

Take Time to Talk, Listen and Play

A new campaign encouraging parents, carers and guardians to take time to talk, listen and play to help their child's language development and communication skills has been launched by the Welsh Government today (18th January).

The 'Take time' campaign is part of a wider Welsh Government approach to oracy which includes £700,000 of extra funding and support to schools in 2018-19 through regional consortia to help improve the language skills of learners. Funding of £700,000 is already in place for 2017-18.

The campaign will provide practical tips to parents/carers to help children aged 3 to 7 improve their language skills and prepare for school.

Research shows that children who receive this attention have a greater capacity for language, and later literacy, boosting their communication skills and chances of success in later life.

Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams, launched the 'Take time' campaign at Llangattock Church in Wales School, Crickhowell, earlier today where the reception class took part in an workshop to mark National Storytelling Week.

Kirsty Williams said:

"We are prioritising children's speech, language and communication skills because they are the building blocks for success, not only in school but later on in life as well.

"Oracy is essential for developing life skills and we are keen to support parents, carers and guardians as they pass these valuable skills on to their children.

"We know there are many different pressures when you're raising children, sometimes just finding the time can be a challenge, but the message of this campaign is that every effort you make at this early stage will help and the benefits will last a lifetime.

"It's important that we make this as fun and as rewarding a process as possible so the new campaign provides some helpful hints, tips and practical advice for parents, carers and guardians to support the development of their child's bilingual speaking, listening and discussion skills."

Alison Stroud, Head of Wales Office for the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists said:

"The ability to communicate effectively is an essential life skill for all children because it underpins a child's social and emotional development. In particular, the first three years of a child's life are crucial in developing all of a young child's growing need to communicate. Poor speech, language and communication skills can impact their behaviour, mental health, 'school readiness' and even their employability as adults.

"Children should be exposed to as many words as possible in everyday experiences to help them develop their language and promote their communication. There are lots of different ways that parents, carers or guardians can support them, but the simplest way is to keep creating opportunities to listen and talk together with the telly, smart phones and other mobile devices turned off."

From today, advertisements featuring writer and presenter Anni Llyn will run for two weeks on television, local radio stations and online, encouraging parents, carers and guardians of 3 to 7 year olds to take time to talk, listen and play.

The short animations will include top tips for them to help develop their child's language and communication skills.

Booktrust Cymru's Pori Drwy Stori programme supports key Foundation Phase areas of learning, including literacy and numeracy, as children start the reception class at school.

The Welsh Government funded programme provides bilingual learning materials for use in the classroom, and at home, which will be an important resource for the oracy campaign.

Booktrust Cymru's Pori Drwy Stori programme materials are given to every child in the reception year of school. The termly resources supports parents and carers to engage in their child's learning when they start school and focus on the key Foundation Phase areas of learning, including literacy and numeracy.

Helen Wales from Booktrust Cymru added,

"Pori Drwy Stori allows your child to gain confidence with words in a fun way. Our challenges help children learn and recite rhymes or poetry in a fun way, whilst the magazine we produce encourages children to speak, listen and make decisions. We will be launching new materials and a pilot scheme for schools in Wales to help youngsters improve their oracy skills, and hope that parents and teachers will find these tools useful for promoting language development."

"Pori Drwy Stori aims to make learning fun and to give parents and carers ideas about ways they can support their children to talk and learn. The resources help children and families to have fun

learning rhymes, to enjoy sharing books and stories and to play number games. The resources encourage children to speak, listen and make decisions building on our long-established Bookstart programme which encourages families to start talking and sharing books, stories and rhymes from a very young age."

Now in its fourth year, 'Education Begins at Home' aims to encourage parents, carers and guardians to do more of the little things at home that will make a big difference to their child's development and education.

For further information about the 'Education Begins at Home' campaign and the online resources available for parents, please visit www.facebook.com/beginsathome (facebook.com/dechraucartref) and follow us on Twitter @edubeginsathome (@dechraucartref)