



COMMUNICATION & LANGUAGE

Autumn 2026

Progression through the early years

Skills children coming into Reception should already have



Three and Four-Year-Olds

- Enjoy listening to longer stories and can remember much of what happens.
- Pay attention to more than one thing at a time, which can be difficult.
- Use a wider range of vocabulary.
- Understand a question or instruction that has two parts, such as "Get your coat and wait at the door".
- Understand 'why' questions, like: "Why do you think the caterpillar got so fat?"
- Sing a large repertoire of songs.
- Know many rhymes, be able to talk about familiar books, and be able to tell a long story.
- Develop their communication, but may continue to have problems with irregular tenses and plurals, such as 'runned' for 'ran', 'swimmed' for 'swam'.
- Develop their pronunciation but may have problems saying:
 - some sounds: r, j, th, ch, and sh
 - multisyllabic words such as 'pterodactyl', 'planetarium' or 'hippopotamus'
- Use longer sentences of four to six words.
- Be able to express a point of view and to debate when they disagree with an adult or a friend, using words as well as actions.
- Start a conversation with an adult or a friend and continue it for many turns.
- Use talk to organise themselves and their play: "Let's go on a bus... you sit there... I'll be the driver."

Skills we learn in Reception



Children in Reception

- Understand how to listen carefully and why listening is important.
- Learn new vocabulary.
- Use new vocabulary through the day.
- Ask questions to find out more and to check they understand what has been said to them.
- Articulate their ideas and thoughts in well-formed sentences.
- Connect one idea or action to another using a range of connectives.
- Describe events in some detail.
- Use talk to help work out problems and organise thinking and activities, and to explain how things work and why they might happen.
- Develop social phrases.
- Engage in story times.
- Listen to and talk about stories to build familiarity and understanding.
- Retell the story, once they have developed a deep familiarity with the text, some as exact repetition and some in their own words.
- Use new vocabulary in different contexts.
- Listen carefully to rhymes and songs, paying attention to how they sound.
- Learn rhymes, poems and songs.
- Engage in non-fiction books.
- Listen to and talk about selected non-fiction to develop a deep familiarity with new knowledge and vocabulary.

End of Reception Goals



Early Learning Goals

Listening, Attention and Understanding

- 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.

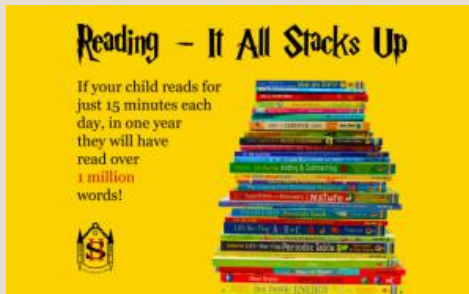
Speaking

- 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.

- C&L is assessed in English.
- Two areas- Listening, attention and understanding & Speaking
- To reach 'expected', children must fit the majority of the statements.
- If children are working below, you will be informed and we will work together to help support your child.

Why is communication so important

- Communication and language is 1 out of 3 prime areas in the Early years (the other two are Personal, Social & Emotional Development and Physical development).
- It is the foundation and basis for all learning. If a child doesn't achieve well in Communication and language, they will not achieve well in any of the other areas.
- It is the first thing we target in Nursery and reception alongside Personal, Social and Emotional development.



Listening and Attention

First skills are children learn auditory attention, discrimination & memory

- Reading engaging books
- Bedtime stories
- Listening games (in the environment/ animal sounds etc)
- What made the sound? game (using instruments/ household objects)
- Memory games (missing object/ pairs game)



Books to engage....



Understanding

- Following instructions
 - Practising 'remembering' - Sequential memory games (I went to the supermarket and I bought/ went to the zoo and I saw a.....)
 - Using time language at home 'first, next, before, after, later.
- Nouns, verbs and vocabulary
 - Model using sentences and talk ab
 - Repeat what your child has said with the correct pronunciation/ grammar/ structure.
 - Concentrate on verbs (doing words) during play. For example, rather than saying 'You have a blue bowl,' say 'you are **mixing** the eggs.
 - Follow the **ShREC** and 'OWL' (see next slide) approach

Sh



Share attention

Be at the child's level. Pay attention to what they are focused on.

R



Respond

Follow the child's lead. Respond to their non-verbal and verbal communications. You could make a brief comment on what they can see, hear or feel.

E



Expand

Repeat what the child says and build on it by adding more words to turn it into a sentence.

C



Conversation

Have extended back and forth interactions. Give children time to listen, process and reply.

Imagine your child loves playing in the sand. You head to the playground or to the beach and...



Get face-to-face Get down to your child's level so you are close together and can see each other's faces.

then...

- Observe** Watch your child silently and pay close attention to what they say or do. This will tell you what they're interested in. Do they like pouring water on the sand, making a big pile, or digging a hole?
- Wait** When you wait quietly without telling your child what to do, you give them an opportunity to explore and experiment, which will help you pinpoint what they are most interested in doing. You also give them a chance to start the interaction and "tell" you something.
- Listen** Pay attention to what your child says, without interrupting. This lets your child know that you are present and focused on them, and that what they are communicating is important to you.

Next...Follow Your
Child's Lead!



Speech

- By Reception, your child should be able to say most sounds and words correctly and clearly.
- Seek help from doctor/ school who can/ may refer you to a speech and language therapist.
- Model the sound or speech and repeat what child has said to them (do not make them repeat it back)
- Clap out the syllables of a word
- Drop in sessions you can discuss concerns with a qualified speech and language therapist. They will give you advice and next steps.



Impact of Technology



- A study found that screen time robs average toddler of hearing 1,000 words spoken by adult a day, study finds
- Poorer socio-emotional outcomes, meaning a reduction in children's ability to understand, manage, and express their own emotions,
- Reduction in building positive relationships, empathising, and interacting effectively with others
- Poorer language development, meaning children starting to speak later or having a smaller vocabulary
- Negative impacts upon other elements of cognitive development, such as attention or executive function (skills that you use to manage everyday tasks like making plans, solving problems and adapting to new situations.)
- Children saying "I'm bored," when not getting the dopamine rush of fast paced technology
- Recommended no longer than one hour of screen time per day and not before bed.
- Parent- child interaction



What to do if I'm worried about my child's communication and language development?

- Speak to the class teacher
- Mrs Rowlands is the school SENDCO and can refer children for communication and language support if needed.
- Can also speak to your health visitor
- Website with lots of information <https://www.familycorner.co.uk/> - can translate into different languages

