

Joseph Hood Primary School  
Parent Workshop

*Child Talk and  
Independence  
in Early Years*

17.10.2025



# It is important to say...



Each child is an individual and will develop at their own rate. A lot of what we will talk about during this workshop illustrates what a child is 'typically' able to do at a certain age.

For children who are EAL, it is understandable their language skills will be at a different stage to English speaking children. However, EAL children often arrive in our setting already able to communicate effectively. It is English they need to learn, not communication. Research suggests that bilingualism has many benefits and that is cause for celebration.

It is important that we as teachers and parents have high expectations of children so they can achieve and **'be the best they can!'**

# The Areas of Learning

## Prime Areas of Learning

Communication and Language

Physical Development

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

## Specific Areas of Learning

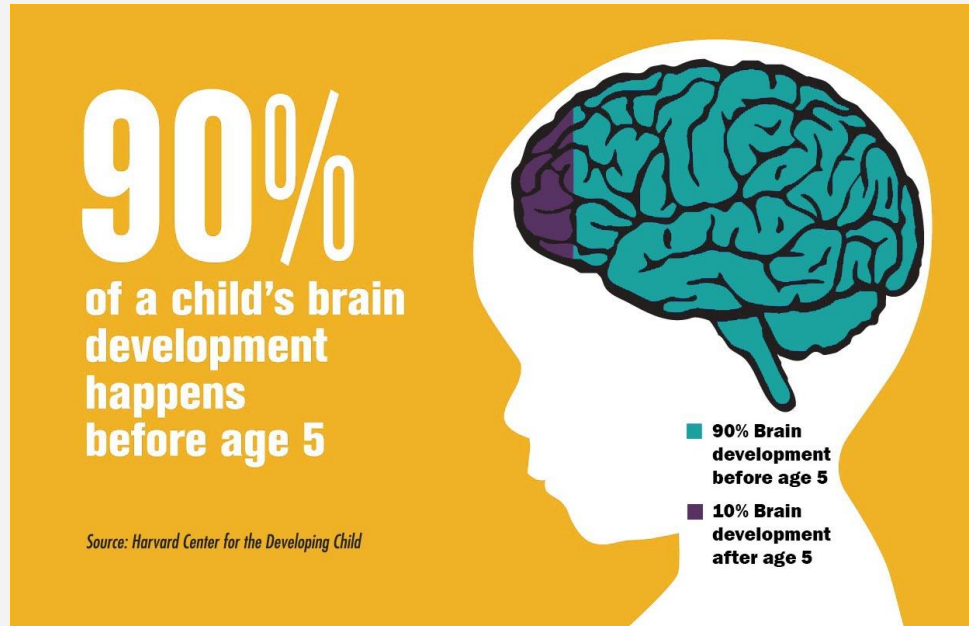
Literacy

Mathematics

Understanding the World

Expressive Arts and Design





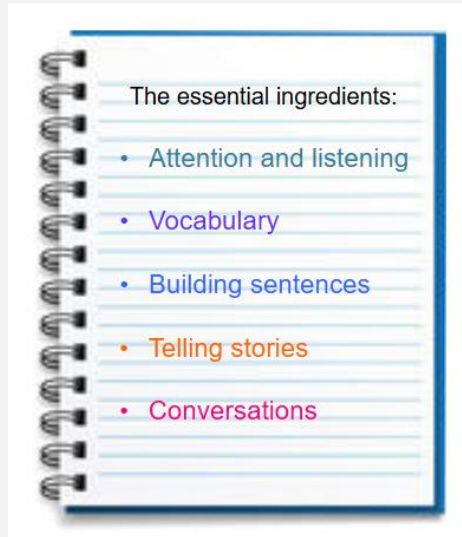
At birth, the average baby's brain is about a quarter of the size of the average adult brain. Incredibly, it doubles in size in the first year and keeps growing to about 80% of adult size by age 3 and 90% – nearly full grown – by age 5.

