# Greenhall

## Communication and Language

<h1 style="text-align:center">Communication and Language</h1>

### 1. *EYFS Statutory Educational Programme*

*"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".*

*EYFS Statutory Framework, 2023*

### 2. Introduction

Communication and Language within the EYFS is divided into

   a. Listening, attention and understanding
   b. Speaking

As the children attending Greenhall present with a very wide range of physical, learning and language abilities they will undoubtedly access learning experiences and activities in very different ways. Some children will be operating at a sensory level and will only just be beginning to become aware of the world around them. Other children will have no or limited language and will therefore find it difficult to communicate ideas and ask questions, other children will have restricted physical abilities both fine and gross motor and may be reliant on assistance or observation only if they are to gain from learning experiences and activities. Some children will have a combination of all of these difficulties.

It is necessary, therefore, to break the aspects of the curriculum areas down further and plan learning opportunities for the children which take account of the stage of development they are operating within. In order to enable every child to develop skills in communication and language, we need to pay particular attention to two other vital areas of learning therefore:-

   a. Sensory Learning
   b. Augmentative Communication

The sensory curriculum underpins all aspects of learning and is therefore the foundation for the development of communication and language for all of our children.

Augmentative Communication is the method(s) used to enable each child to communicate in their own way, dependent upon their specific level of skill, physical, cognitive and sensory.

### 3. Sensory Curriculum

Every child will have access to the sensory curriculum, whatever their level of development. For some children, sensory experiences will be integrated into all activities, while others will need individually designed and delivered programmes.

The sensory curriculum is the foundation from which early development arises. By tasting, looking, listening, touching, smelling and moving, the baby or small child gathers and processes information about their environment. They repeat movements, put things in their mouths, reach out to touch things, or lie still to watch a mobile above them. The typically developing child seems driven by the need to explore. Parents say, frustratedly or delightedly, that their toddler is "into everything!"

As adults we all revert to this way of gathering information and learning when we encounter something novel or attractive. Like toddlers we indulge our senses: patting, stroking or having a sniff. Does it rattle? What does it taste like? Things which stimulate the senses grab and hold our attention.

If something looks interesting, or is pleasant or surprising to touch, or if it makes an unexpected noise or smells good, we give it our attention.

Our senses are engaged and we investigate: the beginnings of science.

We wonder and delight: the beginnings of spiritual awakening.

Our senses are excited as we search for words to express and share that excitement: the beginnings of communication.

Our senses are challenged and we want to ask questions: the beginnings of language.

We have been in, on, under and through a box; our bodies have jumped and rolled, turned, curled and stretched: our mathematical understanding has begun.

We have shouted numbers as we climb the stairs. We are learning to count. One day it might be plastic teddies; another, it might be dried peas or gooey marshmallow sweets. Maths will be something we understand and want to do – now, and later in our school career.

The Integrated Sensory Curriculum

Children will be:
- offered a rich sensory environment
- introduced to new stimuli
- given time to explore freely, with due regard for safety
- introduced to new vocabulary, to describe their sensory experiences
- have their individual preferences acknowledged and respected

The Senses

Visual:
- wall displays (at child height)
- toys
- books
- creative work
- special lighting effects
- definition and division of space (e.g. work areas; gazebo, indoor and outdoor)

Children will be offered experiences of colour, light and darkness, shape and pattern. They will be encouraged to look at things, reach out for, touch, and comment on the things that they see. Things to be considered in terms of differentiation would be:

- visual aids
- seating position
- lighting in the room
- use of contrasting coloured equipment
- different visual ranges
- visual stimulation programme using light to encourage interest, location, tracking and eye contact

Auditory:
- human voice
- noise-making toys
- musical toys
- musical instruments
- recorded music
- live music
- silence

Children will be offered a wide range of auditory experiences. During the course of routines and activities, consideration will be given to the auditory environment to ensure that the children can attend to relevant sounds, like the teacher's voice, an instrument they are playing, their own voices, and silence. Things to be considered in terms of adjustments would be:
- hearing aids
- being seated near the sound source
- intensive sound stimulation at close quarters to encourage interest, awareness, location and pleasure
- a resonance board – to maximise the use of vibrations from sound or movements
- a sound beam

