

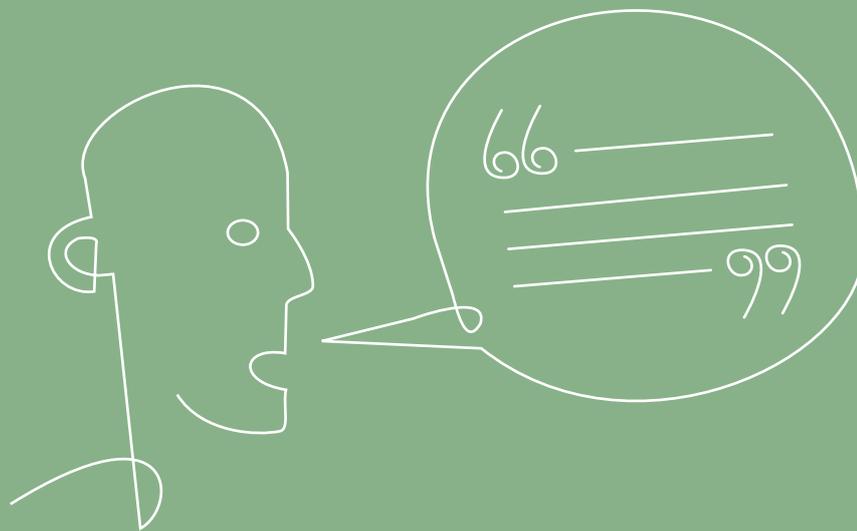
PRIMARY

Communication and Language

Guidelines for Teachers of Students with

MODERATE

General Learning Disabilities



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Introduction

The ability to gain control over the environment opens up a world of opportunity for the student.

Communication is a vital element in the education of students with moderate general learning disabilities as it permeates the entire curriculum and is central to all learning.

Enabling the student to make the greatest possible use of his/her senses is a very necessary first step for these students. Activities to develop awareness, interest and concentration are gradually extended to encourage functional and enjoyable interaction with people and objects. The ability to gain control over the environment opens up a world of opportunity for the student. Central to such development is an interactive approach that stimulates a desire in the student to communicate and acknowledges that every effort to communicate is valuable.

The term '*language*' generally implies verbal communication, oral and written. However, the acquisition of language is quite advanced and is far removed from the first attempts at communication in early childhood. The term '*communication*' embraces verbal and non-verbal methods of receiving and giving information, essential when catering for students for whom verbal communication may not be an option. Communication may, therefore, take the form of listening and responding through speech or listening and responding using an augmentative communication system such as sign language. Some students may communicate with the help of technology; information on this may be found in the section on *ICT supporting teaching & learning*.

For the student with moderate general learning disabilities, the starting point for communication may involve being alerted to the fact that a world exists outside himself/herself. Early learning in this area includes sensory, perceptual, physical, social, emotional and cognitive development to enable the student to make sense of and interact with the immediate and wider environment. Early language experiences will focus very much on developing receptiveness to language and developing competence in the use of verbal or non-verbal means of communication. The development of symbolic understanding is central, and ranges from an understanding that a picture or sign may be used to represent an object or activity, to understanding that hand-signs or words can be used to represent people and objects.

An interactive classroom that stimulates the desire to communicate and recognises every effort at communication is essential. The strengths and needs of the student, including physical strengths and needs, should be considered when planning and developing a functional means of communication for individual students. Most students will need to use more than one means of communication. It is essential that every single possibility is fully explored and utilised. The contribution of other professionals, such as speech and language therapists, will often be required and parents should be fully involved at all stages.

Play activities have an important role in the development of communication and language. Early investigation into what the world is all about can take place through exploratory play, physical play and constructive play. Imaginative and pretend play, storytelling and drama can stimulate interest in oral and written communication. These early experiences give students the motivation to communicate and write, and bring relevance to what they read.

Overview of content

The content of the *Primary School Curriculum, English* is presented in three strands:

- Receptive and expressive language
- Reading
- Writing.

Language learning is a process in which the skills of receptive and expressive language, reading and writing are intrinsically linked. For example, recording familiar events through writing activities reinforces the development of receptive language and reading. It can also stimulate expressive language. Every opportunity should be taken to link the three strands when planning the student's communication programme. However, for the purposes of these guidelines, the three strands will be considered separately in order to facilitate understanding of the challenges they each present for the student with moderate general learning disabilities. This will support the teacher in recognising the particular needs of individual students and assist him/her in addressing these needs in the context of curriculum planning and mediation.

Receptive and expressive language

Receptive and expressive language encompasses all forms of communicative responses, including the use of gestures, signing, vocalisation, speech, and communication aids and devices.

Receptiveness to communication ranges from alerting the student to the immediate environment through stimulation of the senses to enabling him/her to understand symbols, hand signs, oral language, and written language. It is important that students encounter an environment where every response is noted and valued and opportunities are presented to interact with others.

Intentional and functional communication

For students learning to communicate, there must be a tangible reward for all effort. Generally, early communication will be about likes and dislikes, comfort and discomfort. Students need to learn that exerting control over people and objects in their environment is a highly pleasurable and rewarding experience. As a student becomes adept at acting on the immediate environment, he/she will need to establish a means of communication that can be understood by all those with whom he/she may wish to communicate. At first, this may be by looking, using facial expression, using body movements, using gestures and/or vocalising. These can gradually be shaped and refined, for example by expecting more accurate and sustained eye, hand or finger pointing or by encouraging the student to increase his/her range of vocal tones. Some students may go on to use objects of reference, hand-signs, pictures, symbols or words. The use of technology may offer increased opportunities for intentional and functional communication. Where students appear to be functioning at the pre-intentional communication stage the *Guidelines for Teachers of Students with Severe and Profound General Learning Disabilities* offer useful information and learning activities.

Awareness of all types of sensory stimuli is a basic first step towards communication. Listening to and discriminating between sounds is important for all students. However, some students with moderate general learning disabilities will depend on visual or tactile symbols in order to communicate. Therefore, the development of all the senses is important.

Learning to associate a sensory experience with a particular activity or person may be developed into learning to associate objects of reference with familiar activities and people. An object of reference is something that the student learns to associate with (and may later use to intentionally represent) a person or activity. Some students may be enabled to gain the understanding that a photograph/symbol can be used to represent and communicate about a particular need, desire, person, object or activity. Other students may go on to use hand-signs or words. Information on communicating with the help of technology may be found in the section on ICT.

Students gradually acquire an increasing range of vocabulary, starting with the names of everyday objects and people in their immediate environment and gradually extending to vocabulary related to the wider community.

Competence and confidence in communicating begins with the student's first attempts at reaching out to people and objects and develops towards competence in the use of verbal or non-verbal methods of expressive communication. Competence in communication enables students to participate in social interactions with peers and adults and to initiate and respond to the communication of others in a widening range of situations. Students begin to use an increasing range of vocabulary and use appropriate forms of communication for a range of purposes and audiences. While they continue to extend their vocabulary, students with moderate general learning disabilities tend to restrict themselves to more concrete words because of difficulties with abstract thinking.

In the early stages of language development, many students will need to have expressive language modelled for them. They may need structured support to understand and use the different elements in speech such as nouns, verbs, prepositions and connectives and to progress from using single words to combining two or more elements.

Possible areas of difficulty in communication and language development

For many children, language development is a simple process. However, students with moderate general learning disabilities often experience significant delays. The spoken language of students with general learning disabilities is late to appear, is relatively more delayed than other areas of development and is slower to develop once it does begin. Additional input and support is needed at home, in school and in the community in order to improve everyday communication. The greater part of the language experience for the student with moderate general learning disabilities is verbal and it is through oral language activity that much of his/her learning takes place, both in and out of school. The many challenges experienced in developing an understanding of the world can be compounded by the difficulties experienced in oral language development. Language development, therefore, is a priority for these students.

Communication and language problems generally come under the umbrella terms '*language delay*', '*language disability*' or '*language difficulties*'. They may range from an occasional difficulty with certain sounds to an inability to communicate using spoken language. It is of vital importance that the particular communicative and oral challenges experienced by students with moderate general learning disabilities are identified at an early stage. A speech and language therapist may, in fact, have assessed and worked with the young student before he/she has started school. She/he may suggest ways of promoting communication and listening skills. They can also give advice if there are any difficulties with feeding and swallowing.

The development of communication skills may be affected by sensory, perceptual, physical or cognitive difficulties. Identifying which areas present a challenge for the student and which affect speech and language development is crucial. Depending on the student's needs, specific techniques and information can be used to help him/her make maximum progress in communication development. It will be important that the speech and language therapist and teacher work closely together to devise strategies to facilitate the student's development in this important area.

Depending on the student's needs, the team may be expanded to include, where available or appropriate, the occupational therapist.

Sensory and perceptual skills

In order to develop speech and language skills, students need certain fundamental sensory and perceptual skills.

- Sensory skills include the ability to see, hear, touch, taste or smell objects and people in the environment.
- Perceptual skills refer to the ability to give meaning to this sensory input.

Generally, students need to be able to hear what is being said in their environment in order to learn speech and language. They must also be able to see, feel, touch, smell or taste objects in order to learn the names of objects.

Auditory skills

Conductive hearing loss is one difficulty that students with moderate general learning disabilities may face. This means that a problem, such as infection or fluid accumulation in the ear, is preventing sound from being transmitted effectively and consistently. The most common cause of this conductive hearing loss is recurrent otitis media, more commonly known as ear infections. Many infants, toddlers and young students have multiple and successive ear infections. Students with Down Syndrome are particularly affected, because they have small, narrow ear canals. A conductive hearing loss not only affects the actual hearing but also affects auditory awareness and listening skills. If the student does not consistently hear the sounds in the environment, he/she will not learn to pay attention to those sounds. Fluctuating hearing loss also affects the development of phonemic awareness (the knowledge that words are composed of individual speech sounds). If the student cannot hear all the sounds in a word, he/she may have difficulty learning to include those sounds in the spoken word. Fluctuating hearing loss does not allow the student to catch up during periods of better hearing. Instead, it may mean that the student is hearing the same word differently, depending on hearing status, and so has even greater difficulty with language development.

Some students have *sensorineural* hearing loss. This is a more permanent type of hearing loss, caused by damage to the inner ear or the auditory nerve, or both. It may affect the ability to hear at certain frequencies (pitches), and thus may affect the ability to hear certain sounds. Students with this type of hearing loss often need hearing aids to amplify sounds. Mixed hearing losses occur when a student experiences a combination of a sensorineural and a conductive loss. Where hearing loss occurs, the visiting teacher service and in particular, teachers for the hearing impaired, can be an invaluable support to the school, teacher and student.

Developing auditory skills and auditory memory is important for all students. The ability to listen and attend enables students to locate, track and sequence sounds, to maintain concentration in a listening activity, and to learn to associate sounds and words with people and objects. Speech and language development relies greatly on the ability to discriminate between different sounds and words, to copy sequences of sounds, to respond to instructions, and to listen to stories, songs and rhymes. Phonological awareness in reading will also depend on the ability to blend and segment sounds.

Visual skills

Some students with moderate general learning disabilities may have a visual impairment and so have difficulties focusing on objects. The ability to visually track, i.e. to follow a moving object, is also important in learning names. In order to develop symbolic knowledge and word recognition, students need to be able to discriminate between different objects/symbols/signs, to match and identify symbols and signs, to recognise patterns, and to distinguish between print and illustrations. The ability to continue or to re-create patterns of objects and symbols depends on the development of the student's visual memory. For the student with Down Syndrome, visual memory is revealed as an area of relative strength. A number of teaching approaches are based on the premise that visual approaches may support their learning, not least because they provide relatively static material that can be absorbed over a greater length of time than auditory material.

Sensory-motor integration

To imitate a word, a student must be able to hear each sound in the word and then develop the skills to figure out how to use the lips, tongue etc. to make those sounds. In order to learn which words correspond to which objects in their environment, it helps if students can see what adults around them are talking about. This ability to organise input from various senses and apply it to everyday life is important for all students.

A student's ability to attend and respond to the interactions of others often forms the basis of how we view students and their behaviour. Not listening and not looking can give a misleading impression of non-compliance. Students with moderate general learning disabilities may need particular help in learning to pay attention, to look, to listen, and to respond, because of the difficulties they may have processing input from more than one sense at the same time. Auditory attention is more demanding on some students than visual attention. Therefore, a multi-sensory approach, which will help support the student's development, is important.

Articulation

Some students with moderate general learning disabilities may have:

- low muscle tone (hypotonia), muscles that are more relaxed and floppy than usual and therefore more difficult to control (muscles in the student's lips, tongue and jaw may be affected)
- a tendency to breathe through the mouth because of enlarged adenoids or tonsils or as a result of recurrent allergies or colds.

These problems can affect the student's intelligibility in different ways. The student may have difficulty with:

- articulation, or the ability to move and control the lips, tongue, jaws and palate to form sounds correctly and clearly
- resonance, or the tone and quality of speech sounds, for example sounds may be too nasal or 'twangy,' or not nasal enough.

Although the difficulties described in this section can make speaking more difficult for the student, they need not prevent him/her from communicating effectively. He/she can learn to supplement speech with sign language. Alternative communication systems fall into three basic categories. These are:

1. Communication boards
2. Graphic symbol systems
3. Manual signing systems.

Lámh is the simplified, concept-based sign language developed specifically for people with learning disabilities in Ireland. It aims to extend a person's communicative ability by combining speech and signs, and in many cases facilitates the development of verbal language and reading skills. The system does not seek to replace oral or aural forms of language, but aims to support language learning for children who have difficulty in processing linguistic systems. Many Lámh signs have been adapted from Irish Sign Language (ISL). ISL is a natural sign language and is used by the deaf community in Ireland. There are differences. For example, with Lámh, speech is always used with the signs, the number of signs used is smaller, the hand positions are less complex, finger spelling is uncommon and the emphasis in the training provided is different. Lámh aims to maintain connections with ISL. This close link allows for progression onto more complex ways of communicating. Formal training in Lámh is open to both families and staff and is provided by specially trained Lámh tutors. Lámh training not only covers the mechanics of learning to make the signs but the necessary background to implementing a signing programme with children and adults.

Augmentative or alternative speech systems may include picture books, and high-technology and low-technology electronic speech aids.

Possible areas of difficulty in developing confidence and competence in communicating

Specific cognitive abilities that can be impaired include:

- *generalisation* — the ability to apply information learned in one situation to a new one
- *auditory memory* — the ability to remember words after they have been spoken for long enough to process and respond to them
- *auditory processing* — how quickly and efficiently the student takes in, interprets and responds to spoken words (students with a moderate general learning disability generally need more time to process and understand what is said to them and may therefore be slower to answer questions or respond to instructions, even when they are not experiencing auditory memory problems)
- *word retrieval* — the ability to select the appropriate word in a given situation (this problem may affect the complexity, accuracy or length of the phrases and sentences the student uses)
- *abstract thinking* — the ability to understand relationships, concepts, principles, and other ideas that are intangible.

