



Oracy at Marsden Infant and Nursery School

Purpose of Oracy

In Early Years at Marsden Infant and Nursery School, oracy is central to all our teaching and learning. We believe that the ability to speak clearly, listen carefully and express ideas confidently supports children's' academic progress, social development and overall confidence. Through structured talk and purposeful discussion, our children are given regular opportunities to develop their language, explain their thinking and respond to the ideas of others. Oracy is embedded across the curriculum so that children can practise speaking and listening in meaningful contexts.

Teacher modelling

Adults play a key role in modelling effective spoken language. Staff consistently model clear, grammatically accurate speech and demonstrate how to communicate ideas in full sentences. Before asking children to respond, adults provide examples of the expected sentence structure so that children understand how to frame their answers. This modelling helps children to develop confidence, expand their vocabulary and improve the clarity of their spoken responses.

Speaking in full sentences

We encourage the children to speak in full sentences when sharing their ideas. This expectation helps children to organise their thinking and communicate more clearly. Teachers will model appropriate responses and support children in extending short answers into full sentences. Over time, this approach strengthens children's ability to articulate their understanding and explain their reasoning.

Talk partner routines

Talk partners are used regularly at Marsden Infant and Nursery School to encourage participation and ensure that every pupil has the opportunity to speak and be heard. Structured partner talk allows children to practise explaining their ideas, rehearse language and extend their learning.

When working with a talk partner, children are expected to turn towards their partner so that they are facing them, with their knees turned towards the speaker. This physical positioning helps our children to focus their attention and signals that they are ready to listen and engage. It can be indicated by the teacher the order of speaker or children are asked to begin the conversation by asking, "Shall I talk or shall you?" so that it is clear who will speak first and so that both partners have an opportunity to contribute and listen to each other's ideas.

Active listening is a key expectation during partner discussions. Our children are taught that listening means giving their full attention to the speaker. This includes looking at their partner, remaining quiet while the other person is speaking and showing that they are interested in what is being said. The idea is that each person should listen carefully to their partner's ideas before responding, rather than thinking only about what they will say next or speak over their partner.

Through regular practise of these routines, our children learn to respect the contributions of others and build on each other's ideas. Teachers model what active listening looks and sounds like and remind the children of these expectations so that partner discussions remain purposeful and respectful. This approach helps to develop their confidence in speaking while also strengthening their ability to listen attentively and respond thoughtfully.

Vocabulary Development

Developing their vocabulary is an important aspect of oracy at our school. Teachers introduce and model new vocabulary across all areas of the curriculum and encourage children to use these words when speaking. Through discussion, questioning and explanation, our children have regular opportunities to practise and embed new language in meaningful contexts. Within our book talk session and topic sessions we introduce key vocabulary that we would like the children to use and give opportunities for children to use this in future sessions and within our enhanced provision where appropriate. We also take part in the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) programme. NELI is a research-based programme that supports the development of children's early language skills, including listening, vocabulary, and storytelling. These skills are very important for communication and for supporting children's learning across the curriculum. As part of the programme, a group of our children take part in a number of short, structured sessions each week with a trained adult. These sessions have a mixture of small group activities and some individual work, using stories, pictures, and games to help develop their language skills in a fun and engaging way.

Transitions

Clear routines support calm and purposeful movement around the classroom. When transitioning between activities, children are expected to stand up and move quietly to the place where they need to be. Consistent routines ensure that transitions are efficient and minimise disruption to learning. A consistent signal is used across the classroom to gain their attention. When an adult raises their hand, children are expected to stop talking, finish their sentence if needed, and focus on the adult. This shared signal helps maintain a calm learning environment and ensures that instructions can be given clearly. When the children see one finger raised, they know to stand up, when they see two fingers raised they know it is time to quietly transition to where they need to go. Visual prompts also help children in our setting, for example our quiet zone images are visible to remind children to travel through quiet zones around the school quietly (cloakrooms, the hall and in corridors).



Oracy Progression of Skills

The below Oracy Progression of Skills outlines how children develop spoken communication, listening, and discussion skills over time. The progression highlights key elements such as modelling language, active listening, talk partners, and explaining thinking using sentence stems such as “I think that because...”. Earlier statements from the Birth to Three stage are also included to acknowledge that children begin their oracy journey at different starting points. This ensures the progression reflects the full range of developmental pathways and allows our practitioners to support and build on children’s communication skills from the earliest stages. Progress is continuously monitored against oracy assessment checkpoints. It is important to note that if a child has not yet achieved the Communication and Language Early Learning Goals (ELGs) by the end of the Reception year, practitioners will focus on strengthening those specific foundational skills. These areas will remain a primary focus as the child transitions into Year 1.

EYFS Progression of skills and assessment checkpoints - Oracy			Beyond Early Years
Birth-Three Turns towards a familiar sound then locate a range of sounds with accuracy. Listens to, distinguishes and responds to intonation and sounds of voice. Reacts in interaction with others. Listens to familiar sounds, words or finger plays. Responds to simple questions when in a familiar context with a special person. Understands simple sentences. Communicate needs and feelings in a variety of ways including crying, gurgling, babbling and squealing. Makes own sounds in response when talked to by familiar adults. Practises and gradually develops speech sounds to communicate. Uses sounds in play. Uses single words. Frequently imitates words and sounds. Enjoys babbling and experiments with using sounds. Uses words to communicate for a range of purposes. Creates personal words as they begin to develop language. Copies familiar expressions. Uses different types of every day words. Begins to put two words together.	Three- Four Years Listen with interest to the noise adults make when they read stories. Recognise and respond to familiar sounds. Show interest in play with sounds, songs and rhymes. Listen to others in one-to-one or small groups, when conversations interest them. Join in with repeated refrains and anticipate key events and phrases in rhymes and stories. Able to follow directions. Identifies action words by following simple instructions. Begins to understand more complex sentences. Understand who, what, where in simple questions. Develop understanding on simple concepts. Shows understanding of prepositions. Responds to instruction with more elements. Begins to understand why and how questions. Uses language to share feelings, experiences and thoughts.	Reception Shows variability in listening behaviour – may move around and fiddle but still be listening or sit still but not absorbed by activity. May indicate two-channelled attention. Understands a range of complex sentence structures, including negatives, plurals and tense markers. Begins to understand humour. Able to follow a story with pictures or props. Listens and responds to ideas expressed by others. Understands questions. Extends vocabulary, especially by grouping and naming, exploring the meaning and sounds of new words. Uses language to imagine and recreate roles and experiences in play situations. Links statements and sticks to a main theme or intention. Uses talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking ideas, feelings and events. Introduces a storyline or narrative into their play. ELGs Listening, Attention and Understanding (CL ELG)	Spoken language The national curriculum for English reflects the importance of spoken language in pupils’ development across the whole curriculum – cognitively, socially and linguistically. Spoken language underpins the development of reading and writing. The quality and variety of language that pupils hear and speak are vital for developing their vocabulary and grammar and their understanding for reading and writing. Teachers should therefore ensure the continual development of pupils’ confidence and competence in spoken language and listening skills. Pupils should develop a capacity to explain their understanding of books and other reading, and to prepare their ideas before they write. They must be assisted in making their thinking clear to themselves as well as to others, and teachers should ensure that pupils build secure foundations by using discussion to probe and remedy their misconceptions. Pupils should also be taught to understand and use the conventions for discussion and debate. All pupils should be enabled to participate in and gain knowledge, skills and understanding associated with the artistic practice of drama. Pupils should be able to

Begins to ask simple questions. Begins to talk about people and things that are not present. Uses gestures, sometimes with limited talk. Recognises and responds to many familiar sounds.	Hold a conversation, jumping from topic to topic. Learns new words rapidly and uses them to communicate. Uses longer sentences. Begins to use word endings. Begin to use more complex sentences. Use language in recalling past experiences. Retell a simple past event in correct order Use talk to explain what is happening and anticipate when might happen next. Questions why things happen and gives explanations. Uses intonation, rhythm and phrasing to make the meaning clear to others. Builds up vocabulary. Uses talk in pretending that objects stand for something else in play.	Children at the expected level of development will: • Listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments and actions. • Make comments about what they have heard and ask questions to clarify understanding. • Hold conversation when engaged in back-and-forth exchanges with their teacher and peers. • Follow instructions involving several ideas or actions. Speaking (CL ELG) Children at the expected level of development will: • Participate in small group, class and one-to-one discussions. • Offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary. • Express their ideas and feelings about experiences using full sentences. • Use past, present and future tenses and connectives appropriately. Self-Regulation (PSED ELG) Children will: • Show an understanding of their own and others' feelings and adjust behaviour accordingly. • Focus attention as necessary and follow instructions.	adopt, create and sustain a range of roles, responding appropriately to others in role. They should have opportunities to improvise, devise and script drama for one another and a range of audiences, as well as to rehearse, refine, share and respond thoughtfully to drama and theatre performances Spoken language Pupils should be taught to: • listen and respond appropriately to adults and their peers • ask relevant questions to extend their understanding and knowledge • use relevant strategies to build their vocabulary • articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions • give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including for expressing feelings • maintain attention and participate actively in collaborative conversations, staying on topic and initiating and responding to comments • use spoken language to develop understanding through speculating, hypothesising, imagining and exploring ideas • speak audibly and fluently with an increasing command of Standard English • participate in discussions, presentations, performances, role play/improvisations and debates • gain, maintain and monitor the interest of the listener(s)
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				Give focused attention to what the teacher says.		- consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others - select and use appropriate registers for effective communication	
Attention	- Turns towards familiar sounds and voices. - Shows brief moments of focus during play.	Explores objects with growing concentration.	Maintains attention during short group times.	- Focuses for longer during purposeful play. - Responds when attention is redirected.	Sustains attention during whole-class teaching.	Filters distractions more effectively.	- Shifts attention between tasks when guided. - Show an understanding of their own and others' feelings and adjust behaviour accordingly.
Listening	Responds to tone, rhythm, and familiar speech patterns.	- Listens to simple rhymes, songs, and repeated phrases. - Pauses or looks when name is called.	Listens to longer stories with increasing recall.	- Joins in with repeated refrains. - Responds to sounds in the environment.	Listens with understanding and anticipates key story events.	- Responds purposefully to peers' comments. - Demonstrates active listening behaviours.	Listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments and actions.
Understanding	Recognises familiar words (names, objects, people).	Understands simple instructions supported with gestures.	Follows routine phrases ("bath time", "all gone").	Understands question words (who, what, where).	- Follows two-step instructions. - Understands more complex vocabulary across play.	Understands why and how questions.	- Follows multi-step instructions. - Uses context to infer meaning
Receptive Language	Processes meaning from facial expressions and intonation.	Anticipates actions in songs/routines.	Responds to early question types ("where's...?").	Processes meaning from story context and visual cues.	Understands positional and descriptive language	- Understands more abstract vocabulary. - Processes multi-clause sentences.	Offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently

				• Begins to understand humour.		• Responds to reasoning or problem-solving prompts.	• introduced vocabulary.
Speaking	• Uses babbling, sounds, early vocalisations. • Begins to say single words and short word combinations.	• Uses gestures to express needs (pointing, waving, nodding).	• Speaks in 4–6 word sentences. • Uses simple connectives (and, because).	• Expands vocabulary through play. • Uses language to describe, imagine, recall, and narrate.	• Speaks in well-formed, detailed sentences. • Uses rich topic vocabulary. • Retells stories with sequencing language.	• Explains ideas, predictions, and feelings. • Use past, present and future tenses and connectives appropriately.	• Participate in small group, class and one-to-one discussions. • Express their ideas and feelings about experiences using full sentences.
Vocabulary Development	• Begins understanding familiar everyday words. • Uses single words for naming (mummy, car, ball).	• Shows rapid increase in receptive vocabulary. • Attempts new words heard in interactions.	• Learns and uses new topic vocabulary. • Uses descriptive language (big, fast, hot).	• Begins categorising words (animals, food). • Uses imaginative vocabulary during play.	• Uses varied vocabulary linked to topics. • Chooses precise words to express ideas.	• Begins using Tier 2 vocabulary (predict, compare, explain).	• Understands and uses time/sequencing words.
Non Verbal Communication	• Uses pointing, reaching, showing objects to communicate. • Maintains eye contact and uses facial expressions.	• Copies gestures and simple actions. • Responds to adults' non-verbal cues.	• Uses gesture to support meaning. • Demonstrates listening posture and eye contact.	• Adapts facial expression during role-play. • Uses body language to show understanding.	• Uses gesture, expression and posture confidently when speaking. • Maintains appropriate eye contact during talk.	• Uses non-verbal cues to support explanations.	• Reads others' non-verbal signals to guide responses.
Pragmatics	• Takes turns in vocal play.	• Uses communication for needs (more, help, up).	• Takes turns in short conversations.	• Repairs communication when not understood.	• Maintains extended conversations.	• Uses talk for reasoning, explaining and negotiating.	• Adjusts tone and formality for different listeners.

	Initiates interaction by gesture or sound.	Understands simple social routines (bye-bye).	- Begins staying on topic. - Adjusts talk based on listener (quieter for babies).		Builds on others' ideas ("I agree because...").		
Articulation	- Uses early babble patterns. - Produces a variety of consonant and vowel sounds.	- Attempts word approximations. - Speech becomes clearer to familiar adults.	- Produces most common speech sounds. - Speech is understandable to most adults.	- Begins self-correcting speech sounds. - Joins words clearly in short sentences.	Speech is clear and intelligible to all listeners.	- Uses correct articulation for most sounds. - Self-corrects mispronunciations	Demonstrates control over pace, volume and clarity.
Conversations	Engages in simple back-and-forth vocalisations.	Takes turns in sound play and shared attention moments.	Uses eye contact to communicate intent.	- Takes turns in short conversations. - Begins staying on topic.	- Asks simple questions. - Talks with peers during play.	- Maintains topic and clarifies meaning. - Begins using discussion skills (agreeing, adding on).	- Engages in extended back-and-forth exchanges. - Builds on what others say.
Confidence	Shows pleasure in communication (smiling, vocal turn-taking).	Uses familiar words spontaneously.	Initiates interactions through gestures or sounds.	- Speaks in small groups. - Shares ideas during circle time.	- Uses familiar vocabulary independently. - Shows willingness to try new words.	- Speaks in front of groups with growing assurance. - Uses clear voice and eye contact. - Shares ideas independently.	Participates in drama, role-play, and performance.

How do adults support Oracy Progression at Marsden Infant and Nursery School

Birth to 3

- Use simple and concise sentences.
- Use clear intonation.
- Model early routine vocabulary e.g. "milk finished".
- Mirror children's sounds and add a little more.
- Repeat new words frequently and within meaningful contexts.
- Narrate actions using "I" and "you".
- Use lots of repetition.
- Allow time for the children to process before repeating and rephrasing.
- Give the children simple choices and accept non-verbal responses e.g. "banana or apple?".
- Ensure to convey warm greetings to the children. Respond warmly using greeting rituals e.g. "good morning, I'm happy to see you".
- Ensure adults are seated at the children's level, face-to-face, following the child's lead in play.
- Encourage lots of turn-taking games e.g. passing a ball.

3-4 Years

- Model correct use of sentences.
- Introduce and model rich, descriptive vocabulary within play.
- Expand on children's statements.
- Use open prompts.
- Ensure to use and model sentence stems e.g. I will make... I like the way... I like this because...
- Begin to model reasoning aloud e.g. "I'm putting the big blocks at the bottom because they feel heavy".
- Support children to talk to each other using simple prompts.
- Encourage full-sentence responses through gentle scaffolding.
- Model how to ask why/how questions and how to respond to them.
- Model emotional vocabulary to explain feelings.
- Ensure supportive greetings on the gate/door at drop off and pick up.
- Circle time in the morning – encourage talk and singing.
- Planned small group discussion times with props, objects and photos to stimulate language.
- Encourage the children to retell familiar stories using puppets, small world or story stones.
- Role-play area scenarios with a focus on retelling stories / experiences etc.
- Outdoor play with running commentary e.g. "you're balancing. Now you're jumping!"

Reception

- Regularly model a range of rich vocabulary.
- Expect and encourage the children to speak in full sentences, gently prompting when needed.
- Model structured talk "first, next, finally".
- Wonder aloud, offer alternative viewpoints and encourage respectful disagreements.
- Give children opportunities to clarify, justify and extend their ideas.
- Prompt and scaffold reasoning to the children e.g. how do you know?
- Encourage peer-to-peer talk.
- Support the children to extend their ideas.
- Encourage independent greetings.
- Allocate talk partners.
- Allow opportunities for structured talk sessions (storytelling etc.)
- Encourage story maps, puppet theatres and set up small world scenes.
- Display vocabulary linked to key topics/themes.⁴
- Encourage the children to share their ideas with the class.
- Ensure the children are given opportunities for 'show and tell'.
- Encourage class discussions.
- Model and encourage the children to listen and take turns – e.g. when you are holding the teddy you can talk, the rest of us are listening.

Year 1 and 2

Year 1

Staff model complete sentences and essential vocabulary, providing sentence stems like "I think..." or "I can see..." to scaffold responses where appropriate. Children are encouraged to use full sentences and begin justifying their reasoning.

Structured speaking opportunities remain a priority through talk partners, circle time, and frequent story retelling.

Year 2

Adults model extended sentences and subject-specific vocabulary to build upon prior knowledge and to support with recall.

In Year 2 the children expected to speak independently in full sentences and explain and justify their thinking.

In Year 2 discussion stems are also used such as "I agree because..." and "I disagree because..." to encourage children to articulate their reasoning and build upon peer contributions.

Children are also given regular opportunities for drama and role-play, group discussions and presentations to strengthen their confidence.

• Encourage lots of repetitive nursery rhymes – singing and actions. • Play peekaboo and copycat games to develop anticipation and conversation timing. • Play lots of games requiring listening to sounds. • Singing hello and goodbye songs to embed predictable language. • Read books with strong rhymes and predictable sequences. • Label children's emotions during conflict or moments of need e.g. "you are feeling sad". • Encourage early role-play with familiar routines e.g. feeding baby, putting a teddy to bed.	• Encourage the children to turn to a friend to share an idea. • Intentionally extend vocabulary in play. • Encourage group discussions. • "Tell me more" conversations embedded throughout the day. • Invite the children to explore and explain what they discover in continuous provision.	• Drama and role-play games. • Model discussion expectations e.g. we listen, then we speak, we build on ideas etc.	
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