Tachbrook Nursery School Communication, Language & Vocabulary Policy

'Happy, healthy & high expectations'
Reviewed: 2024

Communication, Language & Vocabulary Policy

At Tachbrook Nursery, we understand the critical role that communication, language, and vocabulary development play in children's overall learning and future success. This policy outlines our commitment to creating a language-rich environment that fosters effective communication, promotes language acquisition, and supports vocabulary expansion. By implementing this policy, we aim to provide every child with the necessary skills and opportunities to express themselves, understand others, and engage actively in their learning journey.

Aims:

1. **Language-Rich Environment:**

a. We will create an environment that is rich in language and literacy experiences, including print-rich displays, books, storytelling, and engaging resources that stimulate children's interest and curiosity.

b. We will provide a variety of language-rich opportunities, such as conversations, discussions, songs, rhymes, games, activities' and experiences to encourage language development and vocabulary expansion across all areas of the curriculum.

2. **Communication and Language Development:**

a. We will foster a supportive and nurturing environment that encourages children to communicate effectively and express themselves confidently.

b. We will promote active listening skills among children and staff members, emphasising the importance of respecting and valuing each other's contributions in communication.

3. **Vocabulary Expansion:**

a. We will provide a wide range of experiences, activities, and resources to enrich children's vocabulary across the curriculum and children's interests, including everyday words, subject-specific vocabulary, and concepts.

b. We will incorporate vocabulary-building strategies such as explicit teaching, word exploration, and contextual usage to deepen children's understanding and usage of language.

4. **Communication Strategies:**

a. We will model effective communication strategies, including clear and concise language, appropriate tone, active listening, for children with SEN and delayed language this will include Makaton and visuals to enhance children's communication skills and understanding.

b. We will provide opportunities for children to practice and refine their communication skills in a variety of contexts, such as group discussions, small groups, circle time, role play, experiments, storytelling and specific language groups such as Bucket and Sparkle time.

5. **Multilingualism and Cultural Diversity:**

a. We will embrace and celebrate the multilingualism and cultural diversity present in our learning community, recognising the importance of supporting children who speak languages other than English.

b. We will provide resources, materials, and support that respect and value children's home languages and cultures, fostering a sense of belonging and cultural pride.

6. **Partnership with Families:**

a. We will actively involve families in supporting children's communication, language, and vocabulary development by sharing information, resources, reports and strategies.

b. We will establish regular communication channels to discuss children's progress, exchange ideas, and seek input from families regarding their child's language development.

7. **Staff Training and Development:**

a. We will provide ongoing training and professional development opportunities for staff members to enhance their knowledge and understanding of effective strategies for communication, language, and vocabulary development in early years.

b. We will encourage staff members to reflect on their own practices and language use, ensuring they model language skills effectively and create an inclusive environment for diverse learners.

We want each child to leave the nursery as an effective communicator. Language and thought are interdependent processes. Well-developed skills in **speaking, listening** and **understanding** are essential to children's learning in **all areas of the curriculum.** We cannot overestimate the importance of this aspect of the curriculum.

How our curriculum is implemented

Children's learning is linked to our curriculum progression map. This maps out progress children should make during their time at Tachbrook. Half termly learning objectives are linked to individual learning activities which all children are able to access.

Knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes

We want each child to develop the following:

Knowledge & Understanding

- To listen to instructions, rhymes, poems and stories
- Know they will be listened to
- To listen with increasing attention and recall
- Take part in a variety of conversations
- To pay attention to activities of their own choice
- To use simple greetings
- To know language, signs and visuals can be used as a way to communicate and get what they want
- To develop a wide vocabulary
- To know and follow simple nursery routines
- To understand and follow simple instructions
- To know words are powerful; they can hurt and heal
- To know how to listen carefully in conversation, how to take turns, not to interrupt

Skills
We want each child to be able to:

- Listen to others, in a range of situations and respond appropriately
- Follow instructions
- Communicate with adults and peers in a range of situations
- Speak in front of others in small and large groups
- Develop a wide vocabulary that reflects their interests and things they do
- Expand their vocabulary and be curious to learn whet new words mean
- Take part in word play - rhymes, puns, jokes
- Initiate conversations
- Recount experiences, discuss, ask questions, give explanations, negotiate, discuss, express emotions and intentions
- To enjoy having conversations

