



## Archibald First School

### Communication and Language Statement

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**Next review due by:** September 2024 (Annually)

It is essential that children are supported to develop their language and communication skills during the Early Years. Language skills are the building blocks for developing and maintaining social relationships, play and reading and writing. Early support and intervention has the potential to prevent many later difficulties with learning, socialisation, and wellbeing in children with language difficulties.

There are many ways that we support children's speech, language, and communication skills in Early Years at Archibald First School. These can be split into three different levels of support:

1. **Universal:** this is how we support all children within the Early Years Unit to have appropriate speech, language, and communication skills through developing a robust language environment;
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.

### **Universal Support**

Our Universal offer is what most children need in order to thrive and is based on high quality interactions leading to robust language development. In order to promote robust language development, we focus on specific areas and processes in our planning:

Children are exposed to high quality language input throughout the day, through a range of contexts and interactions. These interactions can be adult to child or peer to peer interactions. Some examples include:

- Book sharing
- Junk box modelling
- Self-care routines
- Outdoor play

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. During activities, the adult 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.

This language used can be **concrete**, e.g. labelling (apple, stalk, leaf), imitating (copying 'splish splash splosh') and describing (talking about wet and dry objects, heavy, light, big, little), or it can be **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') or reasoning (getting children to wonder and to think why particular things happened. - 'why did this one sink/float?').

Children need repetition of language within and across contexts in order for the language skills to be generalised. Repetition across contexts increases learning and retention and is particularly helpful for children with difficulties learning language.

Adults will expose children to diverse language in order to develop their language skills. This will include deepening and extending the child's vocabulary by modelling nouns, action words, words about feelings, descriptive words and abstract concepts, increasing the range of sentence structures the child hears: questions, simple sentences, commands, requests, complex sentences, past, present and future, and increasing the range of purposes of the language the child hears: requesting, describing, imitating and choices but also abstract purposes like predicting, wondering, reasoning. 'I wonder' is a really powerful phrase to use with children.

Adult responses to a child's attempt to communicate should be reliable and frequent, ensuring when a child is communicating with an adult, the adult reliably notices these attempts and responds to them. It should respond to the child's intent, talking about the thing the child's interested in/focused on, following the child's lead. Even if they're unclear with what they're trying to convey, adults have to respond to what they think is the underlying intention of the action. It must also be sensitive to the child's language abilities: Use language in the child's zone of proximal development. Copy and slightly extend the language the child is using. For example, if the child says 'car', the adult can copy and extend the language: 'yes, a red car' 'a fast car' 'a big car'.

Language learning interactions are the ways in which adults in the setting talk with the children. Adults in the Unit will ensure that 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.

The adult will model and provide examples of language structures, vocabulary and purposes. The adult will provide labels for unfamiliar actions, objects or abstract concepts (feelings), use a variation of types of words, e.g. words that are used to name things (nouns), doing words (verbs), describing words (adjectives).

The adult may sometimes provide a narrative to the child for representing an activity, describing the play/everyday routine.

The adult may repeat what the child has said to consolidate the language. The adult may repeat what the child has said with extra detail or more correct language. For example, if the child says 'he ranned', the adult can say 'yes he ran'.

The adult may also repeat what the child has said and add a small amount of information. This is adding to the complexity of the sentence. For example, if a child says a word/short phrase, model the phrase back and add an additional word, e.g. if the child says 'car', the adult can reply with 'big car' or 'fast car' 'red car'.

The adult will offer choices to the child. This can be done throughout daily routines. It will help the child practice using language and links a word with an object. If the child cannot say the word, the adult should say it for them and model. For example, during snack time, the adult can offer the child a choice, 'do you want a banana or an apple?'

The adult will wait to see where the child's focus of attention is. They will join in with the child's game rather than trying to shift the child's focus. A shared focus helps the child map the meaning of language.

We have worked hard to create a 'language learning environment' with visuals used with all children and specific children to aid communication and understanding, and language learning activities planned as part of our continuous provision and targeted adult-led activities. Visuals are used alongside language to aid communication.

Visuals can support children, with and without language difficulties, to be independent. Using a visual cue can support transitions as the child can see what has just happened and what is coming next. It is important that visual cues are within the child's line of vision.

Visual Timetables as a feature in all classrooms in the Early Years Unit and can support children's understanding of routines, developing skills for anticipating what will happen next, as well as develop their understanding of time, e.g. '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 – and does not stop children talking.