Tactile:
- toys (plastic, wood, cloth, metal)
- play materials (sand, water, rice, soil, etc.)
- fabrics
- floor coverings (carpet, cushions, vinyl, tiles, etc.)
- outdoors (grass, asphalt, brickwork, soft playground, etc.)
- natural environment (wind, rain, sunshine, plants, animals)
- foodstuffs

In considering tactile exploration, it is important not to rely too much on plastics, which are more easily cleaned – and cheaper – but less diverse in texture and temperature than natural materials. Children who are tactile defensive can start with an area of the body they are more comfortable with and expand their experiences from there. They should also start tactile exploration with textures they are comfortable with.

Taste:
- dinner time
- snack time
- cooking sessions
- role play

Taste buds are on the tongue and, with children, on the inside of the cheeks. Different taste buds stimulate a desire for a range of foods. In school, dinner time is the most obvious opportunity for exploring taste and smell, its related sense. A meal consisting of meat and two vegetables, then

apple pie and custard, contains six possible flavours and textures when offered separately, but only two (sweet and/or savoury gloop) when mashed together.

Under-reactive or over-reactive senses of taste can lead to feeding problems. Therefore, knowing about the individual child's taste preferences is important. Tasting activities separate from meal times can be useful, as actual eating is not the goal. Taste experiences stimulate oral responses with mouth and tongue movements. It is also important to be aware of allergies and any children who are not able to take anything by mouth.

In addition to the sensory aspects of tasting, the development of feeding and chewing has a direct impact on the developing child's oral skills which are most important in the development of spoken language. Chewing develops the facial muscles, particularly those in and around the mouth, which are crucial when learning to create and refine speech sounds.

Smell:
- soap
- baby wipes
- cream
- disinfectant
- clean washing
- leather on new shoes
- new books
- perfumes
- massage oil
- flowers
- food and drink

A smell sensation often accompanies another sensory experience, and its importance as a marker may be overlooked. Smells can arouse attention, create anticipation, stimulate appetite, trigger memories, or enhance imagination. This is a particularly important consideration when working with children who have experienced early trauma.

Movement:

Proprioception is the sense of movement and awareness of the position of body and limbs which receptors in the joints, muscles and bones register. Developing this sense, and of movement in general, should involve the following:

- standing
- jumping
- pushing
- pulling
- hugging
- rolling
- sitting
- lying

Children are on the move almost all of the time. It is their way – literally – of keeping in touch with where they are in space. If they have the physical ability to do so, they may climb, rock, slide, roll, spin, or just balance. As with taste, adults have a tendency to curb the child's natural inclinations. They must be kept safe, but at the same time they need opportunities to experience an exciting and challenging range of movements. The opportunities offered by our hydrotherapy pool are

invaluable in widening the sensory experiences for our children. Such a unique environment impacts on all the senses.

A sensory curriculum is fundamental to all learning, but extra stimuli need careful administration. Some children are able to cut out excess stimulation by closing their eyes, putting their hands over their ears, saying that they don't like it, pushing away or turning away. Other children behave in a more subtle manner, using sounds, movement, facial expressions and changes in their body tone. Some children may not be able to express stimulation overload.

The Role of the Adult

The role of the adult is:
- to provide and structure sensory experiences for the child
- to create an atmosphere of permission, exploration and wonder
- to allow adequate time for the child to simply "be" with their own experience
- to observe and monitor each child's responses and refer any child who may be experiencing difficulties to an appropriate agency
- to devise and deliver individual sensory programmes that take account of the child and his or her needs (all staff are trained in sensory integration and we work with an OT to assess children's sensory needs. Opportunities for sensory regulation are built into our daily routine through sensory circuits and sensory diets).
- to provide the child with a vocabulary to express and process their sensory experiences.

Our senses are forever a source of pleasure!