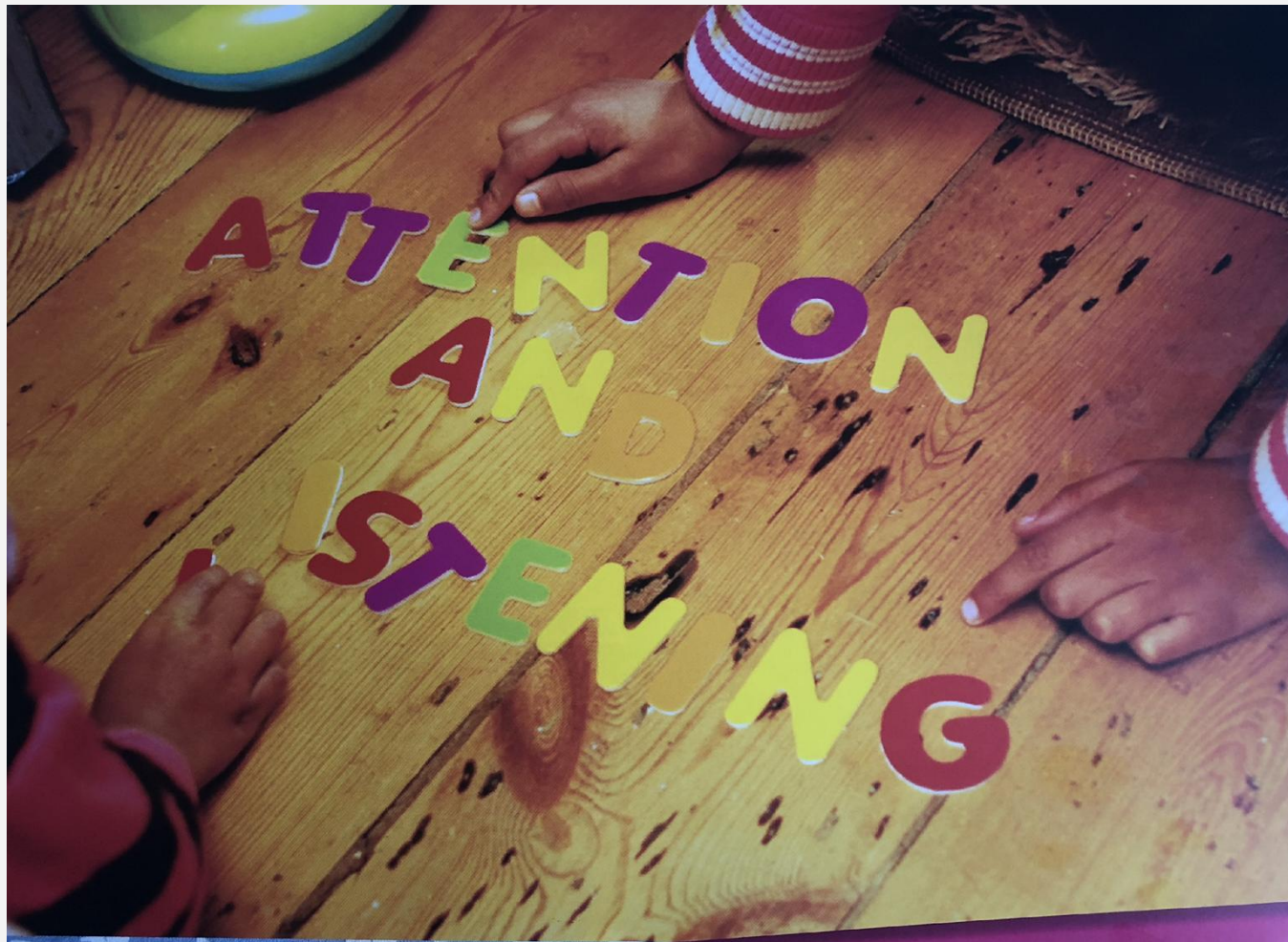
We are all familiar with the idea of having a balanced diet, incorporating 5 portions of fruit or veg a day.



# Let's use this analogy...

It is recommended that children practise communication and language skills in 5 different areas.





# Attention and Listening

*We're always asking children to listen, but they don't always know how to.'*

- Listening is essential if children are able to make sense of the words that surrounds them.
- It is also fundamental to having a proper 2 way conversation.

## Ways you can help your child:

- Set aside some quiet time each day where there is nothing to distract them from listening. Turning off the TV is a good start. You could read a book, play a game, do a puzzle together, engage in role play together.
- Engage your child's attention (e.g. by saying their name first) to make sure they are listening before giving the instruction.
- Praise them for doing good listening. "Well done. You knew what to do. You were doing good listening." – reinforce and recognise good listening skills.
  - It is important adults demonstrate good listening with children.
- Sometimes it is necessary to cut down on what we're saying to help our children listen. E.g. "Ellie, shoes, coat, bag, please – brilliant. We're ready to go!"



# Vocabulary

*Helping children learn new words is not only important, it's also great fun!*

- A good vocabulary is essential if children are to understand what's going on around them, get to grips with new ideas and express their own thoughts.

