Early Years Foundation Stage

Communication & Language Development: Long Term Curriculum Map

Area of Learning:	**Aspects of Learning:**
Communication & Language	Listening, Attention & Understanding Speaking

Intent

To provide a language-rich environment where every child, regardless of starting point, is supported to become a confident, communicator who feels, heard, valued and able to express themselves effectively.

We want every child to develop the ability to:

- Listen with focus and understanding.
- Maintain attention during play and group activities.
- Express ideas, feelings and experiences through rich spoken language, or other means of communication.
- Engage in meaningful conversations with adults and peers.
- Develop a rich and varied vocabulary through stories, play, songs and real-life experiences.
- Understand and follow instructions, questions and narratives appropriate to their stage of development.
- Develop a love of speaking, listening and communication as the foundation for reading, writing and lifelong learning.

Created by Louise Cheetham (Early Years Team Leader) with reference to Mary Sheridan: From Birth to Five Years: Children's Developmental Progress (2014), DfE: EYFS Statutory Framework (2025), DfE: Development Matters (2023) and Early Years Coalition: Birth to 5 Matters (2021).

Child Development Progression Map Listening, Attention & Understanding						
0-6months *Children will: show growing interest and focus when listening to speech and everyday noises.*						
1 month	**2 months**	**3 months**	**4 months**	**5 months**	**6 months**	**End of Stage**
*Alerts and stills when hearing a familiar voice. *Quiets to gentle voice, or soothing sound. *Prefers mothers voice.	*Turns eyes or head slightly toward a sound. *Recognises familiar caregivers voice. *Attends briefly when spoken to.	*Shows excitement (smiles, moves arms/legs) when hearing a familiar voice. *Listens quietly to a voice or sound. *Starts to discriminate between tones of voice.	*Turns head fully toward a sound or voice. *Watches caregiver's face closely when spoken to. *May pause vocalisation when listening.	*Responds to changes in tone of voice (happy/stern). *Enjoys listening to musical toys or rattles. *Begins to anticipate familiar routine sounds.	*Turns immediately toward a familiar voice. *Attends more to speech than non-speech sounds. *Shows recognition of own name.	*Responds to own name. *Turns to familiar voice. *Shows early understanding of tone and routine sounds.
6-12months *Children will: show sustained attention by turning, smiling, or babbling in response to speech and music.*						
7 months	**8 months**	**9 months**	**10 months**	**11 months**	**12 months**	**End of Stage**
*Looks for source of familiar sounds. *Enjoys simple vocal games (peek-a-boo). *Responds differently to friendly/angry tones.	*Responds consistently to own name. *Listens carefully to everyday sounds around them. *Begins to understand a few familiar words (bye-bye).	*Attends to speech directed at them. *Looks at familiar objects or people when named. *Begins to follow simple requests with gesture prompts ('come here').	*Recognises words for familiar people and objects ('mama', 'ball'). *Listens to simple nursery rhymes with interest. *Understands 'no' (although may not obey).	*Follows very simple commands with gesture support ('give it to me'). *Shifts attention between person and object when listening. *Listens actively, sometimes stops what they're doing to listen.	*Understands and responds to about 2-5 familiar words/commands. *Follows one-step instructions (with or without gesture). *Shows clear anticipation of routines when hearing associated words (bath time). *Joins in with actions to rhymes (claps, waves).	*Recognises and responds to familiar words. *Follows simple instructions (with gesture). *Shows clear enjoyment in listening to rhymes and songs. *Concentrates for 1-3 minutes when an adult engages with them.

