

What you might see:

You might see a child who:

takes longer to learn and use new words

uses 'empty' words often e.g. 'this', 'that', 'thingy', 'it'

uses shorter sentences than peers

makes errors with grammar or sentence structure e.g. 'runned', 'mouses', 'got paper cutting'

sounds muddled when trying to explain something that has happened

gets frustrated or gives up when trying to explain something

finds it difficult to answer questions

What you can try:

- Accept and encourage all forms of communication e.g. talking, gesture, Makaton, symbols.
- Talk to the child using clear sentences around the same level of language they are using e.g. 'the hedgehog is spiky', 'the volcano is going to erupt'.
- Use the child's communication system when you communicate with them e.g. talking, communication boards, communication book.
- Repeat what the child has said back to them and add an idea e.g. child: 'we watched a panto', adult: 'yes, we watched a panto at the theatre'.
- Model correct language by saying the correct version back if the child makes a mistake e.g. child: 'they is going football Saturday', adult: 'oh they are going to football on Saturday'.
- Use visuals to help children plan what they want to say e.g. question word symbols, narrative planners, first/then/next strips.
- Use sentence starters e.g. 'I think...'
- Plan and provide opportunities to talk e.g. group discussions, think-pair-share, talking ideas through with teacher or teaching assistant, circle/news time.
- Teach new words by talking about what the word means and how it sounds (e.g. initial sound, syllables, rhyming words). Use word maps to support.
- Give the child time to think when you ask them questions. If they can't answer, repeat the question and emphasise the question word e.g. 'why is...'. If they still can't answer, give a choice e.g. 'do you think it's because they are poorly or because they are excited?' then repeat their choice back in a sentence.