Language learning opportunities are the structured opportunities that are present in the classroom to support language development. Here are some examples of how we create those opportunities during our school day:

- Snack time – making a choice of what snack they would like, talking about the snack, what it tastes like, what it looks like. You can link this back to the language wheel to consider the type of language and the variation you are using during snack time
- Using technology during circle time - encouraging children to take a photo or a video of what they have been doing. They can then chat about this during circle time. Parents may also share photographs or videos on platforms such as 'Tapestry' or 'Seesaw'. Children can then talk about what they have been doing at home.

- Tuff trays to focus on vocabulary for the topic of the term, e.g., creating a sea-creature tuff tray, autumnal tuff tray
- Role play areas to encourage children to dress up, play imaginatively and cooperate with others to develop social skills and support the development of more complex language skills
- Story telling corner/reading corner will encourage children to use it frequently. The area should be comfortable and welcoming e.g., carpets, drapes, cushions. Books should be accessible to the children – on low shelves or a book box. Books can be selected which relate to the topic of the week/term
- Dedicated play areas outside, e.g. sand/water/messy play space, climbing equipment, role and small world play, mark making and writing, mud kitchen. These areas can focus on a range of vocabulary: 'mixing' 'stirring' 'emptying' 'filling' 'shaking' 'pouring' 'baking' 'folding'
- Problem solving area, e.g. construction, jigsaws, may focus on abstract language such as predicting, 'I think this piece is going to fit in here'

Using books, stories and nursery rhymes will help children learn new words. Books and nursery rhymes use the same repetitive language. This makes learning new words and ideas easier for children. You don't just have to read the words of the books, you can talk about the pictures, use different voices, facial expressions and stress the key words.

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

- Helicopter stories
- Encourage children to tell us their story and act it out
- Use a word in writing, in play – taken from stories
- Children are asked questions, join in with repetitions, etc.
- Story Sacks

Educational technology can help to support language and communication if it is used effectively.

- We take pictures and/or videos of their learning, in school and on visits, which can be shared on the interactive whiteboard during circle time to allow children to share what they have been doing and reflect on their learning. We also take photos to share with parents on Tapestry to enable them to talk about the school day with their children. Parents can do the same and upload photos from home for the children to share with us at school.
- We use Talking Tins for children to listen to or record with.

- We use remote controlled cars and beebots. The children have to follow instructions to go to different pictures on the mat e.g. can they get the car to go to the right letter or a letter a word begins with

### **Targeted Support**

For some children, the universal offer is not enough to support their language development and we need to target intervention. We can use LA screening materials and NHS S&L checklists to determine if children need targeted support. This support can take many different forms.

### **Targeted Resources**

- Teddy Talk
- Building Early Sentences Therapy (BEST)  
*<https://research.ncl.ac.uk/lively/interventions/best/>*  
*<https://research.ncl.ac.uk/best>*

- Derbyshire Language Scheme (DLS)  
*<https://research.ncl.ac.uk/lively/interventions/dls/>*  
*<https://www.derbyshire-language-scheme.co.uk/>*

- Colourful Semantics
- Language for Thinking (Parsons, & Branagan, 2017)
- Narrative Therapy
- Word Aware (Parsons, & Branagan, 2014)
- Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) (Sibieta et al, 2016)
- Newcastle Intervention for Phonological Awareness (NIPA) (Stringer, 2019).

### **Social Communication Resources**

- Lego Therapy (LeGoff, 2004).

### **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, Educational Psychology and Newcastle University Children's Speech Clinic.

We work closely with professionals during any assessment of need and will then deliver any intervention required.

### **CPD**

All staff in the Early Years Unit have access to a range of CPD.

This has included:

- Kirstie Page CPD:
- 'Interaction and Language Enrichment'
- 'Embedding SLC Interventions'
- 'Supporting Early Communication Skills'
- 'Facilitating Auditory and Receptive Language Skills'
- 'Skills for Phonic Readiness'
- 'Identifying Barriers to Phonic Learning and Progression'
- Lively CPD:
- 'Promoting Robust Language Development for Children in the Early Years'
- 'Using Technology to Support Language and Communication in the Early Years'
- 'Phonological Awareness – What Comes Before Letters and Sounds? Getting Children Ready for Phonics'
- 'Language Disorder in the Bilingual Context'
- Upskilling from Paediatric Speech and Language
- Upskilling from the LA SEND Outreach Service

### **Engaging Parents**

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. Parents to have play time with their children. The parents can 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 2023-24**

- 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.