Teaching Children to Listen
Jacqui Woodcock, *Speech and Language Therapist*, Worcestershire NHS Trust
Liz Spooner, Worcestershire NHS Trust
“Teaching Children to Listen”

A practical approach to developing children’s listening skills

Liz Spooner and Jacqui Woodcock
Worcestershire Speech and Language Therapy Team
Teaching Children to Listen

• **Liz Spooner** has been working as an NHS therapist in mainstream schools for over 23 years. She is the specialist therapist for Specific Language Impairment in Worcestershire.

• **Jacqui Woodcock** is currently a Service Manager for Worcestershire NHS Speech and Language Therapy Team and has been working as a therapist in schools and nurseries for over 21 years in Bromsgrove and Redditch.

• For the past 5 years, Liz and Jacqui have also been running a listening project in mainstream primary schools. Liz and Jacqui are co-authors of the book “Teaching Children to listen” published in 2013.
How do I....

....get children to listen?
The bad news....

• The foundations for listening should have developed by the time a child is a year old

• If they are not in place by the time a child starts school then you need to teach them
The good news....

• A small amount of intervention can achieve huge results

• Weekly intervention for 6 weeks for 45 minutes gave the following results...
Our Results – 2529 children

Pre-intervention
- 41% adequate
  - 21% moderate
  - 38% severe

Post-intervention
- 66% adequate
  - 4% moderate
  - 30% severe
Sustainability – 1635 children

Post intervention
- Adequate: 66%
- Moderate: 30%
- Severe: 4%

1 term on
- Adequate: 75%
- Moderate: 22%
- Severe: 3%
Teaching children to listen means:

• Teaching them what good listening means

• Teaching them why it is a helpful thing to do

• Motivating them to do it independently
What is good listening?

• Looking at the person who is talking

• Listening to ALL of the words

• Sitting still

• Staying quiet (so that everyone can listen)
# Listening Rating Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sitting Still</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not able to stay on chair/mat Constant fidgeting</td>
<td>Inappropriate sitting posture/lots of fidgeting</td>
<td>Stays on chair/mat but some fidgeting</td>
<td>Appropriate balanced sitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Looking at the person who is talking</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Does not initiate eye contact spontaneously</td>
<td>Some eye contact but not sustained</td>
<td>Initiates eye contact but needs recall</td>
<td>Appropriate eye contact when listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staying quiet</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Consistently interrupts/ talks during instructions</td>
<td>Occasionally quiet but cannot maintain this</td>
<td>Some talking but can be recalled to stay quiet and listen</td>
<td>Quiet when listening in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Listening to all of the words</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Does not follow instructions/relied on routine/copies others Does not recognise when has not understood</td>
<td>Carries out part of an instruction – needs repeated reminders</td>
<td>Follows simple instructions but needs repetition of complex information</td>
<td>Able to listen to complex/unfamiliar information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Listening Score</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recognises when has not listened accurately and seeks help</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Classifying children’s listening:

Below 8 – Severe listening difficulties

8 – 11 - Moderate listening difficulties

12 and above – Adequate listening
Teaching good listening:

• Whole class

• Lesson outline:
  ▪ 40-50 minutes
  ▪ Introduction/reinforcement of rules
  ▪ Game for each rule
  ▪ Final activity to reinforce all rules
  ▪ Identifying times to do good listening in school

• Two adults needed
Ground Rules

- Not everyone has a turn every time
- Be explicit about behaviour needed to get a turn
- Be explicit to children about why they are not getting chosen
- Practise games on chairs and on floor
Looking at the person who is talking - sample game

Who feels different?

- One child goes out
- A child in the circle is given a “cross” face card and makes that face
- All the other children make a happy face
- The child comes back in and has to find out who looks different
Staying quiet – sample game

How many people on the rug?

• Class is divided into two teams
• An adult wears a blindfold and sits on a chair in the centre of the circle
• There is a rug behind the chair
• The winning team is the one which gets the most children as possible onto the rug without the adult hearing
Sitting Still – sample game

Fidget Monitor

• One child is the “fidget Monitor” and goes out of the room
• A child in the circle is given the fidget card – they have to do something that is NOT good sitting
• Everyone else does their best sitting
• The fidget monitor has to find the person with the card
Listening to ALL the words sample game

Is it me?

- Put a selection of dressing up props in the centre of the circle
- The children have to listen to a two part instruction to decide if they can put something on
  
  e.g. “If you are 6 and you are a boy put on a medal”
Adapting Classroom Practice

Photographs/Cue cards of target behaviours:

- Whole class display
- Individual children
- Carpet time positions

Seating

- Consider space/depth perception
- Consider trunk control
Other Adaptations:

- Management of background noise
- Group mix
- Seating arrangements in class
- Where to deliver targeted intervention
- Listening audits
- Adult Language
- Share information with parents
How to talk so children will listen

• Instruct – don’t ask
• Use pauses
• Use first and next
• Avoid before and after
• Limit ambiguity
How to talk so children will listen

• Don’t compete
• Use visual prompts
• Exploit unpredictability
• Be aware of trigger phrases
• Leave processing time
Questions?
Jacquelinewoodcock@nhs.net
l.spooner@nhs.net

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