4.  **Listening & Attention**

The development of listening is not only dependent upon a child's ability to hear and see but also on the physical ability to be able to control movement or 'still' in order to focus attention on what is happening around them.  A busy environment, whilst stimulating and motivating for children to explore, may sometimes be counter-productive to the development of good listening and attention skills. When planning activities to develop listening and attention, therefore, the adult should take account of the environment, other children and adults in the group and also the child's personal skill and abilities.

Activities and experiences to develop listening and attention:-

- quiet opportunities with low level stimulation to help children focus
- 'Bucket Time' (Attentional Autism)
- songs and rhymes to encourage children to listen and respond to voices
- wide range of environmental sounds for children to listen and distinguish between
- mirrors or photographs of familiar people and themselves to develop looking and visual focus
- children's names frequently used in conversations to help them distinguish between self and others
- listen to tapes, music, and DVD's responding to visual and oral stimuli
- listen and respond to sound volume and pitch
- listen to and make sounds with musical instruments
- use of highly motivational visual and auditory equipment, i.e. sensory room equipment to develop focus, attention and visual tracking
- tell and read stories, poems etc. appropriate to children's cognitive and concentration skills
- **listen to children actively**, respond to their needs and questions modelling good listening and attention skills for them
- objects of reference in story telling e.g. puppets, to help develop focus and motivation

- range of IT equipment and computer software to motivate and encourage active participation
- games where children have to listen for a cue before responding.
- Develop auditory memory by remembering one, two or three items
- match sounds to pictures
- identify sounds from visual clues
- discuss work and share successes

## 5. Understanding

The ability to listen to and internalise language (verbal or non verbal) develops in advance of the ability to express or speak language. Key words/signs/symbols are recognised by the child in routine, familiar situations. This is 'situational understanding', e.g. 'home' is understood at home time, drink is understood at drinks time. Initially the focus is on relating words to objects but later involves relating words to people and actions. The child needs to develop visual, listening and imitation skills, be beginning to relate objects together and be at the early stages of imaginative play (e.g. pretending to drink from a cup or talking into a telephone) if comprehension levels are to be extended. This can be done in individual and small group teaching sessions, focussing on specific areas of comprehension and also within everyday routine and play situations within the school environment.

Activities and experiences to develop understanding:-
- Use of familiar and household objects (real or toys) to explore initially and then to pretend play
- Adults model play activities, supplying words for objects and actions for children to listen to and imitate
- Use daily routine and structure to provide contextual clues for developing language e.g. snack time
- Association of music/song/vocalisation through actions (rhythmic intention) – CE task series
- Give instructions for children to follow – e.g. put the car in the box – using objects to clarify meaning
- Increase complexity of instructions as children's understanding develops e.g. fetch a red car and put it in the garage

## 6. Speaking

Pre-verbal communication

Early vocalisations in babies which communicate need to the adults around them are responses to personal or environmental stimuli rather than language processing (pre-intentional communication). For example, a baby cries when he's hungry or cold or when his nappy needs changing and the adults respond to his needs by feeding or changing him.

As a baby learns that his noises initiate a positive response from the adult he learns to repeat vocalisations in order to communicate need and intention (intentional communication). If the adult provides appropriate words to accompany the actions, gradually his noises are shaped into spoken language. When vocalisation is not possible due to developmental or physical difficulties, the child may learn to communicate using other methods such as eye-pointing, facial expression or physically directing an adult towards what he wants.

It is essential that children are involved in activities which give them opportunities to 'communicate', are allowed to make choices and are treated as 'communicators'.

Pre-intentional behaviours which convey meaning:-

- Like (person, object, activity)    Smiles, body gesture, vocalising, stilling, facial expression
- Dislike (person, activity, action)    Crying, looking away, facial expression, vocalising unhappily, pushing away, body movement
- Wants (person, activity, action)    Crying, reaching, showing body excitement, extended reach
- Rejects (person, activity, action)    Crying, breaking eye contact, turning away, pushing away
- Distinguish familiar/unfamiliar    Specific excitement at sight of parent, familiar toy etc, seeking comfort from familiar carer
- Make eye contact    fixating on an adult's face when close, fixating on offered toy, sharing attention with toy and adult
- Turn-taking    Acting on an object in turn, vocalising in turn, taking part in physical play routines

