strategies with Children

c. Development Matters

d. Developmental Journal documents

e. Assessment Policy, Guidelines and information

f. Half termly policy, provision and practice monitoring

g.

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Communication Strategies with Children

Reviewed June 2025

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.

Communication requires 2 foundation skills, listening and understanding. Children develop these by observing and reacting to others. This influences communication and talking in later life.

Listening is different to simply hearing. It means interpreting different sounds, while beginning to understand social interactions. Understanding means processing what's being communicated, beginning with simple ideas and vocabulary.

To support children's learning adults, need to: -

Notice

- at first glance
- throughout a session
- during a week
- over time

Interact

- copying/modelling-non-verbal
- Self-talk
- Parallel talk
- Repeating
- Expanding / Extending
- Open ended questioning
- Back and forth interactions

Extend

- Introduce a new resource /experience
- Relocate to a different area
- Research relevant materials e.g., photos, books, internet
- Make connections
- Record what children have done – make a book
- Plan with children what you can do tomorrow /next week
- Plan a relevant visit / visitor

Approaches

Be present with children, sit closely / observe – above all this let children know you are interested / care it provides reassurance.

Consider the settings physical and emotional environment. Children should be able to practice listening closely, and be encouraged to focus their attention. They will benefit from a quiet environment where they can listen and understand.

Leave pauses – thinking and answering time – take turns in speaking

Try to listen more than you talk especially for older children

Look expectantly and lean towards baby/child.

Assume that children have something important to say

Use positive body language and copy children's play – children are sensitive to non-verbal communication

Use lots of warm eye contact and facial expression; respond as soon as possible to children's communication with you including eye contact

Be at same level as child

Be facing the child when possible

Mirror child's play e.g., child has a doll, use a doll yourself, if a child is painting circles paint circles yourself.

Be a good listener – don't interrupt or take over the 'conversation'

Show interest and enjoyment in smiles and streams of sound and gesture. Respond to babble as if listening to someone talking.
Be respectful –talk to children before doing things

Ensure it is not too noisy, younger children are easily distracted
Use gesture/Makaton along with word – tap lips for hungry, talk about what you're doing (words to describe your actions), add words to what child says e.g., milk – drink milk, ball-bouncy ball or big ball. Also add more complex and real-life descriptive words e.g., Dog-Labrador dog, Car-Citroen car, door-sliding door

Make suggestions to keep play going, where appropriate and use objects of reference to extend vocabulary including the first 100 words from Speech and Language Therapy

Re-focus play, where appropriate

Add to imaginary scenarios – join in play, where invited or you judge it will enhance or is needed.

Acknowledge / affirm child's ideas especially where e.g., conflict. "I know you want the bike now

Know the child's limits / difficulties i.e., pitch expectations correctly. Don't force conflict – give choices
Recognise self- talk – children use this to guide themselves – don't interfere
Introduce an idea / resource to children's play where it will introduce new thinking / challenge

Model self- talk

<u>Language</u>

Reflecting and mirroring children's words and behaviour demonstrates your interest and understanding in their worlds
Frequently talk / sign and sing to babies and young children
Use fewer, simpler words for children with delayed language and wait longer for a response
Support use of home language if not English. Use key words in Mother tongue / Bilingual staff communicate in home language
Adapt your language to suit the child e.g., using more exaggerated intonation for younger children, or singing instructions.

Speak slowly, calmly and clearly. If firm communication is required, ensure given appropriately i.e., don't raise voice but take child to one side and say "I need to explain something very important."

Give children reason for instructions / expectations
Speak in a more expressive way – sing song, slightly higher pitch, not too loud

Repeat words/phrases. Try to use same words and or phrases – this supports the child in making meaning
Comment on what the children are doing and echo back what they say with new vocabulary added.

Read frequently with children and engage them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems.

Sound and look interested in what you say and in what the baby/child says – make your enjoyment obvious

Follow babies/children's lead – find out what interests them including resources / events and communicate about that, build a shared dialogue about their interests, refer back to them and make connections with other things using that as a starting point. In this way you can create a shared dialogue

Use running commentary about what you are doing or what child is doing as appropriate

Make sure you have child's attention before speaking – use touch or say their name.
Repeat back correct sentence –don't correct child's speech.

Draw attention to words, if appropriate.

Talk to babies individually and only use very small groups with toddlers and two-year-olds

Use a comment with a question such as - that looks like a fast car, where is it going?

Name objects/people etc. –pointing to or touching object. Copy this if the child is doing it

Model language for child/child interaction – transactions, feelings etc.
Pose open questions, not too many – ask questions when you genuinely want to know the answer - avoid testing unless necessary (colour etc.).

Add structure/ extend what children say e. g.
- Child says "Ball" adult says "Yes, that's Ali's ball"
- Child says "It's a dinosaur" adult says "Yes that's right, dinosaurs lived a long time ago, some of them were very big!"

Use "I wonder", "How can we?", "Is there another way?" to promote problem solving

Be aware of different questioning strategies depending on whether adult led or child led – there is a place for both and use differentiated questioning based on children's language abilities e.g.

-Offer options and choice
-What, where, who questions
-How and why questions