

Points to support successful communication with children:

- Enjoy using language and sounds with children. Be playful and do not worry about making silly sounds or nonsense rhymes and encouraging children to join in.
- Use songs and rhymes as a learning tool missing out words for children to fill in.
- Use a full range of expression. Speak in a lively, animated voice and use gestures and facial expressions to support your words. You will be giving more clues to children about what your words mean which can be very useful if a child is struggling to understand.
- Make sure you have a child's attention. Get down to their level, look at them and call them by their name before speaking with them.
- Give children plenty of time to respond. Sometimes a pause is the most effective way to support a child's communication.
- When a child initiates a conversation use it as an opportunity to scaffold their language. Show you are interested and use questions and comments to keep the conversation going.
- Some questions work better than others. None of us like to be quizzed and some questions only require one word answers. Instead, enjoy real conversations over meaningful contexts with children that challenge their thinking. Too many questions can block the flow of conversation. Instead try wondering some things out loud, 'I wonder how that worked?'. An alternative to questions is to describe what you or a child are doing as it happens, 'I'm going to put this inside the bucket. Will it fit I wonder? Oh yes, it does'.
- Praise children's efforts. When there are errors recast children's sentences, for example, Child: 'mummy comed back' Adult: 'Yes, your mummy will come back soon'.
- Extend children's sentences by one or two words, for example, Child: 'put it there', Adult: 'put it on the coat peg?'
- Talk to the child as one would talk to an adult – this means that both participants in the conversation have equal rights to initiate, select topics or even close the conversation.
- Show real interest in what the child has to say – the greatest respect we can show children is to respond seriously to what they have to say. This requires practitioners to reflect on their own assumptions about children from homes or cultures different from their own, and to avoid negative stereotypes.
- Maximise the opportunities for children to use language purposefully – engaging in interesting and meaningful activities is always likely to lead to richer language than might occur in artificially created situations.
- Plan specifically for communication and language in all areas across your setting, including outdoors, between adults and children and between children and children

Help to develop children’s oral language skills by using ‘talk’ which is:

- Child centred – focuses on what the child is doing or saying;
- Relevant and related to what the child says;
- Embedded in familiar routine, e.g. hanging up coats, having a snack;
- Supports verbal interaction between peers, e.g. redirects adult initiated interactions;
- Makes use of focused contrasts, e.g. *‘one car’, ‘two cars’*;
- Asks open questions or invites conversation e.g. *‘That’s strange, why did that happen? Tell me about your picture’*;
- Expands on child utterances, e.g. *‘boy fall in water’ ‘Yes, he’s fallen in the water and he’s getting very wet’*;
- Recasts sentences, e.g. *‘doll broke’, ‘yes, the doll is broken’*;
- Models language structures;
- Uses event casting, e.g. *‘Now we are going to bake some biscuits.’* This can be a good alternative to questions; try just talking about what you are doing or what is happening, pause and give children time to join in.