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12-18months *Children will: listen with interest to familiar words and focus attention on songs, stories, and spoken interactions.*						
13 months	**14 months**	**15 months**	**16 months**	**17 months**	**18 months**	**End of Stage**
*Listens closely to speech directed at them. *Responds quickly to name being called, even across a room. *Begins to recognise names of familiar objects/people when asked ('Where's daddy?').	*Attends briefly to short stories, rhymes or songs. *Points or looks to where adult directs attention. *Understands simple one-step requests with gesture ('Give me the ball').	*Pays attention to adult speech, especially familiar voices. *Brings or shows objects in response to requests. *Understands at least 5 – 10 words, shows comprehension before speech develops fully.	*Enjoys repeating sounds, rhythms, and musical toys. *Follows adult gaze or pointing to share attention. *Understands "Where is…?" questions for familiar objects.	*Attends to speech and looks for meaning in conversation. *Can focus briefly on a short activity or book with adult support. *Understands 10+ words, including familiar actions like "sit," "come," or "drink."	*Listens to simple short stories/rhymes with enjoyment. *Shows joint attention – looks at an object, then back to an adult, to share focus. *Understands and follows simple instructions with one step ("Go get your shoes").	*Understands simple-step instructions. *Recognises many familiar words. *Shares attention with an adult showing clear links between listening and early language learning.
18-24months *Children will: respond to simple questions, and show sustained attention during short stories, songs and conversations.*						
19 months	**20 months**	**21 months**	**22 months**	**23 months**	**24 months**	**End of Stage**
*Recognises familiar songs or rhymes from the first few words. *Can attend for longer periods to a chosen activity (stacking, turning pages). Follows instructions involving familiar objects/actions (e.g. "Put teddy on the chair").	*Listens carefully when people are talking, may pause activity to attend. *Actively seeks adult's attention when unsure about something. *Knows and points to several body parts on request. *Understands 30+ words.	*Engages more with storytelling, songs and simple pretend play involving sounds. *Sustains attention for slightly longer when motivated. *Understands simple action-based requests with no gesture ("Put shoes in the box").	*Listens and responds with gestures / vocalisations during songs or rhymes. *Can follow another's lead in play when named or prompted. *Understands simple questions like *Where's the car?" and follows more varied commands.	*Shoes preference for favourite songs/stories. *Can sit and attend to a short picture book for a few minutes. *Understands 50+ words and simple two-step instructions with support ("Pick up the cup and give it to me").	*Actively listens to conversation, may try to join in. *Maintains attention for longer periods, though easily distracted. *Understands and carries out two-step commands (Get your shoes and put them by the door").	*Follows two-step directions with familiar tasks. *Understands simple instructions. *Listens to short, interactive stories. *Concentrates for 3-5 minutes during playful activities. *Show sustained attention to short activities. *Understands 50 – 200+ words.

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2-3years *Children will: listen to and enjoy stories, songs and rhymes and show growing attention during conversations and play.*						
Autumn 1	**Autumn 2**	**Spring 1**	**Spring 2**	**Summer 1**	**Summer 2**	**End of Stage**
*Attends to a self-chosen activity, is easily distracted by noise or people. *Enjoys rhymes, songs & noisy toys. *Responds to familiar words (i.e. "daddy," or "snack".	*Can focus for slightly longer on favourite activities. *Still single-channelled: adult directions may need prompts and to use child's name first. *Understands 200 – 500 words. *Follows simple instructions ("get your bricks").	*Begin to shift attention between task and adult when supported. *Need prompts (e.g. visual cue or name) to refocus on instruction. *Understands simple sentences and action words. *Can follow a two-step direction.	*Starts to develop more control: can move between listening and doing. *Enjoys songs and shared activities with rhyme and sound. *Grasps simple questions (e.g.) who/what/where). *Beginning to understand pre-positions ("behind," "on").	*Can listen in small group or one to one when engaged. *Might show dual-channel attention: listening while doing. *Manages multi-part instructions ("Pick up blocks and put in box"). *Understands simple concepts like fast/slow or same/different.	*Sustained attention for longer periods; able to integrate visual/auditory information briefly. *Listens to familiar stories and repeated refrains. *Begins to follow stories without visuals. *Can answer why/how questions in simple form.	*Can concentrate for about 6-8 minutes on a task, especially if they find it appealing. *Will start to return to tasks after brief distractions with adult support. *Follows a three-step direction with familiar tasks. *Has a receptive vocabulary of approx. 1,000 words
3 – 4 years *Children will: listen with increasing attention during stories and conversations, responding to questions about what they have heard.*						
Autumn 1	**Autumn 2**	**Spring 1**	**Spring 2**	**Summer 1**	**Summer 2**	**End of Stage**
*Begins to control their own focus and shift attention between play and adult-led moments with less prompting.	*Can listen in small group or one on one situations when the content interests them. *Begin to anticipate repeated refrains in rhymes and stories.	*Begins to follow directions even when not fully focused on their chosen activity, particularly after hearing their name. *Begin to respond to why/how questions with more detail.	*Listens to longer stories with increasing recall. *Begin to actively participate in adult-led group activities, responding with comments or actions.	* Continue to focus on one activity but show increasing independence in shifting attention between tasks and the adult speaker. *Give full attention to an adult when spoken to, interrupting play momentarily, before returning independently.	*Begin to anticipate key events in familiar stories, answer simple "who/what/where" questions about them.	*Can concentrate for up to 10 minutes when interested. *Participates in adult-led group stories and activities. *Follows multi-step instructions. *Understands approx. 2,000 – 3,000 words.

