EYFS Autumn Adult Interaction & Language Focus

Heatherlands Primary School

High-quality interactions, oracy and vocabulary across the Autumn Term 2026

Purpose

This document focuses on adult practice: how adults deliberately support children to develop the skills identified within our Communication and Language Progression. The two documents work together: the Communication and Language Progression identifies what children are learning and developing, while the Adult Interaction and Language Focus identifies what adults do to enable and extend this learning.

Across the Autumn Term, adult interaction strategies are introduced, modelled, practised and embedded in a developmentally appropriate sequence that reflects children's transition into Reception. Strategies are layered rather than replaced, enabling adults to build a growing toolkit and select approaches responsively according to the child, interaction and context.

Oracy and vocabulary development are woven throughout. Adults create language-rich opportunities through play, high-quality texts, stories, rhymes, first-hand experiences and carefully planned provision. New vocabulary is explicitly introduced, modelled and revisited, with repeated opportunities for children to hear, explore, use and apply new words in meaningful contexts.

How we use each two-week focus

- **Week A – Introduce, Model & Practise**
  Adults are introduced to the new interaction strategy, deliberately practise it across the provision and begin to notice how children respond.
- **Week B – Embed, Notice & Reflect**
  Adults continue to use the strategy, alongside those already introduced, noticing its impact on children's communication and reflecting on what is working well and what may need adapting.

Strategies are layered, not replaced. Each new focus is added to the adult interaction toolkit so that, over time, adults draw responsively on an increasing range of approaches.

Vocabulary is a golden thread: introduce → model → revisit → use → apply in different contexts.

Adults draw on play, routines, high-quality texts, Bumping into Books, first-hand experiences, indoor and outdoor provision and other meaningful contexts for talk.

The fortnightly Adult Interaction Focus is displayed in our speech clouds and identified on weekly planning as a visible reminder for adults. The wording is deliberately short and memorable, while the prompts and guidance within this document support adults to apply each strategy responsively in practice.

Autumn overview

Weeks	Adult interaction focus	Children are…	Vocabulary / language thread
1–2	Notice, Comment & Connect	Settling, connecting and feeling safe	Belonging, routines, relationships and feelings
3–4	Narrate & Model	Learning routines and joining play	Language linked to actions, play, stories and routines
5–6	Repeat, Recast & Extend	Communicating with growing confidence	Richer vocabulary and fuller oral sentences
7–8	Invite Talk & Listen	Becoming more confident communicators	Retrieving vocabulary and sustaining exchanges
9–10	Wonder, Explain & Reason	Thinking, predicting and problem-solving	Descriptive, explanatory and reasoning language
11–12	Retell, Sequence & Make Links	Connecting experiences, stories and learning	Narrative, sequence, recall and oral composition
13–14	Sustain & Build Conversations	Increasingly secure and independent	Flexible vocabulary and sustained collaborative talk

Autumn principle: fewer questions at first; more noticing, commenting, modelling and waiting.

Weeks 1–2: Notice, Comment & Connect

Children are… Settling into Reception, building relationships, learning new routines and beginning to feel safe, secure and confident within their new environment.

Why this focus now?

At the start of Reception, our priority is connection and communication without pressure. Children arrive with different experiences, levels of confidence and language starting points. For some children, including those developing English as an additional language, listening and observing may initially be an important part of joining in. Adults tune into children's interests, get alongside their play and use comments rather than relying on questions. This provides rich language linked to what children are seeing, doing and experiencing, while giving them time and space to respond in their own way.

Adult practice

- Get alongside the child and follow their focus of attention.
- Notice what the child is doing before deciding whether you need to speak.
- Comment more than you question.
- Use warm, natural language linked to what the child can see, hear, feel or experience.
- Introduce useful vocabulary naturally within the interaction.
- Pause and wait – give the child time to process and choose whether and how to respond.
- Notice and respond to non-verbal communication, gesture and expression.
- Value home languages and different ways of communicating; limited spoken English does not mean limited understanding or ideas.
- Follow the child's lead and allow interactions to develop naturally.

