

Speech, Language and Communication Needs

Support for families during Covid-19

Support

During this time of school closure, we recognise the additional pressure which may be placed on families who feel the need to support their child's academic activities, social and emotional wellbeing and other Mental Health needs during this uncertain time. Families may also be concerned about the impact of such significant changes in day to day life. Children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) may have a variety of needs below are some suggestions on how to support your child at home during this time.

- **Play and Discussion.** For a young child engage in play on a regular basis, model how to play with toys, role play, objects and topics of interest e.g. sport follow the child's lead and talk about what they are doing with the toys or topic of conversation.
- **Talk** to your child often throughout the day about what you are doing, where you are going, what you are going to do, what you have just done.
- **Turn off or try to reduce background noise.** Turn off background noise in the home such as the television, radio or music when engaging with your child to reduce and minimise the distractions
- **Face-to-face.** Ensure you are face to face with your child when talking so they may watch your mouth to imitate how to produce words.
- **Expand the language** your child is using by repeating what they are saying and adding one or two more words to their utterance (e.g. child: "Dog"; adult: "A big dog").
- **Model** correct use of language by repeating back phrases in the correct way (e.g. child: "Me want that one"; adult: "I want an apple please").
- **Books.** Spend time looking at books which interest your child and talk about the pictures and/or the story. Ask what might happen next or explain why something might have happened.

Receptive language skills

Receptive language is the ability to understand information. It involves understanding the words, sentences and meaning of what others say or what is read. The following tips will help develop receptive language skills:

- **Eye-contact.** Obtain the child's eye contact before giving them an instruction.
- **Minimal instructions.** Refrain from giving too many instructions at once.
- **Simplify the language** you use with your child so it is at a level that they can understand (i.e. usually just above their expressive (spoken) language level or how much they are saying).

- **Chunk verbal instructions** into parts. Instead of “Go and get your and your hat, coat and shoes before you go outside”, say “Get your coat.” When the child has followed that instruction, say “Now get your hat” then “put your shoes on” and “OK, now you can go outside”.
- **Repeat.** Ask your child to repeat the instruction to ensure that they have understood what they need to do
- **First/then.** Use this concept to help the child know what order they need to complete the command (e.g. “*First* get your jacket, *then* put on your shoes”).
- **Clarify.** Encourage the child to ask for clarification if they forget part of the instruction or have trouble understanding what they need to do. Encourage them to ask for the command to be repeated or clarified (e.g. “Can you say that again please?”).
- **Show.** Physically show the child what to do when giving them an instruction so that they can ‘see’ what the concept within the instruction looks like.
- **Visual aids.** (e.g. pictures, gestures, body language, and facial expression) can be used to assist the child’s comprehension and recall of the instruction.
- **Describe.** In everyday activities describe to your child what they are doing (e.g. when the child is packing up their toys you might say: “Put the toys in the box” or when getting ready you might say: “Put your shoes on”).
- **Emphasise the word** you want your child to learn and repeat the concept in a variety of situations or settings so that the child sees the different ways in which a concept can be used (e.g. “Lights on” vs. “The book is on the table”).

Expressive language skills

Expressive language skills are the ability to put thoughts into words and sentences, in a way that makes sense and is grammatically accurate. The following tips may help to develop expressive language skills:

- **Name items together** when looking at a book, in the car, looking outside, in play or while they are playing.
- **Choice-making.** Offer your child choices so that they are encouraged to use words to make a request rather than relying on gesture.
- **Play** something together that your child really enjoys and throughout the game model new words and phrases.
- **Look at books** together and talk about what you see.
- **Ask questions** about for example what is happening in a story or television programme and why.
- **Sing songs** together.
- **Use pictures, drawings or photos** to make a book or sequence of events and make up a story about the pictures. Can be discussed and then written.

Supporting language and learning at home with Independence and life skills

Help continue learning language and communication skills through everyday activities such as

- **Money:** online shopping, pretend cafes and shops counting money, use of calculators
- **Time:** calendars, clocks, timetables

- **Independence skills:** following instructions with setting the table, following recipes
- **Social skills:** playing board games and enjoying creative arts and crafts, Skype and phone calls with friends and family
- **Vocabulary skills:** Lego match – play as a pair. Ensure both have the same Lego bricks (colour, shape, size). Using a book or other object, create a physical barrier between you. One creates a shape using the bricks, and describes it to the other who must copy it. Compare.

Useful Websites

Explanations of Coronavirus:

- [My Story About Pandemics And The Coronavirus - Carol Gray](#)
- [Child Friendly Explanation of Coronavirus](#)
- [Corona E-book](#)
- [Information about Coronavirus](#)
- [What is Coronavirus – using Widget](#)
- [Widget symbols](#) - schools/ parents can get access to picture symbols to create personalised timetables and worksheets for children who cannot read but can understand pictures

Language and Communication Support

- [I CAN](#) - The Children's Communication Charity have additional advice, support strategies and activities to support families and children
- [Afacic](#) - voice for life
- www.radld.org Raising Awareness of Developmental Language Disorder –RADLD
- [The Communication Trust website](#)
- [Speech Buddy website](#)

Creating a timetable/using visual supports

- [Visual supports - National Autistic Society](#)
- [Visual timetables for all ages | Tes](#)
- [Free Printable Visual Lanyard for ASD Autism Pupils - Tes](#)
- [Widget symbols](#) -schools/ parents can get access to picture symbols to create personalised timetables and worksheets for children who cannot read but can understand pictures

Some ideas for more exciting learning:

- [Things to do with kids: 49 cheap activities to keep children entertained](#)
- [Fun things to do at home with the kids](#)
- [These 50 Fun Activities for Kids Will Keep Them Entertained for Hours](#)
- [30 day LEGO Challenge](#)
- [10 Things to do at Home with Kids Right Now](#)
- [Non Screen Activities to do at home](#)
- [50 things to do without technology and screens](#)

Anxiety

- [iPsy-19 Psychological Tips to cope with COVID - 19](#)
- [Guide to what you can and cannot control during these times ...](#)
- [NHS Every Mind Matters - advice for Coronavirus stress](#)

Other useful websites

- [Cosmic Yoga](#) - this is a yoga site for mindfulness and is great for the younger pupils.
- [Thinking Talking](#) have a range of word game ideas to enjoy as a family and help children to continue their important word learning skills.
- [Topmarks](#) links to a range of interactive online learning games. Search for subjects topics and age range.
- [Phonics Play](#) - free phonics learning activities.
- [Usborne](#) - links to websites for areas covered by Usborne books, both school subjects and topics.
- [Word Free Games](#) - free word games maths and puzzle games.
- [Crickweb](#) - free online educational games.
- [BBC Schools Games KS1 - KS2](#) - search by age and subject to find fun games and animations suited to popular topics.
- [Primary homework help](#) - links to interactive learning games.
- [BBC Teach Lessons Live](#) - bring subjects to life with interactive lessons featuring some of the BBC's biggest brands and presenters.
- [The National Literacy Trust](#) - free reading and writing resources, audiobooks, videos, competitions and reading challenges.
- [Motion Maths](#) - visual, adaptive games based on growth mindset research.
- [Maths Factors](#) - free during school closure. An on-line maths tutoring site.
- [Audible](#) - 100s of free stories for children.
- [Collins](#) - free resources for learning at home. Click the red button at the top of the website.
- [SEN Teacher](#) - a website for children with learning difficulties with excellent free printable worksheets across the curriculum.
- [Brainpop](#) - a bright engaging American resource for primary school children covering most subjects with a useful social-emotional area.