

Communication and Language– Reception Curriculum Framework

Educational Purpose

Children develop the attention, understanding, vocabulary and spoken language needed to communicate, think, learn and build relationships. Through responsive interaction, rich stories and poetry, purposeful conversation and shared thinking, children learn to understand others, express ideas, connect thoughts, explain and participate increasingly fully in conversation.

Golden Threads

Listening & Understanding	Conversation & Interaction	Vocabulary & Expression
Children develop attention and understanding so they can make sense of what they hear and respond.	Children develop reciprocal communication, learning to listen, respond and contribute.	Children develop vocabulary and spoken language to communicate needs, experiences, ideas and thinking.

Curriculum Progression

	Typical Starting Points	DP1 Engage & Communicate	DP2 Develop & Connect	DP3 Apply & Extend	End of Reception Statutory ELGs
Listening, Attention & Understanding – Knowledge	Children may: - attend to people, activities or experiences that interest them. - listen to familiar stories, songs or rhymes for varying lengths of time. - understand familiar words, phrases and everyday routines. - follow some simple instructions in familiar contexts. - respond through words, actions, gesture or other communication. - need support to share attention or interact.	I know... - listening helps me understand. - other people have things to say. - stories tell us about people and events.	I know... - listening helps me find out more. - stories have characters and events. - questions help us find out more.	I know... - listening helps me understand ideas. - stories have events I can connect. - people can have different ideas. - asking a question can help clarify something I don't understand.	Listening, Attention and Understanding - Listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments and actions when being read to and during whole-class discussions and small-group interactions. - Make comments about what they have heard and ask questions to clarify their understanding. - Hold conversation when engaged in back-and-forth exchanges with their teacher and peers. Speaking - Participate in small-group, class and one-to-one discussions, offering their own ideas, using recently introduced vocabulary. - Offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems when appropriate. - Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions, with modelling and support from their teacher.
Listening, Attention & Understanding – Skills	- follow some simple instructions in familiar contexts. - respond through words, actions, gesture or other communication. - need support to share attention or interact. Children learning English as an additional language may communicate and understand at different levels in English and home language(s). Emerging English should not be assumed to reflect limited understanding, language development or thinking.	- Listen during a short shared experience, returning attention with adult support when needed. - Follow a familiar instruction involving one action; begin to follow instructions containing two pieces of information when supported by context. - Respond to what they hear through words, actions, gesture or another appropriate form of communication. - Engage with a familiar story, showing understanding of a character, event or something that interests them. - Respond to another person during an interaction and begin to contribute something of their own.	- Listen during a shared experience or conversation, maintaining or returning attention with less adult support. - Follow an instruction containing two pieces of information in familiar situations. - Respond to questions and comments about what they have heard, showing relevant understanding. - Talk about characters or events in a familiar story and begin to make simple predictions or connections. - Take part in a short exchange, listening and responding to another person.	- Listen during shared experiences and conversations, responding to what they hear and returning attention when it shifts. - Follow a longer instruction or sequence of familiar actions, asking for clarification when needed. - Respond to questions, comments and ideas, showing understanding and adding something relevant. - Talk about events and characters in familiar stories, making predictions or connections and explaining an idea about what they have heard. - Listen to another person's contribution and respond in a way that keeps an interaction going.	
Speaking – Knowledge	Children may: - communicate wants, needs, interests and experiences in different ways. - use words, phrases or sentences of varying length and complexity. - join familiar songs, rhymes or repeated story language.	I know... - words help me share ideas. - new words help me say more.	I know... - new words help me explain. - adding detail helps another person understand what I mean. - ideas can be connected when we talk.	I know... - details help other people understand. - words help me describe and explain. - ideas can be connected to give a fuller explanation. - different words help me express ideas, experiences and feelings more precisely.	
Speaking – Skills	- talk about things important or interesting to them. - interact with familiar adults or children. - have speech understood to varying degrees by different listeners.	- Use words, phrases or sentences, including home language where appropriate, to communicate needs, interests, experiences and ideas. - Respond to another person's communication, using words or phrases to add something where they can. - Use some new words heard through stories, play and curriculum experiences, with modelling and prompting where helpful. - Talk about something familiar, such as a person, object, experience or event. - Add information to what they say, supported by adult modelling and sentence stems where helpful.	- Share experiences, ideas and thinking, adding relevant information to help another person understand. - Connect ideas using language such as and, because or then, with modelling and sentence stems where helpful. - Use newly learned vocabulary in relevant situations, supported by adults where needed. - Talk about a familiar experience or event, linking two or more ideas about what happened. - Take part in a short conversation, responding to another person and beginning to ask relevant questions or add comments and ideas. - Begin to explain an idea or give a simple reason, using adult modelling or sentence stems where helpful.	- Share ideas and experiences with relevant detail, helping another person understand what they mean. - Connect ideas using language such as and, then, because and so, and other language encountered. - Use newly learned vocabulary in different relevant contexts, drawing on stories, conversations and wider curriculum experiences. - Talk about experiences or events, connecting ideas and adding relevant details about what happened. - Take part in a conversation over several exchanges, listening, responding and adding relevant ideas, comments or questions. - Explain an idea or simple reason so another person can understand their thinking.	
Vocabulary	Possible starting experiences, not entry expectations.	listen – hear and think talk – share words and ideas story – something told to us	question – something we want answered explain – help someone understand detail – something more you tell predict – say what might happen	conversation – people talking and listening describe – tell what something is like reason – why you think something	

