**EARLY COMMUNICATION**

Communication is the ability to send and receive information. It can be verbal, nonverbal, artistic and technological, among others. In order to help a child build essential skills and feel confident, they must first be able to communicate and feel positive in that interaction. It’s important that there are strategies in place to promote a good communication rich environment for all children within the setting, these should be naturally embedded into everyday practice.

**Examples of communication strategies include:-**

**Visual cues**- pointing, gestures, facial expressions or objects of reference.

**Visual strategies**- now and next boards, visual time tables, sand timers and traffic lights.

**Processing time**-this could be auditory processing (how they process spoken instructions) or physically planning their movements (i.e. where they are in the room and how they are going to get to where they are going).

**Verbal communication**- Minimise questions, use simple key words and simplify your language. As adults we talk a lot and use complicated and very grown up language. Ensure you think about the child’s level of language and understanding. Using key information carrying words when you communicate with the child will help them understand – rather than ‘We’re going to go outside, let’s go and get your coat on as its very cold’ replace with ‘Outside? Coat on’

**Communication support**- Sign/Makaton, Baby Sign, gestures offer visual cues to support what you are saying. Don’t cover your face when talking to children, they need to see your mouth and read you facial expressions and body language.

**Continuity and Repetition**- giving consistent messages to children help their communication. This includes using common language within the setting, choose phrases you will all use – story time/circle time/carpet time they all mean the same thing but can be confusing.

**Top Tips:**

* **Modelling language**- Use slow, simple, repetitive speech when talking to children. Always use real words not “babytalk”. Remember that the child will need to hear the words many, many times before they’ll start to use them. Label objects and actions in real life and in pictures.
* **Waiting-** Wait for the child to ask, gesture, or sign for a toy on a shelf, rather than just getting it for him/her. Do not anticipate the child’s need or desires before s/he has a chance to make them known to you. If the child gets what he wants without communicating for it, s/he will be less motivated to point, gesture or ask.
* **Responding-** Delay your responses to the child’s pointing, gestures or babbling when s/he wants things. Pretend you don’t understand what s/he wants to see if the child will try to verbally communicate. Pausing allows the child another chance to verbally express himself/herself.
* **Use Makaton**. Makaton is a speech support system. It can help encourage language development, it does not hinder it! It helps children develop communication skills even if they are still struggling to speak with words
* **Singing and Rhymes-** Using songs and rhymes with repetitive verses to support communication encourage predictability for children giving them the confidence to join in. Provide plenty of opportunity for the children to join in by pausing on the last word of the song and see if they respond with a vocalisation or fill the gap i.e ‘if you see a crocodile don’t forget to ……….’
* **Enjoy making sounds** – use lots of vocalisations and sounds in play - animal sounds, silly sounds (blowing raspberries, sneezing), babble sounds etc. There are no rules, this gives the child confidence to try to imitate what you are saying, when they do repeat it back to them. This validates their efforts and encourages them to try again which then encourages the early stages of turn taking in speech. Most importantly have fun with sounds!