Asynchrony of language skills

Generally speaking, students do not achieve at the same level in all language areas. While this is true for all students developing language skills, the gap may be wider in the case of many students with moderate general learning disabilities. Also, while language comprehension will be delayed, the student may not follow the normal pattern in acquiring language, that is, he/she will need support with developing specific linguistic structures but not all. This results in what is referred to as an asynchrony of language skills. In other words, some language skills are more advanced than others. Most notably, students are better at comprehending language (receptive language skills) than putting thoughts and ideas into words (expressive language skills). For example, they often have difficulty sequencing words to express an idea or to ask for clarification when they do not understand something that has been said. This results in the so-called receptive-expressive gap.

If the student is slower to formulate a response, we might assume that he/she does not comprehend what was said. In fact all he/she may need is a cue, or a prompt, or more time to organise his/her response. One consequence of the student's expressive language delay is that he/she will probably have a shorter mean length of utterance than other students. On average, phrases and sentences will contain fewer words.

Syntax and semantics

Additional areas of relative difficulty in students with moderate general learning difficulties include:

- syntax — the grammar or structure of language
- semantics — the meaning of words, including usage and understanding of vocabulary.

Pragmatics

Pragmatics encompasses such skills as the appropriate use of social greetings and an understanding of the unwritten rules of conversation, for example turn-taking and using language appropriate to the context. This is a particular area of difficulty for many students with moderate general learning disabilities.

The potential areas of difficulty that students with moderate general learning disabilities may encounter in developing communication and language skills seem daunting. However, carefully planned and clearly evaluated intervention can significantly affect the student's opportunity to communicate and learn. The role of the speech and language therapist in assessing each student and in determining the intervention required is vital. Parents should be fully involved at all stages. It is important that teachers and parents are aware of each student's strengths and needs, as this can affect teaching, perceptions, and general social interaction. It is also important to remember that because a student has a learning disability we cannot assume that he/she will develop in a similar way to other students with the same disability. Each student is an individual who has unique personal, social and physical factors influencing his or her development.

Implications for teaching

- *Speech production difficulties.* A student's cognitive ability can be underestimated because his/her ability to understand is greater than the ability to communicate.
- *Language delay.* The student may have a limited vocabulary and may have difficulty mastering the rules of grammar and syntax.
- *Smaller short-term auditory memory spans.* This results in the student having difficulties in following spoken instructions, especially if they involve several consecutive tasks. The student may fare much better if he/she is able to copy other students, is given written or picture prompts or if the task is broken down into smaller, more manageable, elements.
- Some students may require teaching supported, whenever possible, by visually presented information. This builds on visual processing and visual memory strengths rather than relying solely on auditory processing.
- Students with moderate general learning disabilities also need to be given every opportunity to show that they understand, by being enabled to use motor responses such as pointing or selecting.
- For students with general learning disabilities, communication takes place in a number of ways and involves all the senses. Preferred methods of communication may include the use of:
 - body language, for example, turning towards or away, stiffening, relaxing
 - facial expression, for example, smiling or grimacing
 - eye-pointing
 - objects of reference to signal events or to indicate choices
 - communication aids
 - photographs, pictures and symbols, for example in a communication book
 - print
 - signing.
- Information and communication technology (ICT).

Critical factors in facilitating learning are:

- quality of presentation and instruction
- simple, clear verbal instruction backed up by demonstration or pictorial representation
- avoiding complex or ambiguous language when giving instruction
- use of relevant language
- pacing and timing of lessons
- relevance of tasks
- tasks matched to the ability of the student
- level of difficulty of the task, neither too easy nor too difficult
- prior knowledge and understanding of the student
- appropriate level of support, avoiding over-support which creates learned helplessness
- promoting independent learning skills
- building self-esteem and self-motivation.

Reading

Reading for students with moderate general learning disabilities is far broader than the interpretation of text. Some students may not learn to interpret text. The focus for these students will be on enabling them to make sense of and derive pleasure from all types of visual and tactile representations. It involves looking at, listening to and touching objects, pictures, symbols and text in an effort to gain meaning and enjoyment from them. At first, activities should concentrate on people and events that are familiar and have immediate meaning for the student. For example, the daily or weekly timetable could be represented using objects, pictures or symbols. Where a student is learning to interpret text, the written word can initially be used in conjunction with other representations.

Fostering enjoyment in reading includes listening to stories being read, looking at and handling books. Interactive books that offer the option of touching represented objects, pushing a button to obtain a sound, or lifting a flap to find a hidden picture can greatly enhance the early reading experience. Commercially, these books tend to be made for very young children, so teachers of older students may need to make a version that will be meaningful in the life of the older student. The use of computer programmes offers exciting possibilities for early reading activities that may be individualised for each student.

Other students however, may have a particular strength in this area. Reading may provide a visual support to students who are having difficulties with syntax and it can also be an invaluable support in extending and developing their expressive language. Teaching students with moderate general learning disabilities to read is an extremely effective way of improving both their command of language and their ability to think and reason.

At the early stages, students listen and respond to text with enjoyment and some understanding. They show an awareness that print and pictures carry meaning. Initially, activities should focus on people and events that are familiar and have immediate meaning for the student. They learn to recognise letters, words and phrases that have significance for them in a familiar text, and they begin to recognise some of the letters of the alphabet. In all these activities, they will require support.

As students progress, attention should be paid to developing comprehension skills as well as word recognition skills. They will also need to be taught to generalise their skills to a wider range of situations.

Due to the fact that a significant number of these students remain longer at the *learning to read* stage, and progress more slowly to the *reading to learn* stage in their primary years and beyond, their experience of reading will not necessarily support oral language development to the extent it does for other students. While students will continue to be encouraged to read for their own interest and pleasure, the emphasis may shift towards developing functional reading skills and the recognition of social sight vocabulary. The aim will be to assist students to lead as independent a life as possible.

Many students, however, are able to develop their reading skills to a useful and practical level and as a result they improve and develop their use of language and their language understanding. Reading improves the learning of sentence structure necessary for spontaneous speech. Improved articulation and word production skills are enhanced during the reading process, enabling the student to practise sentences s/he may not yet be able to articulate. Learning to read also has a profound effect on the student's self-esteem, independence and quality of life.

Reading can be significantly important in helping students to

- access the curriculum
- improve their speech and language skills
- develop their knowledge and understanding of new concepts
- increase their self-esteem
- work independently.

Strategies to enhance reading ability in students with moderate general learning disabilities

- Ensure that the student understands what she/he is reading and why.
- Teach '*sight words*' first, using the '*look and say*' method.
- Select words which are suitable for the student's language comprehension level and interests, beginning with words he/she already understands.
- Use complete short, simple sentences.
- Start a homework diary, using pictures of the student's familiar surroundings and interests to illustrate the written words.
- Play matching and selecting games with vocabulary, not using pictures, to ensure the student can recognise visual vocabulary.
- Read the words and sentences with the student.
- Introduce new vocabulary into the reading once he/she is comfortable with the reading activities and vocabulary.
- Encourage the student to repeat words and sentences with you.
- Practise writing alongside reading from the start. This will draw attention to letters and help handwriting.
- When the student has a sight vocabulary of 30-40 words, start teaching phonics - learning to write and spell rhyming sets of words improves phonic skills.
- Students often enjoy the supplementary readers that accompany the reading schemes. Providing a choice of reading material empowers the student and can make reading fun.

Writing

Activities in this section of the curriculum focus on enabling the student to make visual recordings that will communicate meaningful events, experiences, interests, information, thoughts and feelings. Initial writing activities centre on making marks in a variety of ways and with as wide a range of exciting materials as possible. Students gradually begin to understand the connection between speech and writing.

Under the guidance of the teacher, the student's writing begins to convey meaning through the use of pictures, symbols or isolated letters. He/she begins to show an understanding of the difference between drawing and writing and between numbers and letters. Gradually the student may begin to show some control over the size, shape and orientation of letters.

Writing presents a considerable challenge for many students because of difficulties they may have in relation to perceptual (spatial and visual) motor development. The writing ability of students with moderate general learning disabilities is typically defined by the following:

- ability to organise thoughts and transfer relevant information on to paper can prove challenging
- difficulty sequencing words to form a sentence
- difficulty sequencing events/information into the correct order.

The use of ICT to help students produce written work is encouraged. Students will be enabled to compose at greater length than they can manage when writing by hand.

Some students will progress to recording information for a functional purpose. Recording the day or week's events regularly may help the student to remember what has happened and anticipate what is yet to come. It may also serve as a basis for communication between home and school. Recording personal events and experiences also offers opportunities for increasing vocabulary and stimulating expressive language. It reinforces reading activities, affording meaningful material for students in learning to interpret the meaning of recorded information. Other students may be involved in making personal books that reflect their interests.

Suggestions for creating worksheets

Preparation

- Use meaningful material that is within, or close to, the student's own experience.
- Introduce new concepts in familiar contexts.
- Make the tasks self-contained.
- Provide plenty of prompts such as pictures, diagrams and print.
- Provide plenty of opportunities for success.
- Use student feedback and behaviour to determine whether or not the written task sheets achieve your educational aims and objectives.
- Supplement instruction and tasks with a taped version that can be replayed for reinforcement.
- Experiment with different versions of a written task sheet.

Presentation

- Differentiate clearly between text and illustrations.
- Leave a wide border all round the edge of the page.
- Highlight and explain all key words.
- Illustrate new words if necessary.
- Avoid handwritten worksheets and instructions and use a word processor/PC.
- Use subheadings to separate and organise written sheets.
- Avoid confusion by using simple and uncluttered layouts.
- Break up continuous text.
- Use illustrations.
- Ensure the illustrations or diagrams tie in closely with text.
- Highlight instructions, for example, in a box or by a selected font or colour.
- Use coloured as well as white paper for variety or coding.

Language

- Use simple and familiar language.
- Keep sentences short and concise.
- Avoid ambiguous words.
- Use active rather than passive verbs.

Strategies to enhance the writing ability of students with general learning disabilities

- Additional resources to make writing an enjoyable and interesting physical process:
 - different types of writing implements, e.g. markers, gel pens
 - pencil grips
 - larger lines
 - boxes on page to encourage uniformity of letter size
 - lined paper/squared paper
 - writing board, e.g. magna doodle
 - computer aids.
- Alternative methods of recording:
 - scribe
 - underline or ring correct answer
 - cloze procedure
 - sentence card sequences
 - picture card sequences
 - specialist software.
- Visual support:
 - flash cards
 - keywords
 - picture cues and sequences
 - sentence cues.
- When copying from the blackboard, select and highlight a shorter version for the student to copy, focusing on what is important for that student or use a cloze method on a previously made worksheet.
- Gross motor skills affect fine motor skills; participation in PE improves handwriting.
- Practise - all motor skills improve with practice.

School planning

Planning sections in the *Primary School Curriculum: English, Teacher Guidelines*, pages 12-16 give advice on this aspect of planning, much of which will also be applicable when planning for students with moderate general learning disabilities. The following outlines some additional aspects of planning that may need to be considered.

Curriculum and organisational planning

A coherent whole-school plan

Addressing the particular needs of individual students involves planning at a whole-school level. Establishing a whole-school approach to curriculum planning and assessment for communication and language will include consideration of the following:

- assessing the existing oral language and literacy skills of students
- identifying the particular oral language and literacy learning needs of students
- targeting essential skills
- differentiating activities in order to meet the needs of individual students
- planning for parental participation
- examining the collaborative role of all relevant professionals—the principal, the class teacher, the resource teacher, the special needs assistant, the speech and language therapist, the physiotherapist and the occupational therapist
- planning for learning in a variety of contexts or situations
- evaluating the effectiveness of the school plan in providing opportunities for oral language and literacy learning
- monitoring and evaluating student progress in specific skills.

Developing communication skills is of paramount importance for students with moderate general learning disabilities. The communication and language curriculum should be structured to provide appropriate support so that expressive language skills are acquired systematically and literacy skills developed in accordance with the abilities of individual students. Parents should be kept fully informed of their child's development and be made aware of any difficulties he/she is experiencing. The role of the parent in helping and encouraging the student at home is crucial.

In order to be effective in planning for the communication needs of students with moderate general learning disabilities, a whole-school policy on the types of communication to be used by the students is essential. Agreeing general communication approaches and methodologies will enable students to receive a coherent education in this central area of the curriculum. Individual needs will, of course, determine the finer details of each student's communication plan but this should be guided by the overall methods of communication being fostered in the school. For example, teachers might agree to use the same objects of reference or pictures for certain people or activities. Similarly, agreement should be reached on symbols or hand-signs to be used throughout the school. Some flexibility may be necessary, for example if a student comes from another school with a different communication system.

Guidelines for Teachers of Students with Mild General Learning Disabilities: Communication and Language presents extremely detailed information on possible areas of difficulty in acquiring language skills and the implications that this can have for students with mild general learning disabilities in developing communication skills. Much of this information will also be relevant for students with moderate general learning disabilities. Teachers will find many useful teaching strategies outlined in these guidelines, which may be adapted to suit the needs of students with moderate general learning disabilities.

A communication-friendly school environment

When planning for oral language in the curriculum, it is essential to ensure that the student will be provided with a variety of opportunities to use oral language in order to put meaning on experience. He/she should be involved in real talk in real contexts with a variety of partners. The routine of the school day provides many opportunities for engaging the student in language-rich social interactions. All those working within the school environment may be involved in the targeting of such opportunities for language teaching and learning.

Creating an ethos of communication in the school which regards all teachers, personnel and students as communicators is essential. It is important that the school creates an environment in which:

- students are seen as communicators with a purpose
- talk is valued and respected
- students learn to talk because somebody initiates or provides an opportunity for communication
- interaction with others is enjoyable
- feedback given to the student is positive and explicit
- opportunities are created for all students, regardless of abilities, to contribute to talk and discussion
- interaction is pitched at an appropriate level.

A good working knowledge of how students learn to communicate is essential for all potential communication partners. All school staff members who are likely to interact with students should be aware of the range of communication methods being used in the school. If a student is using objects of reference/pictures/symbols/hand signs/a particular technical aid in order to communicate, then all staff members should be aware of the meaning of each object/symbol/hand sign and be able to use such symbols or the technical aid in return.

Joint planning and collaboration between teaching staff, special needs assistants, and speech and language therapists is imperative. All must decide upon the learning outcomes for the pupil. Careful thought must be given to how any new vocabulary will be introduced and used to form phrases and sentences.

Where students use a sign language system, such as Lámh, it is crucial that all teachers undergo training in the use of this system, and this will include ensuring that provision is made for new teachers and staff members. All students, whether they use verbal or non-verbal means of communication, should learn how to communicate using sign in order to facilitate the development of an effective signing environment.

Signs normally written in text around the school could also be accompanied by visual and tactile symbols that students in the early stages of reading will understand.

If a student is slow to communicate, it is very tempting for adults to jump in and anticipate the student's needs, and in the busy school environment opportunities for communication can be lost. It may only be a matter of making all staff aware of the need to slow down a little and look out for opportunities to challenge students to communicate. For example, rather than anticipating a student's need for a door to be opened to allow them to leave, a staff member might wait for and encourage the student to indicate that need. Instead of wheeling out a student to their bus the minute the bus arrives, staff might wait for and encourage the student to indicate that they know that the bus is there or that they wish to go home.

In relation to the transfer of information from one teacher to another, the introduction of an agreed framework will be effective at class level, for example in end of year reports and individual progress reports.

Curriculum planning for literacy

The identification of an approach to the teaching of literacy and selecting literacy materials for the student with moderate general learning disabilities is a whole-school issue. Literacy is also a cross-curricular issue and decisions made regarding approaches to the teaching of literacy and literacy materials apply across all areas of the curriculum. Literacy must be seen in the context of oral language. An integrated approach will incorporate the development of oral language, reading, and writing skills. Skills instruction (sight vocabulary, phonics, letter formation, etc.) should be relevant to the students' general experiences of books and print.

Establishing a culture of literacy within a school will involve the creation of an environment in which:

- being a reader and/or a writer, even at minimal levels, is valued
- reading and writing are viewed as being purposeful and pleasurable experiences
- opportunities are created to encourage all students, regardless of ability, to contribute
- the school is proactive in involving parents/guardians in the literacy programme (parents/guardians may need to be given information in relation to choosing books and other reading materials that are appropriate to both the age and ability level of the student).

A good working knowledge of the oral language and literacy learning process on the part of all staff will determine the effectiveness of the planning process. At school level, the responsibility for ensuring this may rest with the principal and/or with a designated teacher.

Choosing literacy materials

The needs of all students must be considered when choosing literacy materials for use within a school. Materials used should:

- be *pitched* appropriately for the development of the oral language abilities of the students
- be *age-appropriate*, in that the material should be of interest to the student, be of an appropriate reading level, and also assist in the development and extension of literacy skills
- be *attractive, stimulating and enjoyable* in order to engage the students and capture their interest, so they will want to continue using it and will also wish to return to the material frequently
- present the text in an *uncluttered format* that uses an appropriate print size
- *facilitate differentiation* so that the student with minimal literacy skills is enabled to participate by, for example, being encouraged to make inferences from pictorial images

- *facilitate autonomy* in the learner by incorporating illustrations that are clear and unambiguous
- *contain variety* - reflecting the many functions for which reading and writing are used.

In general, the material should reflect themes that will be relevant to the student, that will assist in developing his or her literacy skills, and that may be linked to oral language discussion and activities.

Organising a suitable library

Stories play a key role in the student's language development and it is important that he/she has access to a wide range of quality books which cater for all interests and ability levels, including big books, picture books, home-made books containing photographs of the student's family or particular interests, interactive books, and a variety of fiction and non-fiction books. Finding suitable books for students with moderate general learning disabilities can be quite challenging. Extra-strong and extra-large books may be required, and interactive books will also be very useful. These can be expensive, and a wide and interesting variety is necessary. Therefore, schools may find it useful to have a central supply from which teachers and students can choose, according to individual needs or interests. Having a central supply of sensory material, music tapes, videos, interactive toys and story props can greatly assist the development of communication and language.

Classroom planning

Many excellent ideas are to be found in the *Primary School Curriculum: English, Teacher Guidelines*, pages 24-34, much of which will be applicable when planning for students with moderate general learning disabilities.

However, some additional aspects of planning may need to be considered when planning for this group of students.

Curriculum and organisational planning

The centrality of communication and language

Communication and language plays a central role throughout the student's day. In school, every subject and every extra-curricular activity will have a communication element. Since communication and language play such an essential role in all learning, curriculum planning across all subject areas must take account of the communication abilities and needs of each student. Every subject should be examined for opportunities to foster receptive and expressive language. Many subjects will offer meaningful material for early reading and writing.

Ensuring clarity of adult communication

Whether using language spontaneously as part of the natural incidental interaction of everyday classroom life or when communicating formally with students, particularly at the early stages of language development, it is important to ensure that all adults who interact with the students:

- use clear, consistent language (for example is 'small' or 'little' to be used, is the student to be asked, 'show me,' 'point to,' 'where is?' etc.)
- use signs correctly and consistently in all situations where the word naturally occurs
- ensure that the student's attention is engaged before speaking or using sign
- use clear facial expressions and gestures, in addition to oral language
- use additional tactile or visual clues such as objects of reference, photographs or pictures
- ensure that the student has any necessary communication aids within reach
- allow the student sufficient time to respond
- avoid needless repetition of a question or instruction, as the student may have to reprocess the information, further slowing and confusing the interaction
- avoid asking students to make signs out of context, for example, 'What's the sign for _?' 'Show X our new signs'.

Creating a communication-friendly classroom environment

Creating a classroom environment which facilitates communication for all students is a challenge for teachers of students who are at the early stages of learning to communicate. Teachers may find the following general points helpful in creating a communication-friendly classroom:

- Identify activities and rewards which interest and motivate the student.
- Give the student the opportunity to interact, and look out for/create situations which facilitate this (for example, 'forgetting' to do something the student expects and challenging him/her to draw attention to the omission).
- Certain types of toys may encourage communication. Toys such as a ball, dressing-up clothes or puppets might be helpful in encouraging social interaction. Ordinary, safe household utensils can also be a great source of fascination.
- If communication is being encouraged while the student is engaging in a task, the task should be relatively easy, so that the student's attention is not entirely taken up with the task.
- Be aware of the pace at which students work and provide sensitive support.
- Opportunities to spend time with students who are more able communicators can be very beneficial.
- Choice-making should be built into as many activities as possible.
- Provide access to ICT supports where appropriate.

In planning for communication and language, a number of other key considerations should be kept in mind:

- *The teacher as model*—The teacher should be continuously conscious of his/her potential as a model for language use. The language the teacher uses and the way he/she uses it can have a powerful influence on students' language development, their motivation to use language, and the development of their facility with language. To this end, it is important for the teacher to exploit the full range of language that is appropriate to the students, and to employ a variety of strategies that demonstrate the effectiveness and attractiveness of language.

These will include:

- the use of an appropriate range of vocabulary and syntax
- thinking out loud and working things out aloud
- verbalising different actions
- being involved in role-playing
- storytelling
- reading stories
- reflecting interest through animated verbal expression.

- *Structuring the classroom environment*—The classroom environment should stimulate students' interest in language and encourage them to use it. The environment should include a variety of objects (familiar and unfamiliar), photographs, pictures, classroom displays, books, magazines, newspapers, labels, directions, and props for drama and role-playing. As added stimulation, these elements should be changed regularly.
- *Rules of interaction need to be explored and taught in a variety of contexts*—Students with moderate general learning disabilities may not readily appreciate the conventions of talk and discussion, for example listening, reacting to what they hear, tailoring their responses to what they hear in a group or one-to-one situation, or taking turns. Part of the teacher's concern will be to foster these skills in order to help students to take an effective part in interactive classroom situations, and to transfer these skills to everyday life.
- *Explicit instruction*—Students with moderate general learning disabilities need explicit instruction if their potential for language is to be developed to the full. It is important that the teacher is aware of the language ability of individual students and that he/she uses this as a base from which to lead them to a greater facility with language. This will involve encouraging them to move from using language in real situations to using language in imaginary situations, and to make the progression from the concrete to the iconic and symbolic. A central element of such language activity will be encouraging students to engage consistently in analysing tasks to be done, to verbalise this process and discuss it with others, to ask and answer questions, and to justify particular choices and courses of action. In this way, both language development and cognitive development will be enhanced.

It may often be necessary for the teacher to elicit and develop such responses through questioning, prompting, guiding, and even provoking the students. It is important, too, that the teacher should encourage the students to make the progression from mere reactionary responses to expressions of likes and dislikes, approval and disapproval, enjoyment and celebration. It should be a feature of classroom life that students are encouraged to understand and clarify their thoughts and emotions through the use of language.

- *Role-playing*—Role-playing provides considerable opportunities for language use and language development. It can involve the student in an interactive way in both a listening and responding mode. Because role-playing provides a structured situation in which each student who participates has a well-defined role and function, a context is created that supports and encourages students in using language. It should be stressed, however, that many students may experience difficulties in bridging the gap from the real world to the imaginary world of role-playing. The guidelines on drama for the teacher of students with moderate general learning disabilities offer some advice in dealing with this issue.
- *Regular evaluation and review*— Staff members should be supported in their use of the various communication approaches. Regular review helps to ensure consistency and accuracy of communication and helps to update staff members on individual students' progress. Regular evaluation of motivators for communication should also be carried out.

Classroom planning for literacy development

The development of the literacy skills of students with moderate general learning disabilities will, as with all students, be based on their oral language experience. The following should be given careful consideration:

- Literacy activities should be rooted in the students' own experiences.
- A student's oral language development and experience will define starting points for the development of literacy skills.
- The level of development of fine motor skills will have a crucial bearing on students' progress in literacy.

- Although the development of oral competence is paramount, students should experience literacy activities from the earliest stages. They should be encouraged to handle books from the beginning and see themselves as readers. The class library should contain a variety of books that includes picture books, books with one-word captions or sentence captions, and books with illustration and text.
- Teachers should prioritise carefully the sequence of oral and literacy activities that are most appropriate to individual students, so that students achieve the maximum level of success at all stages.
- Literacy activities should be enjoyable for students.
- Literacy activities should contain options for the student who is unable to read/write.
- Parents/guardians should be kept fully informed and involved at every stage of the student's literacy development.
- As well as challenging students, it is important that they are given the opportunity to use a variety of reading materials of the same level of difficulty, to enable them to reinforce the literacy skills they have mastered and to experience consistent success in the reading process.

Creating a literate environment/choosing books

One of the most important factors in enabling students to develop literacy skills and an interest in reading is the extent to which they are read to, both at home and in school. The school should encourage parents/guardians to read to their children on a daily basis. In school, hearing books and other texts read to them should be a central element of students' experience. The class library or library corner should contain a wide range of age-appropriate books that cater for a variety of levels of development, presented in an attractive and inviting way. Where possible, a reading corner which contains an inviting selection of books and is comfortably furnished, should be developed. This area might also contain a listening area containing story tapes with accompanying books or tapes relevant to a current topic or theme. Recorded stories could include such cues as '*turn to the next page*'. Students can also record their own 'reading aloud' for classmates and for assessment purposes.

Books should:

- have strong central characters and a strong theme
- encapsulate an element of predictability in language, in which repetition is an enhancing rather than a boring feature
- attract, intrigue, and illuminate
- have natural language, engaging narrative, and an uncontrived and natural text
- be flexible enough to allow the teacher to create a simple text version or to add text to a picture book.

Whatever text is chosen, and whether children read it themselves or whether it is read to them, talk and discussion about the text should be central to the reading experience.

Choosing commercially available materials

It is important to choose material that is appropriate to the age and ability of the student with moderate general learning disabilities.

When choosing support materials it is important to ensure that they:

- provide meaningful contexts
- are uncluttered in format, and clearly target relevant skills.

The teacher as author

In the early stages of learning to read, the text chosen should provide positive reading experiences. In many cases, this may require the teacher to create personalised texts for the students. For example, classmates' names can provide a valuable stimulus to read that is particularly relevant to these students. The focus can shift later to a wider and more flexible vocabulary. Personalised texts are of enormous benefit in that they are based on the individual student's oral language vocabulary and experience.

In choosing vocabulary for texts it is important to prioritise:

- vocabulary that is most likely to enable students to achieve some independence in reading at a basic level
- high frequency words
- the smaller link words
- words directly connected to the student's personal experience
- common social sight vocabulary.

Repetition will be an important feature of the text, in that it will enable the student to learn to use the predictability of oral language as a key strategy in learning to read. It is essential, however, to ensure that the repetition occurs in a natural and meaningful context.

When constructing text, the teacher should take into account the criteria normally used in constructing text for an emergent reader. These include:

- a relevant level of interest
- age-appropriateness
- appropriate structure and pace
- the use of high frequency words.

Using these criteria and knowledge of the student's developmental stage, the teacher as author can personalise texts and make them functional and pertinent to the everyday needs of individual students with mild general learning disabilities. Personalised texts are valuable not only in the early stages of a student's reading career but right throughout the period of instruction leading to the student becoming an independent reader.

Progress is monitored by reference to high frequency word lists, and by keeping up-to-date word banks for individual students. In a mainstream classroom the use of personalised texts, in addition to the use of commercially produced materials, can be used successfully with all students.

Using personalised texts can provide students with access to a reading experience that links what they read to both their oral vocabulary and language learning and to their direct experience of the world. Their response to such texts provides the teacher with invaluable feedback on their level of understanding and skill in the many facets of literacy development and allows him/her to continually fine-tune the teaching and learning process.

Other considerations

The following are some other considerations that need to be taken into account when planning the approach to reading:

- *Personnel*—Reading time with adults, parents/guardians, special needs' assistants, siblings, etc. should be planned when developing a programme of reading for students with mild general learning disabilities. Peer tutoring, and adapted programmes such as C.A.P.E.R. (Children And Parents Reading Together) and PASSPORT (model of shared reading for students with learning difficulties) should also be considered.
- *Environmental print*—Social sight vocabulary is of particular importance to most students with moderate general learning disabilities and this should be a feature of both the classroom and the school. Sentences highlighting daily routines, greetings used for visitors, birthday messages, etc. should also be displayed. The whole school community should be alert to the significance of this.
- *Access to resources*—It is important that teachers are kept aware of newly published literature, teacher resource literature, and the availability of courses and training.

Creating a writing environment

In creating a writing environment in the classroom, the following should be taken into account:

- Students should have frequent opportunities to write in different contexts and for a variety of audiences.
- Consideration should be given to the development of a writing area that offers a wide range of materials, at a level easily accessible to all students, and that may be changed and adapted so as to complement a specific topic.

- Writing activities should be fun and meaningful, even at the early stages of writing development. For example, drawing stripes on a zebra for a class collage is more interesting for the student than copying straight lines.
- It is important that students see different kinds of writing in class—his/her name on copies, books, lists, letters, forms etc.
- The role of the teacher in modelling the writing process is crucial to students' development as writers.

Classroom planning for writing

Writing involves communicating in a symbolic form, just as reading involves receiving a communication in a symbolic form. Understanding symbols can be difficult for students with moderate general learning disabilities. In planning the approach to the process of writing, it is important to keep the following considerations in mind:

- In encouraging students to become independent writers, it is important that they are aware of the purposes of writing. Students with moderate general learning disabilities may not always see writing as having a function in their lives.
- The teacher should be careful in using language for instruction. For example, the instruction 'draw a line down' may need explanation in the context of working on a horizontal surface.
- The student needs support in the early stages. Attention should be given to issues such as allowing enough time for a task, for example the correct way of holding a writing implement, the position of the page, or copying from the blackboard.
- Decisions on the use of ICT only in the writing process should involve the student and their parents/guardians.
- Print in the environment should be similar in font design to that encountered in students' reading materials.
- All personnel involved with students should agree a policy in relation to features of writing such as size and scale, spacing, and the use of upper and lower case letters.

