

Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School
"Nurturing curiosity and inspiring imagination"



2025-26

Whole School Oracy Policy

DOCUMENT STATUS

Produced By	Version	Date	Action
Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School	1	31.03.26	Ratified by full governing body (FGB)

Legislation

- *The Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework for groups and school-based providers Sept 2025*
- Ofsted State-Funded School Inspection Toolkit

Approval

Governing body free to delegate to a committee of the governing body, an individual governor or the headteacher

Review Frequency

In the event of any changes

1. Introduction and Vision

1.1 Our Vision for Oracy

At Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School, we believe that every child deserves the best possible start in developing their communication and language skills. Oracy is the use of verbal interaction (dialogue) to develop pupils' skills in using spoken language, their understanding and use of vocabulary, and pupils' ability to communicate effectively with others. It can take the form of oral language interventions. In the classroom, oracy can include:

- Pupils recalling or repeating facts, information or parts of familiar texts
- Pupils offering explanations about why things may happen or being involved in discussion with adults and/or their peers
- Adults asking structured questions to deepen pupils' understanding
- Pupils beginning to hold a back-and-forth conversation with adults or their peers

We are committed to creating a language-rich environment where:

- Every interaction is an opportunity for language development
- All staff model high-quality dialogue and rich vocabulary
- Children feel confident to communicate their thoughts, feelings and ideas
- Communication development is prioritised across all areas of learning
- Our forest school environment provides unique, meaningful contexts for talk

1.2 Why Oracy Matters

Oracy can help pupils increase self-confidence, deepen their self-awareness, improve resilience, boost their wellbeing, and increase their academic achievement and employability. It can also have a high impact on pupil outcomes for a low cost – the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) found that the average impact of oracy interventions is six months' additional progress. For our youngest children (2-4 years), strong communication and language skills provide the foundation for all future learning, relationships and well-being.

1.3 Statutory Requirements

All pupils are explicitly taught how to communicate effectively through spoken language (oracy), articulate ideas, develop understanding and engage with others through speaking, listening and communication. *The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework for groups and school-based providers Sept 2025* (p8-9) identifies communication as one of the **prime areas**, these being 'particularly important for learning and forming relationships. They build a foundation for children to thrive and provide the basis for learning in all areas.'

The curriculum clearly identifies and prioritises this foundational knowledge and the skills pupils need for later learning. Staff engage pupils in high-quality interactions to develop their knowledge and vocabulary across all areas of learning.

2. Principles of Oracy at Sandy Lane

2.1 Communication and Language as a Prime Area

We recognise that communication and language is a prime area of learning in the EYFS. The curriculum supports all children's progress through the EYFS educational programmes, appropriate to their age and stage of development; it clearly identifies the foundational knowledge and skills that children need for later learning and emphasises children's communication and language development.

2.2 Age-Appropriate Practice

We understand that 2-year olds and 3-4 year olds have different developmental needs.

For our 2-year olds:

- We take account of the typical development of 2- and 3-year-olds, including their emotional and physical dependence on adults
- Staff are patient, attentive and responsive when encouraging 2- and 3-year-olds to express their ideas, listen to children and respond to their verbal and non-verbal communication, rather than interrupting them
- We focus on the prime areas of learning, with communication and language at the heart

For our 3-4 year olds:

- We build on established communication skills to develop more complex language
- We introduce richer vocabulary and more extended conversations
- We prepare children for the transition and, in consultation with parents/carers, if we consider a child would benefit from additional support we will refer to other professionals. Those needing a little more help will also take part in a range of 'in-house' interventions

2.3 Every Moment is a Language Moment

Daily routines and interactions ensure that children develop their language and vocabulary across all areas of learning and development and can communicate and manage their thoughts and feelings.

All staff understand that language development happens throughout the day, including during:

- Care routines (nappy changing, mealtimes, handwashing)
- Play and learning (both child-initiated and adult-led)
- Forest school sessions
- Transitions
- Story time and singing

3. What Oracy Looks Like at Sandy Lane

3.1 High-Quality Interactions

All staff will:

- Engage children in high-quality interactions to develop their knowledge and vocabulary; help children articulate what they know and understand by scaffolding, modelling, extending and developing their ideas
- Get down to children's eye level when communicating
- Use clear, simple language appropriate to each child's stage of development
- Follow children's interests and build language around what fascinates them
- Provide a running commentary during activities and routines
- Ask open-ended questions that encourage extended responses
- Give children time to think and respond without rushing them

3.2 Scaffolding Language Development

Staff will support children's communication by:

- Sh** – Shared attention. Being at the child's level. Paying attention to what the child is focusing on
- R** - Respond. Follow the child's lead. Respond to their non-verbal and verbal communications. Making a brief comment on what is said, seen or heard
- E** – Expand. Repeating what the child has said and building on it by adding more words to turn it into a sentence
- C** – Conversation. Having extended back and forth interactions with one or more children. Giving the children time to listen, process and reply

3.3 Songs, Rhymes and Stories

Staff build children's emotional connection to language and help them gain awareness and control of their voices through songs, rhymes and poems. Teachers prioritise daily story time; they read aloud and re-read high-quality stories and talk with children about them to build familiarity and understanding.

We will:

- Have daily story time in small groups or one-to-one
- Re-read favourite stories to build familiarity
- Use songs and rhymes throughout the day, not just at family group time
- Include action rhymes to engage children physically
- Make books freely available for children to explore
- Share stories in our forest school environment

3.4 Forest School and Oracy

Our forest school provision offers unique opportunities for oracy development:

- Rich sensory experiences that generate vocabulary (textures, sounds, smells)
- Natural curiosity that prompts questions and discussion

- Problem-solving activities that require verbal collaboration
- Wonder and awe that inspire children to share their thoughts
- Real-world contexts for using and applying new vocabulary

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 The headteacher will:

- Have a clear and ambitious vision for giving children the best start to their education, have an accurate understanding of the provision's context, strengths and areas for development, which informs the actions they take to improve children's education and care
- Ensure all staff receive appropriate training in oracy strategies
- Monitor the implementation of this policy through learning walks and observations
- Ensure oracy is embedded in curriculum planning
- Allocate resources to support oracy development
- Report to governors on oracy provision and outcomes

4.2 All Practitioners will:

- Engage children in high-quality interactions to develop their knowledge and vocabulary
- Model clear speech and rich vocabulary throughout the day
- Plan activities that promote communication and language, under the supervision of the lead teacher (in line with the school's curriculum for family time activities)
- Use care routines as opportunities for language development
- Be responsive when children need comforting and provide support appropriate to the child's individual needs (Ofsted State-Funded School Inspection Toolkit)
- Assess children's communication development and plan next steps
- Work in partnership with parents to support language development at home
- Attend training and CPD on oracy strategies
- Prioritise interaction with children rather than using their time to observe, record and compile 'evidence'

4.3 The SENDCo/Deputy SENDCo will:

- Quickly and accurately identify children who face any barriers to their learning or well-being, including disadvantaged children, those with SEND, and those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care
- Focus particularly on children whose language is less well developed and/or who do not readily engage with adults (Ofsted State-Funded School Inspection Toolkit)
- Provide specialist support and advice to practitioners
- Liaise with external specialists (eg, speech and language therapists)
- Monitor the progress of children with identified communication needs

4.4 Parents and Carers will:

- Work in partnership with the school to promote children's learning and development and to raise their awareness about supporting children's readiness for starting school
- Engage in conversations about their child's communication development
- Support oracy practice at home through everyday activities and engaging in the home learning shared by the school
- Share information about their child's communication in their home language
- Attend workshops and information sessions about supporting language development

5. Curriculum and Practice

5.1 Curriculum Design

The curriculum supports all children's progress through the EYFS educational programmes, appropriate to their age and stage of development; it clearly identifies the foundational knowledge and skills that children need for later learning and emphasises children's communication and language development.

Our curriculum will:

- Identify key vocabulary for each topic/theme
- Plan specific opportunities for talk in all areas of learning
- Include daily story time, songs and rhymes
- Provide both adult-led and child-initiated language opportunities
- Make use of our forest school environment to develop vocabulary and communication
- Build progressively from 2-year old provision to 3-4 year old provision

5.2 Teaching Strategies

Staff make effective choices about what, when and how to teach, tailored to the children's context, age and starting points, and select activities that enable children to sustain their attention, focusing on the intended learning rather than leaving it to chance; they ensure that children have sufficient foundational knowledge to complete tasks and provide additional teaching and practice for those who need more support.

Our practitioners will use:

- Sustained shared thinking - engaging in extended conversations with children
- In-the-moment planning - responding to children's interests
- Intentional teaching - planned vocabulary and language objectives
- Small group work - allowing more opportunities for individual children to speak
- One-to-one interactions - particularly during care routines
- Environmental prompts - using displays, labels and resources to stimulate talk

5.3 Assessment

Staff use assessment well to make any necessary changes to teaching and/or the curriculum. For children needing additional support in house interventions and referrals to other professionals (with parental consent) are implemented. Parents are informed of their child's progress termly and a summary of progress is shared with receiving schools on transition.

We will:

- Observe and assess children's communication regularly
- Use the EYFS Development Matters guidance to track progress
- Identify children who need additional support early
- Adjust our approach based on what we learn about each child
- Share information with parents about their child's communication development
- Seek guidance from other professionals as required
- Ensure smooth transitions by sharing communication assessments with receiving schools/classes

6. Supporting All Children

6.1 Inclusive Practice

Leaders take all reasonable steps to make sure that all children have access to an ambitious curriculum, including those who attend part time or attend more than one setting, those who are disadvantaged, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing.

We are committed to ensuring that all children, including those who are disadvantaged, have Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND), or are/were known to social care, are able to access an ambitious, inclusive and progressive oracy curriculum.

We recognise that children arrive with differing starting points in communication, language and confidence. Reasonable steps are taken to remove barriers and provide targeted support so that every child can develop the spoken language, listening skills and self-expression needed to succeed.

To achieve this, we:

- **Plan high-quality oracy opportunities for all children**, ensuring expectations remain ambitious, while support is adapted to individual need rather than lowering outcomes
- **Use inclusive teaching strategies**, such as modelling language, repeating and extending vocabulary, visual prompts, Makaton, objects of reference and real-life experiences to support understanding and expression
- **Provide targeted small-group and one-to-one oracy interventions** for children who need additional support, informed by ongoing assessment and professional judgement

- **Create language-rich environments indoors and outdoors**, including forest school sessions, where children are encouraged to talk, ask questions, negotiate, explain ideas and reflect on experiences in meaningful, low-pressure contexts
- **Support children with SEND through personalised approaches**, including individual support plans, specialist advice, and close collaboration with families and external professionals where appropriate
- **Ensure children who are disadvantaged or known to social care are prioritised for high-quality adult interaction**, recognising the crucial role of sustained shared thinking and positive relationships in developing communication and confidence
- **Promote emotional safety and belonging**, understanding that secure attachments and predictable routines are essential foundations for children to find their voice and engage in talk
- **Work in partnership with parents and carers**, sharing strategies, celebrating progress and reinforcing oracy development at home
- **Regularly review provision and outcomes**, using assessment information to identify gaps, adapt practice and ensure support remains effective

Through these reasonable steps, we ensure that all children are supported to participate fully in our oracy curriculum and are empowered to communicate with confidence, curiosity and ambition.

6.2 Children with Emerging Language

Staff focus particularly on children whose language is less well developed and/or who do not readily engage with adults.

For these children, we will:

- Provide more one-to-one time with key adults
- Use visual supports (photos, symbols, Makaton signs)
- Model single words and simple phrases
- Create low-pressure opportunities for communication
- Celebrate all communication attempts (gestures, sounds, words)
- Work closely with parents to understand home communication

6.3 Children with SEND

We will:

- Quickly and accurately identify children who face any barriers to their learning or well-being, including disadvantaged children and those with SEND
- Seek advice from speech and language therapists where appropriate
- Implement specialist strategies and programmes
- Adapt our approach to meet individual needs
- Provide additional time and support for communication
- Use alternative communication methods where needed (eg, Makaton, PECS)

6.4 Children Who Use English as an Additional Language (EAL)

Leaders and teachers recognise that these pupils already speak at least one language, and do not lower their expectations of them.

We will:

- Value and celebrate children's home languages
- Recognise that providing opportunities for pupils to talk with staff and peers during lessons is particularly important
- Use visual supports and gestures to aid understanding
- Learn key words in children's home languages
- Work with families to understand children's communication in their first language
- Provide dual-language books where possible
- Engage with the Local Authority EAL team to support our practice

6.5 Disadvantaged Children

We recognise that disadvantaged children may have had fewer opportunities to develop rich vocabulary and communication skills.

We will:

- Provide additional small group and one-to-one support and 'in house' interventions when required
- Ensure these children have priority access to language-rich activities
- Monitor their progress closely
- Work intensively with their families to support language at home
- Use Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) funding to resource oracy interventions, including working with parents/carers

7. Partnership with Parents and Carers

7.1 Communication with Families

Leaders work in partnership with parents to promote children's learning and development and to raise their awareness about supporting children's readiness for the next stage in their learning.

We will:

- Explain what oracy is and why it matters during induction
- Share information about children's communication development regularly
- Provide resources and ideas for supporting language at home
- Celebrate progress with families
- Be responsive to parents' concerns about their child's communication
- Gather parent and carers views on our curriculum and other aspects of school via our Friends of Sandy Lane Parent and Carer Group

7.2 Supporting Families

We will talk to all parents/carers about supporting families as a whole, as all pupils can benefit from extra practice at home; we will be ready to spend more time with parents/carers of pupils in the groups listed above.

We will:

- Host workshops on supporting communication at home
- Provide ideas for simple activities families can do
- Share songs and rhymes that children are learning
- Offer ideas for talk during everyday routines
- Support families who speak other languages at home
- Provide resources in home languages where possible

7.3 Working with Other Settings

Some parents/carers may choose to send their child to more than one setting. At Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School, we will work in close partnership with the additional setting to secure continuity of education and care for the child involved.

For children who attend multiple settings, we will:

- Share information about all aspects of development, including communication
- Ensure consistent approaches where possible
- Work collaboratively to co-ordinate support for children with identified needs
- Share strategies and relevant documents

8. The Oracy Curriculum at Sandy Lane

8.1 Curriculum Intent

The curriculum supports all children's progress through the EYFS educational programmes, appropriate to their age and stage of development; it clearly identifies the foundational knowledge and skills that children need for later learning and emphasises children's communication and language development.

Our curriculum will:

- Prioritise communication and language across all areas of learning
- Identify key vocabulary for each topic and theme
- Plan specific opportunities for talk in both indoor and forest school sessions
- Build progressively from 2-year old to 3-4 year old provision
- Use our unique forest school environment to develop rich, contextual vocabulary

8.2 Daily Entitlements

Every child will experience:

- Daily story time: teachers read aloud and re-read high-quality stories and talk with children about them to build familiarity and understanding
- Songs, rhymes and poems throughout the day
- High-quality one-to-one interactions with their key person and other room staff
- Small group activities that promote talk
- Language-rich care routines
- Opportunities to communicate during child-initiated play