Understanding of Spoken Language (School Age Children)

Name: ____________________________________________

Who to contact and how: ____________________________________________

Notes: ____________________________________________

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Introduction

The Communication Pyramid shows the different elements that make up speech, language and communication.

Children need to be able to understand words before they can use them in their talking.

Progress Checker

You can check your child’s progress on Speech, Language and Communication.

http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk/progress-checker

The Ability to Understand Language Involves the Following Skills:

- Listening
- Remembering information (auditory memory)
- Understanding vocabulary and concepts
- Understanding the importance of word order in a sentence (grammar)

What You May See if a Child Has Difficulty Understanding Language

In the classroom environment, the child may:

- Look blank when spoken to
- Have poor listening skills
- Not respond to the speaker or echo back what has been heard
- Give inappropriate responses to questions, instructions and in conversations
- Take their cue as to what to do by observing other children around them
- Seek a lot of reassurance from adults
Information for patients

- Be hesitant to start a task following spoken or written instructions
- Read mechanically with little understanding
- Exhibit inappropriate or 'naughty' behaviour

Useful Strategies

Get your child’s attention → Gain the child’s attention before giving any instruction by saying their name.

Comment more & question less → Children learn from adult models of language. It’s more helpful to comment on what they’re doing instead of asking lots of questions e.g. “You’re building a big tower” instead of “what are you building?”

Simplify questions → Use ‘who?’ ‘what?’ ‘where?’ as they are easier for children to understand. ‘When?’ ‘why?’ and ‘how?’ are more complex questions.

Short & simple → Break down instructions into small chunks and use key words only. Give one step at a time and allow your child time to complete each step, before giving the next step. E.g. “Coat on (wait) shoes on (wait) hat on” instead of “Go and find your coat, shoes, and hat, put them on and wait by the door.”

Make it visual → Make full use of visual clues to support spoken or written information. These include pictures, photos, symbols e.g., facial expression, gesture, diagrams and, for older children, concept maps, vocabulary boards, written texts etc.

Slow Down → Pause between sentences and slow down your rate of talking. This gives your child extra time to process and understand what you have said.

Check understanding → Check that the child has understood before moving on – ask the child to explain / repeat back what they have to do rather than ask them if they have understood

Support understanding in reading → Allow the child to read texts below their optimum reading or decoding ability, to allow them to concentrate on the meaning.

Be Careful with non-literal language → Explain non-literal / ambiguous language e.g. idioms, words with multiple meanings, sarcasm etc. For example: it’s raining cats and dogs.

Targeted Activities:

- Teach ‘Good Listening’ skills and active listening skills and frequently revise them
- Consider reducing the content of class / home-work activities
- Reinforce key concepts
- Pre-tutor vocabulary (teach new words before introducing a topic), using symbols and signs
- Repeat activities in different ways to reinforce understanding
Information for patients

Further Advice and Information for Parents and Teachers

https://www.nlgnhs.uk/services/childrens-speech-language/
www.talkingpoint.org.uk
www.ican.org.uk
https://www.nlgnhs.uk/services/childrens-speech-language/
https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

Contact Details for Further Information

Children’s Speech and Language Therapy – Tel: 03033 303758

Any Comments, Compliments, Concerns or Complaints

If you have any other concerns please talk to your nurse, therapist or doctor. Our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) are available on 03033 306518 (Grimsby, Scunthorpe and Goole). You can also contact nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net

As a Trust we value equality of access to our information and services, therefore alternative formats available on request at nlg-tr.interpreters@nhs.net

Date of Issue: October, 2019
Review Period: October, 2022
Author: Children’s Speech and Language Therapy Department
IFP-1129

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