Ways you can help your child:

- Start by helping children to make connections between words and objects – e.g.  
“Look  
there’s a helicopter.” “Mummy’s eating mango.”
  - Explain what new words mean.
- Demonstrate how words are linked to other words. They might be similar in meaning (tall, high, long) or they might fit in the same category, e.g. animals.
- Have fun with words! It really helps children to remember them and organise them properly in their head.

The key to building vocabulary is lots of repetition and making links between new words and things children already know.



# Research highlights:

- Children's vocabulary at 30 months is influenced by the quantity of words parents use 1 year earlier. (Children aged 12-24 months benefit from hearing lots of talk and many examples of words.)
- Children's vocabulary at 42 months is influenced by parents' use of sophisticated words 1 year earlier – children aged 24-36 months learn a lot of common vocabulary and are ready to learn more difficult words such as 'purchase' instead of 'buy' or 'weary' instead of 'tired'. **Don't be afraid to use big words with children!**
- Children's vocabulary at 54 months is influenced by parents' use of narratives and explanations, one year earlier. Children aged 36-48 months benefit from conversations about things that have happened in the past or something planned for the future or providing explanations about things (answering children's 'Why?' questions).



# Building Sentences

*'Putting words together to make sentences is an exciting step in a child's development.'*

As children begin to express themselves in sentences, they also start exercising more control over their lives, for example, making their needs known.

## Ways you can help your child:

- Provide a safe, non critical environment in which children can practise their skills.
- Provide opportunities which encourage children to use their sentence building skills.
  - Guessing games.
- As an important role model, it is essential that you speak in clear sentences yourself.
  - Model how the sentence could be extended.





# Telling Stories



*'Stories are woven into the fabric of life.'*

Children as young as 3 or 4, given the right support, are able to convey information in the form of a simple story.

Storytelling exercises act as great communication workouts because they call on all the other skills.

Being good at telling stories verbally is a good foundation for writing.

## Ways you can help your child:

- Give your time as a listener.
- Respond to their stories.
- Let your facial expressions reflect your interest.
- Ask gentle questions.
- If necessary, prompt them to tell you what happened next.
- Encourage story telling around the house.

It is important for children to hear stories in as many different situations and settings as possible.





# Conversations



*'Conversations make the world go around.'*

Children need to become familiar with having conversations using their language for different purposes.

## Ways you can help your child:

- Play lots of turn taking games. Taking turns is central to two way communication.
- Comment on what children are doing or saying. This can create much better conversations than simply asking lots of questions, "I noticed you were playing with ...today..."

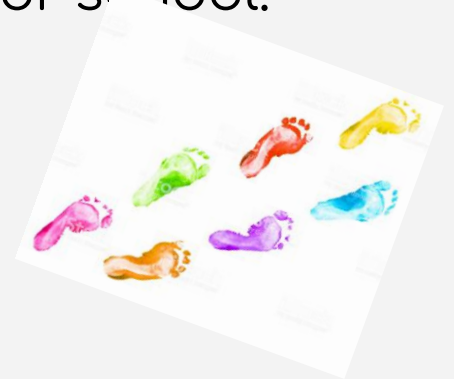
Our Nursery and Reception learning environment is a language rich space with many communication friendly areas where children feel confident to explore language.

These activities are also things you can do at home!

# Independence

Children's language skills are fundamental in supporting them to become independent little people.

Alongside language they have learnt in the home it is important they develop other independent skills which will prepare them when starting nursery or school.



At nursery we build upon the independence skills the children are developing at home.

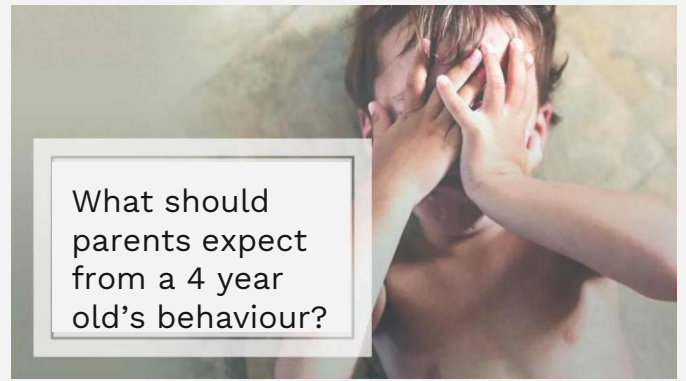
- Children learn to self select their own snack and follow a sequence of routines.
  - Practise doing up zips.
- Changing shoes, e.g. wellie boots for the mud kitchen.
  - Eating lunch with their friends.
    - Tidying up.
  - Hanging coats up on their peg.
  - Putting tissues and rubbish in the bin.
- Putting aprons on when playing in the water.

By the time children start Reception they should have developed a lot of these skills and will be becoming independent little people who have solid foundations in the prime areas of learning. They are now ready to build upon these skills and face the new challenges as they start school.

This will include:

- Developing independence whilst in the lunch hall. (Queuing for lunch, choosing lunch, eating lunch, clearing away lunch tray.)
  - Taking more responsibility over their own belongings.
  - Be able to put their jumper and coat on independently





- Enjoys playing with other children and pleasing their friends
- Shares and takes turns, at least most of the time, and understands rules of games
- Understands and obeys rules; however, your 4- to 5-year-old will still be demanding and uncooperative at times.
- Is becoming more independent
- Expresses anger verbally, rather than physically (most of the time)
- Gets the difference between make-believe and reality

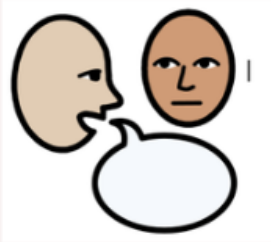
At Joseph hood, we talk to the children.

We are at  
the child's  
level

We give  
them time to  
talk

We  
Listen

We  
respond  
sensitively



We don't ask  
too  
many questions

## Let's talk

Before asking another question, try making 4 comments. Try starting with ...

*I wonder ...*

*Maybe ...*

*This reminds me of ...*

*How can / did you make it ?*

*I like the way you ...*

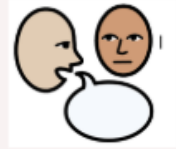
*How did you ... ?*

*I wonder what would happen if... ?*

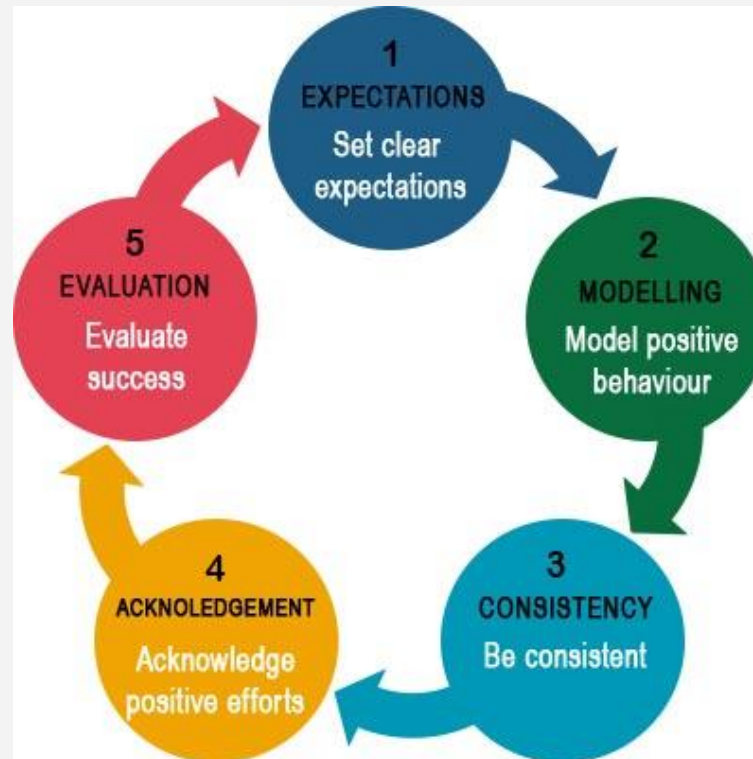
*I can see you have ...*

*What could we use for a ... ?*

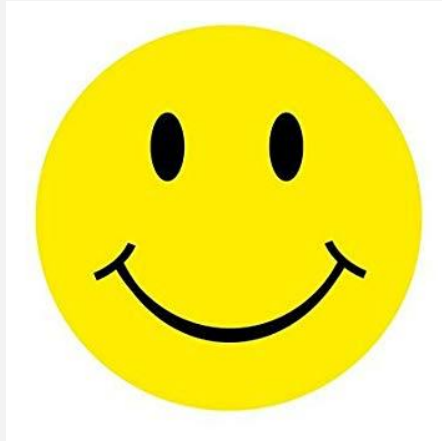
*So you think that ...*



# Strategies to support behaviour at home



*We are in a very privileged  
position to watch this  
incredible journey!*



Questions ?