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4 – 5 years *Children will: listen attentively in a range of situations and show good focus and recall when engaging in conversations, stories and group activities.*						
Autumn 1	**Autumn 2**	**Spring 1**	**Spring 2**	**Summer 1**	**Summer 2**	**End of Stage**
*Listens to familiar and new stories, songs and rhymes, anticipating repeated refrains and key events. *Listens in small and large groups and is able to shift attention when called by name. *Can answer "who/what/where" questions about familiar contexts.	*Sustains attention without support and for gradually increasing periods of time. *Responds to positional language (for e.g. under, on top, behind) through action or picture selection.	*Demonstrates early two-channelled attention: can listen while engaged in another task such as drawing or play. *Begins to follow sequencing language ("first…then…after that").	*Listens and contributes to whole-class or small group discussion without reliance on visual cues or adult prompting. *Clarifies meaning by asking or commenting; begins to contribute relevant observations and questions in discussions.	*Maintains sustained focus during longer story sessions or discussions. *Comfortably switches attention while multi-tasking. *Engages in extended back-and-forth conversations, uses newly learned vocabulary and asks/answers questions to deepen discussion.	*Exhibits flexible, integrated attention-able to follow multi-step verbal instructions while engaged in other activities without visual supports. *Listens attentively across contexts, responds thoughtfully, asks and answers questions and initiates conversation with peers and adults	*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.

Child Development Progression Map: Speaking						
0-6months						
Children will: communicate primarily through crying, cooing, gurgling and early vocal sounds.						
1 month	**2 months**	**3 months**	**4 months**	**5 months**	**6 months**	**End of Stage**
*Cries as the main form of communication. *Makes small throat sounds (coo-like noises). *Begins to quiet when comforted by voice.	*Coos (long vowel sounds, "oooooh, ahhhh"). *Begins to vary cries with needs.	*Produces more cooing and gurgling sounds. *Vocalises when spoken to (back-and-forth exchanges).	*Laughs out loud. *Begins to squeal with delight.	*Starts experimenting with pitch and loudness. *Enjoys "talking" to caregiver (vocal turn-taking).	*Begins babbling with repeated syllables (e.g., "ba-ba," "da-da"). *Makes raspberry sounds, squeals, growls.	*Crying, babbling and cooing is used effectively to gain and maintain the attention of others.
6-12months						
Children will: babble using repeated consonant-vowel sounds and begin to use gesture and sounds to express needs and interact.						
7 months	**8 months**	**9 months**	**10months**	**11months**	**12months**	**End of Stage**
*Babbling becomes more varied (consonant + vowel sounds). *Responds with sounds when talked to.	*Uses babbling conversationally (intonation like speech). *May copy sounds they hear.	*Uses repetitive babble (mamama," "dadada"). *Imitates speech sounds.	*Uses jargon (strings of sounds with speech-like rhythm). *May say first meaningful word (often "mama" or "dada," specific to parent).	*Tries to copy single words. *Combines babbling with gestures.	*Says 1- 3 recognisable words. *Still relies heavily on babble/jargon with intonation.	*Babble becomes more speech-like with back and forth pause and return. *First words appear.

