

# HOW CAN WE HELP IN SCHOOL? KS3 & KS4

## Strategies to Support Understanding/ Comprehension/ Receptive Language Skills

### What is Receptive Language?

Receptive language refers to the way that we understand and know the meaning of words, sentences & conversations.

As pupils get older, they begin to understand more abstract concepts (e.g. months/years, seasons), grammatical features (e.g. bigger, biggest) and longer instructions that include more higher level 'linguistic' concepts (e.g. or, although, however, if).

Some pupils find it hard to understand what these concepts or abstract words mean while others find it difficult to understand a lot of information given at one time.

### Strategies to use at school:

- Before giving an instruction ensure that the pupil has stopped what they are doing and is listening. Use their name or move into their eye line to gain attention first.
- Use visual cues to support what you are saying (e.g. objects, gestures, pictures, facial expression)
- Use shorter instructions and emphasise key words
- When you have given the pupil an instruction, check their level of understanding by asking them what they have to do. Be aware of the language you are using to the pupil and think about how you could simplify it when you need to. Complex and/or longer material will be harder for the pupil to follow
- Consider the difficulty of the words that you are using (e.g. the pupil may not understand words like "before" and "after")
- Pause between chunks of information (e.g. "put your P.E kit away" **PAUSE** "go and get your coat" **PAUSE** "go out to break")

- Give sequential instructions in the order you want the pupil to carry them out (e.g. “put your books away...wash your hands” **NOT** “before you wash your hands put your books away”)
- Give the pupil time to think about the instruction
- If the pupil does not understand the instruction first time, repeat it. This will allow time for the pupil to process the material. If they still do not understand and you consider that they have had enough time to process the instruction, rephrase it, using the simplest language possible
- Encourage the pupil to ask questions if they have not understood. You may want to teach a strategy for them to indicate when they need help. Some pupils may not always be aware that they have not understood or be reluctant to say that they don't understand. Encourage them to say that they have not understood or to ask for help. They may need to have a set form of words to use. Pupils who have difficulty asking for help or who have expressive language difficulties may need a physical prompt they can use such as a coloured card, or a card with a question mark on, which they can put on their table or hold up. Rehearse this strategy to encourage the pupil's independence and self-esteem
- If the pupil has not understood then repeat the instruction while you help them carry out the task
- Use whiteboards/notebooks to encourage active listening (the pupil is encouraged to write down instructions and create a checklist for what to do)
- Look for patterns or specific aspects of language that the pupil does not understand and find opportunities to develop and practice this understanding (e.g. pre-teaching of concepts and vocabulary such as before/after, past/future tense, seasons etc)
- Use colour coding / pictures / symbols to aid recognition and understanding (e.g. numeracy is always in a blue book, literacy is in a red book)
- Colour code wh- questions (e.g. “where?” = red card held up when question asked “who?” = yellow card held up when question asked)
- Revise information regularly (summarise at the end of the lesson, recap at the beginning of the next lesson)
- Ask the pupil with receptive language difficulties questions about what they have done to check their understanding. Keep them simple and/or use visual cues to support their understanding.
- Many pupils with language comprehension difficulties are strong visual learners. Use visual support in the classroom wherever possible, (e.g. an instruction time line for the structure of the day, visual timetables, symbols, signs, gestures, written material like having written key words). This will encourage the pupil's independence and confidence and support their developing language.

- Pupils with comprehension difficulties are often very good at learning from watching the other pupils in the classroom and from routine. It can be easy to overestimate how much spoken language the pupil understands
- Learn to watch for the signs that the pupil you are supporting does not understand. They may stop paying attention or listening, or their behaviour might deteriorate

If you require any further support/advice please contact via the following email

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In the subject line please state **FAO Virtual School SLCN Support** to ensure that your message is actioned by the relevant team.