Early Language Policy

1. Aims

Early language development is fundamental to children's learning and underpins success in reading, writing and across the wider curriculum. Strong language skills enable children to communicate effectively, develop understanding and express their ideas with confidence.

At our school, we prioritise early language development through high-quality interactions, rich vocabulary teaching and carefully planned learning opportunities.

Our approach is informed by research from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), which highlights the importance of high-quality adult–child interactions in supporting language development.

The aims of this policy are to:

- ensure a consistent approach to supporting early language across the school
- develop children's vocabulary, speaking and listening skills
- provide rich opportunities for conversation and language development
- ensure all staff understand their role in promoting language development
- support children to develop confidence in expressing their ideas
- promote strong foundations for reading and writing

2. Principles

Early language development at our school is based on the following principles:

- language development is supported through high-quality adult–child interactions
- adults model rich and accurate language
- children are given frequent opportunities to talk, explain and rehearse ideas
- vocabulary is taught explicitly and revisited regularly
- language development is supported across all areas of the curriculum
- staff use evidence-informed strategies to extend children's thinking and language

These principles ensure that children develop the language skills needed for success in school and beyond.

3. The SHREC Approach

Staff use the SHREC approach to support language development during interactions with children.

SHREC stands for:

S – Share attention
Adults ensure they are focused on the same activity or object as the child to support meaningful communication.

H – Respond
Adults respond to children's attempts to communicate, acknowledging and valuing their contributions.

R – Expand
Adults build on children's language by extending their sentences or adding new vocabulary.

E – Conversation
Adults engage children in sustained conversations, encouraging them to explain their ideas and experiences.

C – Take turns
Adults support turn-taking in conversations, allowing children time to respond and develop their thinking.

This approach ensures interactions are purposeful, responsive and supportive of language development.

4. High Quality Adult-Child Interactions

High-quality interactions are central to developing children's language.

Staff support language development through:

- modelling rich and accurate vocabulary
- extending children's sentences
- encouraging children to explain their thinking
- giving children time to respond
- building on children's interests and experiences

Staff are encouraged to use the "1 question to 5 comments" approach, which prioritises modelling language and engaging in meaningful conversations rather than asking large numbers of questions.
This helps to create natural, sustained interactions with children.

5. Language Development in Continuous Provision

Language development is embedded within high-quality continuous provision, particularly within the Early Years environment.

Provision areas are carefully planned to promote conversation and interaction.

Adults use these opportunities to:

- model new vocabulary
- extend children's ideas through conversation
- support imaginative play
- encourage children to explain and describe their thinking

Activities are designed to encourage children to talk, collaborate and share ideas with others.

6. Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary is taught explicitly across the curriculum.

In particular, vocabulary is carefully planned within reading lessons, where children are introduced to new words and given opportunities to discuss their meaning.

Staff support vocabulary development by:

- introducing and explaining new words
- revisiting vocabulary in different contexts
- encouraging children to use new vocabulary in conversation
- modelling rich language during teaching and play

This helps children develop a deeper understanding of language and expand their vocabulary.

7. Oral Rehearsal and Writing

Speaking and listening skills play a vital role in supporting writing development.

Teachers plan opportunities for oral rehearsal within writing lessons, allowing children to practise their ideas verbally before writing.

This may include:

- discussing ideas with a partner
- rehearsing sentences aloud
- explaining thinking before writing
- retelling stories or information

These opportunities help children organise their thoughts and develop confidence in their writing.

8. Language Development Across the Curriculum

Supporting language development is a priority across the whole school.

Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to:

- explain their thinking
- participate in discussions
- present ideas to others
- ask and answer questions

These opportunities help pupils develop confidence, clarity and fluency in spoken language.

9. Language-Rich Learning Environment

Classrooms are designed to support language development through a talk-rich environment.

This may include:

- carefully planned continuous provision areas
- vocabulary displays linked to current learning
- storybooks and texts available across the classroom
- sentence stems to support speaking
- opportunities for collaborative learning and discussion

Teachers model language consistently and encourage pupils to use subject-specific vocabulary during learning.

Creating a language-rich environment supports children in developing confidence and independence in communication.

10. Monitoring and Professional Development

The school is committed to continually improving early language provision.

Staff have recently taken part in professional development focused on supporting early language development to ensure consistent practice across the Early Years team.

Monitoring may include:

- lesson observations
- learning walks
- discussions with pupils
- review of classroom environments and provision

This ensures that high-quality interactions and language development remain a priority.

11. Roles and Responsibilities

Headteacher / SLT

- ensure early language development remains a priority across the school
- provide professional development opportunities for staff
- monitor implementation of the policy

Early Years Lead

- support staff in implementing effective language strategies
- monitor early language practice in the Early Years
- ensure provision supports communication and language development

Teachers

- provide opportunities for meaningful conversation
- model high-quality language
- teach and revisit vocabulary across the curriculum

Teaching Assistants

- support language development through interactions and play
- reinforce vocabulary and communication skills

This policy was written in March 2026 and will be reviewed in March 2027.

Signed (Subject Leader):

Head Teacher:

Chair of Governors:
