Communication and Language Policy



‘Communication skills are the foundation for children’s learning and a key to their life chances.’ iCan.

Communication and Language forms one of the three Prime areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum, which divides Communication and Language into the two key strands Listening, Attention and Understanding, and Speaking.

Educational Programme 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.

Children are encouraged to become life-long confident communicators, using whatever method of communication is appropriate for them, who are all valued whatever their starting points, whether they have English as a first, or additional language, or have additional needs. Communication and Language are cross-curricular and underpin all areas of a child’s development and the list below gives a broad view of many of the things that we do to promote Communication and Language here at Homerton.

**Homerton Curriculum Goal 1 particularly relates to this policy**

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| **CHILDREN**  **LISTENING & ATTENTION**  **Children are encouraged to develop their listening, attention and understanding skills through:**   * **Listening to each other at large and small shared group time together eg sharing snack, small group activities, whole class circle times, music, lunchtimes etc** * **Engaging in conversation in daily interactions with adults and other children at activities both inside and out in our garden/allotment/old orchard and park spaces. We have found children often communicate more freely when outdoors.** * **Having the opportunity to listen to fictional stories, songs, rhymes and non-fiction texts, daily in class** * **Having a language rich environment within the classroom** * **Being encouraged and supported to ask questions and make comments through adult positive interactions and praise.** * **Through fun early phonic activities eg using ‘Letters and Sounds’ phase one.** * **Listening to the letter sound of that day’s Homerton owl’s name, whilst also seeing it on their name card at circle times, joining in with listening activities which arise from this activity at the start of Circle time.** * **Music sessions in class circle times.** * **Listening to visitors coming to share activities and ideas with children in class** * **Having small group targeted work with an adult. This is especially important for children referred to Speech and Language service, whose targeted advice is followed by ourselves and parents.** * **Making up their own stories regularly through our Helicopter Story sessions with and adults scribing for these – checking meaning by making comments and asking for clarity of meaning where needed.**   **UNDERSTANDING**   * **Responding to simple who, what, why, where, when questions by pointing, or talking, when sharing stories with an adult.** * **Following routines with instructions eg at tidy up time etc which demonstrate a child’s level of understanding.** * **Enjoying lots of activities which develop concepts such as big, small etc** * **Doing activities promoting more complex language eg positional language such as in front, behind etc.** * **Being encouraged to use simple connectives such as ‘and’ or ‘but’ in Helicopter story sessions to clarify meaning and extend story.** * **Building a bank of rhymes, songs and simple stories which give pattern of language …eg Our Core Books or Once upon a Time stories.**   **SPEAKING**  **All forms of children’s communication are valued, whether it be through speech, sign language, gesture or through eye contact or use of visuals.**   * **Use symbols to express their feelings or needs.** * **Develop language through visuals and modelling of choices by adult eg apple or banana?** * **Use sign language – Makaton / BSL as a way of communicating for all children** * **Share news from home, ideas, thoughts and interests at snack time and whilst playing etc** * **Bring in photos and objects from home to share and talk about with class** * **Take part in one to one, small group, and whole class conversations and discussions as the year progresses** * **Use vocabulary they have recently heard and learnt** * **Explain why things might happen** * **Express their ideas and feelings** * **Use different tenses in conversation when talking about past, present or future events** * **Start to use joining words such as ‘and’ or ‘but’.** * **Share ideas and thoughts at circle time …sometimes when an object is passed around circle so children know it is their turn to talk and be listened to….(giving option of not contributing if children don’t want to as well.)** * **Do EAL vocabulary exchange when sharing stories or activities** * **Use talking postcards/boxes for EAL children** * **Follow adult model of sentence when needed** * **Join in with opportunities for specific language development as needed, depending on stage of development ie games involving verbs, nouns, adjectives etc** * **Join in with conversations with adults and other children at activities and during snack/lunchtime etc**   **In summary through interactions provision and modelling children can learn to confidently do the following knowing they will be valued and listened to:**   * **Communicate their needs and wants using gesture, action or speech** * **Make links between gestures and words, including body language and facial expression** * **Question** * **Argue** * **Reason** * **Imagine** * **Discuss** * **Initiate conversation** * **Turn-take in conversation** * **Respond to simple instructions** * **Give instructions** * **Relate experiences** * **Retell stories and rhymes** * **Give explanations** | **ADULTS**  **LISTENING & ATTENTION**  **Adults strive to provide a fantastic role model for children by demonstrating how to actively engage in listening to another person and valuing what that person is saying.**   * **Actively listen to children with interest, making eye contact, giving full attention, getting down to child’s level, encouraging children in what they have to say by smiling, nodding etc.** * **Respond appropriately joining in with conversation and child’s/childrens’ interests and moving their thinking and ideas on by commenting and questioning, sensitively allowing child/children to have thinking and response time.** * **Model correct use of language when repeating back to children what has been said and in general.** * **Extend children’s vocabulary in daily interactions** * **Provide lots of opportunities to share stories and rhymes using props and visuals and an engaging interesting voice.** * **Have a playful fun approach to language making up nonsense rhymes etc** * **Provide lots of opportunities for stories/words and phrases in different languages to ensure EAL children feel their voice and language is valued by the group.** * **Play listening games such as Simon says/ Hide the musical instrument in the box, or behind the screen.** * **Take children on listening walks to park and allotment or Old Orchard.** * **Use techniques such as clapping, speaking in a quiet and louder voice etc to gain attention and help with whole class behaviour management** * **Use praise saying ‘ good listening’ ‘Aren’t you being great listeners’ etc** * **Plan activities and interventions following advice from Speech and Language service** * **Act as a scribe for ‘Helicopter Stories’ – sensitively and effectively making comments and asking questions**   **UNDERSTANDING**   * **Limit use of language where appropriate and speak in a clear voice** * **Use mime and gesture** * **Use child’s/children’s name/s** * **Use repetitive language to convey meaning** * **Use lots of visuals including visual timetable etc so children have cues to help them understand meaning** * **Praise children for what they have understood and how they have responded eg to instructions.** * **Share lots of rhymes and stories as well fiction and non-fiction texts.** * **Use Blank language scheme as appropriate to gauge levels of understanding and pitch questioning appropriately** * **Use Core book texts in a variety of ways to help children really get to know stories and patterns of language**   **SPEAKING**  **We aim to support all children at Homerton to become confident at communicating either using speech or other methods of communication to express their wants and needs. We aim to extend their communication skills as they develop the ability to express their feelings and ideas.**   * **Provide symbols to support children to express their feelings or needs** * **Build vocabulary through visuals and language choices ‘apple or banana?’ etc.** * **Use Makaton / BSL as another way of promoting communication.** * **Assess children regularly and pass on any concerns to SENCO and SALT** * **Ensure targeted activities are put in place for children needing specific speech and language development – acting on advice from SALT.** * **Promote different languages within class so EAL children feel valued and able to share their languages.** * **Use a clear voice and intonation to model language** * **Promote conversation by listening to children attentively, encouraging and valuing what is being said building on this to have a conversation and extend their ideas and thinking.** * **Promote talking through appropriate use of direct questions eg**   **‘What did you do at the weekend?’ ‘What did you see at the**  **allotment?’ etc**   * **Ask questions and make comments in an open way to promote language and thinking… ‘I wonder why…’ ‘What do you think will happen if…’etc** * **Model language for children at an appropriate level supporting them to also ask others for things eg ‘Can I have a turn after you please?’ Or to express feelings ‘Stop I don’t like you doing…’** * **Have fun playing with sounds, letters, rhymes etc** * **Use snack pictures, books, photos etc to promote conversation** * **Share with parents’ children’s conversations, achievements and experiences, both at home and school, valuing the key role parents play in language development.** * **Encourage turn taking in conversation between children.** * **Reflect back to children their likely feelings and emotions encouraging them to articulate them themselves eg ‘I can see you look a little sad can you tell me what is making you feel that way?’** * **Extend and develop children’s vocabulary through everyday interaction and specific games and activities.** * **Praise children’s language eg ‘Good talking’ or ‘I like the way you asked for that’.** * **Enhance areas of the classroom to promote language eg roleplay areas, interactive displays, small world play etc.** * **Encourage children to tell and then act out their own stories and imaginative play using their developing language using Helicopter Stories.** * **Record children’s communication style and stage of development in Special Books and Planning in the Moment.** * **Use EAL scale to assess children’s levels of English if it is not their first language.** |

**Reviewed January 2025**

**Next Review January 2028**