EYFS progression of skills in Communication and Language (Listening, Attention and Understanding & Speaking)

Context:

The importance of Communication and Language:

The development of children's speech, language and communication underpins all seven areas of learning and development. As children develop speaking and listening skills, they are building the foundations for literacy, learning and social development. The number and quality of conversations children experience with adults and peers throughout the day, within a language-rich environment, is crucial to their success.

At Heatherlands, we recognise the importance of teaching and modelling a small number of core communication skills that enable children to listen, talk, ask questions and share their ideas. These foundational communication and language skills are explicitly taught, modelled and practised daily and are made explicit within the progression grids through the use of bold text, supporting children to access learning, build positive relationships and develop confidence as communicators.

Children's language at age five is a significant predictor of later academic outcomes. A strong foundation in communication and language supports children to become confident learners, effective communicators and positive members of their community. Language is central to children's emotional wellbeing, their ability to build relationships and their capacity to access all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum.

We pride ourselves on providing high-quality adult interactions, rich storytelling experiences and carefully planned opportunities for children to develop and extend vocabulary. Adults consistently model high-quality language, encourage children to elaborate on their ideas and support them to use new and ambitious vocabulary across the curriculum. Through play, storytelling, discussion, role-play and shared thinking, children are given meaningful opportunities to practise and embed their communication skills. At Heatherlands, adults use the SHREC approach alongside evidence-informed EEF questioning prompts to ensure children experience a wide range of purposeful questions and high-quality talk. This supports children to clarify their thinking, extend their responses, use new vocabulary, explain their ideas and develop deeper understanding across the curriculum.

Rationale:

At Heatherlands, we believe that every child should be supported to become a confident and effective communicator. Our Reception Communication and Language Progression has been designed to provide a clear, sequenced pathway for developing children's listening, understanding, vocabulary, sentence structure, storytelling and social communication skills.

This progression identifies what children are learning and developing across the Reception year. It is supported by our **Adult Interaction and Language Focus**, which identifies how adults deliberately model, scaffold and extend communication and language through high-quality interactions. Together, the two documents ensure a clear link between the communication skills we want children to develop and the adult practice that enables this development.

This progression is rooted in the understanding that children enter Reception with varied language experiences and starting points. All children are screened on entry using the WellComm Communication Toolkit to identify strengths, gaps and areas requiring additional support. This ensures that teaching, provision and adult interactions are responsive to children's individual needs.

The progression supports staff to plan purposeful teaching, provision, targeted support and curriculum opportunities that enable all children to make strong progress.

Our Aspirations and Communication & Language

Communication and Language is a key vehicle through which children work towards the Heatherlands EYFS Aspirations. Our Communication and Language Progression shows how high-quality interactions, rich language and vocabulary, purposeful talk and carefully planned experiences support children in developing towards each aspiration.

Heatherlands Aspiration	How this is developed through Communication & Language
To understand myself, build positive relationships and approach challenges with confidence and resilience. *I can talk about how I feel, work and play positively with others, and keep trying when something is tricky.*	Through high-quality interactions and the explicit teaching of emotional vocabulary and the language of feelings. Jigsaw PSHE and Scribble Spot support children to identify and express feelings, understand others, explain choices, negotiate and resolve conflict through talk. Adults model the language of self-regulation, relationships and resilience and provide opportunities for children to practise this through everyday interactions, collaborative experiences and play. Regulation Stations, The Nest and targeted nurture and ELSA support provide further opportunities for children to talk about feelings, relationships and strategies for managing emotions.
To be a confident communicator who enjoys listening, sharing ideas and telling stories. *I can listen to others, share my ideas and experiences, and tell a story using the words I have learned.*	Through high-quality conversations and daily exposure to rich, high-quality fiction, non-fiction, rhymes and poetry, including our Bumping into Books experiences. Carefully chosen texts expose children to rich language, ideas and experiences and provide a stimulus for talk, storytelling and imaginative play. Through Helicopter Stories, children are encouraged to orally compose, tell, act out and celebrate their own stories, developing confidence, narrative language and an understanding that their ideas have value. Adults explicitly introduce and model ambitious Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary and provide repeated opportunities for children to hear, explore and use new words through discussion, storytelling, play, role-play, small-group work and whole-class teaching. First-hand experiences provide further meaningful opportunities for children to ask questions, explain ideas, sequence and retell experiences and stories, and sustain conversations with adults and peers.
To be physically confident, coordinated and independent, using increasing control to explore, create and write. *I can use my body and hands with control and use drawing and writing to share my ideas for a purpose.*	Through the understanding that children need to say it before they can write it. Adults provide rich opportunities for children to talk through, rehearse and orally compose their ideas before representing them through mark-making and writing. They model and extend children's language, helping them develop vocabulary and increasingly complete sentences that can then be translated into written ideas. Kinetic Letters provides a consistent shared language for posture, movement, pencil control and letter formation, while adults model the language of movement, position, direction and action. Enhancements and provocations across indoor and outdoor provision provide meaningful reasons to talk, imagine, compose, mark-make and write, supporting children to develop both the language and physical control needed to express their ideas in writing.
To be curious about people, places and the world around me, exploring, asking questions and sharing what I discover. *I can explore, ask questions, notice changes and explain what I discover about the world around me.*	Through rich language and high-quality interactions woven throughout our carefully sequenced Understanding the World curriculum. Curiosity Cubes, high-quality texts, first-hand experiences, visitors, community links, visits and Forest School provide meaningful contexts for children to encounter and use new vocabulary, wonder aloud, ask purposeful questions and talk about what they notice and discover. Adults model and introduce rich, topic-specific vocabulary and use commenting, questioning and shared thinking to encourage children to observe, compare, predict, explain and make connections. Children are given time and opportunities to articulate their ideas, revisit new vocabulary and use talk to develop and communicate their growing understanding of people, places and the world around them.

Autumn 1 – Theme: Bright Beginnings Key Question: Where do I belong?				
Attention and listening	**Vocabulary**	**Grammar and Sentence Building**	**Verbal Storytelling and Narrative**	**Conversations and Social Interaction**
• I listen to familiar stories, songs and rhymes in small groups and whole-class times. • **I begin to maintain attention during short adult-led inputs** and carpet sessions. • I respond to simple instructions related to familiar classroom routines.	• I understand and use classroom vocabulary (e.g. school, teacher, friend, safe). • **I begin to understand and use new vocabulary introduced through stories, play and first-hand experiences.** • I name familiar objects, people and places within the classroom and school environment.	• I use simple sentences to express needs and ideas. • I begin to extend sentences using "and". • I talk about what I am doing using simple present tense.	• I enjoy listening to and joining in with familiar stories and rhymes. • **I talk about familiar and personal experiences using simple sentences.** • I join in with repeated refrains and familiar parts of stories, songs and rhymes.	•**I begin to take turns in conversations with familiar adults and peers.** •I express my needs and feelings using words. •**I begin to initiate and respond to interactions with familiar adults and peers.** •I begin to respond to others' ideas in play.

Autumn 2 – Theme: My Place in Space Key Question: Where in the World am I?				
Attention and listening	**Vocabulary**	**Grammar and Sentence Building**	**Verbal Storytelling and Narrative**	**Conversations and Social Interaction**
• I follow one- and two-step instructions. • **I maintain attention during longer stories and group discussions.** • I begin to listen and respond to simple "why" and "how" questions.	• I use topic-related vocabulary linked to space and the wider world. • I understand and use descriptive words (e.g. hot, cold, light, dark). • **I understand and use new Tier 2 vocabulary introduced through stories, non-fiction and first-hand experiences.**	• I use longer sentences (4–5 words or more). • **I begin to use "because" to explain ideas**. • I use plurals and simple past tense in talk.	• **I retell simple stories using pictures or props.** • I sequence simple events in the correct order. • I make predictions about stories.	• **I engage in longer conversations with adults and peers.** • I ask simple questions to find out more. • **I begin to listen, respond to and build on the ideas of others.** • I use talk to organise my play and include others.