At the intentional communicator stage, the child behaves purposefully in order to communicate, possibly using the following behaviours to communicate and convey these meanings:-

- Draw attention to (self, events, objects, people)    Vocalising and looking, tugging and pulling, coming close and learning
- Request (objects, actions, information or more)    Reaching, putting adult's hand on item, extended reach – open palm gestures, (arms up carry)
- Greeting    Hand out and vocalising, waving bye, approaching and hugging
- Give information    Pointing and showing, giving, taking adult to show what has happened
- Protest and reject    Crying, pushing/stiffening, throwing by gesture
- Respond yes/no    vocalising/head nod – yes, head shake- no by gesture

Intensive Interaction

Intensive interaction is one way of accelerating intentional communication by leading a child from passivity, through reciprocity to imitation.  It involves intense, highly focused sessions that can last from a few seconds to a few minutes.  It relies on the teacher being able to deploy intuitive responsiveness using face, voice and body.

Intensive Interaction activities are highly interactive, with the teacher working from the behaviour of the learner. The activities can operate at many levels; they can be active and physical, but also quiet and restful.  They can use whole body movements, simple arm or fine motor movement or facial expression.  Music is usually used to motivate or stimulate children to move and also objects which demonstrate movement such as soft fabrics, scarves etc.

Activities and experiences to develop speaking:-
- choice making activities – e.g. offer choice of two toys for child to indicate by gesture or voice which he would like
- circle time song box, children choose object or picture to direct group activity
- snack time, choosing between drink, biscuit etc. using signing, symbols or vocalising
- use singing games, rhymes and songs, encouraging children to join in

- encourage eye-pointing, gesture etc. to indicate choice or show interest
- use humour to motivate responses
- use IT equipment which is sound activated to encourage children to vocalise
- puppets, dolls, etc. can encourage children to talk back or to talk *for* the puppet
- role play story telling, children pretend to be teacher and tell familiar or made up stories
- model and encourage children to use a range of spoken phrases and sentences in different environmental situations – e.g. commenting, questioning, exclaiming, instructing etc.

Expressive communication

As the child becomes an intentional communicator and begins to influence his environment and the behaviour of others, he also begins to develop understanding and comprehension skills. If able to babble or vocalise, the child begins to combine vocalisation with other communicating skills such as facial expression, gesture, eye or finger pointing, imitation etc. If unable to vocalise, signs and symbols may be used.  Gradually a vocabulary of single words / signs / symbols is built up and used to convey meanings:-
- existence – drawing attention to an object, using 'look' or the name of an object
- disappearance - comments when objects or people go away – e.g. 'gone', 'bye',' no'
- recurrence – request for more of an item, action or person e.. 'more', 'again', 'want'
- possession – relationship between an object, person and themselves e.g. 'mine' or point to themselves when asked 'who wants a biscuit?'
- rejection – rejecting an object, action, event or person e.g. 'no'
- non existence – something not where expected to be e.g. 'gone'
- location – convey position of an object or where it should be e.g. 'there'
- action – request action e.g. 'kick' indicating football
- agent – indicating an adult to carry out an action
- object – both labelling objects and relationship between objects
- attributes – explore and communicate properties of an object or person

Further language development occurs through a combination of structured teaching sessions and language used in everyday situations.  Receptive language (understanding) needs to be developed further if expressive language is also to develop.  Regular assessment of both areas need to be made by the practitioner if activities are to be pitched at the right level for the child.  Gaps in learning need to be identified in order to inform future planning and to set appropriate targets. Communication and language targets are arrived at by careful monitoring of the child's progress via the use of Connecting Steps V5 EYFS B Squared programme. Targets are clearly displayed in the classrooms so that all staff working with the child can identify his/her current needs.