Communication and Language Entitlement

- Communication and language is developed throughout the Reception day. Children experience a language-rich environment in which adults deliberately create time for listening, conversation, vocabulary development, storytelling, explanation and the sharing of ideas.
- High-quality adult-child interaction using the ShREC approach is embedded throughout provision, routines and planned learning.
- Children experience daily high-quality stories, with opportunities to enjoy, revisit and talk about texts. Stories are also protected as experiences for pleasure and are not always assessment opportunities.
- Poetry Basket, songs and rhymes provide regular experience of rhythm, repeated language, expressive language and performance.
- Talk Pictures and other visual stimuli encourage noticing, describing, wondering and sustained talk.
- Sentence stems are used across the curriculum to model and scaffold increasingly developed spoken language, explanation and reasoning.
- Useful vocabulary is explicitly taught, modelled and revisited through meaningful stories, play and curriculum contexts.
- Earlier in Reception, selected stories are revisited in greater depth using the Talk Through Stories approach to develop vocabulary, comprehension and spoken language.
- Helicopter Stories gives children opportunities to contribute their own ideas and narratives and participate in story acting.
- Drawing Club later in Reception provides further opportunities for imaginative talk, vocabulary, storytelling and oral composition.
- Play, partner talk, small groups and everyday conversation ensure meaningful opportunities to communicate are available to every child.

Practitioner Guidance

COMMENT MORE, QUESTION LESS

Notice • Describe • Wonder

Adults use comments, observations and thoughtful wondering to model rich language and invite conversation, rather than relying on repeated questions.

STAY WITH THE THINKING

Sustained Shared Thinking

Adults notice opportunities to think alongside children, staying with an idea, problem or possibility. They listen, respond, wonder and build on children's ideas, giving conversations time to develop.

ShREC is the interaction foundation. Share attention, Respond, Expand and Conversation should inform everyday interaction. Adults sensitively join children's interests, model language and extend contributions.

Give every child opportunities to communicate. Whole-class responses alone provide a limited picture. Use provision, partner talk, small groups, stories and individual interaction so quieter children and children whose communication is emerging can contribute.

Model rather than demand language. Recast and expand children's language naturally. Sentence stems are scaffolds, not scripts children must reproduce.

Teach vocabulary deliberately and revisit it. Select useful words, explain them simply, model them in context and create repeated opportunities to hear and use them. The vocabulary row is not the limit of vocabulary teaching.

Value home languages. Recognise communication in children's home language(s). Use visuals, gesture, objects, repetition, routines and modelling to support English. Emerging English must not be assumed to reflect limited understanding or thinking.

Allow different ways to show understanding. Children may communicate through speech, action, gesture, play, drawing or other appropriate means. Eye contact, sitting still and whole-class speaking are not measures of language competence.

Identify speech and language needs carefully. Use the Wiltshire Speech Tracker on entry alongside practitioner observation and family information. Distinguish English acquisition from a possible underlying speech, language or communication need.

Targeted support complements the curriculum. The Reception TA responsible for speech and language supports identified children with specific targets. Relevant strategies are shared with practitioners, progress is reviewed and specialist advice/referral sought where appropriate.

Communication and Language is everyone's responsibility. Targeted intervention does not replace high-quality interaction and language teaching throughout the Reception day.

Development Points are not termly stages or ceilings. Children may demonstrate aspects from different DPs simultaneously. The statements identify essential progression; practitioners extend vocabulary, conversation, ideas and language whenever children are ready.

Vocabulary Principle

Vocabulary is cumulative and limited to essential child-facing words within this framework. Definitions are five words or fewer. This does not represent all vocabulary practitioners explicitly teach through stories and the wider curriculum.

Assessment

Assessment should arise primarily through observation, interaction and children's communication across everyday contexts, rather than through isolated tasks.

Practitioners should notice what children increasingly know and can do over time, including how they:

- listen and attend in different situations;
- understand and respond to what they hear;
- follow increasingly complex instructions;
- respond to stories, including recalling, predicting and connecting events;
- ask and answer questions;
- participate in back-and-forth conversation;
- use and apply an increasingly rich vocabulary;
- develop and connect ideas through talk;
- explain experiences, ideas and thinking with increasing clarity.

Assessment should reflect children's communication across different contexts and with different people. A child's willingness to speak in a whole-class situation should not be used as a measure of their overall Communication and Language development.

Practitioners should distinguish between what a child understands, what they can communicate, and the particular language or mode through which they communicate it. Home language, gesture, action, play and other forms of communication may provide important evidence of children's understanding.

Transition to Key Stage 1

By the end of Reception, children are increasingly able to listen attentively, follow instructions involving several ideas or actions, and respond appropriately to adults and peers. They use a widening vocabulary and increasingly well-formed sentences to explain their ideas, recount experiences, ask questions and take part in sustained back-and-forth conversations. These foundations support the Key Stage 1 English curriculum, where pupils listen and respond in different situations, participate actively in discussion, articulate and justify answers, give clear descriptions and explanations, and speak audibly and fluently. Transition information should identify each child's strengths and next steps in listening, understanding, vocabulary, sentence development and confidence in communicating, including any strategies or adaptations that enable them to participate successfully.