**Subject header: Early Language universal and targeted offer 25/26**

**For PVI settings please add at top of email - FAO The Manager / current Language Lead.**

**For schools with and without nurseries please add at top of email: FAO The Headteacher / EYFS Lead and the Nursery / Reception teacher / current Language Lead**

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Dear Colleague,

**Improving early language provision in Oxfordshire**

In Oxfordshire there is shared understanding that early language is the key to later life success. By investing in early identification and in ensuring high quality universal and targeted provision, we can prioritise speech, language and communication (SLC) development for all children in Oxfordshire. The priority given to children’s SLC in Oxfordshire’s Early Years’ Strategy highlights the local commitment to improving outcomes for children. The Government have recently announced Oxfordshire targets for the Good Level of Development (GLD) in 2027/28 of 77.8% for all children and 50.8% for children in receipt of free school meals (FSM). To help realise these goals, and help children reach their potential, it is imperative to ensure that early language provision remains a top priority.

You might be interested to see new animations recently published by The Foundation Centre for Early Childhood which include resources focused on the importance of back-and-forth interactions to support early learning. <https://centreforearlychildhood.org/help-resources/the-explainer-series/>

**WellComm**

[WellComm - GL Assessment](https://www.gl-assessment.co.uk/assessments/products/wellcomm/) is a complete speech and language toolkit, from screening to intervention. Designed for Early Years and Primary settings, WellComm is quick and simple to use — no specialist expertise is needed. With long waits for speech and language therapy, it gives nurseries and schools an instant speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) profile and ready-made interventions that can be used straight away.

In Oxfordshire WellComm is used as a universal speech and language tool for all children in settings aged birth to 4 years.

* All Nursery settings, including school nurseries, received a free copy of WellComm in summer 2021.  Please contact [early.years@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:early.years@oxfordshire.gov.uk) if you are a new nursery and have not yet received a WellComm pack.  This academic year there is a bigger focus on collecting data.
* **If you are a PVI *setting* and you have access to a WellComm paper pack, please register for the free WellComm digital reporting tool by clicking** [**here**](https://forms.office.com/e/7dHYPrQ08V) **and filling out the online form.**
* **If your *school* has a nursery and you have access to the paper pack, please register for the WellComm digital reporting tool by clicking** [**here**](https://forms.office.com/e/m30kC6z57P) **and fill in the online form to enable us to onboard you.**
* Alongside this offer, there is a Primary Schools WellComm pilot currently running. Please do not register for the digital data tool if you are already a member of the school WellComm pilot project.
* Childminders have been offered access to the digital tool and can loan an early years’ paper pack.
* Health visitors, speech and language therapists, EY SEND advisory, and EY advisory colleagues all support the universal and targeted use of this tool.
* Free online Oxfordshire training is available on the following dates and times this term to allow more staff to attend. Please book via Education Services: [WellComm training for professionals via Oxfordshire | Education Services](https://educationservices.oxfordshire.gov.uk/Search?search=WellComm).
* Thursday 25/9/25 12-1pm
* Tuesday 30/9/25 7-8pm
* Monday 6/10/25 4-5pm
* Thursday 9/10/25 7-8pm
* Standalone training from GL assessment is also available: [WellComm - GL Support (gl-assessment.co.uk)](https://support.gl-assessment.co.uk/training-assessment-insights/wellcomm).

We are committed to improving the early identification of speech, language and communication needs by supporting all nursery settings to use the WellComm toolkit. In addition, there will be opportunities for some settings to participate in targeted programmes such as, [Early Talk Boost](https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/educators-and-professionals/programmes-for-nurseries-and-schools/talk-boost/early-talk-boost/) and [Tots Talking](https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/educators-and-professionals/programmes-for-nurseries-and-schools/tots-talking/) which can both work in parallel with WellComm. Invitations to these programmes will follow.

**The Foundation to Phonics:**

**Improving Phonological Awareness in Oxfordshire in 2025/6**

This autumn the Early Years & Childcare Quality Improvement Team.

will be providing FREE face to face training to launch a new Oxfordshire Phonological Awareness booklet.

Phonological awareness is an oral language skill that every child needs in their journey to become a reader. Phonological awareness refers to the ability to recognise and manipulate sounds in words. It involves skills such as recognising the difference between sounds and making different sounds, rhyming, alliteration, blending and segmenting.

It is our ambition that every early years’ practitioner attends this training which will take place in locations across the county. It will also be invaluable for phonics leaders and reception teachers, as these skills continue to develop throughout the reception year. Helping all children to develop these skills in their early years will support their journey as a reader. Children from a disadvantaged background will particularly benefit from a focus on these strategies. Each school / setting represented at the training will receive a free booklet.

There is a short briefing for senior leaders on Monday 29th September 11-11.30am on Microsoft Teams. [The Foundation to Phonics: Improving Phonological Awareness in Oxfordshire in 2025/6 (Senior Leader briefing) | Oxfordshire | Education Services](https://educationservices.oxfordshire.gov.uk/Event/281337)

[Please book now for the practitioner training sessions via Education Services through this link.](https://educationservices.oxfordshire.gov.uk/Search?search=Phonological+Awareness)