Useful prompts

"I can see…"	"You've…"
"You found…"	"I noticed…"
"That looks…"	"You're…"

Vocabulary Spotlight

Focus on language for belonging, relationships, routines and feelings. Select a small number of useful words linked to current routines, experiences, stories and provision. Adults deliberately introduce, model and revisit these words in meaningful contexts, creating repeated opportunities for children to hear and begin to use them.

Introduce: Which 3–5 words are we deliberately introducing?

Model: How will adults use them naturally and in meaningful sentences?

Revisit: Where will children encounter them again – texts, play, routines, experiences or provision?

Use and apply: What opportunities will children have to use the words themselves and transfer them into another context?

Rich language opportunities

Familiar stories, rhymes and songs; Bumping into Books; names and photographs of significant people and places; classroom routines; role-play; shared experiences; and everyday interactions during child-initiated learning.

What to avoid

- A stream of questions such as "What are you doing? What colour is it? How many have you got?"
- Testing children on vocabulary they may not yet know.
- Expecting an immediate verbal response.
- Filling every silence.
- Taking over children's play in an attempt to create conversation.

At this stage: fewer questions, more comments, more pauses.

Link to our Communication & Language progression

Supports children to develop classroom vocabulary, express needs and feelings, use simple language and begin to initiate and respond to interactions with familiar adults and peers.

Week B: Notice & reflect

Where did commenting lead to spontaneous communication or talk? Which children responded particularly well to a low-pressure approach? Are we giving enough processing and wait time? Which new words are children beginning to recognise or use? Are our interactions following children's interests?

Weeks 3–4: Narrate & Model

Children are… Becoming familiar with Reception routines and increasingly confident about joining, organising and sustaining play.

Why this focus now?

As children become more secure, adults can attach language to familiar actions, routines and play. Selective narration helps children connect words with what is happening in the moment, while modelling gives them useful vocabulary and sentence structures without requiring them to copy or repeat. This is particularly supportive for children developing English as an additional language because meaning is grounded in a shared context.

Adult practice

- Narrate selectively – describe significant actions or ideas rather than providing a constant running commentary.
- Model the language children may need to enter, organise or sustain play.
- Use clear sequence language during familiar routines: first, next, then.
- Model complete but natural sentences and useful sentence structures.
- Use gesture, objects and visual context alongside spoken language where helpful.
- Repeat useful vocabulary naturally across routines, stories and provision.
- Model language for social interaction, including joining play, asking for help and negotiating.

Useful prompts

"You're putting…"	"First we… then…"
"I'm going to…"	"You could say…"
"The water is flowing…"	"You've chosen…"

Vocabulary Spotlight

Introduce vocabulary linked to routines, provision, current stories and first-hand experiences. Include useful action words, positional language, object names and a small number of richer words that children can encounter repeatedly in context.

Introduce: Which 3–5 words are we deliberately introducing?

Model: How will adults use them naturally and in meaningful sentences?

Revisit: Where will children encounter them again – texts, play, routines, experiences or provision?

Use and apply: What opportunities will children have to use the words themselves and transfer them into another context?

Rich language opportunities

Daily routines; role-play; construction and small world; outdoor play; songs and rhymes with actions; high-quality texts and Bumping into Books; shared snack and other familiar social routines.

What to avoid

- Talking continuously and crowding out children's own communication.
- Expecting children to copy every adult model.
- Narrating the obvious when it adds no useful language.
- Using unnecessarily complex language that disconnects from the child's experience.

Link to our Communication & Language progression

Supports children to talk about what they are doing, name familiar objects and people, understand and use new vocabulary, and hear models of increasingly complete sentences.

Week B: Notice & reflect

Are our language models useful and natural? Which routines or areas of provision are generating the richest talk? Which words are children beginning to use independently? Are we modelling language children can use with one another?

Weeks 5–6: Repeat, Recast & Extend

Children are… Beginning to communicate with greater confidence and offering adults more words, sentences and ideas to build upon.

Why this focus now?

