

Supporting your
child's language
and
communication at
home



LOXFORD
School Trust

A message...

Equipping children with effective communication skills results in higher levels of emotional intelligence and improvements in mental well-being. There is so much to gain from practicing these skills.

With the increased use of computers, iPad's and the like, children need to practise these face-to-face skills more than ever.

Building these skills in all age groups builds a society for empathy and emotional resilience. The more practise children get at home, the better these skills will become.

Talking and communicating is key to ensuring children are achieving well.

Key points to remember...

Talk with and listen to your child

- Give time to let them respond
- Make eye contact at their level - this will communicate your desire to hear what they have to say.
- Ask open-ended questions: "What do you think about today's rainy weather?" "Where do you think the rain goes?" "How do you think the rain helps flowers grow?" "Why is the sky so grey?"
- Talking with your child helps them to see themselves as a good communicator and motivate them to keep developing these skills.
- Help children build on their language skills. "So you are pretending to be a hungry caterpillar who wants to eat some food? What kind of food? Let's name all the things you want to eat."
- Teach your child about non-verbal communication. "Ali, do you see how Aleena is holding her hands up to cover her face? She doesn't like it when you throw the ball so hard. I know you can throw it softer so she will want to keep playing catch with you."
- Respect and recognise your child's feelings.
- Children are far more likely to share their ideas and feelings if they know they won't be judged, teased, or criticised.
- Help your child develop a "feelings" vocabulary by providing the words for their experience. "You're sad because Daddy left for work." Keep in mind that feelings are not good or bad, they just are. Sometimes parents are afraid that talking about an intense feeling will escalate it; but many times the opposite happens: When children feel

that their feelings and experiences are respected, they are often able to move on more easily.

- Read together - reading with your child teaches more than literacy and language skills. They are learning that you value their interests and choices, and that you love and enjoy being close to him.
- Narrate what you do as you go through your daily routines - this helps your child connect words with objects and actions. "I'm washing the dishes. I'm squeezing the yellow dish soap into the warm water." Talk about what you're doing as you care for your child. "Here we go into the bath. Your arms, legs, and tummy are getting all wet." Talk as you play together: "You're brushing your dolly's hair. She has long hair. Are there any tangles?"
- Encourage pretend play.
- Children often express themselves more freely when they're pretending. It may feel safer to talk about how Teddy Bear is afraid of the dark, than how the child is. Pretend play is also a chance to take on different roles and to act out what different people might say, think or do. This develops language as well as social skills like empathy.
- Make your requests clear, simple, and appropriate for your child's age and ability.
- Be a good role model.
- Your child is watching you very carefully. If you talk to others with kindness and respect, they will likely follow your lead and take on your manner and tone.

Here are the answers to some questions you may have

Can I support my child if I don't speak English well?

Yes! You can help your child to gain confidence and feel more motivated by giving them lots of praise and opportunities to practise English. It's easier for children to learn when they get encouragement at home.

You could also all learn some English together. If you are enthusiastic about learning the language, they will be too.

How can we practise English at home?

Learn little and often: regular practice really helps children to learn. Keep activities short and fun (for younger learners 3–10 minutes). However, if your child is enjoying working on their own, let them control their own activity times.

Build confidence: children are sometimes afraid of making mistakes in front of their classmates. They often feel more comfortable trying things out with their

parents. Praise them to create a sense of success and encourage them when they take 'risks.'

Focus on your child's interests: teachers prepare lessons that they hope will interest the whole class, whereas you can really focus on your child's interests. Choose materials together that your child will enjoy the most, whether dinosaurs or dancing!

How involved should parents be with their child's learning?

Parents play a vital role by giving children the courage and confidence to do their work, providing encouragement and helping them develop skills.

What types of rewards are most effective?

Rewards can sometimes produce one-time actions, rather than developing long-term study skills. It's really important to praise effort, not just results.

This means praising your child if they have kept going when they've found something hard, or found a way to solve a problem by themselves.

You could try:

Activity rewards: your child earns extra free time to do their favourite activities

Social rewards: your child earns extra quality time together with family and friends

Asking your child to think about how they would like their effort to be recognised. Their ideas may surprise you!

Will my child copy errors in my pronunciation?

No. Children can hear differences in pronunciation and their accents are influenced by lots of different things – their teachers, their peer group, actors in films, and so on.

