

# the school years toolkit

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tion hope enthusiastic specialist compassion safe health service local dependable help equality care d

## Vocabulary

You have been directed to this Advice Sheet for strategies to help children who have difficulties with understanding and using words.

If you have used this Advice Sheet and not seen improvement after three to four months, please contact CYPIT.

**Vocabulary** is the bank of words children can understand and/or use meaningfully. This includes nouns, verbs, adjectives, basic concepts, prepositions etc.

**Semantics** refers to the meanings of words and how they are related. The meaning of individual words can change depending on the context e.g. "wave" (in the sea) and "wave" (your hand).

### Vocabulary learning is affected by many factors:

- Listening skills
- Auditory memory
- Life experience
- Expressive language/speech difficulties
- Word retrieval abilities (this is where the child has the word in their memory store but has difficulty accessing it when they need to use it)
- Literacy development
- Learning English as a second language.

### What you may see

#### In the classroom, the child may:

- Have difficulty naming familiar items
- Talk about a limited range of subjects
- Talk hesitantly with mispronunciations, repetitions or inappropriate choice of words
- Over-use non-specific words e.g. "it, there, that, thingy, whatsit"
- Use a lot of gesture and pointing
- Have difficulty learning and remembering new vocabulary
- Appear to talk fluently but without clearly expressing their meaning ("talk around the houses").

## Section 5 **advice** sheets

### Strategies and advice

- Basic, everyday vocabulary may need to be checked and specifically taught.
- Identify and prioritise key vocabulary items across the curriculum.
- Introduce new vocabulary explicitly, using a multi-sensory approach including visual materials/objects, symbols, real experience.
- Recap on key vocabulary and ideas at the end of lessons.
- Revise new vocabulary at regular intervals.
- Display key vocabulary within the classroom using charts, labelled pictures, words and symbols (Somerset Total Communication).
- Encourage the child to use description, gesturing, signing when they cannot recall a word (what it looks like, its function, what sound it begins with etc.).
- Use personal vocabulary books/files to encourage practice and revision at home.
- Expose the child to a variety of reading materials e.g. books, magazines, comics etc.

### More specific suggestions

- Arrange pre-tutoring of curriculum vocabulary to the whole class.
- Teach vocabulary using:
  - A simple definition
  - Categories and category names e.g. apple is from the category "fruit"
  - Association's e.g. Sea is associated with boat
  - Description
  - Similarities and differences e.g. How are cat and cow the same?
  - Odd one out
  - Phonological features (long or short word, number of syllables, the starting sound, rhymes with etc.) e.g. Bat is a short word that has one syllable, starts with b and rhymes with cat.
  - Mind mapping e.g. Upload picture of mindmap.
- Provide opportunities for reinforcement of key words across a range of concepts.
- Develop an individual vocabulary book divided into topic areas. Use pictures, symbols, diagrams, simple definitions to explain word meanings.
- In individual reading sessions, identify with the child any words not understood.
- Develop a vocabulary wall.
- Label displays.

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## Suggested Resources

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- Primary and Secondary Inclusion Development Programmes for Teaching and Supporting Pupils with Speech, Language and Communication Needs.
- Early Language Builders – ELKLAN, [www.elklan.co.uk](http://www.elklan.co.uk).
- Language Builders – ELKLAN, [www.elklan.co.uk](http://www.elklan.co.uk).
- Secondary Language Builders – ELKLAN, [www.elklan.co.uk](http://www.elklan.co.uk).
- Language Builders for post 16s – ELKLAN, [www.elklan.co.uk](http://www.elklan.co.uk).

## Section 5 **advice** sheets

- Key vocabulary for curriculum areas - Qualifications and Curriculum Authority [www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk).
- Semantic Links – STASS , 44 North Rd, Ponteland, Northumberland, NE20 9UR (Tel: 01535 631 346).
- Colour cards and Colour Library, LDA Duke St, Wisbech, Cambs, PE13 2AE (Tel: 01945 463 441).
- Talking Semantics - STASS - see above.
- Somerset Total Communication symbols.
- Communicate in Print.
- Teacher Net – an interactive resource to support head teachers, leadership teams, teachers and support staff [www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications).