



## Early Years Foundation Stage Revised Framework - Introductory Briefing Paper - April 2021

Issue 2

**Welcome to the second of our briefing papers in preparation for implementing the revised EYFS from September 2021.**

This overview focuses on **Speech, Language and Communication development** across the whole curriculum. The revised framework and supporting non-statutory documents highlight the importance of developing key communication skills from birth in both spoken language and receptive processing.

Practitioner knowledge of child development linked to early Speech, Language and Communication development is key to ensuring a secure foundation in learning for all children, in partnership with parents.

‘Studies have shown children with limited vocabulary are held back not just in English, but right across the whole curriculum. These children arrive at school without the words they need to communicate properly. Just imagine the disadvantage they face, right from the start. Unable to follow what’s going on. Unable to keep up with their classmates. Unable to reach their potential’. (Amanda Spielman 2019, Ofsted)

### The DfE says.....



**Proposals are intended to:**

**focus on strengthening language and vocabulary development to particularly support disadvantaged children.**

All practitioners in early years will need to be confident playing and talking with young children; their knowledge of child development and how to support progress in Speech, Language and Communication skills will be key.

Practitioners will need to have knowledge of a child’s current speech and understanding level in order to model, scaffold and support appropriately to move the child forward.

Greater emphasis is placed on playing with the child and ongoing valuable to-and-fro conversations rather than time being taken to observe and overly assess.

Practitioners will need to take time to get to know children well so they can talk about the child’s interests; gain a child’s confidence and know where children are most likely to communicate fully (indoors, outdoors, in a favourite area).

## Communication and Language

The draft statutory framework states.....

‘The development of children’s spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children’s back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on

what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children's language effectively.

Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, story-telling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures'.

'The specific areas of learning provide children with a broad curriculum and with opportunities to strengthen and apply the prime areas of learning. This is particularly important in developing language and extending vocabulary'. (Draft stat framework 1:11)

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## Early Learning Goals



**Whilst the Early Learning Goals are a checkpoint for the end of the reception year, they are not the whole curriculum or statements to be broken down and used as a checklist.**

**Breadth in learning is more important than moving steps.**

**Draft revised Early Learning Goals: Communication & Language**

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## ELG: Listening, Attention and Understanding

Children at the expected level of development will:

- 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

## ELG: Speaking

Children at the expected level of development will:

- 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.

## ELG: Comprehension

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Demonstrate of understanding of what has been read to them by retelling stories and narratives using their own words and recently introduced vocabulary
- Anticipate where appropriate key events in stories.
- Use and understand recently introduced vocabulary during discussions about stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems and during role-play.

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## Communication and Language links with Literacy

Communication and Language links closely with the specific area of Literacy (Reading and Writing) but reference to children and adults talking together is also made throughout the framework and supporting documents.

Children will struggle to achieve across the curriculum if they can't talk about what they like, dislike, feel and see.

Identification of any concerns in relation to speech, language and communication is therefore vital at the earliest opportunity so children can be supported fully by practitioners and parents.



For children whose home language is not English, providers must take reasonable steps to provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in play and learning, supporting their language development at home.

Providers must also ensure that children have sufficient opportunities to learn and reach a good standard in English language during the EYFS, ensuring children are ready to benefit from the opportunities available to them when they begin year 1. (Draft stat framework 1:13)

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## (Development Matters and Birth to Five Matters)

The two non-statutory documents (Development Matters and Birth to Five Matters) both reiterate this golden thread of developing language and extending vocabulary through high quality play; provision and practice with links to the Characteristics of Learning.

In Development Matters the link between self-regulation and executive function is highlighted.

**‘Language development is central to self-regulation: children use language to guide their actions and plans. Pretend play gives many opportunities for children to focus their thinking, persist and plan ahead’.**

In Birth to 5 Matters the Communication and Language description varies from that in the Statutory Framework, the key principles are still similar

**‘Babies are born ready and willing to communicate. They depend on interactions with others to become confident and effective communicators and language users. Within the first three years of life children have laid the foundations of communication and language proficiency. Language also begins to guide and support their thinking and emotional development and underpins their emerging literacy.’**

**From birth to five their skills develop through a series of identifiable stages which can be looked at in three strands – Listening and Attention, Understanding and Speaking. Not all children will follow the exact same sequence or progress at the same rate, but it is important to identify children at risk of language delay or disorder as these can have an ongoing impact on wellbeing and learning across the curriculum’.**



### Interactions

‘Children’s language is enriched and enhanced by back-and-forth exchanges with practitioners who respect and respond to children’s conversation’.

### Supporting development and learning

‘The quality of adults’ interactions with children has an immense impact on whether their experiences result in making the most of the learning opportunities’. (Birth to Five Matters)

‘Young children are born communicators. So, if a child at any stage within the EYFS is not communicating, that should cause us to stop and be concerned. Are they feeling well-supported? Do they need extra help; for example, time in a smaller group for conversation? Have we done enough to spark their interest and excitement with experiences and things to talk about? Do they need help to get involved in pretend play?’ (Julian Grenier)

Aside from using the Statutory Framework there is no requirement to use a particular document or teaching approach. It is important for practitioners to consider their curriculum as a whole and reflect on the needs of their children and families, their ethos and to adjust their practice accordingly whilst having high aspirations for all.

It is vital that English subject leads and the senior leaders in schools have a good understanding of teaching and learning/child development in early years and understand the crucial role Speech, Language and Communication development has on the holistic child and future outcomes.

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## Speech, Language and Communication a high focus for Ofsted inspections.

In group settings, inspectors observe as many staff as possible to ensure that an accurate picture of the overall quality of interactions between practitioners and children can be gained.

When observing interactions between staff and children, inspectors should consider how well staff:

- engage in dialogue with children
- watch, listen and respond to children
- model language well
- read aloud and tell stories to children
- sing action songs, nursery rhymes and games
- encourage children to express their thoughts and use new words



- support independence and confidence
- encourage children to speculate and test ideas through trial and error
- enable children to explore and solve problems
- behave as an excellent role model for children to copy

(Early Years Inspection Handbook updated September 2019)

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## A final thought.....

**'One of the most powerful things we can do to help a child's development ,is help them to become a better communicator. Communication underpins children's thinking and learning. Being a good communicator enables you to make friends and play with others.'** (Julian Grenier)

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## Useful documents

[CCC Supporting Children's Speech, Language and Communication Development in Early Years Settings and Schools](#)

[Development Matters](#)

[Birth to Five Matters](#)

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If you require any more information or have any enquiries please contact Ann Breeze or Nicky Steels – [ann.breeze@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:ann.breeze@cumbria.gov.uk) and [nicola.steels@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:nicola.steels@cumbria.gov.uk) or alternatively [childrens.information@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:childrens.information@cumbria.gov.uk) or visit us [online](#)