Adults now build directly from children's own communication. Repeating shows that we have listened; recasting provides an accurate model without correction; extending adds a manageable amount of vocabulary, grammar or meaning. The child's idea remains at the centre of the interaction.

Adult practice

- Repeat the child's key word, phrase or idea to acknowledge and value their contribution.
- Recast grammatical errors naturally rather than asking the child to correct or repeat.
- Extend by adding one useful word, detail, idea or sentence structure.
- Introduce richer or more precise vocabulary within the extension.
- Keep the extension close enough to the child's original language to remain meaningful.
- Pause after extending so the child can continue the exchange.
- Use the same approach during play, stories, Helicopter Stories and first-hand experiences.

Useful prompts

Child: "Big tower." Adult: "Yes, a really tall tower."	Child: "He goed fast." Adult: "He went really fast!"
"It's enormous – much bigger than this one."	"You made the bridge and the road."
"The leaf is crunchy and dry."	"You're telling me that…"

Vocabulary Spotlight

Revisit familiar words and deliberately introduce richer alternatives or more precise vocabulary. Model the new word within a meaningful sentence so children hear both its meaning and how it can be used.

Introduce: Which 3–5 words are we deliberately introducing?

Model: How will adults use them naturally and in meaningful sentences?

Revisit: Where will children encounter them again – texts, play, routines, experiences or provision?

Use and apply: What opportunities will children have to use the words themselves and transfer them into another context?

Rich language opportunities

Helicopter Stories; story retelling; imaginative and role-play; construction; outdoor exploration; artwork and making; first-hand experiences; Bumping into Books and rich shared texts.

What to avoid

- Correcting children directly or asking them to repeat the 'right' sentence.
- Adding so much language that the child's original meaning is lost.
- Turning every utterance into a teaching moment.
- Introducing a sophisticated word without enough context to make its meaning clear.

Link to our Communication & Language progression

Supports children to understand and use new vocabulary, extend sentences, talk about familiar and personal experiences and communicate ideas with increasing confidence.

Week B: Notice & reflect

Are we extending by a manageable amount? Which new words have children begun to adopt? Are recasts conversational rather than corrective? Are we building from the child's idea rather than redirecting it?

Weeks 7–8: Invite Talk & Listen

Children are… More secure in the environment and increasingly ready to sustain longer exchanges, retrieve language and communicate ideas with adults and peers.

Why this focus now?

Once relationships and routines are established, adults can create more invitations for children to describe, explain and share ideas. Purposeful questions now have a stronger place, but the aim remains genuine conversation rather than adult-led interrogation. Adults listen carefully to the response and use it to decide what comes next.

Adult practice

- Use open invitations such as "Tell me about…" rather than relying on closed questions.
- Ask a purposeful question when it will deepen the interaction or help the child organise an idea.
- Allow generous thinking and processing time.
- Listen to the child's answer and respond to what they actually say.
- Encourage children to listen and respond to one another.
- Prompt children to retrieve and use vocabulary they have encountered previously.
- Continue to comment, model and extend – questioning does not replace earlier strategies.

Useful prompts

"Tell me about…"	"What do you think?"
"How did you…?"	"What could we do next?"
"I'd like to hear your idea."	"What did you notice?"

Vocabulary Spotlight

Encourage children to retrieve and use recently introduced vocabulary in conversation, play and storytelling. Notice and affirm independent use, then model further language where it adds meaning.

Introduce: Which 3–5 words are we deliberately introducing?

Model: How will adults use them naturally and in meaningful sentences?

Revisit: Where will children encounter them again – texts, play, routines, experiences or provision?

Use and apply: What opportunities will children have to use the words themselves and transfer them into another context?

Rich language opportunities

Small-group conversation; shared texts and Bumping into Books; role-play; Helicopter Stories; collaborative construction; Curiosity Cubes; shared experiences; indoor and outdoor provocations.

What to avoid

- Rapid-fire questioning.
- Questions where the adult already knows the answer simply to test recall.
- Moving straight to the next question without responding to the child's contribution.
- Using questions when a comment, model or pause would be more effective.

