Words First | Speech and Language Coffee Morning

Presented by Hanan Ibrahim
Speech and Language Therapist
HCPC registered, MRCSLT

words first
Multidisciplinary services for schools

Hello, I’m Hanan ☺

- I’ve worked with the lovely team at Rushey Green School since January 2026

- I am passionate about helping children and young people develop their communication skills in ways that works best for them, tailoring my approach to each child’s strengths and needs.



Aim of today's coffee morning…

- To discuss different speech, language and communication needs children might experience.
- To learn about different strategies and activities you can use at home to develop speech, language and communication skills.
- To practice using these skills with your child.

Areas of Speech and Language development that we will touch on

Phonological Awareness

Receptive Language

Expressive Language

What difficulties may look like

Strategies we can use to support

Interactive activities!

k

Early intervention- Why is it important?

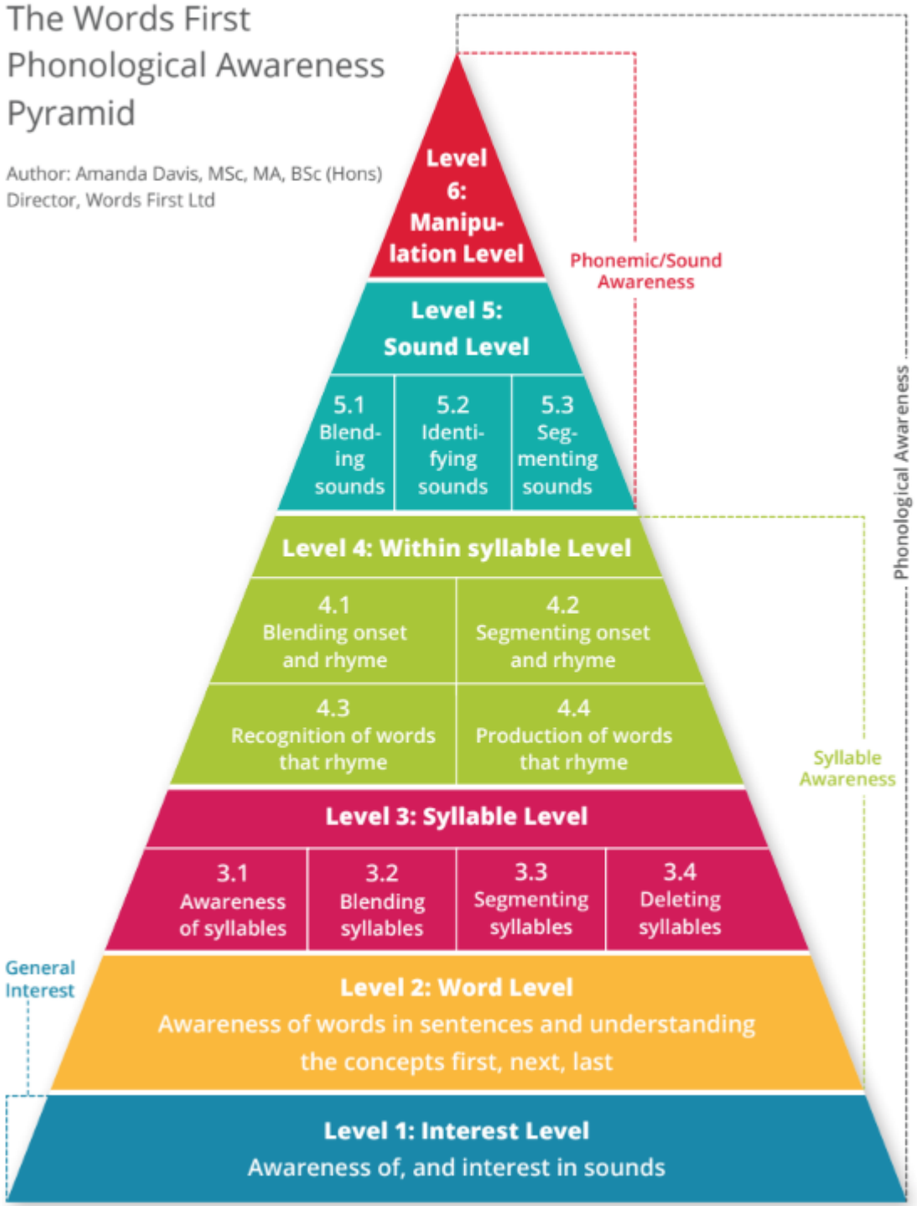
- **Foundation of Learning**: Early language development shapes a child's ability to communicate, learn and interact with the world.
- **Long Term Impact**: Identifying speech, language and communication needs early can lead to better educational outcomes, employability, mental health and social connections.



Phonological Awareness- What is it and why is it key?

