

Communication and language

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.

How communication and language can be observed in our setting:

We are very proud to hold 'Communication Friendly Setting' status.

As children's vocabulary and use of spoken language increases practitioners play alongside children, commentating on what they are doing. To build children's understanding of the spoken word they use simple language, emphasise key words and information, repeat words and phrases often. When they are talking to children, they gain their attention first by calling their name and looking directly at them.

In the setting there are puzzles, manipulative toys, building blocks, small world play resources, a sand area, hats, costumes, bags for role play and a good supply of books. We are aware that different children are interested in different things and take time to have conversations with children in a variety of play situations. We talk with the children about what they are doing and use open ended questions such as, 'How do you think we could...', 'Can you show me how to...', 'What might happen if...'.

We give regular support to children who struggle to understand, acknowledging their efforts, adapting the level language we use, and modelling correct sentences. There are visual signs and symbols around the room and the storage boxes are all labelled with pictures of what should be in there.

Favourite stories are read and re-read, and the children love joining in and saying what is going to happen next in a story. At these times we challenge the children's thinking and understanding by asking simple questions such as, 'What happens next?' and 'Why do you think that?'.

We support children through our Preschool Start Programme and Bucket Time sessions, which are delivered in small groups to give children the best possible opportunity to learn and develop.

The wide variety of resources in the setting gives children lots of opportunities to make choices and follow their interests. We are a free flow setting so children choose where to play but are expected to observe the school rules which children and staff have devised to ensure everyone's safety and comfort. Talking about these rules – which happens quite frequently – is a great opportunity to develop children's understanding as they discuss the consequences of things not being done correctly.