

## SEN newsletter

Issue 3, March  
2024

Welcome to our third issue of the SEN newsletter! As usual please send in suggestions of what you would like to read about in future issues! Have a fantastic Easter holidays! We also wish those families celebrating Eid a joyful and blessed day!



### Using visuals to support communication

This issue we are going to be exploring the use of visuals to support communication! This is the bread and butter of what we do here at lanterns and a highly visual approach is very important to support our children's understanding!

First of all let's begin with us as adults, what visuals did you use to help you get your child to nursery? (Below are some clues!)



Naturally we rely on lots of visuals to support our understanding of routine, where we need to be and what we need to do.

Now imagine you were in a different country where you did not speak the language. How would you feel if you couldn't understand someone, or ask for help?

This is often how our children can feel when they do not understand what is being communicated to them or if they are unable to process the verbal instructions. We are now going to look at ways we can support this!

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### What are the benefits of using visuals?

Visuals stay,  
words fly away...

Visuals are  
permanent

Visuals help us  
with changes  
and transitions

Visuals can move  
between people  
and  
environments

Visuals can help  
build  
independence

Visuals allow  
children to  
share  
information

Visuals help  
children make  
choices and express  
their wants and  
needs

Visuals provide  
structure for  
children who  
need it

**Visuals  
help ALL  
children**

For our children, processing our verbal language may be difficult, they may have only processed the first or last word of what we have said or they may not have processed anything from it at all. This is when we often see our children becoming dysregulated and refusing to transition, because they have not understood what we have said and now we are expecting something of them. This is similar to how we would feel if we were in a different country and someone was asking us to do something but speaking in a different language.

### What visuals can I use with my child?

There are different types of visuals we can use. On the whole, children's understanding of visuals develops in the following order.

1. Real objects
2. Photographs
3. Pictures/symbols
4. Words
5. Phrases
6. Sentences

The following page will discuss how to use visuals with your child.

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### Where do I start?

For children with significant social communication difficulties you may want to start by using real objects to support communication. An example of this is showing them their nappy before taking them to change their nappy or showing them their snack to prompt them that it is time for snack.



It is really important to use really simplified language, and give the child time to process the instruction/communication. Start by showing the child the object and say 'Nappy time' pause for 10 seconds to see their response, repeat the same thing to reinforce the language. After repeating this consistently each time you change your child's nappy they will begin to make the connection that showing them the nappy means that it is time for their nappy change. Avoid changing your language each time you repeat it, we want the child to hear the same thing to reinforce the connection between the word nappy and you showing them the nappy.

### Once they understand this, what do I do?

Once they are able to understand objects of reference or if you feel that they are already at this level you can begin to show them photographs. We would use this in the same way as we would with the objects but instead you would have a picture of the nappy or a picture of where you would like them to transition them. Again you would use the same simplified language e.g. 'Nappy time' pause for 10 seconds to see their response, repeat the same thing to reinforce the language.

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Once the child is understanding pictures you could use symbols instead. This can allow more flexibility as the symbol would be a generic symbol of a nappy and not that specific nappy meaning that you can be more flexible with symbols.



nappy



snack



garden



bottle

Eventually when your child is able to read words you may be able to remove the symbol and just have the word. This can then progress to phrases and then to sentences.

### **How can I use this to support my child's understanding of routine?**

Some children really benefit from an individual timetable and may have one of these at nursery. This is a good way of showing children what their day will look like and supporting them to understand routine. It can have a positive effect on challenging behaviours when transitioning from one activity to another because it reduces that anticipation and anxiety. Alternatively you could have a keyring with pictures on it that you can take with you while you are out and about. Speak to your child's key person if you feel like they would benefit from one of these approaches at home.



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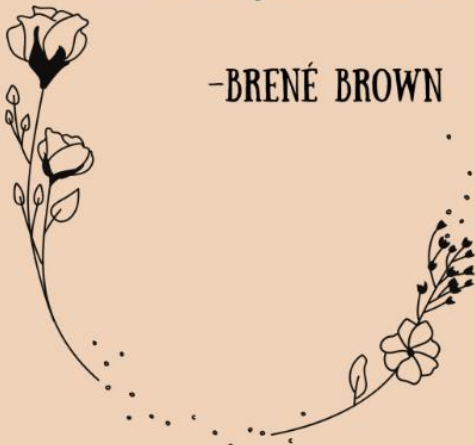
### Top tips!

- **Support visuals with language!** When using a visual aid with your child, reinforce this with your language. The aim is to support them making a connection between the word and the object/activity.
- **Keep language simple!** It is tempting to use lots of language when talking to children so that they hear a wide range of language. However, for some of our children, particularly our children with SEND, they may only be able to process the first or last word you have said, or they may have not processed it all. Therefore they often respond best to repetition of very simple language.
- **Keep language the same!** Once you have communicated something to a child e.g. 'Nappy time' and given them time to process, they may show signs of not having processed that language. If this is the case repeat the same thing rather than changing it to something else. This is because they may need the same thing repeated to them a number of times before they have processed it. If you change the language to something else they may be back to square one, having to process a new set of language.
- **Time to process!** After you have communicated to your child through visuals and your language, give them time to process before you repeat it. Some children may need between 10-20 seconds. It may feel a bit weird but just pause!

If you have any questions or would like some more information please don't hesitate to contact Helen, Ellie or your child's key person!

"Talk to yourself  
like you would to  
someone you love."

-BRENE BROWN



Check out **Pavilion on the park** in Eastleigh. They offer a range of SEN specific activities including: 'sensory 4 all' a community multi-sensory space for babies through to adults, 'Cycle 4 all' an inclusive outdoor cycling for all ages and abilities. Plus more! Check them out!

**If you would like to feedback on how you found this newsletter or if there is anything else you would like to see in future issues please email Ellie at [e.jennings@lanterns.hants.sch.uk](mailto:e.jennings@lanterns.hants.sch.uk)**