- PA is the awareness of sounds in our language.
- PA focuses on the sounds that words have, not how they look or what letters are within them.
- For example, it is knowing that “chair” is made up of two sounds, ch + air.
- PA is the foundation phonics is built on, and (huge amounts of) research has shown that it is vital that children can identify and play with the sounds in words to be good at reading and spelling.

Phonological Awareness – Where is my child now?



What children should be able to do:

- 2-3 years = word awareness, some syllable awareness
- 3-4 years = syllable segmentation and blending, beginning to recognise rhyme
- 4-5 years = stronger rhyme production, onset-rime awareness, *some* phoneme-level skills
- 5-6 years = phonemic awareness develops - segmenting, blending, and manipulating phonemes
- 6-7 years = refinement of phonemic skills to support decoding (reading) and spelling

Phonological Awareness- linking to literacy

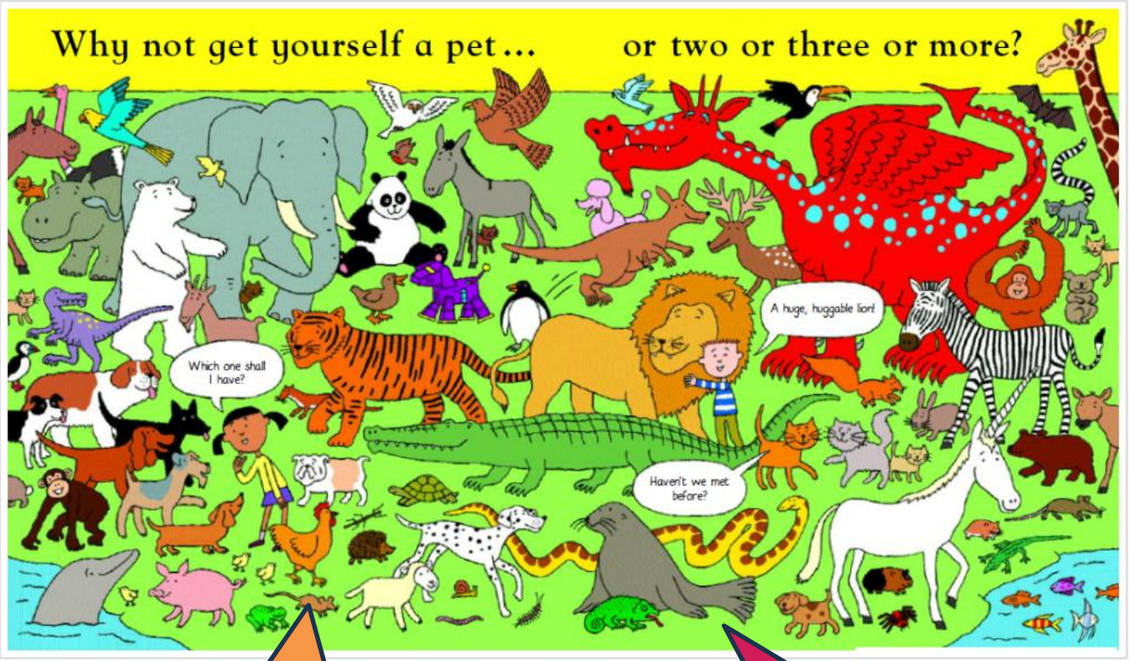
- PA is an oral language skill and phonics refers to the printed letters. Both are important for literacy.

 Reading together

- Emphasise sounds when reading e.g. *“oh it’s a c-a-t!”*
- *“What sound does this word start with?”*
- Praise effort, not accuracy e.g. *“oh that’s a tricky one! Let’s do it together. Well done for trying!”*
- If your child is not a big reader, read to them! This may pique their interest in the story/ characters and engage them.

Phonological Awareness- Interactive activity

Turn to a page in your books filled with pictures…



Can you find the…
ti…ger?
li…on?
u…ni…corn

Listen to this… e-le-phant. Can you do that? E-le-phant

Point to an animal that starts with sssss. Sssssss snake!

What animal rhymes with ‘dish’?

Difficulties Understanding Language- how might they look?

- Difficulties following instructions
- Difficulties remembering or recalling information
- Difficulties understanding what they have read or heard
- Appear distracted
- Changes in behavior (e.g. appear confused, frustrated)



Difficulties Understanding Language- how might they look?

Strategies

- Break important information down into small, manageable chunks. Repeat key information.
- Provide information in the order the task needs to be completed.
- Check understanding by asking them to repeat/explain the information/instruction
- Allow extra time for them to process information heard and read

Activities

- Story Chain: Start a story and take turns adding sentences.
- Follow Directions (e.g. Simon Says -"jump three times; pretend play – "feed the doll a banana")
- Music and movement (e.g. following directions in songs 'head, shoulders, knees and toes')
- Watch short movies and ask 'wh' questions

Comprehension (Understanding) Language activity break: Interactive Story Time

- Look at the cover: “What do you think this story is about?”

Introduce new words simply e.g. “a snail is… the ocean is like… a fox is a creature that lives in the…”

- During the story:

Ask simple questions e.g. “*Who is in the story? “Oh! What just happened?” “Where have they ended up?”*

- After the story:

Retell it together “*First they… Next, they… At the end…”*

Make predictions “*Wow what a crazy ending! What adventures do you think that they went on next?”*

Relate new words that you’ve just discovered to something in real life e.g. “*Have you ever seen something **enormous**?”*

Activity: Interactive Story Time

BEFORE:



What do you think this story is about?

DURING:



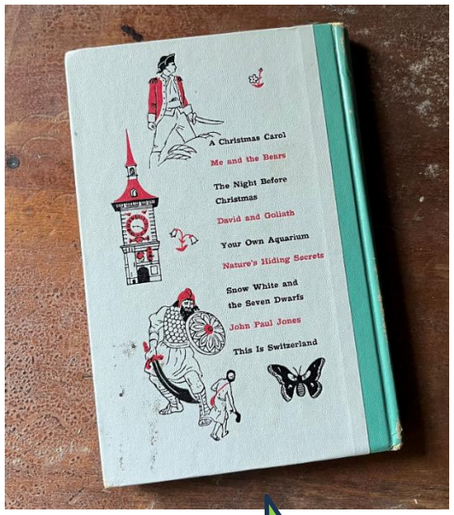
WHO is in this story?

WHERE are they?

What just happened?

WHAT is this?

AFTER:



What do you think happened next?

Difficulties Using Language- how might they look?

- Difficulties finding words
- Use vague/filler words like ‘thing’ or ‘stuff’
- Use simple sentences or short phrases
- Grammar errors beyond expected age (e.g., “him goed”).
- Being late to begin talking
- Speak quietly
- Difficulties expressing what they are thinking or feeling.



Supporting Talking at home

Strategies

- Repeat responses in a grammatically correct way
- Maintain eye contact and allow enough time for them to get their message across
- Repeat what you think they have said and allow opportunity for them to correct you.
- Expand their sentences e.g. if a child says ‘dog’, you can respond ‘yes, it’s a brown dog’.

Activities

- Painting/Crafting: Talk about art; describe colours, materials, shapes, textures.
- Water Play at bathtime: Add different toys and discuss actions, shapes, colours, categories.
- Role Play
- Play ‘I spy’ based categorises (e.g. ‘something blue’, ‘something you wear’).

Using Language activity break- Interactive Story Time

- Pause and invite your child to talk:

“What is happening here?”
“How do you think she feels?”
“Why did he do that?”

- Encourage retelling:

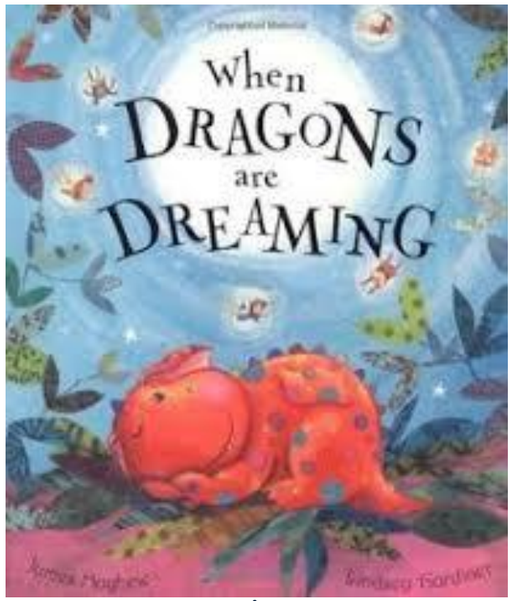
“Tell me the story in your own words.”
“What happened first? Next? Last?”

- Encourage opinions

“Which character did you like best?”
“What would you do if you were there?”

Expand their sentences- model the language that you want to hear!

Using Language activity break- Interactive Story Time



Tell me something interesting about this cover



Tell me the animals that you can see

What just happened?

Why do you think they did that?



What would you do if you were in the story?

Who was your favourite character? Why?

Let’s recap! What have we learnt today?

1. **Phonological awareness:** Can you remember one activity to help your child recognize and play with sounds?

2. **Understanding language:** What’s one strategy we can use to help children understand information?

3. **Using language:** What’s one strategy we can use to encourage children to communicate and develop their sentences?

Thank you!

For more information, please contact info@wordsfirst.uk

words first

Multidisciplinary services for schools