Receptive and expressive language

The student should be enabled to develop his/her listening and attention skills.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Receptiveness to language</p> <p>Develop his/her ability to focus aurally: <i>listen and attend to familiar sounds in the immediate environment—voices, toys, noises associated with routine activities such as setting the table for lunch or music linked to key activities.</i></p> <p>Listen attentively to, and focus on or track sounds in his/her immediate environment: <i>locate sounds made within vision/made out of vision/sounds played above, below and behind student, independently focus on and track sounds that interest him/her, draw the attention of others to sounds inside or outside the classroom.</i></p> <p>Respond to hearing own name.</p> <p>Attend to physical /aural/visual sensory input related to story or rhyme.</p> <p>Respond to visual stimulus, i.e. puppet.</p> | <p>Receptiveness to language</p> <p>Listen to a wide range of sounds: <i>voices in the home/classroom, natural and mechanical sounds in the environment, percussion instruments, live music.</i></p> <p>Listen to, identify and communicate about sounds in the environment with increasing awareness: <i>use signs, words or pictures to identify real or recorded sounds—telephone, ambulance, alarm clock, rain falling, car horns blowing, dogs barking, babies crying.</i></p> <p>Listen attentively and selectively to sounds in his/her immediate and wider environment: <i>identify familiar voices on tape, listen to taped stories.</i></p> | <p>Receptiveness to language</p> <p>Move from visually and aurally attending in a distraction-free environment to attending in settings with distractions.</p> <p>Discriminate sounds of widely differing intensity: <i>classical music, pop music.</i></p> <p>Recognise sounds in the wider environment: <i>recognise signature tune of television programme.</i></p> <p>Participate in more challenging listening activities: <i>'Kim's game': adult makes two/three sounds, the sequence repeated omitting one sound and the student identifies the missing sound.</i></p> <p>Play 'Simon says'.</p> <p>Listen to contrasting sounds and vibrations: <i>soft versus quiet, long versus short, rhythmic versus random.</i></p> |

The student should be enabled to recognise and re-create sounds.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Receptiveness to language</p> <p>Seek out and use toys and equipment involving cause and effect to create sounds: <i>seek to make things happen with toys and equipment, with assistance use switches to control electrical or battery-operated equipment/toys.</i></p> <p>Imitate playful sounds: <i>cough, car sounds.</i></p> <p>Imitate and repeat simple sounds made by adults or other students: <i>tap a drum, shake a tambourine.</i></p> | <p>Receptiveness to language</p> <p>Actively seek to interact with objects in the immediate environment: <i>independently seek to use toys/equipment for fun or functionally, explore objects with all senses, physically manipulate objects with both hands.</i></p> <p>Locate, imitate and repeat sounds: <i>match sounds made by objects hidden behind a screen and name/communicate about the sound—if sound is created by a tambourine, select the instrument or picture of the instrument.</i></p> <p>Imitate familiar sounds in the environment: <i>animal/mechanical sounds as they are heard in context, imitate sounds on tape.</i></p> <p>Join in and make sounds related to a theme/story/drama activity: <i>wind howling, footsteps running down stairs, baby crying.</i></p> | <p>Receptiveness to language</p> <p>Experiment with different voices in role-playing: <i>favourite story character, voices to suit animal characters.</i></p> <p>Experiment with his/her own vocal sounds: <i>experiment with making a range of sounds, experiment with volume and tone.</i></p> <p>Use microphones and make tapes of own singing.</p> <p>Recognise and copy sequences of sounds using a wide range of instruments.</p> |

The student should be enabled to relate to others in his/her environment.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Receptiveness to language</p> <p>Develop awareness of the presence of other students in the class: <i>show curiosity and interest in the actions of another student in paired activities, participate in group awareness activities.</i></p> <p>Have opportunities to play or work alongside siblings or peers: <i>tolerate the presence of others, become aware that others are playing/working near him/her.</i></p> <p>Show interest in the actions and activities of siblings and peers: <i>turn his/her head to look/vocalise, become still to aurally or visually follow movements of siblings or peers.</i></p> | <p>Receptiveness to language</p> <p>Differentiate between familiar people and strangers: <i>smile at familiar people and look enquiringly at or ask about strangers/visitors at home or in the classroom.</i></p> <p>Interact with others during play.</p> | <p>Receptiveness to language</p> <p>Actively seek to interact with people in the wider environment when safe to do so: <i>seek to gain the attention of a familiar person when seen outside the classroom/home, interact appropriately with strangers, show curiosity about unfamiliar people in the wider environment.</i></p> |

The student should be enabled to develop turn-taking skills.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Receptiveness to language</p> <p>Have opportunities to play or work alongside other students: <i>tolerate the presence of others, engage in parallel play/work activities with an adult and later a student — play/work alongside without interacting.</i></p> <p>Participate in simple games which involve turn-taking, arranged and directed by adult: <i>clapping hands, hitting a drum in turn.</i></p> <p>Attend and participate within a group situation for a short period of time: <i>use gestures/single words/signs/symbols.</i></p> | <p>Receptiveness to language</p> <p>Play or work co-operatively with an adult and later a student: <i>play or work co-operatively with a shared purpose.</i></p> <p>Play with two or three students: <i>show interest in the actions and activities of other students.</i></p> <p>Develop joint attention and participation in both one-to-one situations and in groups: <i>attend to others, respond to the communication of others.</i></p> <p>Attend and participate within a group situation for a longer period of time: <i>games and songs.</i></p> <p>Respond to prompt for his/her own turn in turn-taking situations: <i>games, circle-time activities, parachute games.</i></p> | <p>Receptiveness to language</p> <p>Co-operate with others in planning and carrying out an activity.</p> <p>Propose turn-taking: <i>will take and give turns during game.</i></p> <p>Maintain a conversation across more than one 'turn'.</p> <p>Attend to a topic in a group situation and make an appropriate response over a number of turns.</p> <p>Make contributions relevant to the topic and take turns in discussion, gradually extending contributions.</p> |

The student should be enabled to

learn to adopt appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviour to secure and maintain the attention of a partner.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Receptiveness to language</p> <p>Observe people talking, looking from one to the other.</p> <p>Show interest in talking to an adult: <i>pull at a person to show them an object or action.</i></p> <p>Initiate communication: <i>use sounds/smile to attract attention, draw attention to an object or event of interest, give/keep eye contact, wait with interest for adult to respond, turn head away to indicate enough.</i></p> <p>Begin to communicate intentionally: <i>seek attention through eye-contact, gesture or action, point to key objects or people.</i></p> <p>Participate in shared activities with less support: <i>sustain concentration for short periods.</i></p> | <p>Receptiveness to language</p> <p>Initiate and maintain conversation with peers and adults: <i>establish and maintain eye-contact, show attention to speaker through facial expression, wait with interest while speaker responds, listen to speaker and give appropriate response.</i></p> <p>Take turns at talking and listening within a group situation: <i>respond to question from teacher/hold a simple conversation with another student.</i></p> <p>Attend to the social behaviour of others on common social occasions.</p> <p>With decreasing assistance, respond appropriately to common social occasions: <i>make eye contact/smile/extend hand for greetings, wave or say bye-bye for departures, push/hold out object when giving, smile/express thanks when receiving, show concern by expression/action/ vocalisation.</i></p> <p>Initiate common social functions: <i>initiate 'hello' and 'goodbye', initiate the giving of things, express thanks on receiving things.</i></p> | <p>Receptiveness to language</p> <p>Use emerging conventional communication.</p> <p>Greet known people and initiate interactions and activities.</p> <p>Become more adept in using appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviour in order to secure and maintain the attention of the listener: <i>establishing eye-contact using appropriate head movements, gestures, and facial expressions, adopting appropriate posture, not invading another's personal space, ensuring audibility and clarity, tone of voice.</i></p> <p>Participate in individual and group interactions with familiar and unfamiliar adults or peers.</p> |

The student should be enabled to develop imitation skills.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Receptiveness to language</p> <p>'Talk' to mirror image, have conversation with self and doll/ teddy.</p> <p>Clap hands in imitation.</p> <p>Play peek-a-boo.</p> <p>Join in vocal play – <i>coughs, car noise, copy playful sounds.</i></p> <p>Observe/imitate face and hand movements of adult during action songs.</p> <p>Imitate simple actions: <i>wave 'bye bye'.</i></p> <p>Imitate actions involving objects: <i>banging drum, kissing teddy.</i></p> <p>Imitate sounds and actions: <i>hand clapping, tapping.</i></p> <p>Respond appropriately to guided pretend/imaginative play: <i>imitate putting doll to bed, give doll a drink when cup is presented.</i></p> | <p>Receptiveness to language</p> <p>Respond to body image activities: <i>imitate action, identify parts of the body on request or perform body movements on request.</i></p> <p>Observe and imitate the actions of others: <i>adults and other students in activities such as action songs/ play/drama.</i></p> <p>Perform body movements on request: <i>participate in action songs and rhymes, imitate actions of adults and other students.</i></p> <p>Initiate sessions of pretend/ imaginative play: <i>decide to use a box as a car, bring a doll along when called to wash hands and pretend to wash doll's hands also.</i></p> <p>Set up shop/school/hospital in the play corner.</p> | <p>Receptiveness to language</p> <p>Copy gestures during role-playing/ drama activities: <i>pretend to put on hat, smell a flower, put on lipstick, order a meal in a restaurant, go on a journey.</i></p> <p>Experiment with different voices and actions in role-playing: <i>animals/favourite story character.</i></p> <p>Perform in front of peers in assembly or in front of a public audience.</p> |

The student should be enabled to express feelings/emotions.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Receptiveness to language</p> <p>Show response when basic needs and desires are met: <i>stop crying when discomfort is removed, relax when placed in a comfortable and pleasant position.</i></p> <p>Indicate likes and dislikes or if happy/sad: <i>signing/nodding/smiling/becoming distressed/verbalising/saying 'yes' or 'no'.</i></p> <p>Have a favourite puppet or object and show pleasure when it appears.</p> <p>Begin to use the term 'mine'.</p> <p>Begin to use the term 'me'.</p> | <p>Receptiveness to language</p> <p>Actively seek to indicate basic needs and desires by crying or smiling: <i>vocalise to intentionally gain attention when unhappy or uncomfortable, smile to intentionally show that something is pleasant.</i></p> <p>Use facial expression, gesture or tone of voice to express own emotions.</p> | <p>Receptiveness to language</p> <p>Express in mime/drama a range of emotions and reactions.</p> <p>Interpret the emotions, gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice and reactions of others during interactions with familiar/unfamiliar people.</p> |

The student should be enabled to
have opportunities to listen to stories/rhymes.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Receptiveness to language</p> <p>Participate in guided pretend/ imaginative play: <i>washing doll's face, sitting in a pretend car.</i></p> <p>Participate in gestural and speech-action games: <i>for example 'Around and around the garden' or 'Incy wincy spider'.</i></p> <p>Listen to a wide variety of stories, songs and rhymes for increasing periods.</p> <p>Listen to a story of two or three sentences with understanding: <i>attend in a one-to-one situation/ within a group situation for a short period of time.</i></p> <p>Experience a wide variety of stories, action songs and nursery rhymes with repetitive and predictable words/phrases: <i>respond to own name in 'hello to ...' songs.</i></p> | <p>Receptiveness to language</p> <p>Respond appropriately to guided pretend/imaginative play: <i>imitate putting doll to bed, give doll a drink when cup is presented.</i></p> <p>Initiate sessions of pretend/ imaginative play: <i>make a puppet clap hands, make puppet open and close mouth to 'talk' or 'eat', decide to use a box as a car, bring a doll along when called to wash hands and pretend to wash doll's hands also.</i></p> <p>Listen to a story or description and respond to it: <i>hear, repeat and elaborate words, phrases and sentences modelled by the teacher.</i></p> <p>Fill in gaps left in familiar stories, songs and rhymes using gestures, pictures or words.</p> <p>Retell familiar stories using props: <i>watch others perform and anticipate actions.</i></p> <p>Sing from a repertoire of songs/ rhymes: <i>well-loved classroom favourites, songs heard at home, familiar television jingles.</i></p> <p>Ask for stories, songs and rhymes using gestures, pictures and words.</p> | <p>Receptiveness to language</p> <p>Listen to a story or a narrative and ask questions about it.</p> <p>Listen to a story and predict what will happen next.</p> <p>Retell main events in story in two or three sentences.</p> <p>Respond to stories through discussion, mime and role-playing: <i>create characters from stories/ legends using clothes from drama wardrobe—what clothes would a clown/a doctor/an old man wear?</i></p> <p>Sing/recite rap songs/nonsense rhymes.</p> <p>Experiment with different voices in role-playing: <i>favourite story character, voices to suit animal characters.</i></p> |

The student should be enabled to

communicate needs effectively using speech, gesture or signing as appropriate.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Competence and confidence in using language</p> <p>Use vocal/gestural skills to communicate intentionally: <i>express a preference, indicate rejection of undesired object, choose foods/ preferred toys, communicate 'more', 'no', 'again' 'stop'.</i></p> <p>Use individual means of communication to give information and ask questions about people, events and objects: <i>say/sign own name, point to a picture/make sign for 'home' to ask about going home, make sign for 'bus' to tell about journey on bus, point to swimming togs/picture of swimming pool to ask about going swimming.</i></p> <p>Respond to the use of objects of reference/gestural/ pictorial/verbal cues about objects or activities: <i>get swimming bag when object of reference relating to swimming is shown.</i></p> <p>Attend to facial expressions, gestures and tone of voice expressing various emotions.</p> <p>Use yes or no to indicate need or preference.</p> | <p>Competence and confidence in using language</p> <p>Use individual means of communication to give information and ask questions about events and objects: <i>ask teacher about next activity, tell news about parents and siblings.</i></p> <p>Assert self by sometimes refusing to do things.</p> <p>Ask for attention – 'watch', 'look at me'.</p> <p>Combine words and gestures to indicate needs: <i>use gesture and facial expression to assist meaning.</i></p> <p>Recognise some Lámh signs: <i>try to use some hand signs.</i></p> <p>Respond to the use of objects of reference/gestural/ pictorial/ verbal cues about people: <i>show anticipation when sound of familiar person's car is heard, show excitement when picture of favourite person is shown/that person's name is used.</i></p> <p>Use individual means of communication to give information and ask questions about people: <i>ask to visit a favourite person, ask about a student/staff member who is absent, tell news about parents and siblings at home (perhaps link with home communication book or other communication arrangements with home).</i></p> <p>Interpret and imitate facial expressions, gestures and tone of voice expressing various emotions.</p> | <p>Competence and confidence in using language</p> <p>Communicate about things of interest: <i>indicate preferred activity, ask about next step in sequence of task, for example in a cookery/ woodwork lesson.</i></p> <p>Use language to comment, make statements, share information, and organise thoughts and ideas: <i>sequencing events of the day or week.</i></p> <p>Use individual means of communication to make a request: <i>for a favourite object/ person/ activity.</i></p> <p>Deliberately use facial expression, gesture or tone of voice to express own emotions.</p> |

The student should be enabled to
choose appropriate words to label people, objects and activities.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Competence and confidence in using language</p> <p>Show awareness of the names of familiar objects: <i>look at/point to items as they are named, match picture/symbol/ make sign for familiar objects or people, use word to name familiar objects and people, name a number of own toys, interests, favourite objects, say what he/she would like to play with, work on, listen to, read. (Inclined towards one word response.)</i></p> | <p>Competence and confidence in using language</p> <p>Use words associated with his/her immediate environment—home, family names, favourite toys and games, school routines and activities.</p> <p>Use nouns in functional or play situations: <i>use words, symbols, or signs and describe what he/she is doing in relation to activities, games, toys.</i></p> <p>Use simple vocabulary related to stories and curriculum topics/ areas.</p> | <p>Competence and confidence in using language</p> <p>Extend personal and core vocabulary to include words associated with the wider community: <i>appropriate vocabulary for leisure activities and curriculum areas such as home economics, horticulture, woodwork.</i></p> <p>Use an expanding vocabulary to convey meaning.</p> |

The student should be enabled to
experience, recognise and observe simple commands.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Competence and confidence in using language</p> <p>Attend to spoken or gestural instruction in familiar and generalised situations: <i>listen to and be guided into appropriate response for 'give me', 'where is?', 'show me'.</i></p> <p>Follow short visual or verbal instructions for familiar activities with decreasing assistance: <i>start getting ready to go home when shown objects of reference for coat and car, follow two or three sequenced pictures to carry out routine activity such as washing hands/dressing after swimming, follow a short video sequence for getting a particular piece of equipment in the classroom, respond to verbal recording of a short sequence of instructions for a familiar activity.</i></p> <p>Point to familiar people in response to command 'show me', 'point to'.</p> <p>Point to familiar objects on request.</p> <p>Respond to command 'no'.</p> | <p>Competence and confidence in using language</p> <p>With decreasing assistance, respond to spoken or gestural instruction in familiar and generalised situations: <i>'give me' 'where is?' 'show me'.</i></p> <p>Experience, recognise and observe simple commands: <i>look, listen, watch.</i></p> <p>Give appropriate motor response to commands: <i>sit, stand, run.</i></p> <p>Follow instructions which involve carrying out an action on an object: <i>turn on the light, pick up your bag.</i></p> | <p>Competence and confidence in using language</p> <p>Follow more complex gestural, pictorial or verbal instructions – a series of related commands: <i>'take the milk out of the bag and put it in the fridge'.</i></p> <p>Carry out a sequence of instructions: <i>follow steps for self-care routines/work activities, remember directions to a place.</i></p> <p>Give a simple instruction to another student.</p> |

The student should be enabled to use descriptive words.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Developing cognitive abilities through language</p> <p>Attend to activities involving object permanence: <i>object of interest moved slightly out of reach and then brought back after a pause, object of interest partially covered/fully covered with a cloth and then re-emerging, games of 'peek-a-boo' with a familiar person, pushing a train through a tunnel, putting toy cars in a garage, looking at a jack-in-the box.</i></p> <p>Attend to descriptions of people/objects: <i>descriptions that can be seen and felt readily, such as big/small, soft/rough, tall person/small person, curly hair/straight hair.</i></p> <p>Respond to instructions involving description: <i>'show me the big ball'.</i></p> | <p>Developing cognitive abilities through language</p> <p>Engage independently in hide and seek games with people and objects.</p> <p>Know where familiar objects are kept and independently seek them out.</p> <p>Notice and express descriptive detail in relation to people, places, objects and events.</p> | <p>Developing cognitive abilities through language</p> <p>Focus on descriptive detail and begin to be explicit in relation to people, places, times, processes, events, colour, shape, size, position.</p> |

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The student should be enabled to use action words/show understanding of verbs.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Developing cognitive abilities through language</p> <p>Attend to demonstration of common verbs: <i>listen to the verb that goes with the actions.</i></p> <p>Show understanding of verbs: <i>follow out request to carry out actions on self/teddy/dolly.</i></p> <p>Use action words in functional or play situations: <i>'go' to express desire to go somewhere, 'sit' when making teddy sit.</i></p> <p>Participate in action rhymes and songs, finger play.</p> | <p>Developing cognitive abilities through language</p> <p>Show understanding of verbs: <i>follow request to carry out actions on self or puppet, point to/select a picture of a particular action.</i></p> | <p>Developing cognitive abilities through language</p> <p>Use action words in conversation with peers and adults.</p> |

The student should be enabled to show understanding of prepositions.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Developing cognitive abilities through language</p> <p>Attend to descriptions of people/objects: <i>descriptions that can readily be seen and felt such as big/small, soft/rough, tall person/small person, curly hair/straight hair.</i></p> <p>Attend to demonstrations of common prepositions: <i>have his/her attention drawn to how he/she is sitting 'on' the chair/lying 'on' the mat, have the opportunity to experience walking/being wheeled/creeping 'under' things, experience being 'in' and then 'out' of a small area, listen to the preposition and watch or feel the car going 'under' the bridge, the cup being placed 'on' the table.</i></p> <p>Show understanding of prepositions on, in, under: <i>respond to instructions involving prepositions—'put your cup in the sink'.</i></p> <p>Use prepositions in functional and play situations: <i>'out' to ask to go out, 'under' to show that something/someone is hidden.</i></p> | <p>Developing cognitive abilities through language</p> <p>Respond to requests involving prepositions: <i>crawl 'on' the mat, 'under' the table, 'through' the tunnel, 'through' the hoop.</i></p> <p>Use prepositions and nouns in a structured group activity: <i>sign/verbalise 'the car is under the box'.</i></p> <p>Respond to instructions involving prepositions: <i>'drive the toy car under the bridge', 'put your cup in the cupboard'.</i></p> | <p>Developing cognitive abilities through language</p> <p>Make a choice or make a request involving descriptive detail in relation to people and objects: <i>always choose the red mug, seek to sit on a big chair, seek to play with someone smaller than him/her, show special interest in people with glasses/long hair/beard.</i></p> |

The student should be enabled to
construct sentences through the use of verbs, and connecting and questioning words.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Developing cognitive abilities through language</p> <p>Use single words/signs/symbols with purpose and in context: <i>'milk' conveys 'I want milk' / 'That's a picture of milk'.</i></p> <p>Use whole phrases associated with particular events: <i>'Happy birthday'.</i></p> <p>Link single words, signs or symbols to communicate meaning.</p> <p>Respond appropriately to requests containing two key words, signs, symbols: <i>'Give me the cup'.</i></p> <p>Link objects of reference, pictures, symbols, signs or words to form phrases/sentences of two or more words:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ use two word/sign/symbol utterances: <i>more milk</i> ■ use verb object: <i>give doll</i> ■ use subject object: <i>daddy ball</i> ■ use subject complement: <i>me John</i> ■ use adverb and other element: <i>there ball</i> ■ use negative and other element: <i>no ball</i> ■ use adjective and noun: <i>big ball</i> ■ use demonstrative and noun: <i>my hat.</i> | <p>Developing cognitive abilities through language</p> <p>Respond appropriately to requests and instructions containing three key words, signs or symbols.</p> <p>Use phrases/sentences of up to three key words, signs, symbols including verbs to communicate meaning.</p> <p>Link objects of reference, pictures, symbols, signs or words to ask questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ use questions: <i>Who? Where?</i> ■ use verb complement: <i>Be quiet</i> ■ use 'is' and present participle: <i>Boy is running</i> ■ use 'is' interrogative: <i>Is Sean here?</i> | <p>Developing cognitive abilities through language</p> <p>Combine simple sentences through the use of connecting words:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ use phrases/sentences containing four or more key elements ■ use questions: <i>What? Why? How?</i> ■ sequence words and ideas to convey meaning adequately ■ explain actions ■ discuss different possible solutions to simple problems ■ make complaints or requests. |

The student should be enabled to:
use language to perform common social functions

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Developing cognitive abilities through language</p> <p>Respond appropriately to common social occasions/daily routines with verbal/gestural prompting: <i>make eye contact/smile/extend hand for greetings, wave or say bye-bye for departures, push/hold out object when giving, smile/express thanks when receiving, show concern by expression/action/vocalisation.</i></p> | <p>Developing cognitive abilities through language</p> <p>Use common salutations correctly: <i>greeting strangers and familiar people, saying goodbye.</i></p> <p>Engage in real and imaginary situations to perform different social functions: <i>greeting others, using the telephone, ordering a drink in a café, using appropriate language (excuse me, sorry, thank you).</i></p> <p>Greet familiar adult without reminder.</p> <p>Know when to stop talking to give space for a peer to speak.</p> <p>Listen and wait for adult response to a question.</p> | <p>Developing cognitive abilities through language</p> <p>Develop social and functional communication and language skills: <i>greeting others and saying goodbye, introducing oneself and others, expressing concern/appreciation, giving and receiving messages, giving/receiving compliments, asking for directions</i></p> <p>Give specific information on request: <i>name and address and basic information about self: age, address, family.</i></p> <p>Control volume of speech.</p> <p>Use different speech styles when talking to adults or peers.</p> <p>Know when to be quiet.</p> |

The student should be enabled to
communicate about past, present and future activities

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Developing cognitive abilities through language</p> <p>Talk about what he/she is doing as they play.</p> <p>Respond to questions about present experiences: <i>verbalise or make the sign for 'playground' when asked, 'Where are we going now?'</i>.</p> <p>Attend to talk about recent past and present experiences and attend to plans for the future, given tactile, gestural, pictorial or verbal cues.</p> <p>Respond to questions about recent past or present experiences: <i>recap on what happened today at end of school day, point to dinner/make sign for dinner when asked in the dining room, 'What are you doing now?'</i>, <i>recall a special event that happened in recent past with the aid of photos/video footage/sound recordings.</i></p> <p>With decreasing assistance, communicate about plans for the future: <i>given help, use object of reference/expression/ gesture picture/symbol or word to tell about the planned class trip to the swimming pool.</i></p> | <p>Developing cognitive abilities through language</p> <p>Give a running commentary on personal activity.</p> <p>Have something to say about matters of immediate and personal interest: <i>name a number of own toys, interests, favourite items.</i></p> <p>Tell stories about past or present experiences with objects of reference, expression, gesture, picture, symbol or word.</p> <p>Ask questions about past or present experiences with own communication system.</p> <p>Speculate about plans for the future with objects of reference, expression, gesture, picture, symbol or word: <i>use own communication system to ask if he/she will be going swimming later, speculate about who will collect him/her from school.</i></p> | <p>Developing cognitive abilities through language</p> <p>Carry on a simple conversation about his/her past and present experiences using gestures, pictures, symbols or words.</p> <p>Ask questions about past or present experiences using gestures, pictures, symbols or words.</p> <p>Communicate about future plans and events: <i>planned trip to the cinema, school football leagues, holidays.</i></p> |

The student should be enabled to recognise some symbolic representations.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Reading</p> <p>Link familiar pictures, non-letter signs and symbols to their meanings: <i>show excitement when shown picture of favourite person/object, link picture of game/activity on box to game inside, link sign on toilet door to the actual toilet inside.</i></p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Use pictures, signs or symbols: <i>to show preference for particular person/object/activity when presented with a selection, indicate needs and desires, ask question about person/object/event.</i></p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Interpret the meaning of non-letter signs and symbols in the immediate and wider environment: <i>use his/her own picture timetable, recognise pictorial signs for the swimming pool/bus stop/post-office/public toilets.</i></p> |

The student should be enabled to symbolically represent objects.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Reading</p> <p>Create and sustain imaginary contexts using objects, role-playing to represent meaning beyond the concrete present: <i>pretend to drink from a cup/to eat 'dinner' in the play corner.</i></p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Match 3D objects to their 2D representations: <i>match picture to object.</i></p> <p>Make 3D models of real objects: <i>make models from clay/bricks/play-doh.</i></p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Represent objects, animals and people through movement, dance, mime, sound and gesture.</p> <p>Represent 3D objects in 2D form: <i>draw a picture of an object.</i></p> |

The student should be enabled to develop an awareness of books.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Reading</p> <p>Observe adult pointing to the words of the story as he/she reads it: <i>turn the pages for adult, understand that books are read from front to back.</i></p> <p>Attend to stories supported by a range of objects: <i>puppets, picture books, interactive stories on CD.</i></p> <p>Feel textural tactile books.</p> <p>Look through books at random: <i>turn pages haphazardly and stop at something of interest.</i></p> <p>Show preference for a favourite book.</p> <p>Hand book to adult to read or share.</p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Listen to stories being read: <i>look at pictures, observe text,</i></p> <p>Echo the reading of the story while looking at pictures.</p> <p>Understand that print is followed in a certain order: <i>line by line, word by word.</i></p> <p>Understand that print/text is read from left to right: <i>find the starting point and direction for reading on each page.</i></p> <p>Seek out a favourite storybook from selection and ask for it to be read.</p> <p>Choose a storybook from selection presented: <i>'read' to adults/other students.</i></p> <p>Willingly share a book with an adult.</p> <p>Show pleasure when sharing a book.</p> <p>Find a specific book.</p> <p>Demonstrate preferences.</p> <p>Sit for several minutes looking at a book by themselves.</p> <p>Show something found in a book.</p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Listen to stories supported by a range of objects: <i>props, pictures, symbols, words, text.</i></p> <p>Look for specific objects in a book.</p> <p>Have a favourite book.</p> <p>Become involved in discussion while sharing a book.</p> <p>Request the reading of a book.</p> <p>Listen to stories from books containing pictures and text.</p> <p>Choose books from the library and handle with care.</p> <p>Have access to a range of books: <i>stories on tape/CD-Rom/video, stories made by and for the students, picture and information books reflecting his/her own interests (football, music, animals, cars, fashion, cinema).</i></p> |

The student should be enabled to understand that pictures can tell a story.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Reading</p> <p>Look at pictures in book.</p> <p>Observe and attend to the sequence of a simple picture story shown by adult: <i>home-made books of clear photographs relating to the student's own self/family (e.g. the journey to school).</i></p> <p>Watch an adult point to pictures.</p> <p>Listen as the adult talks about the picture.</p> <p>Make noises in response to a picture – car, cat, etc.</p> <p>Turn book around to look at pictures in different ways.</p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Follow the sequence of a simple picture story: <i>with assistance, put pictures in sequence as adult tells a familiar story, using pictures cut from a duplicate storybook.</i></p> <p>Recognise that pictures tell stories.</p> <p>Turn pages several at a time to find the named picture.</p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Put pictures in sequence as he/she recalls a recent event: <i>using photographs relating to a class outing/musical production/art project.</i></p> <p>Communicate to adults and peers about a family celebration using own photographs.</p> |

The student should be enabled to handle books appropriately.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Reading</p> <p>Participate in the handling of books: <i>opening, closing, turning pages</i>.</p> <p>Show evidence of pretend reading.</p> <p>Point to named picture.</p> <p>Look at books randomly.</p> <p>Look at a book handled by an adult.</p> <p>Look at pictures with an adult and point to objects.</p> <p>Turn pages on prompt when sharing a book.</p> <p>Turn pages – several at a time.</p> <p>When reading independently, will pause to look at pictures in the book.</p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Hold a book the right way up.</p> <p>Turn several pages at a time to find named picture.</p> <p>Bring a book to be read.</p> <p>Have a favourite book.</p> <p>Listen to stories from a picture book.</p> <p>Name objects in picture books.</p> <p>Name common objects in a picture.</p> <p>Say appropriate animal sound when presented with the picture.</p> <p>Recognise picture of family members.</p> <p>Respond to instructions about handling a book: <i>hold it the right way up, turn the page</i>.</p> <p>Point to pictures as a story is being told.</p> <p>Attempt to point with finger as adult reads text.</p> <p>Recognise the direction in which the pages are turned.</p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Handle books appropriately without guidance and initiate own reading activity</p> <p>Pick up books, open books, look at books independently.</p> <p>Treat book with care.</p> <p>Show a preference for specific books.</p> <p>Relate book or picture to TV programme.</p> |

The student should be enabled to demonstrate understanding and enjoyment of stories.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Reading</p> <p>Follow a story (signed or spoken): <i>laugh at a funny story.</i></p> <p>Remember learned responses over a short period of time with sensory cues: <i>show pleasure each time a particular puppet character appears in a dramatised poem.</i></p> <p>Remember simple actions or sounds to a familiar poem.</p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Ask for specific stories.</p> <p>Enjoy looking at the same book over again.</p> <p>Notice detail in pictures</p> <p>Point to named objects.</p> <p>Listen and respond to a story from a 'talking book' on the computer.</p> <p>Remember and join in with some key words of rhymes and stories: <i>'You can't catch me, I'm the gingerbread man'.</i></p> <p>Join in repetitive verse.</p> <p>Repeat final word in each line of a verse.</p> <p>Respond individually or as part of a group.</p> <p>Read story to a friend – <i>adult, child, doll.</i></p> <p>Choose book to take home.</p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Know some lines by heart.</p> <p>Join in stories with repetitive passages.</p> <p>Use repetitive passages when 'reading' independently.</p> <p>Enjoy hearing familiar stories.</p> <p>Ask questions about pictures.</p> <p>Create a story from a picture.</p> <p>Use a picture to tell own experience.</p> <p>Have a favourite place to share books.</p> <p>Choose a book to be read.</p> <p>Talk in simple terms about the content of stories: <i>ask 'What is he doing?' 'Why did she do that?'</i></p> <p>Predict what will happen next.</p> <p>Respond imaginatively: <i>through art, music and drama activities.</i></p> |

The student should be enabled to
understand that text in a book relates to pictures and has meaning.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Reading</p> <p>Watch as adults point to text.</p> <p>Recognise that the word/story remains the same each time it is read.</p> <p>Be aware when the story has finished.</p> <p>Try to retell stories while looking at books.</p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Be aware that print has meaning in books and in other forms of text.</p> <p>Realise that the printed word 'dog' relates to a picture/photograph of a dog.</p> <p>Move from front to back of book, top to bottom of page.</p> <p>Look at the left hand page first.</p> <p>Move finger along text from left to right.</p> <p>Join in discussion about story.</p> <p>Show an awareness if the reader changes the story.</p> <p>Answer key-word questions about the story.</p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Start at the beginning of a book.</p> <p>Point to text when reading.</p> <p>In class, sit appropriately to listen to story.</p> <p>Name a character in a story.</p> <p>Respond to situations in story <i>i.e. laugh at humour or surprise.</i></p> <p>Act out stories or situations in stories.</p> <p>Ask what text says.</p> <p>Show by looking at or pointing to text that the adult has skipped a page.</p> |

The student should be enabled to
differentiate between print and pictures.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Reading</p> <p>Look attentively at pictures in a book.</p> <p>Match objects to pictures and symbols: <i>for example choosing between two symbols to select a drink or seeing a photograph of a child and eye-pointing at the child.</i></p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Point to details in story illustrations.</p> <p>Point to illustrations on request.</p> <p>Use illustrations to make sense of text.</p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Discuss detail in illustrations.</p> <p>Know the difference between print and pictures.</p> <p>Notice print in the classroom: <i>point to text on packets.</i></p> |

The student should be enabled to retell a story.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Reading</p> <p>Communicate about text using photographs/symbols/pictures/ words.</p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Use full sentences to retell a story: <i>using the book, turning the pages correctly and matching meaning to the particular illustration on that page.</i></p> <p>'Read' story to a friend.</p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Focus on the main events of a story in sequence: <i>recognise beginning, middle and end, name main character.</i></p> <p>Answer and ask questions.</p> <p>Create own story from pictures.</p> |

The student should be enabled to: develop an awareness of story structure

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Reading</p> <p>Understand that there is a written form of familiar stories: <i>teacher tracing along the lines of a book as he/she tells story.</i></p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Understand how storybook language works: <i>'Once upon a time,' 'They all lived happily ever after,' 'One morning'.</i></p> <p>Retell the story focusing on the main sequence of events— beginning, middle, end.</p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Make up own story using a book as a prop or using photographs of familiar events: <i>'My day'/'My holiday', incorporating photographs relating to the student.</i></p> |

The student should be enabled to: use some language related to reading

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Reading</p> <p>Show understanding of some language related to reading: <i>identify 'picture', 'page'.</i></p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Show understanding of vocabulary related to handling books: <i>identify when asked 'picture', 'page', 'front', 'back', 'beginning', 'end.'</i></p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Identify 'top', 'bottom', 'word', 'letter', 'page', 'line'.</p> |

The student should be enabled to
recall and talk about significant events and details in stories.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Reading</p> <p>Name the main character in a text.</p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Use picture cues to suggest what the book may be about.</p> <p>Provide information about main characters/events.</p> <p>Retell a story in own words.</p> <p>Act out situations in a story.</p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Express own personal reaction to a story: <i>favourite/funniest/scariest part.</i></p> <p>Name his/her favourite books/stories.</p> <p>Add detail to a story.</p> <p>Communicate about the events in a story.</p> <p>Relate story to own experience.</p> <p>Join in discussion about a story.</p> |

The student should be enabled to
recognise that print is used to convey meaning.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Reading</p> <p>Understand that, in written form, their names represent themselves: <i>recognise own name written down beside own photograph on class labels.</i></p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Recognise other familiar names in written form: <i>classmates, names of family members.</i></p> <p>Recognise words in the class/school environment: <i>labels on storage boxes in the classroom, name of principal/teacher on his/her door.</i></p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Understand that print conveys information: <i>signs outside/inside shops, television and sports pages in newspapers.</i></p> <p>Recognise the written form of a variety of familiar objects: <i>names on items of food/drink.</i></p> <p>Read for information: <i>class timetable, simple written instructions on recipes.</i></p> |

The student should be enabled to recognise that print is found in his/her environment.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Reading</p> <p>Match pictures to household objects.</p> <p>Become aware of printed signs in the immediate environment: <i>printed labels for familiar objects, printed names on desks/above coat hangers.</i></p> <p>Match symbol to object.</p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Link familiar printed signs or names to objects or people: <i>know where to hang own coat by looking at printed name, know where individual students should sit by looking at printed names.</i></p> <p>Begin to recognise individual words or letters in familiar contexts: <i>recognise letters from own name on labels on storage boxes, recognise own name and names of classmates in personalised reading book.</i></p> <p>Recognise familiar words from flashcards.</p> <p>Recognise familiar words and letters in simple unknown text.</p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Recognise labels in the kitchen: <i>tea/coffee.</i></p> <p>Recognise and act appropriately when faced with common signs: <i>Ladies/Gents.</i></p> <p>Recognise and act appropriately to signals: <i>Danger/Bus Stop/Exit/On/Off.</i></p> <p>Read and react appropriately to signs giving directions: <i>inside and outside the shop/on the street.</i></p> <p>Read and identify bus numbers and destinations: <i>42/Cork.</i></p> <p>Recognise and pick out trade names in supermarket: <i>brand names for cereals, washing powder, biscuits.</i></p> <p>Read the TV guide: <i>names and times of programmes.</i></p> <p>Recognise print/pictures in a variety of forms: <i>books, comics, magazines, newspapers.</i></p> <p>Recognise printed and handwritten words in a range of settings: <i>notes, letters, lists, advertisements.</i></p> |

The student should be enabled to build up a sight vocabulary.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Reading</p> <p>Build up a vocabulary of words recognised on sight: <i>family names and classmates names.</i></p> <p>Match pictures to known words: <i>photographs of students with their names.</i></p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Match pictures to words of known objects.</p> <p>Match word to word: <i>word lotto, bingo.</i></p> <p>Read sentences containing known words.</p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Recognise own name in a variety of contexts.</p> <p>Relate letters in own name to print in the environment.</p> <p>Recognise labels on food cans, family names, and own interest words.</p> <p>Read stories from a personalised reading book based on his/her life and daily activities.</p> <p>Use information technology to increase motivation to read and to enhance reading development.</p> |

The student should be enabled to show recognition of familiar letters.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Reading</p> <p>Become aware of familiar letters: <i>pick out initial letters of own name from a small selection of letters.</i></p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Find letters contained in own name in book.</p> <p>Match and sort letters with verbal and physical prompting.</p> <p>Recognise the letters of the alphabet by shape.</p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Know the names of some letters of the alphabet.</p> <p>Show awareness of the patterns of letters in familiar names or words: <i>use loose letters to copy words, use keyboard to type out familiar words.</i></p> |

The student should be enabled to
differentiate between letters and words.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Reading</p> <p>Join in class/group singing of the alphabet song.</p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Arrange magnetic letters on a board to form own name.</p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Recognise and name some of the letters of the alphabet.</p> <p>Re-arrange letters to form new words</p> |

The student should be enabled to
develop awareness of some letter-sound relationships.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Reading</p> <p>Isolate the beginning sound of a word: <i>recognise initial sounds of his/her name.</i></p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Engage in activities designed to increase awareness of sounds: <i>give examples of other words beginning with the same sound as his/her name.</i></p> | <p>Reading</p> <p>Know the sounds of some letters of the alphabet.</p> <p>Identify the letters of the alphabet by their sounds.</p> <p>Begin to associate sounds with patterns in rhymes, with words, signs, symbols and letters.</p> <p>Sound and name the letters of the alphabet.</p> |

The student should be enabled to experience and enjoy a print-rich environment.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Writing</p> <p>Experience a classroom or work environment that encourages writing: <i>personal writing collections, writing corner, displays of writing, captioned drawings.</i></p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Experience a classroom or work environment that encourages writing: <i>personal writing collections, writing corner, displays of writing, captioned drawings and posters.</i></p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Experience a classroom or work environment that encourages writing: <i>personal writing collections, writing corner, displays of writing, captioned drawings, posters, lists.</i></p> |

The student should be enabled to use symbols to represent real objects.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Writing</p> <p>Create and sustain imaginary contexts using objects and role-playing to represent/symbolise meaning beyond the concrete present: <i>put on a white coat/shirt in the play corner and pretend to be a doctor, prepare a 'meal' in the play kitchen.</i></p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Select symbols to place on class weather chart.</p> <p>Select pictures to appear on computer screen.</p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Place symbols of daily activities on own personal timetable.</p> |

The student should be enabled to develop hand-eye co-ordination.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Writing</p> <p>Have opportunities to use a large range of drawing and painting implements: <i>large fat tools, paintbrush padded with foam, finger crayons, triangular pen/pencil (bells or a weight can be attached to drawing implement to increase awareness of its presence), computer drawing programmes: use whole hand to hold pencil, use dagger grip/pincer grip, watch the paper as he/she makes marks, demonstrate pleasure in efforts.</i></p> <p>Participate in drawing and painting on a large range of drawing surfaces: <i>'draw' with finger in a sand tray, paint with water/coloured chalk on blackboard, paint on brightly coloured/black paper, paint on textured surface.</i></p> <p>Have opportunities to hold, grasp, squeeze, push, pull, tear, twist a range of materials.</p> <p>Manipulate and explore the properties of marla/play-doh/clay.</p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Respond to reminders to maintain a suitable posture for drawing: <i>with decreasing assistance, sit as upright as possible, stand securely if using easel, free one hand/both hands, look at drawing surface.</i></p> <p>Experiment with finger paints to achieve various effects and designs: <i>colour, movement, texture, drop sand or glitter into paint.</i></p> <p>Imitate vertical strokes.</p> <p>Imitate horizontal strokes.</p> <p>Imitate circular strokes.</p> <p>Complete simple two, four or six piece jigsaws.</p> <p>Build a tower from blocks.</p> <p>Participate in ball games/cutting and sticking activities.</p> <p>Place coloured pegs in pegboard.</p> <p>Thread beads of varying sizes and colours onto a string.</p> <p>Hammer shapes into a pegboard.</p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Independently adjust posture to accommodate drawing and writing: <i>stabilise self in sitting, standing position, independently secure page with blu-tack or hold paper with one hand while drawing with the other.</i></p> <p>Experiment with large range of drawing implements on range of drawing surfaces to achieve various effects and designs: <i>free-flowing rhythms of early drawing attempts gradually refined to more controlled movements as hand/eye co-ordination improves.</i></p> <p>Develop hand-eye co-ordination through visual arts activities: <i>cutting, pasting, manipulating clay, painting, stirring, threading, constructing.</i></p> |

The student should be enabled to
develop a satisfactory grip of writing implements.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Writing</p> <p>Scribble with either hand: <i>using a crayon, a pencil, pens, paint.</i></p> <p>Use whole hand to hold pencil.</p> <p>Copy horizontal, vertical and circular movement using whole arm movement.</p> <p>Make random marks and experiment with finger paints: <i>paint with vivid colours/different textures (sand/glitter may be added to paint).</i></p> <p>Draw with finger in a sand tray.</p> <p>Paint with water on a blackboard.</p> <p>Experiment further with a range of drawing implements on different drawing surfaces to achieve various effects and designs using large fat tools, finger crayons, triangular pen/pencils: <i>free-flowing rhythms of early attempts gradually refined to more controlled movements as hand-eye co-ordination improves.</i></p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Develop ability to grip drawing implements: <i>scribble without direction using a range of materials (chalk, crayons, markers, pencils).</i></p> <p>Observe the colour and thickness of the marks made by the various implements.</p> <p>Imitate, with decreasing help, marks made by an adult: <i>horizontal and vertical lines, circles, crosses.</i></p> <p>Draw around shape templates: <i>trace outline with finger, draw around shape with finger dipped in paint, draw around/inside the shape with drawing implement.</i></p> <p>Refine the ability to grip drawing and writing implements: <i>progress (if appropriate) to instruments without special aids, progress to smaller instruments.</i></p> <p>Hold pencil correctly with lessening of arm movement and greater use of hand to write.</p> <p>Sit correctly, using second hand to hold paper while writing.</p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Refine further the ability to grip drawing and writing implements: <i>colour inside simple shapes and pictures—large shapes with thick outline gradually refined to smaller shapes.</i></p> <p>Scribble with direction and control using a ‘pincer’ grip and draw dots, loops, squiggles, wavy lines, and zig-zag lines.</p> <p>Draw around templates for a particular purpose: <i>draw around templates of flowers/animals for a spring collage.</i></p> <p>Use a comfortable and efficient pencil grip.</p> <p>Produce a controlled line which supports letter formation.</p> <p>Write letters using the correct sequence of movements using preferred hand.</p> <p>Begin letters in the correct place.</p> <p>Move round circular shape in the correct direction.</p> <p>Return up a vertical stroke ie as in ‘n’.</p> <p>Form some letters correctly.</p> <p>Leave a space between groups of letters/symbols.</p> |

The student should be enabled to recognise when someone is writing.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Writing</p> <p>Observe the teacher model writing: <i>attend to the direction of marks created.</i></p> <p>Attend to the shape of marks created: <i>sprinkle sand or glitter onto painted marks and then feel and observe them when dry.</i></p> <p>Attend to the drawing of models of familiar representations: <i>be enabled to look at real person/object and observe a pictorial representation being made, participate with help in making pictorial representation.</i></p> <p>Develop awareness of the outline of regular shapes: <i>trace with finger around regular shapes, be enabled to colour inside regular shapes.</i></p> <p>Make marks that he/she calls writing: <i>engage in pretend writing.</i></p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Seek out adult to read what they have written.</p> <p>Write on or mark appropriate surfaces, e.g. <i>paper, blackboard as opposed to walls, clothes, skin.</i></p> <p>Imitate (with decreasing help) marks he/she sees being made by an adult: <i>horizontal and vertical strokes, circular strokes, single vertical or horizontal line, single circle, cross, loop, zig-zag line, wavy line.</i></p> <p>Copy (with decreasing help) marks that have been prepared by an adult: <i>examples as above.</i></p> <p>Begin to show an understanding of the difference between drawing and writing: <i>identify a picture of a person writing.</i></p> <p>Ask an adult to draw or write a message: <i>understand that, in written form, their names represent themselves.</i></p> <p>Pretend to write message for others.</p> <p>Use writing in role-play.</p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Distinguish between a person writing and a person drawing.</p> <p>Listen when an adult reads what they have written.</p> <p>Observe adult use writing for a variety of purposes.</p> |

The student should be enabled to attribute meaning to own marks, drawing or scribbles.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Writing</p> <p>Give meaning to own drawings: <i>indicate self/answer 'Daddy'/point to object when asked about a drawing.</i></p> <p>Show interest in watching an adult draw a pictorial representation of a familiar person/object: <i>look from the real thing to the drawing, point to what is represented.</i></p> <p>Colour (with decreasing help) inside regular shapes: <i>move from colouring the whole page to colouring inside large/medium-sized circle or other regular geometrical shape.</i></p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Draw (with decreasing help) around regular templates: <i>trace outline with finger, draw around template with finger dipped in paint, draw around template with implement.</i></p> <p>Colour inside shapes and pictures and communicate with an adult about the activity: <i>colour, shape, size - large shapes with thick outline gradually refined to smaller shapes.</i></p> <p>Engage in pretend writing: <i>use scribble writing and some letter-like shapes ('That says ...').</i></p> <p>Attempt to add own name to picture.</p> <p>Make a reasonable attempt to copy prepared models of familiar drawings: <i>drawing of a person/a face/a house.</i></p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Draw (with decreasing help) simple pictorial forms: <i>representation of self/a house/a flower.</i></p> <p>Draw, with help if necessary, around templates for a particular purpose: <i>draw around template of animal to help with farm collage.</i></p> <p>Use a drawing package to create a pattern on the screen.</p> <p>Draw a picture of a person using a simple graphics programme on the computer: <i>add colour to the picture and communicate about the finished product.</i></p> <p>Contribute to records of own achievement or to books about themselves, their families and interests.</p> |

The student should be enabled to understand that pictures, symbols and words communicate meaning.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Writing</p> <p>Use objects of reference/picture/symbols/words to record events and experiences: <i>with help, place objects of reference on a board to record the events of the day, paste two or more pictures/symbols on a board/into a book to record a recent class trip.</i></p> <p>Use a concept keyboard to select pictures and symbols: <i>select a picture/symbol for drinks at break time.</i></p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Point to words, pictures and page numbers when sharing a book.</p> <p>Ask adult to draw something for him/her: <i>give drawing implement to adult and indicate what they wish to see represented.</i></p> <p>With some help, record thoughts and feelings using pictures/symbols/ words: <i>add a smiling mouth to a picture of a face to record happiness, choose a sad face from a selection and add to the collage of a boy/girl to record sadness, place a red sticker on the body part of a picture of himself/herself to record pain in that area.</i></p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Understand that the picture helps to tell the story: <i>look for details in the pictures.</i></p> <p>Understand that writing can be used for a range of purposes, e.g. <i>to send messages, record, inform, tell stories.</i></p> <p>Understand that writing remains constant, i.e. <i>will always 'say' the same thing.</i></p> <p>Distinguish between writing and drawing in books and in own work.</p> |

The student should be enabled to
develop an awareness of letters.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Writing</p> <p>Use finger to trace over letters in 2D and 3D form: <i>soft letters, magnetic letters, sandpaper letters, letters on paper.</i></p> <p>Begin to develop awareness of the letters in his/her name.</p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Recognise letters in his/her own name or a friend's name, and letters in the environment.</p> <p>Sort words and letters from numbers.</p> <p>Group letters to give the appearance of words.</p> <p>Be aware that each letter makes a sound.</p> <p>Know the sounds of the letters in his name.</p> <p>Write the letters in his name.</p> <p>Use a single letter to indicate a word.</p> <p>Use some recognisable words in writing.</p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Distinguish between numerals and letters: <i>sort numerals and letters.</i></p> <p>Understand that there is a connection between letters and sounds: <i>participate in sound lotto games/I spy games.</i></p> <p>Write all the letters in own name.</p> <p>Write own name in correct sequence.</p> <p>Use capital letter to begin name.</p> <p>Enter name on the computer.</p> <p>Put spaces between words on the computer.</p> <p>Ask how to write a word.</p> <p>Be aware of different uses for writing.</p> <p>Dictate extended text for picture or diagram.</p> <p>Join in group story writing.</p> <p>Use letter-sound knowledge in writing.</p> |

The student should be enabled to

learn to form and name individual letters using various materials.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Writing</p> <p>Use fingers to trace over large, bright or textured 3D and 2D models of significant letters e.g. own name: <i>soft letters, magnetic letters, letters in sand, letters on paper.</i></p> <p>Imitate/draw, with necessary help: <i>horizontal and vertical strokes, loops, wavy lines, zigzag lines.</i></p> <p>Have opportunity to experiment with different coloured ink pads and letter stamps: <i>lines of scribbles with a variety of shapes included.</i></p> <p>Make zigzag marks.</p> <p>Use pretend writing with some recognisable letters.</p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Attempt to write letter shapes in wet sand/salt/flour.</p> <p>Make marks for name with some recognisable letters.</p> <p>Make a reasonable attempt to copy large models of significant letters: <i>letters of own name, familiar letters used in the environment, stay within parallel/guide lines.</i></p> <p>Attempt to write first letter of name independently.</p> <p>Write first letter of name.</p> <p>Write several letters from name.</p> <p>Develop a preferred hand.</p> <p>'Read' own 'writing' to adult and illustrate writing.</p> <p>Make patterns visible in writing: <i>spaces between symbols, pictures and writing separate, letter size variable.</i></p> <p>Use plasticine/play-doh to form letters.</p> <p>Draw, with help, around simple letter templates: <i>starting spot for each letter is highlighted.</i></p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Copy letters or words from environment, using a wide range of implements.</p> <p>Copy underneath from left to right: <i>most letters orientated correctly.</i></p> <p>Independently write the letters of significant names or words.</p> |

The student should be enabled to

understand the left-right, top-bottom orientation of writing.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Writing</p> <p>Begin to develop a left-right orientation for writing: <i>trace finger from left to right along a sandpaper road, drive a toy car along a road in a sand tray.</i></p> <p>Trace with finger/writing implements, left to right, over lines and patterns made by the teacher.</p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Play independently at pretend writing with finger in sand tray/ with finger paint on paper going from left to right: <i>using sandpaper 'roads' moving from left to right independently.</i></p> <p>Independently start at red spot when tracing over prepared letter models.</p> <p>Write across the page from left to right: <i>tracing, copying letters and/ or words written by teacher (using rubber tripod grips or triangular pencils if necessary).</i></p> <p>Copy writing patterns.</p> <p>Copy underneath writing.</p> <p>Copy from blackboard or notice.</p> <p>Move from left to right, hold pencil correctly, pictures and writing separate on the page,</p> <p>'Read' what he/she has written, moving finger from left to right.</p> <p>Trace:</p> <p><i>vertical movement – l,t,b</i></p> <p><i>horizontal movement – t,f,z</i></p> <p><i>curved movement – c,o,e</i></p> <p><i>push movement – m,n,r</i></p> <p><i>pull movement – u,w,j.</i></p> <p>Trace words.</p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Copy:</p> <p><i>vertical movement – l,t,b</i></p> <p><i>horizontal movement – t,f,z</i></p> <p><i>curved movement – c,o,e,</i></p> <p><i>push movement – m,n,r</i></p> <p><i>pull movement – u,w,j.</i></p> <p>Copy words.</p> <p>Start writing on left of page and print/write some recognisable letter shapes, capital and lower case, with increasing control: <i>with letters upright, roughly the same size and horizontally adjacent.</i></p> <p>Sit correctly.</p> <p>Position paper correctly.</p> |

The student should be enabled to write name to label pictures.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Writing</p> <p>Trace over his/her name to label drawing.</p> <p>Join dots to form his/her name: <i>understand that he/she has copied own name.</i></p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Dictate caption for computer picture for painting.</p> <p>Copy name to label pictures.</p> <p>Arrange letters of his/her own name in sequence.</p> <p>Use a keyboard/concept keyboard to select the letters of his/her own name.</p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Label drawings with his/her own name, without model.</p> |

The student should be enabled to copy words from signs in the environment.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Writing</p> <p>Observe written material in use: <i>i.e. shopping list, class list.</i></p> <p>Trace, with support, letters and familiar words: <i>own name, family names.</i></p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Copy, with support, letters and familiar words: <i>trace over or join dots to form words.</i></p> <p>Copy letter forms: <i>labels and captions for pictures or for displays.</i></p> <p>Use single letters or groups of letters to represent whole words or parts of words: <i>copy familiar words from flashcards, group letters and leave spaces between them as though writing separate words.</i></p> <p>Become aware of the sequence of letters, symbols and words: <i>selecting and linking symbols together, writing names and one or two simple words correctly from memory.</i></p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Select and write familiar words correctly: <i>label items/compile a list.</i></p> |

The student should be enabled to see personal writing displayed.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Writing</p> <p>Identify his/her own picture or drawings from selection presented.</p> <p>Respond to the display of own work and work of other students: <i>on display in classroom, on school corridor, in portfolio, at home.</i></p> <p>Develop sense of ownership of finished product: <i>show to adult/ other student, ask to bring it home or have it displayed, identify own work from a selection presented, have own portfolio of work.</i></p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Observe own work and work of other students: <i>in the classroom/in the school corridor/at home/in portfolio.</i></p> <p>Have writing valued: <i>hearing it praised, having it displayed, sharing it with others.</i></p> <p>Establish his/her ownership of finished product: <i>show his/her effort to adult or other students, ask to bring it home or have it displayed.</i></p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Use writing to communicate in a variety of ways, incorporating it into play and everyday classroom life: <i>recounting their own experiences, lists, signs, directions, menus, labels, greeting cards, letters.</i></p> <p>Have regular opportunities to write for himself/herself or for others: <i>read personal writing aloud and hear it read, have personal writing included in class anthologies.</i></p> <p>Appreciate and examine the work of other students.</p> |

The student should be enabled to become aware of lower-case and capital letters.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Writing</p> <p>Attend to the creation of significant letters: <i>letters of own name, letters of familiar items in the classroom (can use clay, plasticine, paint, drawing or writing implements).</i></p> <p>With decreasing help, trace over large, bright or textured models of significant letters with finger/ drawing implement: <i>letters of own name, familiar letters used in signs (starting spot for each letter highlighted).</i></p> <p>Recognise letters of own name from a collection of letters.</p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Independently use finger to trace over 3D and 2D significant letters: <i>soft letters, magnetic letters, letters in sand, letters on paper.</i></p> <p>Match lower-case letters to lower-case letters and capital letters to capital letters.</p> <p>Identify some letters by name: <i>name initial letter of own name.</i></p> <p>Write some letters from memory: <i>produce or write recognisable letters related to his/her own name.</i></p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Sequence the letters in own name.</p> <p>Write letters from memory.</p> <p>Identify some capital and lower case letters by name.</p> <p>Use some letter sounds.</p> <p>Match capital and lower case letters.</p> |

The student should be enabled to

use word cards or word bank/folder to construct and then copy out simple sentences.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Writing</p> <p>Participate in word lotto/bingo games.</p> <p>Arrange known words to make a simple sentence: <i>I like swimming.</i></p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Use words based on reading: <i>personalised reading books, reading schemes.</i></p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Generate simple sentences with adult help (some vocabulary is supplied).</p> |

The student should be enabled to:

write a simple sentence

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Writing</p> <p>Trace/copy adult captions on drawings.</p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Form sentences using flashcards.</p> <p>Write a sentence using an overlay/concept keyboard.</p> <p>Dictate an item of news to an adult and then copy the adult's model.</p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Create a sentence using a word bank on the computer screen.</p> <p>Copy simple sentences accurately from a work card, from captions or from the blackboard, using some punctuation: <i>capital letters/full stops.</i></p> <p>In reading and writing, begin to show awareness of how full stops are used.</p> <p>Independently produce simple sentences using some punctuation.</p> |

The student should be enabled to

draw and write about everyday experiences or about something just learned.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Writing</p> <p>Draw with some help or imitate simple pictorial forms: <i>a representation of self, a house, a flower (using lines/dots/squiggles).</i></p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Draw a picture and write about it: <i>write a name/a caption/a sentence.</i></p> <p>Dictate writing to adult and then copy adult's model.</p> <p>Copy accurately from work card, captions or blackboard.</p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Generate simple sentences with adult help: <i>e.g. brainstorming ideas, supplying some vocabulary.</i></p> <p>Complete a simple stem sentence/ cloze task appropriately, given a choice of key vocabulary.</p> <p>Write the significant details about an event or an activity: <i>my holiday, my brother's wedding, our sports day.</i></p> |

The student should be enabled to

develop his/her ability to write using information technology.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Writing</p> <p>Be aware that using an input device causes a change on the screen.</p> <p>Use an input device randomly.</p> <p>Watch adult write text on the computer.</p> <p>Recognise own name on computer screen.</p> <p>Observe the production of a printout.</p> <p>Find own name on a printout.</p> <p>Point to text on the screen.</p> <p>Choose symbols or pictures to represent known words in response to a written or aural stimulus: <i>press the correct visual on a concept keyboard overlay/touch-screen to match a spoken word.</i></p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Look for letter of name on input device.</p> <p>Identify initial letter of name.</p> <p>Attempt to write name on the computer.</p> <p>Use an overlay board to produce a word/symbol on screen.</p> <p>Use a computer keyboard /switch/ touch-screen to write words/ sentences.</p> <p>Realise that the printout is the same as the text on the screen.</p> <p>Review own writing and correct with adult help: <i>physical prompting, constructive comment.</i></p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Take part in a joint composition with an adult: <i>using touch-screen/ concept keyboard/word-processor with verbal and/or physical prompting from adult.</i></p> <p>Write, with some awareness of the sentence as a written unit of meaning.</p> <p>Write a simple sentence starting with a capital letter and ending with a full stop.</p> <p>Communicate information independently, using on-screen text and graphics.</p> <p>Write regularly, and gradually extend the period over which writing effort is sustained.</p> |

The student should be enabled to
begin to develop conventional spelling of simple words.

