

How to Create a Communication Friendly Classroom



Encourage children to read for interest and to gain information

In order to be fully included and independent in a learning environment children and young people need to be able to:

- Understand basic class routines and know where and how equipment is stored.
- Listen to and understand information and the concepts they are learning.
- Understand and use new words including those that are specific to the curriculum.
- Develop ideas and share them with others.
- Ask and answer questions and solve problems.
- Read for interest and to gain information.
- Write to share ideas and knowledge with others.
- Interact and socialise with adults and other children/young people.

Creating a communication friendly classroom will support the learning, language, social and emotional development of all children.

In order to maximise successful communication in the classroom consider the following:

Using pictures and objects when reading a story or delivering information maintains interest



- Use real objects, photographs, text with symbols or speech to develop independence in regular routines such as getting ready for lunch time or PE; equipment for a lesson and for visual timetables.
- Make listening interesting. Games and activities that develop foundation listening skills can support sound discrimination skills which underpin literacy development. Using pictures and objects when reading a story or delivering information maintains interest and makes links with the spoken word. Teach the children what good listening is – sitting, looking and thinking about the same thing as the speaker.
- Icons/ symbols/ vocabulary photo books can encourage understanding and use of subject specific and general vocabulary.
- Ensure that all children have something to talk about - shared experiences or pictures, puppets, talk boxes and picture cards encourage some children to talk more.
- Provide opportunities for children to discuss, plan and share ideas with peers and support staff before they are asked to contribute. Use different methods to share ideas – using drawings or ‘talking mats’ may help with using vocabulary and keeping to the point of the discussion as well as supporting sharing of opinions and ideas.
- Keep teacher language simple, specific and to the point. Always allow time for thinking and processing – the 10 second rule is very powerful. This can be where the teacher leaves 10 seconds after asking a question before choosing someone to respond or before giving extra information to encourage a response. Or, introduce a ‘rule’ where all children wait 10 seconds before they put up hands to offer a response allowing time for those who need it to process information and formulate a response and others to expand on what they originally may have contributed.
- Using symbols can support independence in reading and including speech supported text can make it more accessible. Highlight key or high frequency words and display them around the classroom with symbols where appropriate.
- Use different methods of recording to support those who find it hard to record knowledge and ideas in writing such as word webs, picture sequencing and voice recording.
- Structure groups in class carefully and use a multisensory teaching and learning approach. Have clear expectations about the rules of social communication – listen to others, take turns and look at who is speaking.

Vocabulary photo books can encourage understanding and use of subject specific and general vocabulary



With thanks to Diana Kelly, Lead Speech and Language Specialist Teacher, Essex, for writing this article.

Available as a free download. Please visit the Free Resources section at www.specialdirect.com