7. **Augmentative Communication**

Augmentative communication involves the use of additional means of expressing intention alongside vocalisation.  This can include the use of signing (Makaton), symbols (PECS), or technology which can be a simple switch or a more complex voice simulator system. Augmentative Communication does not replace spoken language but rather enhances it. Despite the fears of some parents that the introduction of other communication systems may hinder the development of spoken language, the converse has been shown to be true.  Non-verbal children using augmentative systems often vocalise and verbalise as they communicate, they exhibit less frustration and anger than those who have no supplementary means of communicating or expressing their needs.

However, no one system is appropriate for all users and a flexible approach needs to be used in setting up a choice or combination of systems.  Teachers, speech therapists and parents

are usually involved in choosing and setting up a communication system for a child and great care is taken that it is understood by everyone using it and that it is introduced in a controlled and consistent manner with the child. It needs to take account of the child's abilities and disabilities – learning and physical.  A system introduced in early years can grow with a child, meeting developing needs and may, in some instances, be retained as the primary means of communication throughout life.  However, it can be phased out, and often is, when the child develops more effective verbal communication skills.

The augmentative system chosen needs to be readily available to the child within the environment – it is their voice! Signs and/or symbols should be present and should be used for labelling as well as alongside vocalisation in songs, stories and general conversation. Signs and symbols should be used consistently and constantly with the child and their use should be modelled throughout the day. Opportunities should be created for one to one work and for group activities involving practice of communication techniques.  Any augmentative communication system should include facial expression, body movement, vocalisation or gesture; all are necessary for total and effective communication.

Photographs, labels, symbols and objects of reference

These are used around the school to enable children to gain an understanding of where they are and/or what is likely to be happening next.  The symbols may be used as a visual timetable to help children to become more familiar with routines and to enable them to anticipate changes of activity.  Objects of reference are used for the same purposes and are particularly useful for children with visual impairments who may find pictures or symbols difficult or impossible to distinguish.

Makaton

Signing is used across the school with all pupils as a means of clarifying and refining speech. It often compliments songs and adds interest and excitement to stories. Some children choose to use it alongside their speech and for others it provides the predominant means of making their needs known.  As spoken language develops, the child often drops the signing as it is no longer needed. Greenhall has a range of Makaton books, picture symbols and DVD's as a resource for developing signing skills.

PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System)

For some children, language spoken by adults does not convey meaning easily, either because of a hearing or perception difficulty, or due to social interaction difficulties which hamper eye contact or spatial awareness.  PECS is a highly structured method of teaching the mechanics of language – e.g. I make a sound and receive something back, (cause and effect). It involves the exchange of a picture symbol for something that the child wants – e.g. food item, special toy etc.  Spoken vocabulary always accompanies the picture exchange and as the child begins to understand the process more symbols and less facilitation for the child to make the exchange are added.

The symbols are usually standard black and white line drawings used fairly universally in other schools but can also include photographs of actual objects where the child might have difficulty recognizing a line drawing.  As the child becomes more proficient with the picture exchange system and acquires a vocabulary of simple words, the symbols can be compiled into a communication book which enables the child to 'talk' with simple sentence construction. As with the other methods of augmentative communication, PECS can be developed into the main method of communication for the child or it can be phased out as spoken language develops alongside it.

<u>PODD</u>

PODD (Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display) communication books were developed in Australia by Gayle Porter, originally for children with cerebral palsy. The PODD communication system is taught through a focus on natural language stimulation, where visual language is modelled alongside verbal. The adult language partner points to the symbols representing the key words of her sentence while speaking. The children therefore see picture symbols used for an entire range of functions by capable communication partners, and in doing so learn how to use this communication method within natural settings. This way of communicating echoes how typically developing children learn language.

At Greenhall, PODD is used alongside existing communication techniques, such as Makaton and objects of reference, according to each child's needs and preferences. Children are not forced to use, or even to look at the displays, but any attempt to use the symbols in a communicative manner gains a positive response.

Introduction to the use of PODD communication books may begin with the use of single sheets of topic specific vocabulary, known as Aided Language Displays, or Activity Displays. These relate to specific play activities and are located in those areas throughout the setting, for example 'snack' boards at the snack table and 'mark-making' by the mark making area.