Link to our Communication & Language progression

Supports the move towards longer conversations, purposeful questioning, longer sentences, using talk to organise play and beginning to listen, respond to and build on the ideas of others.

Week B: Notice & reflect

Who is doing most of the talking? Are our questions genuinely purposeful? Are children retrieving vocabulary without immediate adult modelling? Are they beginning to respond to and build on one another's ideas?

Weeks 9–10: Wonder, Explain & Reason

Children are… Increasingly able to think aloud, make predictions, consider possibilities and begin explaining their ideas.

Why this focus now?

Adults model the language of thinking so children hear how possibilities, reasons and connections can be expressed. Wondering and shared thinking invite children into an idea without suggesting there is always one correct answer. This supports increasingly sophisticated oracy across play and the wider curriculum.

Adult practice

- Think aloud so children hear the process as well as the conclusion.
- Use "I wonder…" to open possibilities and shared thinking.
- Model tentative language such as maybe, perhaps, might and could.
- Model and encourage the use of 'because' when giving reasons.
- Invite children to predict, compare and explain.
- Use Curiosity Cubes, texts, first-hand experiences and provision as genuine contexts for wondering.
- Give children time to change or develop their thinking after hearing another idea.

Useful prompts

"I wonder what might happen if…"	"Maybe…"
"Perhaps it happened because…"	"What makes you think that?"
"What do you notice?"	"How is this the same or different?"

Vocabulary Spotlight

Introduce and revisit descriptive, comparative and explanatory vocabulary. Model words and sentence structures that support prediction, cause and effect, comparison and reasoning.

Introduce: Which 3–5 words are we deliberately introducing?

Model: How will adults use them naturally and in meaningful sentences?

Revisit: Where will children encounter them again – texts, play, routines, experiences or provision?

Use and apply: What opportunities will children have to use the words themselves and transfer them into another context?

Rich language opportunities

Curiosity Cubes; Understanding the World experiences; Forest School; non-fiction; story problems; construction; investigations; seasonal change; indoor and outdoor provocations.

What to avoid

- Repeatedly asking 'why?' without giving children language or thinking support.
- Correcting imaginative or tentative thinking too quickly.
- Valuing a correct answer more than the reasoning behind it.
- Asking children to explain before they have had time to observe or experience.

Link to our Communication & Language progression

Supports children to respond to why/how questions, use 'because', use descriptive language, make predictions and begin to explain their ideas.

Week B: Notice & reflect

Are children beginning to give reasons and make predictions? Which prompts generate the richest thinking? Are adults modelling reasoning language as well as asking children to reason? Which vocabulary is helping children articulate their thinking?

Weeks 11–12: Retell, Sequence & Make Links

Children are… Building a bank of shared stories, routines, visits, experiences and curriculum knowledge that can now be recalled, connected and organised through talk.

Why this focus now?

Children need repeated opportunities to retrieve language and organise experiences into a sequence. Adults support them to connect current learning with something previously heard, seen or experienced. Oral rehearsal is also an important bridge into composition: children need opportunities to say and shape an idea before they can represent or write it.

Adult practice

- Revisit shared experiences and familiar stories through conversation, photographs, props and play.
- Model and encourage sequence language: first, next, then, after that, finally.
- Encourage recall without turning it into a memory test.
- Connect new vocabulary to previously learned words, stories and experiences.
- Use Helicopter Stories and story retelling to support oral composition and narrative structure.
- Encourage children to talk through and rehearse an idea before mark-making or writing.
- Use meaningful indoor and outdoor enhancements and provocations as reasons to talk, imagine, compose and write.

Useful prompts

"Do you remember when…?"	"That reminds me of…"
"First… then… after that…"	"It's a bit like…"
"What happened next?"	"Tell me what you want to say first."

Vocabulary Spotlight

Revisit vocabulary from stories, first-hand experiences and curriculum learning. Deliberately connect new words with familiar concepts and encourage children to retrieve and use them during retelling and oral composition.

Introduce: Which 3–5 words are we deliberately introducing?

Model: How will adults use them naturally and in meaningful sentences?

Revisit: Where will children encounter them again – texts, play, routines, experiences or provision?

Use and apply: What opportunities will children have to use the words themselves and transfer them into another context?

Rich language opportunities

Helicopter Stories; Bumping into Books; familiar and traditional tales; photographs of shared experiences; role-play; visits and visitors; mark-making and writing provocations indoors and outdoors.

What to avoid

- Expecting detailed retells without enough scaffolding.
- Supplying the whole answer before the child has time to retrieve it.
- Focusing only on story retell – everyday experiences are valuable narratives too.
- Moving children straight to writing before they have had an opportunity to talk through the idea.

Link to our Communication & Language progression

Supports retelling simple stories, sequencing events, using past tense, making predictions and organising language before representing ideas through mark-making and writing.

Week B: Notice & reflect

Can children retrieve vocabulary away from the original teaching moment? Are they sequencing experiences with increasing independence? Are children making links for themselves? Are we giving enough opportunity for oral rehearsal before writing?

Weeks 13–14: Sustain & Build Conversations

Children are… Increasingly secure, independent and able to sustain purposeful interaction with adults and peers across a wider range of contexts.

Why this focus now?

The final Autumn focus brings the strategies together. Adults make deliberate choices about when to comment, model, recast, extend, invite, wonder, pause or make a link according to the child and the interaction. The goal is not more adult talk, but increasingly responsive adult talk that enables children to sustain, develop and apply their language.

Adult practice

- Follow the child's lead while looking for opportunities to deepen and sustain talk.
- Combine strategies rather than relying on one preferred technique.
- Support genuine back-and-forth exchanges between children as well as adult-child talk.
- Help children listen, respond to and begin to build on peers' ideas.
- Encourage flexible use of vocabulary across play, stories, provision and curriculum contexts.
- Use shared thinking to develop ideas collaboratively and solve problems.
- Continue to support oral rehearsal where children are moving from talk into mark-making and writing.

Useful prompts

Notice → comment → pause.	Repeat → extend → wait.
"Tell me more…"	"What do you think about ___'s idea?"
"That reminds me of…"	"Shall we think about that together?"

Vocabulary Spotlight

Revisit and apply vocabulary from across the term. Notice whether children can use taught words flexibly in new contexts, and continue to model richer or more precise language in response to individual starting points.

Introduce: Which 3–5 words are we deliberately introducing?

Model: How will adults use them naturally and in meaningful sentences?

Revisit: Where will children encounter them again – texts, play, routines, experiences or provision?

Use and apply: What opportunities will children have to use the words themselves and transfer them into another context?

Rich language opportunities

Collaborative play and problem-solving; Helicopter Stories; high-quality fiction and non-fiction; Curiosity Cubes; shared experiences; indoor and outdoor provision; meaningful mark-making and writing opportunities.

What to avoid

- Feeling that every interaction must include every strategy.
- Taking over a conversation in an attempt to improve it.
- Returning to habitual questioning when a comment or pause would be more effective.
- Only noticing vocabulary when it is used in the original teaching context.

Link to our Communication & Language progression

Supports longer conversations, purposeful questions, organising play, listening and responding to others, using increasingly rich vocabulary and applying language across different contexts.

Week B: Notice & reflect

Which interaction strategies are now embedded in adult practice? Are adults selecting strategies responsively? Which children need more modelling, processing time or opportunities to initiate? Which vocabulary and oracy priorities should carry forward into Spring?

The Autumn interaction toolkit

By the end of Autumn, the approaches should be layered and used responsively. Earlier strategies remain active as new ones are introduced.

Notice & Comment

+ Narrate & Model

+ Repeat, Recast & Extend

+ Invite Talk & Listen

+ Wonder, Explain & Reason

+ Retell, Sequence & Make Links

= Sustain & Build Conversations

***The aim is not to use more adult talk. It is to use adult talk* more deliberately.**