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12-18months *Children will: use single words and simple sounds to communicate and begin to imitate speech and intonation from adults.*						
13months	**14months**	**15months**	**16months**	**17months**	**18months**	**End of Stage**
*Uses 2- 3 single words consistently. *Imitates new words.	*Vocabulary grows slowly- around 5 words. *Echoes familiar sounds.	*Uses 5 – 10 words. *Names familiar people or objects.	*Begins to combine words with gestures ("more" + pointing). *Tries to repeat words often.	*Vocabulary is around 10 – 20 words. *Uses single words to express needs ("milk," "up").	*Says 20+words. *Starts to put 2 words together ("I want ball," "by car").	*Vocabulary grows slowly. *Single words dominate.
18-24months *Children will: use short phrases and simple sentences and expand vocabulary rapidly.*						
19months	**20months**	**21months**	**22months**	**23months**	**24months**	**End of Stage**
*Rapid increase in vocabulary (word spurt). *Uses intonation as if asking questions.	*Says around 30 words. *Uses names for familiar people, toys and body parts.	*Combines 2 words regularly ("more juice," "big car"). *Tries to sing parts of song/rhymes.	*Vocabulary increases rapidly. *Begins to use pronouns in simple form ("me," "mine").	*Makes simple 2-3 word sentences. *Talks a lot during play.	*Names self and familiar people.	*'Word spurt' -- vocabulary is 50+ words *Words are combined into 2-3 word sentences. *Speech is becoming clearer, though strangers may still only understand about half.

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2 – 3 years *Children will: use longer sentences, combine words to express ideas and engage in back and forth conversations.*						
Autumn 1	**Autumn 2**	**Spring 1**	**Spring 2**	**Summer 1**	**Summer 2**	**End of Stage**
*Uses single words for wants and needs, ("milk", "mummy"). *Uses gestures and pointing alongside words. *Imitates familiar words and sounds. *Enjoys babble play and sound exploration.	*Vocabulary grows to 50+ words. *Starts to combine 2-word phrases ("more juice", "big car"). *Repeats familiar words and phrases from books and songs. *Uses vocalisations to engage in back-forth conversations.	*Uses short 3 -4 word sentences ("me want juice"). *Begins to ask simple questions ("What that?") *Enjoys talking about familiar experiences (nursery or home) *Is more confident to initiate communication with peers and adults.	*Uses talk to describe objects and actions ("red ball", "mummy go car"). *Begins to use plurals and pre-dispositions ("on", "in"). *Shares ideas and preferences using simple phrases. *Talks about what is happening now or in the immediate past.	*Talks in short sequences (e.g. "I go shop. I buy apple"). *Begins to use "and" to join ideas. *Enjoys rhymes and rhythm in speech. *Uses simple imaginative language during role play.	*Begins to use past tense ("I played", "I ate"). *Holds simples conversations with peers. *Uses language to confidently ask, answer and pretend.	*Vocabulary of around 200 – 500 words. *Uses 3- 4 word sentences. *Strangers understand about 75% of speech. *Begins to use plurals, pronouns and prepositions. *Starts to ask lots of "what" and "where" questions.
3 – 4 years *Children will: speak in more complex sentences, use a growing vocabulary and tell simple stories.*						
Autumn 1	**Autumn 2**	**Spring 1**	**Spring 2**	**Summer 1**	**Summer 2**	**End of Stage**
*Uses 3-5 word sentences confidently ("I want the big truck"). *Joins in simple conversations with adults and peers *Begins to ask own simple questions, ("Where's mummy?")	*Begins to use more descriptive words (colours, size). *Labels emotions and explains likes/dislikes ("I don't like loud"). *Talks more fluently about recent experiences. *Uses more joining words ("and", "because"). *Enjoys talking in imaginative play and storytelling.	*Retells simple stories using pictures or props. *Talks about recent experiences in logical order. *Begins to use more complex sentences with multiple ideas ("I went to the park and saw a dog"). *Use language to plan play ("I'm the doctor and you're sick").	*Uses language to act out roles and scenarios in pretend play. *Engages in dialogue with peers during role-play. *Uses language to problem-solve and negotiate with others ("let's take turns"). *Expresses likes, dislikes, ideas, and opinions clearly.	*Asks more complex "why" and "how" questions. *Begins to explain thinking and reasoning ("I used this because it's long"). *Uses talk to organise thoughts and solve problems. *Builds sentences with more detail and descriptive language. *Participates in group discussions, listening and responding appropriately.	*Speaks confidently in front of a small group. *Can share news, tell a story or explain how something works. *Uses a wide range of vocabulary across different topics and contexts. *Shows awareness of listener, adjusting speech.	*Vocabulary is around 1,000+ words. *Speaks in 4 – 6 word sentences. *Uses most parts of speech correctly, though still some errors, (e.g., "runned" instead of "ran").