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| Monday | 13/10 | 10am- 12pm | Kidlington |
| Monday | 13/10 | 4-6pm | Bicester |
| Thursday | 16/10 | 10am – 12pm | Didcot |
| Thursday | 16/10 | 4-6pm | Wantage |
| Monday | 20/10 | 10am – 12pm | Witney |
| Monday | 20/10 | 4-6pm | Woodstock |
| Thursday | 23/10 | 10-12pm | Henley |
| Thursday | 23/10 | 4-6pm | Watlington |
| Wednesday | 5/11 | 2-4pm | Banbury |
| Thursday | 6/11 | 4-6pm | Chipping Norton |
| Monday | 10/11 | 10-12pm | Oxford |
| Monday | 10/11 | 4-6pm | Kidlington |
| Monday | 17/11 | 10am-12pm | Thame |
| Monday | 17/11 | 4-6pm | Abingdon |
| Tuesday | 25/11 | 4-6pm | Faringdon |
| Tuesday | 18/11 | 6.30-8.30pm | Online session |

**Early Years’ Language Leads – initial training programme**

**What is a ‘Language Lead approach?’**

* The aim of a ‘Language Lead’ approach is to improve universal early language provision by establishing a named practitioner with a responsibility for communication and language in every early years’ setting or school.
* Language Leads will receive training and support to enable them to develop reflective practice and identify areas of strength and areas for development in relation to early language.
* Your Language Lead will become a leader of change in your setting with the intention that all children reach their full potential.

This academic year we are reoffering the six Language Lead sessions which form the initial training programme. These sessions remain free of charge, and we are keen to engage all schools and settings in Oxfordshire to sign up to this exciting initiative. We are inviting nurseries who have not yet taken part to attend. This year we are also inviting Reception teachers / EYFS co-ordinators to take part in the initiative.

**What do I need to do next?**

**If you have a named Language Lead who has previously completed the initial training programme and is continuing in the role this year,** then please follow the instructions below:

* Read, complete and return the agreement attached by email to [early.years@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:early.years@oxfordshire.gov.uk) **by Tuesday 30th September 2025.** The ‘Manager’ referred to in the agreement could be the Manager, EYFSCO, Deputy Head teacher or Head teacher, as most appropriate to your establishment.
* The second year of our programme for established Language Leads will include 1 Q and A session with a panel of experts and 2 network meetings, one of which will be a live event.  Language Leads will need to register for these sessions individually. They will be available to book via this link on [Education Services.](https://educationservices.oxfordshire.gov.uk/Search?search=continuing+the+journey)  If your nominated Language Lead would like to refresh their knowledge, they may attend the initial training sessions again.

**Language Lead networks for practitioners who have already attended the initial training programme:**

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| **Sessions** | **Session format** | **Date and time** | **Session focus** |
| Session number 1 | online | Thursday  27/11/25 4-5pm | Networking session |
| Session number 2 | online | TBC | Networking session |
| Session number 3 | face to face | TBC | Networking session |

**If your Language Lead has changed or if your nursery has not yet identified a Language Lead** then please follow the instructions below:

* Identify someone well placed in your nursery setting to be a Language Lead. Your Language Lead needs to be interested in developing children’s speech, language and communication and will act as an advocate. This is a leadership role, and they will be asked to support other staff members to make changes in their practice.  This may be your EYFS leader, nursery teacher or nursery room leader, but could also be another staff member with a passion for communication and language.
* Please find attached leaflets to pass onto your allocated Language Lead to help them understand more about what the position entails.
* Please read, complete and return the agreement attached by email to [early.years@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:early.years@oxfordshire.gov.uk) **by Tuesday 30th September 2025.** The ‘Manager’ referred to in the agreement could be the Manager, EYFSCO, Deputy Head teacher or Head teacher, as most appropriate to your establishment.
* Support your Language Lead to book onto the six initial training programme sessions through [Oxfordshire | Education Services](https://educationservices.oxfordshire.gov.uk/Search?search=Language+Lead+%28Year+1%29) .  **Sessions will be available as a recording after the event *if you have registered for the event*. The sessions are now live to book onto on the system:**

**Language Lead initial training programme**

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| **Language Lead initial training package** | **Session format** | **Date and time** | **Session focus** |
| Session number 1 | online | Thursday 2/10/25  3.30 - 5pm | Early Identification |
| Session number 2 | online | Thursday 20/11/25  3.30 - 5pm | Communication Friendly Environment |
| Session number 3 | online | Thursday 5/2/26  3.30 - 5pm | Quality Interactions |
| Session number 4 | online | Thursday 26/3/26  3.30 - 5pm | Developing Phonological Awareness |
| Session number 5 | online | Thursday 21/5/26  3.30 - 5pm | Books, Rhymes and Role-play |
| Session number 6 | online | Thursday 9/7/26  3.30 - 5pm | Language for Self-Regulation |

The content of the programme will be contributed to from a range of agencies, including the EY Advisory team, the EY SEND Advisory team and Oxford Health Speech, Language and Communication Therapy Service. The Language Lead programme supports the use of *WellComm* and the promotion of the [50 Things to Do | Oxfordshire](https://oxfordshire.50thingstodo.org/app/os#!/welcome) website and app.

**50 Things Before You’re Five – Supporting Early Language in Oxfordshire**

We’re excited to continue promoting the free “50 Things Before You’re Five” app again this year! The app offers families and practitioners 50 fun, low-cost activities to enjoy with children under five, all designed to boost early language, communication, and learning through play.

Key benefits:

* Encourages talking, playing, and learning together at home and in settings
* Supports children’s speech, language, and school readiness
* Inclusive activities for all abilities and interests
* Links to local Oxfordshire events and resources

How to get involved:  
Encourage families to download the app, share activities in your setting, and use it to inspire home learning. Let’s work together to give every child the best start! Look out for all the new 2026 resources [here](https://oxfordshire.50thingstodo.org/app/os#!/welcome). Further training events to support universal and targeted early language provision will be signposted throughout the year.

Many thanks for supporting the improvement of early language provision in Oxfordshire. We look forward to working together to improve outcomes for our children.

Early Years & Childcare Quality Improvement Team.