Children's accents can easily change as they are growing up. From teenage years onwards, pronunciation is more difficult to master.

Remember, there is no single 'correct' English pronunciation. In countries such as Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the UK and USA, there are over 100 different regional and local varieties of English.

Some ideas for you to try at home...

Ideas for supporting communication in EYFS

- Pay attention when your child talks to you.
- Get your child's attention before you talk.
- Praise your child when she/he tells you something. Show that you understand her words.
- Pause after speaking. This gives your child a chance to respond.
- Keep helping your child learn new words. Say a new word, and tell him/her what it means, or use it in a way that helps him/her understand. For example, you can use the word "vehicle" instead of "car." You can say, "I think I will drive the vehicle to the shop. I am too tired to walk."
- Talk about where things are, using words like "first," "middle," and "last" or "right" and "left." Talk about opposites like "up" and "down" or "on" and "off."
- Have your child guess what you describe. Say, "We use it to sweep the floor," and have her find the broom. Say, "It is cold, sweet, and good for dessert. I like strawberry" so she can guess "ice cream."
- Work on groups of items, or categories. Find the thing that does not belong in a group. For example, "A shoe does not go with an apple and an orange because you can't eat it. It is not round. It is not a fruit."
- Help your child follow two- and three-step directions. Use words like, "Go to your room, and bring me your book."
- Ask your child to give directions. Follow his directions as he tells you how to build a tower of blocks.
- Play games with your child such as "house." Let her/him be the parent, and you pretend to be the child. Talk about the different rooms and furniture in the house.
- Watch movies together on TV or a tablet. Talk about what your child is watching. Have her guess what might happen next. Talk about the characters. Are they happy or sad? Ask her to tell you what happened in the story. Act out a scene together, or make up a different ending.
- Use everyday tasks to learn language. For example, talk about the foods on the menu and their colour, texture, and taste when in the kitchen. Talk about where to put things.

- Go food shopping together. Talk about what you will buy, how many things you need, and what you will make. Talk about sizes, shapes, and weight.

Ideas to support communication in Key Stage 1 and 2

Create a list of well-known famous pairs. For instance, peanut butter and jelly, Romeo and Juliet, Superman and Lois Lane, etc. Each participant should receive a post-it-note with one half of a famous pair on their back.

Moving throughout the room, with only three questions per person, the participants try to figure out who the person is on their back.

Once the person has discovered who they are, they need to find their partner. If the other partner has not figured out his/her identity, they must not reveal themselves until they know

How many people use “like” or “um,” or “uh” or “so,” or “right” to fill a silent space? It is a nervous habit that is often rooted in the perceived discomfort of silence. This activity helps eliminate these fillers in conversation or in public speaking.

Child is given a topic that they will speak about for 1-3 minutes (topic is not important; it should be simple).

Have two people sit back-to-back. One person has an object and the other has coloured pencils and paper. The person with the object must describe it in as much detail as possible, without directly saying what it is.

The person student must draw the object as best they can, based on the communication of the student with the object.

Communication activities for upper Key Stage 2

Being attuned to our own emotional needs is the foundation of understanding why we are happy or frustrated with others. Many older children have trouble putting words to how they are feeling, and that is often a matter of knowing how to identify complex emotions.

In this activity, provide various emoji's. Take the child through various emotion-invoking scenarios. Have them keep track and label the emotions that popped up for them. Being able to name emotions as they are cued is a first step in improving emotional intelligence.

Have a list of scenarios where assertive communication would be the most effective. Offer the child an opportunity to practice responses to the situations. Have them demonstrate aggressive, passive, and then assertive styles.

When they know the difference, the better they may practice it in real life scenarios.

Some sample scenarios could be:

- You are standing in line at the check-out and two salespeople are engrossed in a deep conversation ignoring you.
- Your teacher marked a test paper that you feel should have received a higher mark.
- Someone calls you a name that is hurtful.
- Go through various options for responses and get the child brainstorming.

In pairs play different roles. Have the child brainstorm scenarios from the past where they wish they had been more assertive.

This gives people the chance to learn from mistakes, and the empowerment to express their needs during the next uncomfortable situation. Have a list of possible scenarios ready, just in case the brainstorming doesn't produce enough opportunities to explore.