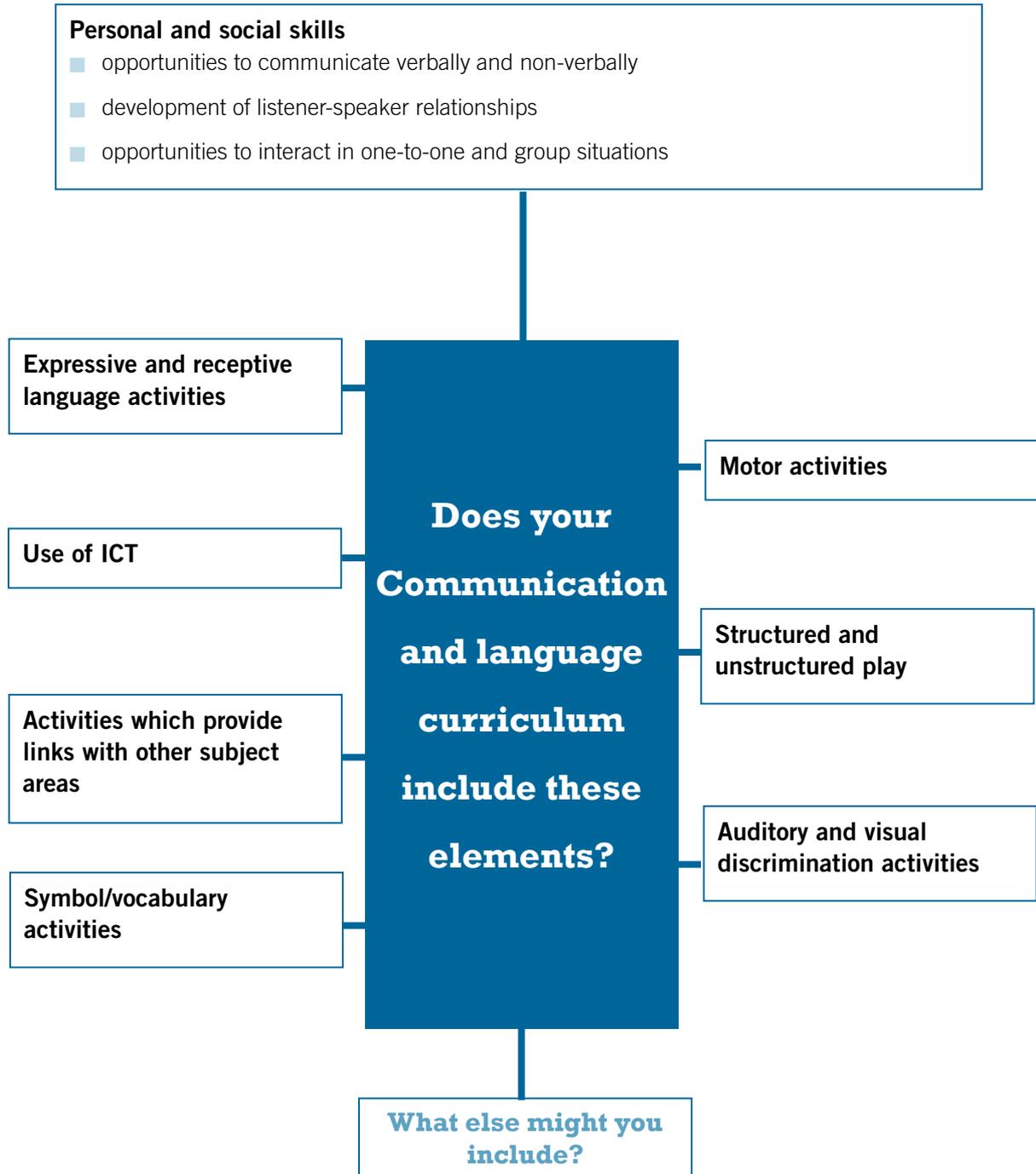
| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| <p>Writing</p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Write correctly a range of familiar, important and regularly occurring words and use a variety of sources as aids to spelling: <i>words displayed in class/learned in reading/compiled in personal word banks.</i></p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Develop the confidence to use appropriate spelling: <i>produce recognisable spelling of common words.</i></p> |

The student should be enabled to
explore different genres.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Writing</p> <p>Observe the use of label and caption pictures/displays: <i>our news, birthday cards.</i></p> <p>Sequence a simple picture series to make a story.</p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Write for a range of functions: <i>making lists, letters, cards, stories.</i></p> <p>Recognise familiar words and basic phrases on simple notices and signs.</p> <p>Write a short story or sequence of ideas with adult support.</p> <p>Experiment with writing with a variety of play, exploratory and role-play situations.</p> <p>Write labels or captions for pictures and drawings.</p> <p>Write sentences to match pictures or sequences of pictures.</p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Address an envelope.</p> <p>Fill out a form requiring name, address and personal details.</p> <p>Write notices, menus, shopping lists, phone messages, reminders, recipes.</p> <p>Produce simple, coherent, non-chronological writing: <i>e.g. lists, notices, invitations.</i></p> <p>Contribute ideas towards a class story: <i>e.g. alternative beginning or ending.</i></p> |

The student should be enabled to
choose subjects for writing.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Writing</p> <p>Contribute to class story or suggest a personal story for teacher to write out.</p> <p>Produce symbols or words using ICT: <i>contributes to the process of making books about the student/class/family outings.</i></p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Sequence a series of pictures to tell a story: <i>the student chooses a sequence and relays story to teacher, who acts as scribe, and then the student traces over/copies/uses concept keyboard to write one sentence for each picture.</i></p> | <p>Writing</p> <p>Record a story of his/her own choice on tape, which the teacher transcribes, and then copy or use a concept keyboard/word-processor to write out the story.</p> |



Exemplars

The *Primary School Curriculum: English, Teacher Guidelines*, presents many useful exemplars that can be successfully adapted to meet the needs of students with moderate general learning disabilities using the information within these guidelines.

The following pages outline some additional ideas for developing themes and topics in communication and language for these students.

The exemplars of work included are outlines from which teachers can develop a more comprehensive programme. In some instances, only minor additions may be necessary to make them suitable for individual classroom environments. Alternatively, the needs of a particular school environment may dictate considerable adaptation before implementation in individual classes. Factors such as the developmental stage and previous experiences of students, the availability of resources (human and material), the nature of the learner and the local community will need to be considered. The *Guidelines for Teachers of Students with Severe and Profound General Learning Disabilities*, and *The Guidelines for Teachers of Students with Mild General Learning Disabilities*, also offer some useful exemplars that can be easily adapted to meet the needs of this student cohort.

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|-----|--------------------------------|------|
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Exemplar 1: **Communication and Language**

Title: A structured language activity

Learning objectives

- The student will identify by naming, gesture or sign, items of clothing.
- Given a fully clothed doll/teddy, each student will undress the doll/teddy in the correct order, i.e. shoes before socks and trousers.
- Having undressed the doll/teddy the student will, with prompts from the teacher, list the steps of undressing in the correct order.
- Given a naked doll/teddy the student will dress the doll in the correct order.
- Having dressed the doll, the student will list the steps of dressing in order.

Resources

- Large dolls/teddies and a full complement of doll/baby clothes.
- Knowledge of Lámh signs.

Exemplar 1: Communication and Language

Method

- group lesson
- direct teaching—modelling of words and structures
- discussion
- questioning
- concrete experience.

Introduction

→ A genuine context is created for dressing/undressing the toys. For example, the doll is dirty and needs a bath, or teddy needs to get ready for the teddy bears' picnic.

Development of lesson

1. Discussion of clothes and introduction to Lámh signs for items of clothing.
2. Teacher asks individual students to remove items of clothing and say what he/she has done, using Lámh signs.
3. When all the clothes are removed, the teacher elicits from individual students what was taken off '*First ... then ...then ...and last of all*'.
4. Activity is repeated but students dress the doll/teddy.

Concluding activity

→ Role-reversal: students tell the teacher what items he/she must remove.

Provision for individual needs

→ Encourage language development at the varying levels of ability by varying the type of questions/requests.

Comprehension

- One-word level: '*Put on her hat*'. (Hand the hat or gesture to it, thus making one unit of information redundant.)
- Two-word level: '*Put on his trousers*'—no gesture given.
- Three-word level: '*Give him a pink scarf*'.
- Four-word level: '*Give her the small white socks*'.

Expression

→ Students close their eyes while teacher adds an item of clothing. Some students may gesture or make the sign for the new item. Other students can tell the teacher or each other what item is added and instruct the teacher to add/remove another.

Exemplar 2: Communication and Language

Title: Using a story

The student will be enabled to:

- show that he/she is listening to the story by joining in with the repeated, rhythmic and predictable words/text, *'but it was too big, too small'*
- show he/she has listened to the story by identifying/naming the main characters and by using the Lámh signs
- recall details and significant events in the story
- establish the sequence of events, *'First, next, then ...'*
- predict outcomes (What will the baby bear do when he finds Goldilocks in his bed?)
- make comparisons—bigger, biggest, small, smallest.

Resources

- large-format book of *'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'*
- three teddy bears of varying sizes
- doll for Goldilocks
- toy furniture—tables, chairs, beds
- doll's tea set
- a set of laminated pictures illustrating the sequence of events.

Exemplar 2: Communication and Language

Method

- group lesson
- direct teaching and modelling of words and signs
- discussion and questioning
- concrete experience—recreating the story using props
- introduction.

Introduction

→ Students sit in a circle and listen as the teacher introduces the storybook.

The students' attention is drawn to the cover of the book and to the title.

Students listen and watch as the teacher emphasises key words, and models Lámh signs.

The teacher opens the book and the story begins. The teacher stops frequently to check that the students are listening and understanding. A student with limited concentration span may be allowed to sit by the teacher and turn the pages.

Development of the lesson

1. The teacher re-reads the story, encouraging the students to join in with the repetitive text and to make the appropriate signs.
2. The story is retold, with the teacher stopping to let individual students take over the role of Goldilocks, baby bear, etc.
3. The teacher questions the students to help them recall the sequence of events. If possible, pictures can be photocopied or copied using a scanner and laminated, and students use these to sequence events correctly.

Concluding activity

→ Students are introduced to the toy characters and identify each character. They take turns to match the bears to the different chairs and beds, and assist the teacher in setting the table. Individual students take turns to tell all or part of the story.

→ Discussion can be extended to allow students to communicate about feelings, *'Why was Daddy cross when he found that someone had been sleeping in his bed?' 'Why did Goldilocks run away?'*

Extension activities

→ A box containing the story props may be left in the reading corner along with the storybook, allowing the students to re-create and retell the story for their own enjoyment or for other audiences.

Exemplar 3: Communication and Language

Title: A visiting puppet

Resources

Provide a visually interesting and noisy puppet, for example, *with a bright jacket, tactile shoes, a hat with a bell on the end and a large bag*. The puppet arrives wrapped in a brightly coloured box complete with bow and a label with the words 'a new friend' on one side and a rhyme on the other. There are also tactile picture cues attached with velcro, for example, *hat, bell and bag*, and the puppet brings the class a present and an activity card, for example, *what the class must do before the next visit*.

Activities

The box is waiting for the students at the beginning of a session. Staff create suspense about what may be in the box, and the introductory and concluding activities will usually be repeated during each session.

Introductory activities

Students may be encouraged to:

- communicate about the box and what may be inside it: *the box may be placed in different areas of the room for them to find*
- open the box and discover what is inside: *rhyme is used for the opening of the box*
- introduce themselves to the puppet using 'hello' or a name song
- explore the puppet and its bag by touching its clothes and listening to the sounds that it makes, explore the present it brings or read the activity cards in its bag.

Main activities

Students, supported by their peers and staff, may:

- decide what to call the puppet, and write the name on a card: *a digital camera is used to photograph the puppet and the teacher reads out the name and matches the photograph to the puppet, both of which are then put in the puppet's bag*
- collect photographs and name cards of themselves, staff or family members and make them into a class book
- match, recognise and recall photographs and the names of the puppet, the students, staff or family members
- write about themselves and the puppet and add the results to the class book
- collect favourite music or toys and include them in a sensory box.

Concluding activities

Students may be prompted to:

- put the puppet away when it indicates that it is time to go, for example, by pointing to the bag: *a rhyme or a goodbye song ends the session*
- communicate about the sessions, using photographs and picture cues as prompts.

Extension activities

Students, supported by their peers and staff, may:

- explore different ways of greeting others, especially unfamiliar adults and pupils
- think of questions to ask the puppet, for example, 'Where are you from?' 'How did you get here?' 'Do you have any other friends?'

This work can link to work in visual arts and music.

Exemplar 4: Communication and Language

Title: Social sight vocabulary

When teaching social sight vocabulary, it is important to take just a few words at a time and to teach them in context so that students will recognise them when they see them outside the classroom. For example, the sign FIRE EXIT can be taught by exploring the school building and noting all the fire exits, fire blankets or fire hydrants. This could then be followed by practising a fire drill and might lead to a more general discussion on fires and fire safety.

The following are examples of activities that will enable the development of a social sight vocabulary:

- Encourage students to write/trace over social sight signs and match them to others in the building.
- Create check lists of signs that the students have to find. Students could be sent in pairs or with a supervising adult and tick a box or collect various objects at each sign.
- Bring students on a walk outside the school grounds to examine signs on doors, sign posts, shop fronts or street names. Photographing the signs will facilitate follow-up work in class.
- Create card games that incorporate social sight words—lotto, bingo, pairs, snap. Progression could include finding signs that are opposites (entrance/exit, open/closed), or are similar in meaning (entrance/way in, toilets/gents/ladies).
- Create class displays of signs and match them to symbols where possible, for example No Smoking, Ladies/Gents, Wheelchair Access, etc.
- Create stories incorporating social sight words, pausing at the relevant place and allowing students to supply the word verbally or by selecting from a group of words. Stories could be created using the photographs taken previously on the trip to town, or in the vicinity of the school.

Note: It will be important to teach the Lámh sign when introducing each new social sight word and to use them consistently throughout the activities.

Exemplar 5: Communication and Language

Title: Our town

Activities

The theme is best introduced by planning and making a visit to a town, which involves the group working collaboratively, making decisions about the places to be visited and by whom, the type of information and evidence they need to gather and the routes they will take. This activity needs to be carefully structured by staff, allowing the group to make their own decisions but defining or limiting the options. If small groups are assigned different tasks or roles, they may take on key responsibilities and report back to the whole group about their particular task.

The preparation of a leaflet about places to visit in town will involve a variety of stages.

Gathering information and evidence

Students may:

- go on an organised tourist walk or bus tour around the town
- visit a local library to consult leaflets about local tourist attractions
- take video clips of their visit to the town or use a digital camera to take photographs of key attractions
- plan and conduct a survey of staff and pupils in the school about favourite attractions in town
- watch a tourist video about the town.

Reviewing and organising information

Students may:

- remember and report back to the whole group on places visited, using photographs, video clips and objects, *for example, a bag of fruit bought at an open air market*
- scrutinise published tourist leaflets and make a list of their key features
- present the information to the whole group, *for example, in a simple graph or table*
- decide, as a group, on the audience for their information leaflet and on headings, layout, organisation and sequencing, *for example, starting with a model to adapt or agree on*
- look at digital photographs and decide how many to include.

Exemplar 5: Communication and Language

Activities *continued*

Presenting information and producing the leaflet

Students may:

- work in small groups on different sections of the leaflet and prepare and type up the information under the agreed headings
- prepare a sensory box to go with the leaflet, *for example, a video tape of the places described, an audio tape of sound effects, objects to handle, related smells and tastes*
- check and edit each others' work
- present the leaflet or sensory box to another group in the school and help to prepare and plan a further visit.

Extension activities

Students may:

- sequence jumbled versions of simple information texts
- use a word processor to experiment with different fonts for headings
- match words and captions taken from information leaflets to pictures, maps or diagrams
- complete simple cloze activities based on information texts
- write lists of tasks to be completed
- prepare feedback to the whole group by rehearsing points with an adult, a friend or in a small group, deciding on the use of prompts to remember key points, *for example, objects, photos, symbols and written lists*
- use a word bank to support descriptions of places visited.

This work can link to work in visual arts, geography and ICT.