

## The Communication Friendly Early Years Setting

### Enabling Environment

As a communication-friendly early years setting our environment:

- Have displays that children want to talk about. If the child has the opportunity to help with a display they are more likely to talk about it;
- Keeps play materials and resources in boxes that are labelled with pictures or symbols;
- Has a well-planned environment where it is clear to the child what happens there, e.g. there is a painting area with a sink close by. Defines area using play-mats and moveable furniture. Children will feel more confident and secure, and are therefore more likely to talk, if the environment makes sense to them. It may be necessary to put the same activity out several times before the child will have the confidence to take part and talk about it;
- Have some quiet areas where children can talk to each other and form relationships. Often children feel more secure in small, well-defined areas. This might be the book corner or even a temporary den built with the help of the children;
- Has quiet, comfortable areas where adults can devote time to bonding with and being close to the children;
- Has some areas that do not have much on display on the wall so that the children can concentrate on the adult talking to them, rather than having their attention taken with what they are looking at on the wall;
- Has a quiet area for storytelling and reading/looking at visual materials. Soft cushions and furnishings will help give the message that this is a comfortable area for sitting and sharing stories;
- Ensures that there is no continuous background noise such as a radio/music. Children who find communication difficult can find it hard to tell the difference between the sounds that make up language and other sounds around them. Even as adults we can find the noise from a TV distracting when we are trying to talk. For

children who are still developing their attention skills it is even more difficult to cut out these extra noises;

- Has play equipment in the outside environment as well as the inside environment that encourages shared play. Often children will engage with an activity purely because it is outside. We plan opportunities for children to communicate. This will encourage verbal interactions;
- Ensures the physical environment reflects the culture and ethnicity of the children. Parents may be happy to offer materials and objects from home;
- Have adults that are flexible with their plans and responsive to spontaneous events, e.g. supporting children to talk about the snow that they see falling.

### **Learning and Development Opportunities**

As a communication-friendly early years setting we are:

- Making sure resources are stimulating and at the appropriate developmental level for the child. Children are more likely to comment and ask questions when resources are exciting to them;
- Making opportunities to relook at favourite books. Children enjoy becoming familiar with the language and repeating familiar stories;
- Planning to both sing and say songs/rhymes with the children either as a planned group activity or spontaneously when children choose to;
- Enhancing stories and songs with props such as objects or puppets and supporting them with actions. It will help to focus child's attention which is essential for the development of language and aid comprehension;
- Checking that children have understood instructions. The developmental level of the individual child's understanding will vary day to day – practitioners will have to simplify their language and use gestures, signs or symbols to help the child struggling to understand;

- Thinking about the vocabulary that might be appropriate. Plan to introduce new vocabulary by giving the child opportunities to use every one of their senses to investigate, e.g. if you want to talk about exotic or unusual fruits then pupils need the opportunity to see, touch, smell and taste them. We will ensure there are opportunities for adults to use new words regularly so that they will become part of the child's vocabulary. It is not enough to just name them once, children need to hear the new words lots of times and in different situations;
- Thinking carefully when making plans about how the adult will support the activity or play. It helps when the adult models the activity and talks about it. This will demonstrate the appropriate language for the activity as well as giving the children ideas without directing them;
- Showing children how spoken language and written language are linked. Adults will offer to write a caption/sentence by the child's drawings or work. Adults will also offer to scribe what the child says and read it back to them. This models both the process of reading, and that of writing.

### **Positive Relationships**

A communication-friendly early years setting means that everyone:

- Encourages children to talk about their own interests at appropriate times. By acknowledging all efforts at communication it shows that the child is valued. This will help build a positive relationship and support the child's independence and self-confidence; practitioners will use their knowledge of the child and sensitive observation to interpret the child's wants, needs and feelings and reflect these back in developmentally appropriate language ('you're happy/sad/angry/tired'; 'you think that's funny'; 'you don't like it; you want the...');
- Uses time spent on physical care with the child (such as toileting and washing hands) as an opportunity to interact with them and form a positive relationship;
- Talks to the child before carrying out physical care tasks, e.g. 'I'm going to help you put on some clean clothes';

- Supports the child in both free play and group times encouraging them to speak. This may mean playing silently alongside the child initially without asking questions or giving instructions and being very sensitive to when the child is unsettled;
- Makes some one-to-one time for the child to talk to an adult so that their turn does not necessarily take place in front of others;
- Uses positive language and behaviour with, and in front of, the child;
- Lets the child know of changes to the day's routine. This will help the child to understand what will be happening and what the expectations of them will be; a visual timetable will be used to support this;
- Encourages the child to share books/objects of interest with other pupils;
- Supports the child's language development by ensuring the child's attention is gained before giving instructions. By using the child's name first, the child is more likely to realise that he or she is being spoken to. Children may not be able to attend to what they are doing and listen to language at the same time, so it is important they can give their full attention when someone is talking to them.
- Is responsive when the child finds it difficult to use the correct speech sounds in words. To support unclear speech, the practitioner will model the correct pronunciation of the word. This means that if the child says, 'It's a dod', the adult – rather than drawing attention to the error – will say, 'That's right, it's a dog'. This is also true for when the child is using sentences and there are errors in grammar. For example, children can make errors where they apply rules of grammar across all verbs and add an -ed ending such as 'I ranned'. The adult will positively model the correct way, 'You ran very fast', but will not ask the child to repeat the correct sentence.
- Thinks carefully before asking questions. Questions can be used to extend the child's thinking and learning, or simply to test. Testing children by asking questions to which the adult already knows the answer does not help support language. Questions

that are merely testing, e.g. 'What colour is it?' or that invite simple 'yes' or 'no' answers can interrupt the flow of communication and stilt natural conversation. Children respond better to comments on their activity, e.g. 'You have made a very tall tower'. The commenting approach encourages the child to talk and keeps the child's attention on the task; gives plenty of time for children to respond. The child needs to process the adult's language, think about what they would like to say and then formulate the words. The adult will give the child extra time to respond, and not dominate the conversation and will encourage the child to talk or use an alternative way of communicating.

- Supports and helps the child to resolve disputes and problems.
- 

Awarded to: *Rudgwick Pre-school*

Dated: *13<sup>th</sup> July 2017*

Signed: *Catherine de la Bedoyere*  
*Highly Specialist Speech and Language Therapist*