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4 – 5 years *Children will: Use clear and detailed sentences, express ideas and feelings effectively and retell stories or events with increasing accuracy.*						
Autumn 1	**Autumn 2**	**Spring 1**	**Spring 2**	**Summer 1**	**Summer 2**	**ELG**
*Uses full sentences to express, wants and ideas ("I need help with my zip"). *Speaks clearly to familiar adults and peers during play. *Responds to simple instructions and questions. *Re-tells personal experiences with support ("I went to the zoo").	*Uses new vocabulary introduced during activities, stories or experiences. *Begins to describe events and or objects using detail. *Engages in more sustained conversations with adults and peers. *Explains likes/dislikes using reason ("I like the story because it's funny").	*Retells familiar stories using story language. *Uses time connectives ("first", "then", "next") to organise thoughts. *Begins to invent their own stories during play or carpet sessions. *Uses increasingly complex sentences with conjunctions ("because", "so", "but").	*Listens and responds appropriately to what others say. *Waits for their turn to speak in group discussions. *Begins to add to others' ideas in conversation. *Expresses opinions respectfully and with reasons ("I think we should use blocks because…"). *Uses speaking to reason, argue, and negotiate in play.	*Takes on roles in imaginative play with consistent character language. *Uses varied tone, pitch, and vocabulary to bring characters and ideas to life. *Creates detailed narratives during storytelling and small-world play. *Uses language to plan, predict and reflect during play and learning. *Begins to self-correct and clarify speech to be understood by others.	*Speaks confidently in front of larger groups. *Can explain ideas, events or processes (how they made a model). *Uses awareness of listener, adapting language or detail as needed. *Demonstrates fluent, clear and grammatically correct speech.	*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.

Spoken Language: Year 1 – Year 6
National Curriculum Expectations

Pupils should be taught to:

- listen and respond appropriately to adults and their peers
- ask relevant questions to extend their understanding and knowledge
- use relevant strategies to build their vocabulary
- articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions
- give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including for expressing feelings
- maintain attention and participate actively in collaborative conversations, staying on topic and initiating and responding to comments
- use spoken language to develop understanding through speculating, hypothesising, imagining and exploring ideas
- speak audibly and fluently with an increasing command of Standard English
- participate in discussions, presentations, performances, role play, improvisations and debates
- gain, maintain and monitor the interest of the listener(s)
- consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others
- select and use appropriate registers for effective communication.

These statements apply to all years. The content should be taught at a level appropriate to the age of the pupils. Pupils should build on the oral language skills that have been taught in preceding years.

Pupils should be taught to develop their competence in spoken language and listening to enhance the effectiveness with which they are able to communicate across a range of contexts and to a range of audiences. They should therefore have opportunities to work in groups of different sizes – in pairs, small groups, large groups and as a whole class. Pupils should understand how to take turns and when and how to participate constructively in conversations and debates.

Attention should also be paid to increasing pupils' vocabulary, ranging from describing English – key stages 1 and 2 their immediate world and feelings to developing a broader, deeper and richer vocabulary to discuss abstract concepts and a wider range of topics, and to enhancing their knowledge about language as a whole.

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Implementation – Communication & Language
Intentional Teaching
Enabling Environment

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Impact
Impact will be achieved by: