

Oaklands Family Newsletter



This half term's Family Newsletter is focusing on communication. This is a key area of our curriculum across all of the pathways and is embedded in all of our learning opportunities.

Creating opportunities for communication

Waiting and Pausing: As parents and carers, we can be so keen to provide what our child needs, that we often give them what they want before they even ask for it. Simply waiting for your child to show you that they want something, is a really important tool. It allows the child to learn that they have a voice which they can use and that they are responsible for their own communication. When we jump in too soon and give our child the things they want, before they have had a chance to communicate, we remove that opportunity.

It is important to be aware that communication might not involve speaking, a child may show us what they want by reaching, looking towards an item, smiling etc. and therefore we do not always need to wait for a child to say words, before we respond. Pausing during an interaction with a child, can also create an opportunity for a child to show you if they want more of something or not. For example, when playing a tickling game, you may pause to see if they show that they want you to continue.

Moving Items out of Reach: Children can quickly learn to become independent, in getting the things they want for themselves. Although independence is an important part of development, too much independence can lead to a child rarely needing to ask for things. If a child can always access all of the things they want, then why would they learn to ask for it? Therefore, we encourage you to put some of their favourite items out of reach, this might be on a high shelf, or in a clear box with a lid, so that your child can still see the item, but will need an adult's help to access it.

Allow Time for Communication: During a busy day it can be easy for communication to slip into the background, and opportunities to communicate get lost in the hustle and bustle. Daily life cannot always be calm, but it might be helpful to think of some key times of the day where you can make some small changes so that your child will have opportunities to communicate. Below are some examples

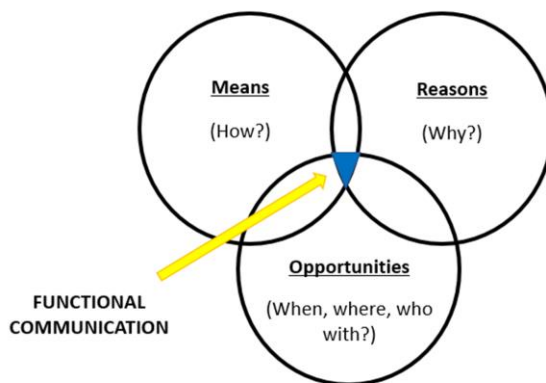
Activity	How to turn into an opportunity for communication
Breakfast	Offer child a choice of items they can have for breakfast (even if you know what they will choose)
Getting dressed	Wait for your child to communicate that they need help if they are able to do so
Bath time	Play splashing/pouring games with the water, remember to pause to see if they want more
Story time	Offer a choice of books, allow your child the time to point at the pictures/turn the pages – respond to your child as they do this.
Doing a jigsaw	Put all the pieces of the puzzle into a box, wait for your child to approach you before giving them another piece

For effective Communication to take place, there are three key factors which need to be present. These are:

Means: Your child needs a way to communicate whether this is by talking, using images, body language/facial expression

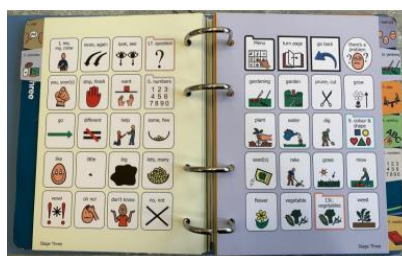
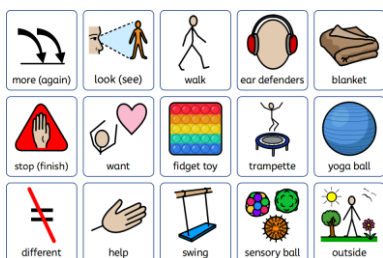
Reasons: Your child needs a reason to communicate, this might be to express their wants needs/to share feelings or to build relationships

Opportunities: Your child needs lots of different opportunities to practise and use their communication skills.



Communication Boards and Books

What is a Communication Board? A communication board is a sheet of symbols, pictures or photos that a child will learn to point to, to communicate with those around them. These will be made up of some core and fringe vocabulary.



What is a Communication Book? A communication book is a folder of symbols, pictures or photos that a child will learn to point to, to communicate with those around them. There will be core language on the left and topic vocabulary on the right.

Why use a communication aid? Speech is difficult for some children. They may find it difficult to make people understand what they are trying to say. They might say less than they want to because the words are hard to say. If the child is able to show their listener as well as tell them what they are trying to say they are more likely to get their message across. It can also be used to model to the child how to make choices and how to develop their language further.

Will using a communication board or book stop a child speaking? No! A communication board or book is just another way of supporting communication. It is used as well as speech not instead of it. If speech is easier (or becomes easier) a child will naturally choose to speak rather than point to pictures.

If you would like to use communication boards or books at home to support your child then please come along to our workshop on Tuesday 19th May at 10am.

Resources that can be used at home

- www.acecentre.org.uk/resources lots of free printable resources that can be used at home
- www.makaton.org lots of free resources including sign of the week
- www.oaklands.leicester.sch.uk/supporting-learning-at-home/ our own website has lots of ideas of how you can support your child at home with a range of activities

