



Moving On to Secondary

Speech, language and communication skills are crucial to young people's overall development. We know that talking is used for every aspect of learning at schools including maths, PE, art, music and much much more. As children move through primary school and into secondary, their language skills continue to develop. Even as adults we carry on learning new words and ways to communicate.

In those last few months before children start secondary school, it can feel overwhelming and challenging to get them fully prepared. This is a big step in terms of their independence and they will be learning in a whole new way.

Supporting them with their language skills can really give them a head start for coping with these changes and help them to feel confident to make new friends..

When we talk about speech, language and communication skills, we mean ALL of the skills that people need to communicate. This includes:

- Listening and Attention
- Understanding words and instructions
- Using new words
- Explaining what they need or want
- Having a conversation

Listening is a vital foundation skill for school, and is a great skill to practise no matter how old you are! Active listening means giving full attention to the speaker and trying to understand the whole message. Try to encourage everyone in the family to:

- Get each others' attention before starting a conversation.
- Ask each other to repeat or explain what words mean if anyone is not sure.

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Some Quick Tips and Activity Ideas...

You can add vocabulary and think about the new skills needed using everyday activities. Giving your child your full attention for 10-15 minutes as often as you can is perfect. Here are just a few examples:

Shopping / Cooking

What do you need? Can they find the things on the list? Can they look at a recipe and find out what is needed and what you already have? Use this to work on planning and ordering steps in an activity. Working together and planning also supports problem solving and critical thinking.

Daily Routines

Encourage them to use a calendar to help planning for each week ahead. Use this a bit like a timetable to help them get used to using one. This will also help them with their negotiation skills if they want to add something to the calendar.

Going for a Walk / Bike Ride

If you are going out, involve your child in thinking about what will be needed, such as packing a bag, travelling there etc. Use a map to plan a route or to look at where you've been. Look for things using descriptive words, and try to find at least one new word while out and about.

Using simple strategies can also help young people to develop active listening, improve their vocabulary, and encourage better communication. Try to:

Encourage listening and turn taking in family conversations

Sometimes young people have difficulty in seeing things from others' point of view, or need help to understand how other people think and feel.

Talk to them about what they're doing

Listen to what they say and comment on it rather than asking lots of questions. This shows you are really interested and often leads to more conversation.

Join them in their interests

Ask your child about the game they are playing online, or a book they are reading, and be interested in what they have to tell you.

Identify some 'words of the week'

New words that you come across. Give points for using these in a sentence and involve the whole family in a competition.

But most of all ... ENJOY CHATTING! If they feel that you want to know about things, young people will be even more likely to share things with you, and you can have some really amazing conversations.

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