

## Communication and Language

Language development is crucial to living and learning: to communicate with others, to share and express feelings, to give and obtain information, and to understand ideas and develop thoughts. Being able to understand and use language allows children to:

- make their needs, thoughts, feelings and ideas known;
- interact socially as they play together;
- manage their own behaviour and self-regulate their emotions; and
- learn independently and collaboratively.

Children bring to Nursery their own experiences of using language. Some children may arrive clearly demonstrating an age-appropriate level of proficiency, while some may not. Communication and language is key to all relationships, interactions and learning. By providing opportunities to develop young children's communication and language skills we are equipping them with skills for the future that will support them to achieve their full potential.

Some children come to us speaking another language. Speaking more than one language has lots of advantages for children and is the norm in many countries around the world. We believe that children should continue to speak their home language while being supported to learn English. We use pictures, gestures and prompts and some words in home languages to support and aid understanding and vocabulary development.

At Ditton Nursery School we focus strongly on Communication and Language. Key persons interact with children everyday – on a one to one basis, when they are in a small group (2 or 3 children), and when they spend time as part of a larger group of 13. We focus on Listening and Attention and from the outset. The ability to listen and attend supports language learning and includes the ability to discriminate sounds and maintain and monitor attention in a shared context. Young children gradually develop the ability to understand words in context, beginning with single words and building on this with phrases and more and more complex sentences. Adults focus on developing understanding in different ways. They will comment on children's play giving them vocabulary and teaching them how to use language to support their thinking. Adults respond to children based on their individual proficiency in language, asking questions as appropriate to the child.

Speaking allows children to express their feelings, needs and wants, their thoughts and ideas and to be able to talk about what has happened and about creative or imaginative events. We support children in a natural way to build their conversational skills using gesture, facial expression and words to make meaning clear. We also model and support how to use language in social situations eg playing with friends, organising play, discussing a point of interest etc. Adults' always role model good speech sounds to children. We also use every opportunity to widen and extend and develop children's vocabulary via their fascinations, interests and stories, and support them to sing and learn new songs and rhymes.

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We use the 'Wellcomm' screening tool to help us to assess what children understand and how they use language. Where children are behind we use a 'good teaching' model to support them to catch up. If necessary we include specific targeted interventions eg in listening and attention, developing vocabulary (verbs, adjectives etc), sentence building etc. We will refer into the Speech and Language service for specialist support and help.