



'Talk to Me About...'

Top Tips to support the 'Talk to Me About...' aspect of Continuous Provision

1. Child Height

When working with or playing alongside children much more will be gained if you are at the same level as the child. This creates a positive start to any interaction.

2. Look – really look and notice

Children communicate in different ways at different stages of development. Look out for small (or large) gestures, what the child is looking at and quiet words. Sometimes it takes great courage to whisper!

3. Observe

Take a moment to stand back. Watch what the child or children are interested in, listen carefully to their communication, and play, before you join in.

4. Speak Clearly

Ensure you are using a clear and animated voice. The children need to know you are keen to join in with their play-based learning.

5. Reinforce and Model

Repeating aspects of what a child says gives them a sense of encouragement and reassurance. If a child has misused language or missed key words out, repeating back to them – whilst positively modelling the correct language will help the child's communication skills progress. For example, 'hat, head' becomes 'The hat is on your head' emphasising the words the child used and using gestures to reinforce understanding.

6. Follow the Child's Interests

Asking the child or children if you can play is often a good start to appropriate engagement. Let the children lead the learning and conversation. Jumping in with your ideas at the forefront is likely to result in children 'sloping' off.

7. Extend Language

Consider how you can add additional information in a reassuring manner. 'This is my hat' 'You have a lovely red hat.'

8. Open-Ended Questions or Commentary

Asking open-ended questions encourages a child's thinking. Questions like 'What do you think will happen if...' encourage a child to reflect on their experiences. However, too many questions can interrupt play. At times, it is just as powerful to comment on what you and / or the child is doing. 'Wow. You are fantastic at rolling that playdough. Just the right amount of pressure on the rolling pin.'

9. Take Turns

Some children can find it difficult to turn take. Modelling and encouraging this through play-based conversation is essential. A simple comment or gesture can invite others into the conversation and keep the play going.

10. Have Fun!

The instructions and recommendations can appear endless. Ultimately children will want to engage with you if you, genuinely want to engage with them. Have fun, enjoy play-based learning opportunities. Positively encourage children's interests and use your knowledge of child development to extend and progress learning.