

Talking to parents about talk

Babies listen to and can recognise voices before they're born. From birth, they learn to communicate by looking at their parents, listening and taking turns. As they develop they begin to understand what people are saying; they learn how to say words and sentences and their speech becomes clear. This process continues as they grow; the quality of talk in the home influences children and young people's outcomes throughout their educational journey. Parents are the best people to help their children learn – they know them best, they care about them most and want to give them the best start in life.



Working to help parents understand the essential role they play in developing their children's communication skills is a key part of cracking communication in your school. Below are some top tips you can share with parents of children of any age to help them feel confident about supporting their child's communication.



- Talk to your child about the things they're interested in - this helps to get them enthusiastic about the conversation and also gives you a good opportunity to find out more about what they enjoy and why.
- Use comments and prompts to keep the conversation up. They're better than questions for keeping children involved. For example, if your child is eating an ice cream, comment, 'Mmm, that looks good. I love ice cream.' They can then respond with more words than if you ask, 'What's that you're eating?'
- Put aside time each day for talking together but remember, this doesn't need to be time you wouldn't otherwise spend together. A trip to the supermarket, cooking dinner or a car or bus journey are all great opportunities for talking together.
- When you're talking with your child remember to OWL...
 - 1) Observe your child
 - 2) Wait for them to interact with you
 - 3) Listen to their responses to you
- Explore words - talk about new words when your child comes across them. As your child gets older, they may well begin to learn words you don't know - this is a great opportunity for them to take the lead and use their communication skills to help you learn something new.
- Most importantly, enjoy conversations with your child! Children learn from conversations with adults as much as with their friends. If your child knows you like talking and listening to them they will want to talk and listen to you.