Spring 1 – Theme: Crazy Creatures Key Question: How am I like an animal?				
Attention and listening	**Vocabulary**	**Grammar and Sentence Building**	**Verbal Storytelling and Narrative**	**Conversations and Social Interaction**
• I listen attentively to stories and non-fiction texts and respond appropriately. **• I listen carefully to the person who is speaking and think about my response**	• I use topic-specific vocabulary related to animals, habitats and diets. **• I understand and use new Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary introduced through stories and discussions.**	• I use more complex sentences including plurals, tenses and negatives. **• I use connectives such as *and, but, so* to extend sentences.**	**• I retell familiar stories using story language.** • I use descriptive language to talk about animals and their habitats.	• I take turns in longer conversations with peers and adults. **• I ask purposeful questions to find out more.**

Spring 2 – Theme: Blooming with Colour Key Question: What makes our World so colourful?				
Attention and listening	**Vocabulary**	**Grammar and Sentence Building**	**Verbal Storytelling and Narrative**	**Conversations and Social Interaction**
• I follow more complex instructions with several elements. • I listen attentively during discussions and respond appropriately.	**• I explore the meaning of new words and begin to make links between words and concepts.** • I use descriptive vocabulary linked to colour, seasons and celebrations.	**• I use talk to organise, sequence and clarify my ideas, feelings and experiences.** • I use past and future tense with increasing accuracy.	**• I tell and retell stories using a clear sequence of events.** • I talk about stories and texts to deepen my understanding.	**• I use talk to negotiate in play, giving reasons for my ideas and choices.** • I express my thoughts and feelings clearly during play and discussion. **• I listen to, respond to and build on the ideas of others during discussion and play.**

Summer 1 – Theme: Cracking the Egg Mystery Key Question: What might crack from an egg?				
Attention and listening	**Vocabulary**	**Grammar and Sentence Building**	**Verbal Storytelling and Narrative**	**Conversations and Social Interaction**
• I follow stories and explanations without picture or prop support. • I listen attentively during longer discussions and whole-class inputs.	**• I understand and use a widening range of topic-specific, Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary.** • I use descriptive and comparative language linked to dinosaurs and life cycles.	**• I link ideas and maintain a main theme in my talk.** • I use a range of connectives to extend sentences.	**• I tell stories with a clear beginning, middle and end.** • I explain what has happened and why.	**• I contribute relevant ideas and responses during discussions.** **• I use talk to solve problems and organise my thinking.**

Summer 2 – Theme: Tides and Ripples Key Question: What if there was no water?				
Attention and listening	**Vocabulary**	**Grammar and Sentence Building**	**Verbal Storytelling and Narrative**	**Conversations and Social Interaction**
• I listen attentively, respond to what I hear and make relevant contributions during discussions. • I sustain attention during increasingly complex conversations, explanations and discussions.	**• I confidently use and apply recently introduced Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary in different contexts.** • I select and use precise, topic-specific vocabulary to explain my ideas.	• I express my ideas using increasingly complex sentences, using tenses and conjunctions with increasing accuracy. **• I use talk to predict, speculate, reason and draw conclusions.**	**• I retell and invent increasingly detailed stories using rich and varied story language.** • I give clear explanations for events, changes and ideas.	**• I sustain back-and-forth conversations with adults and peers, responding to and building on what others say.** • I participate confidently and make relevant contributions in small-group and class discussions. **• I use talk collaboratively to develop ideas, solve problems and reach shared decisions.**

*Our Summer 2 progression supports children towards the Communication and Language ELGs whilst remaining ambitious beyond these expectations. The ELGs are not used as a ceiling for learning; adults continue to extend children's communication and language in response to their individual starting points, strengths and next steps.