



# Language, communication and social interaction

## Language Development

### ***Processing and understanding language***

The following strategies could be used to support your child to develop their processing and understanding of language;

- Whenever possible, reduce distractions within the environment
- Secure their attention before giving an instruction
- Give instructions in the same order as the actions required in small chunks
- Allow your child time to process one piece of information before giving more instructions.
- Use simple sentences and vocabulary if you can. Long complex sentences are harder to understand, process and remember.
- Check your child's understanding before moving on to the next task. Staff working with your child should be aware that they may struggle to process and retain information that is presented to the whole class. If your child asks for information to be repeated it is likely because they have not been able to remember the information and also think about what they need to do.
- Summarise key points at suitable intervals and support this with visual information where possible. e.g. 'mind maps', 'time lines', 'summarised bullet points', 'task boards' etc. Encourage your child to ask for clarification if they don't understand.
- Allow at least 10 seconds for a response. If no response, repeat the instruction without rephrasing it – if you feel they have not understood the instruction you may need to rephrase however make sure you have given plenty of time for them to respond before doing this.
- Try to keep your language simple, consistent and non-ambiguous – say what you mean
- Visual supports could be used to support your child to understand what is happening, provide predictability and develop independence, such as visual timetables, visual schedules, task boards with activities broken down into smaller steps. Visual supports can also be used to help children prepare for a change in plan or to help them learn a new routine (e.g. getting dressed). Further information about visual supports: <https://www.autismwestmidlands.org.uk/online-resources/visual-resources/>

### **SELECTIVE MUTISM/ SITUATIONAL MUTISM/RELUCTANT TALKING**

Please see the following websites for advice and strategies:

[Leaflets Produced by SMIRA \(Selective Mutism Information & Research Association\)](#) These resources explain what selective mutism is, how it presents in different settings, and offer practical advice for supporting individuals with the condition. They are easy to read and are often used by parents, schools, and professionals as an introduction to understanding selective mutism and how to respond effectively.

[General Information - SMIRA](#)