PODD communication books aim to have a vocabulary wide enough to meet the learner's needs. As this naturally changes as the child's proficiency with AAC grows, different formats of PODD book are available, ranging from nine symbols per page, up to containing several hundred symbols overall. Books are also personalised with vocabulary or topics important to the user. As with Activity Displays, children learn to use it through aided language stimulation, through constant modelling of how to use the book in natural situations, rather through any discrete teaching. It is therefore crucial that the child's communication book is used throughout the day in all situations, both to ensure that modelling is frequent enough for the child to learn its meaning, and so that communication is modeled in a wide range of scenarios and for a mix of different functions.

The name 'Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display' refers to the fact that there is a structured way of navigating between pages throughout the book, through a series of 'go to page (number) instructions and through operational commands such as 'turn the page' and 'go back.' Each page contains vocabulary predictably associated with that topic (e.g., including pronouns, verbs, nouns and descriptors), rather than the traditional method of organising vocabulary purely according to category. This reduces the number of page turns which are needed, and therefore increases the speed and efficiency of communication. In addition, PODD books contain 'pragmatic branch starters' such as 'I'm telling you something' 'Let's pretend' or 'I'm asking a question,' which allows the AAC user to show the communicative function of their message, something which is often expressed through context, gesture or intonation by a verbal speaker.

<u>Summary – A Total Communication Approach</u>

*In recent years, research has shown that if practitioners assume children are capable of more, and provide input to match these assumptions, then the results often exceed the expectations of everyone working with them (Mirenda, 2008).*

At Greenhall, we use a Total Communication approach, providing the children with a toolkit full of a range of communication strategies and tools that they can use as appropriate. The importance of modelling communication and language is crucial and we believe in creating a communication & language rich environment. Thus, we invest highly in staff CPD in this area to ensure we provide the very best opportunities for our children.

Adults model the use of communication in all its forms, creating interactions and acting in response to children's communication attempts. For example, assuming a child's vocalisation or action is an attempt at communication and responding accordingly. In this way, we are encouraging the child to repeat this and to make links between their action and response achieved (cause and effect).

## 8. English as an Additional Language (EAL)

We recognise that speaking more than one language has lots of advantages for children. Children will learn English from a strong foundation in their home language. It is important for that we encourage families to use their home language for linguistic as well as cultural reasons. Children learning English will typically go through a quiet phase when they do not say very much and may then use words in both languages in the same sentence. Where a child uses English as an additional language, we will always talk to parents about what language they speak at home, and try to learn a few key words and use these to support the child at Greenhall. The use of symbols / signs alongside speech also serves as a visual cue to aid understanding for children with EAL.

## 9. Assessment, recording & reporting

Children's progress is recorded on session evaluations and used to inform future planning. Annotated photographs and observations are kept in the children's individual electronic learning journeys. Reference is made to the aspect of Communication & Language as well as the child's age and stage, where appropriate.

Children's Communication and Language skills are assessed using the EYFS and B-Squared EYFS assessment tool on entry to provide a baseline and then each term. This is reported to the Headteacher and data is analysed with regards to progress made at the end of each academic year although information is gathered on trends at the end of each term.

At the end of their reception year, children are assessed against the Early Learning Goals in line with National Regulations.

The majority of children at Greenhall also have an outcome related to Communication and Interaction as part of their EHC Plan. This is reflected in their Personalised Learning Plan. These targets are reviewed termly with the EHC reviewed every 6 months or annually, depending on the age of the child.

We work closely with other professionals such as Speech & Language Therapists to support the development of children's communication & language skills. These professionals will produce their own reports and therapy programmes which are used alongside the systems we use in school.

## 10. Monitoring Effectiveness

The coordinator for Communication & Language at Greenhall is Joanne di Castiglione. She will monitor the effectiveness of the policy together with the curriculum link Governor. They will then report back to the Headteacher and Local Governing Board.

## 11. Equal Opportunities

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Equal Opportunities policy.

*Reviewed and approved: 7/3/23*

Signed: …………………………………………(Headteacher)  Date: …………………
Signed: ……………………………………………. (Chair of LGB)  Date: …………………