

Useful Hints and Tips for Communication including, Expressive/Receptive Language Ideas

- Adults should model language and avoid correcting.
- Try to avoid asking too many questions that can be answered with a yes or no. Instead use forced alternatives e.g. 'Did you go by bus or in the car?'
- Reduce language demands and ensure tasks are differentiated so they have a low communication load.
- Give directions before, not during, an activity.
- Break activities into small manageable chunks to aid retention and increase confidence.
- Use name to cue in beforehand.
- Use visual models to help, see what steps they have to take to complete a task with clear start and finish points – white board and pen would help here. (School can supply if you request)

Additional strategies for Developing expressive

language

- Make a scrapbook of favourite or familiar things by cutting out pictures. Group them into categories, such as things to ride on, things to eat, and things to play with etc.
- Create silly pictures by mixing and matching pictures. Glue a picture of a bird on a bike and talk about what is wrong with the picture.
- Expand vocabulary. Name body parts and identify what you do with them. For example, "This is my nose. I can smell flowers with my nose." This can be done casually on a car journey or even while child is in the bath. Some pupils may need a visual support – again a simple drawing using a white board and pen would do.
- Place familiar objects in a container. The child removes the objects and tells you what it is called and how to use it. "This is a ball. It bounces. I can roll it." Use photographs of familiar people and places and retell what happened or make up a new story.

Developing receptive language

- Avoid speaking out of the blue and out of context: try to establish a background to the conversation so that the child will be cued in from the start.
- Place pupils in a position where they can pick up what is happening by watching the other children, but also where the teacher can easily keep a look out to see if they have understood.
- Say it again– give pupils time to respond and then, if necessary, repeat what you said in the same words, as rephrasing may only confuse.
- Use pictures, demonstration and gesture to help get a point across.
- Break long and complicated questions or instructions into shorter units, e.g. 'When you've coloured the stars cut them out and stick them on the black paper' becomes, 'Colour the stars. Cut them out. Then stick them onto the black paper'.

- Put the main message last. Make sure that the important parts of the message are at the end; not 'Fetch your PE bags; you'll need to take them with you to the hall
- Check for understanding by asking child to explain to you what he's been asked to do (if they are able) and support them with starting a new task. Give praise when s/he asks for an instruction to be repeated or explained.
- Be consistent with the vocabulary you use, and make sure there are visible reminders, such as wall charts of key vocabulary.
- Play the yes-no game. Ask questions such as "Are you a boy?" "Can a pig fly?" Encourage child to make up questions.

Don't try them all at once. For sustained development, I would suggest trialling one or two approaches for at least 6 weeks. Please let me know if you would like a white board or pen sending from school (they are also available in home bargains). Remember most children are visual learners and information printed can be revisited – limiting anxiety for the child. Try to encourage all family members to limit overload of language, give 7 seconds processing time and repeat exact instruction if required.