Attitudes
We want each child to feel:

- Confident
- Secure
- Curious
- Listened to

How we promote this Development

Organisation of space and time inside and in the garden

- Arrange furniture to provide for different sized groups- pairs (side by side and opposite), fours, sixes etc. for different activities. The size and arrangement of the groupings will affect the type of talk that can take place. Smaller groups will be more intimate but larger groups at the workshop, for instance, can lead to organisational talk about sharing the pens or reaching the scissors.

- Provide warm, cosy, semi-private corners with chairs, cushions and carpets. This provides opportunities for relaxed conversation away from possible interruptions in the main teaching areas.

- Posters, displays, artefacts, puppets etc will help to stimulate talk, as will photos of familiar and unfamiliar places, shared events in the life of the nursery, present and past pupils.

- Story bags and props encourage children to use talk as they re-tell and invent stories.

- Role play areas - home corner, shop, office, hospital, fire station, aeroplane, vets etc. - will encourage children to use talk to plan, invent, develop plots, allot roles, control the group, devise rules, make decisions, use role-specific vocabulary, and recall book

language.

- Artists in Residence help children to explore, retell, invent new endings, act out different characters, change the ending, and make up songs and rhymes.
- Vocabulary; when teaching every activity staff should consider subject specific words they may use when teaching and model them. For example when cooking staff may use and models words such as; mix, stir, measure, knead. When constructing; dismantle, secure, angle- even if children might not have heard words before it is important they are exposed to words.
- For children with special educational and delayed language needs staff should consider using Makaton, visual schedules, and visuals to help them develop a wealth of vocabulary as well.

- Time - it is important to provide children with long stretches of uninterrupted time if they are to **sustain** talk. We need to plan activities that can be developed over a period of days and weeks so that children can return to familiar topics, themes and practise new ideas and skills and so consolidate knowledge
- Groups. We organise different groups for different purposes. Circle Time helps children to learn to talk in groups, explore feelings, and have ideas and opinions. Children are grouped into appropriate circle time groups, less experienced children may be learning skills needed to be in the group. Each group is led by a member of staff. Quite a formal ritual underpins the management of the group. This is explained to all children. The groups give all children a chance (if they wish) to speak in a group about their feelings and thoughts on a range of topics that directly affect their daily lives. **Story groups** are arranged so that new children will be in very small groups. The **leavers group** provides an opportunity to talk through leaving nursery and starting primary school.

- Lunch time is another occasion that encourages group conversation. Adults should ensure all children have a chance to contribute to the talk. Children are arranged over four tables with one member of staff per table.

Role of Adult

As well as ensuring that all the above happens, staff should

- Be good role models for language, modelling clear and specific use of language
- Be excellent listeners, remembering to give plenty of time for children to respond (give a child at least 30 seconds to respond)
- Be careful not to talk for the children
- Ensure managerial talk is kept to a minimum
- Listen to children and give them plenty of time to talk
- Using open ended questions (e.g. "What did you do this morning?" rather than "What did you make?") will stimulate a free flowing conversation. There will be occasions when it is necessary to use closed questions - to establish what a child means or what she/he knows or when supporting a child to develop language e.g. "Apple or carrot?" Suit the question to the purpose
- Provide open ended commentary on what children are doing (particularly helpful for children who are learning English, reluctant speakers and those with expressive

language difficulties) e.g. " You are rolling that clay out into a very long shape"

- Model the range of talk we want from the children -simple naming, introducing new and advanced vocabulary, thinking out loud, wondering, questioning, speculating,
- Act as a model of listening to others
- Model an appropriate manner of talk that is respectful, courteous, never shouting, swearing etc.
- Sometimes children may be unclear and ambiguous in what they say, so make sure to understand them before responding
- Take what children say as a basis for reply and respond at or just beyond their ability to comprehend
- Ensure noise levels allow children to hear each other. Children should not be allowed to shout unchallenged. They should be taught to wait before speaking to someone if that person is already talking to someone else. We should teach them how to interrupt if what they have to say is very urgent e.g. "Excuse me but...." or "I'm sorry to interrupt"

Curriculum and Planning

Many of the points mentioned above will be planned for in the long term through our choice of furniture, room lay-out and equipment purchases. They will be permanent features of our daily work through how we deploy staff and organise time.

