Questions focused on language & communication- simple self-evaluation using the Early Years Ofsted inspection toolkit 2025.

1. Do children know and use a wide vocabulary which supports their understanding of language? (see toolkit page 18/19)

2. Are children developing confidence and fluency in their communication so they can express themselves clearly to peers and to a range of adults?

3. Do children begin to connect what they already know to new learning or learning in different contexts (linking vocabulary/ideas)?

4. Are children's listening, attention and communication skills being supported with sufficient urgency when gaps arise? (If not, children may struggle to interact or express ideas)

5. Is there a strong focus on communication and language in the curriculum, with frequent and high-quality interactions, shared reading, rhymes, songs, and books?

6. Are practitioners modelling language, vocabulary and communication in the moment and adapting to children's thinking and emerging ideas?

7. Are children developing the skills to listen, respond and sustain engagement in interactions, play and conversations?

8. Are non-verbal communication and children who do not (yet) communicate verbally being effectively supported through interactions and alternative strategies?

9. How well are children prepared for their next stage, including school, in terms of their communication and language skills?

10. Are staff trained and supported to deliver interactions that focus on communication and language development, and do they recognise the importance of communication underpinning all areas of learning?

Communication & Language Self-Evaluation Checklist (based on the Early Years Inspection Toolkit, Ofsted, 2025).
You can rate each statement using:
Always / Mostly / Sometimes / Rarely / Not Yet

Communication & Language Self-Evaluation Checklist

1. Speaking & Vocabulary

Statement	Rating
Children use a growing range of vocabulary in everyday play and conversations.	☐ -
Practitioners introduce and model new words in meaningful contexts.	☐ -
Children are encouraged to explain their ideas and thinking clearly.	☐ -
Staff use open-ended questions (e.g. "I wonder what would happen if…?").	☐ -
Adults build on what children say, extending language naturally.	☐ -
Vocabulary from stories, rhymes and songs is revisited and reused.	☐ -
Children are confident to talk to familiar adults and peers.	☐ -
Practitioners adapt their communication to match children's levels and needs.	☐ -

Always / Mostly / Sometimes / Rarely / Not Yet

2. Listening, Attention & Understanding

Statement	Rating
Children listen attentively to adults and peers in small and large groups.	☐ -
Practitioners model good listening behaviour and give children time to respond.	☐ -
Children follow simple instructions and routines confidently.	☐ -
Adults check that children understand what has been said before moving on.	☐ -
Practitioners use visual cues, gestures, and repetition to aid understanding.	☐ -
The environment supports listening — calm, organised, and free from distractions.	☐ -

Statement	Rating
Staff identify children who find listening or understanding difficult early on.	□ -

Always / Mostly / Sometimes / Rarely / Not Yet

3. Interaction Quality

Statement	Rating
Practitioners engage in frequent, high-quality interactions throughout the day.	□ -
Conversations are two-way — children's ideas are valued and explored.	□ -
Practitioners narrate play, describe actions, and comment rather than question excessively.	□ -
Interactions are warm, responsive and tuned in to children's interests.	□ -
Children are given thinking time before adults repeat or rephrase.	□ -
Staff consistently model good communication behaviours (eye contact, tone, turn-taking).	□ -
Staff adapt approaches for quieter or non-verbal children.	□ -

Always / Mostly / Sometimes / Rarely / Not Yet

4. Early Intervention & Inclusion

Statement	Rating
Gaps in speech, language or communication are identified promptly.	□ -
Staff know how to access external support (e.g. speech and language therapy).	□ -
Strategies to support children with EAL or communication delays are in place. EAL- English as an Additional Language	□ -
Non-verbal communication and gestures are valued as part of interaction.	□ -

Parents are informed and supported in developing communication at home. ☐ -

Assessment and planning focus on individual next steps for communication. ☐ -

Always / Mostly / Sometimes / Rarely / Not Yet

5. Environment & Curriculum

Statement	Rating
Communication and language underpin all areas of the curriculum.	☐ -
Stories, songs, rhymes and books are central to the daily routine.	☐ -
Books, displays and play areas reflect rich language opportunities.	☐ -
Children have spaces for quiet conversations and focused listening.	☐ -
Staff use routines (e.g. snack time, tidy-up) as communication opportunities.	☐ -
The setting celebrates diverse languages and communication styles.	☐ -

Always / Mostly / Sometimes / Rarely / Not Yet

6. Professional Practice

Statement	Rating
All staff understand the importance of early language for later learning.	☐ -
Staff are confident in modelling standard English where appropriate.	☐ -
Professional development focuses on improving interaction quality.	☐ -
Leaders monitor communication and language provision across the setting.	☐ -
Staff share ideas and strategies for developing communication in planning meetings.	☐ -

Always / Mostly / Sometimes / Rarely / Not Yet

Key actions	Success criteria- impact on children/ staff	Milestones and review checkpoints [dates/ events to monitor]	Responsible lead/ advocate

Update-date:

Key actions	Success criteria observed- impact on children/ staff	Milestone and review checkpoint [date/ event of monitoring]	Advocate review and next steps/ actions
1			
2			
3			
4			

Update-date:

Key actions	Success criteria observed- impact on children/ staff	Milestone and review checkpoint [date/ event of monitoring]	Advocate review and next steps/ actions
1			
2			
3			
4			