- The Curriculum Progression map sets out what we want all children to learn during their time at nursery. It is planned progressively over each half term, building on children's knowledge, understanding and skills.
- For every curriculum area subject specific vocabulary and key questions are linked to the half term theme.
- Staff should plan, use and model subject specific vocabulary and questions for every activity they teach across all areas of the curriculum.
- For many children talk - i.e. explaining to others- will be the primary way they communicate their knowledge.
- We also need to plan for interesting, shared experiences, trips, activities, events that children (and adults) will **want** to talk about
- We need to plan for jokes, puns, word play and reflections on the meanings of words and the different feelings and memories they can evoke (the power of language).

Equal Opportunities

Special Educational Needs and Language

Specific difficulties with communication & Language is a very common special need amongst nursery aged children and are frequently a feature of other learning needs.

All staff are skilled when talking with children and therefore should easily pick up on concerns around a child's language development. Concerns should be raised with the SENDCo and with permission from the parent may need to be referred to a speech and language therapist.

We have staff who are trained in language groups including Bucket Time, Sparkle Time, Intensive Interactions, Makaton and Visual schedules. When appropriate staff will adapt

teaching to support individual children's learning. Visual schedules are powerful tools for communicating with all children and are used frequently throughout the school at story time, the toilet routine, washing hands, following recipe cards and many other activities.

For some children it may be appropriate to make more detailed observations of their language development if we have concerns.

Gender

We must think carefully about our responses and interactions with all children. Avoid stereotyping e.g. don't refer collectively to "The girls" and make general statements about them. Think rather about individuals and name them. Don't for example say "I need a strong boy to help me."

We will need to monitor gender use of areas as well as participation in conversation. If necessary we shall adjust the groupings to ensure that one sex is not dominating the type of talk taking place.

Children with English as an Additional Language (EAL)

We have a wealth of children who speak a wide variety of different language(s) other than English at home. We do not normally have one predominant home language. There can be roughly 15 home languages spoken at any one time. This is a positive asset for those children and for the linguistic understanding of monolingual children. We celebrate this diversity. It helps all children to understand the symbolic nature of language. It generates talk about talk. It helps children reflect.

Even if we ourselves cannot speak the children's home languages and there are no children who share a language, we can still show respect and provide opportunities for children to hear and develop in their own tongues -

- Ask parents to record songs, rhymes, stories
- Re-assure parents that when their children become more able in English they often go through a phase of not speaking in their first language. This is perfectly normal and will not mean a child fails to develop in their own language as long as the parent still uses it with them.

We should not put pressure on pupils to speak in English. We need to ensure that they are able to participate in a range of activity/experiences without speaking. The self service storage of much of our provision is certainly very helpful here. Pictures, artefacts, magnet board figures and local visits will encourage the development of simple English vocabulary. Adults should provide simple vocabulary - initially nouns, verbs, adverbs - as they play with children in all areas, matching talk to children's actions.

Role play props, dressing up clothes, telephones etc. enable children to try out English in different play situations.

Plan story experiences with care. Choose simple repetitive texts such as "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do you see?". Multilingual and bilingual learners may be helped by joining

the smaller story groups and on the other days having the story read to them before story time to prepare them for what is to come.

Conclusion

By implementing this Early Years Communication, Language, and Vocabulary Policy, we are committed to creating a language-rich environment that supports children's communication skills, language development, and vocabulary expansion. We recognise that effective communication and a rich vocabulary are essential for children's overall learning and future success. Through the provision of engaging experiences, partnerships with families, staff development, and a focus on cultural diversity, we aim to empower each child with the necessary language skills to express themselves, understand others, and thrive in their educational journey.