



# Vocabulary Intent

Vocabulary levels are strong predictors of later literacy skills. They predict not only how well children will develop reading comprehension, but also their phonological awareness and phonic knowledge. Without a good vocabulary, children struggle to understand what they are taught, to express how they feel, and find it difficult to manage social situations and resolve conflicts.

Children start school with varying degrees of vocabulary. This is largely determined by their contact with their parents and other persons in the home, as well as their early-childhood experiences within the wider world.

Children mainly use words that their parents and other adults use with them in conversation, and acquire new words through exposure to books, for example, that are shared, enjoyed and discussed with them.

## **Why should vocabulary sit at the heart of learning?**

Developing a child's vocabulary is integral to academic success. Good vocabulary knowledge is not just the ability to recognise a wide variety of words and to assign definitions to those words. Rather, it is much more complex. Pupils need to be able to understand words in a variety of contexts to help make sense of texts, be able to recall those words and also to use them effectively for their own communication, whether spoken or written.

Research shows that vocabulary instruction approaches which only provide definitional information do not significantly affect children's comprehension, as inference is dependent upon knowledge. Whenever new words are introduced, children need a wealth of knowledge to draw upon as links are made in the brain based on their prior knowledge. Over time this allows them to move from generalised definitions to a more specific, deeper understanding of the word in different contexts. It is therefore imperative that we provide children with a wide core of knowledge to draw upon via a well-mapped, systematic curriculum. Essentially, when children gain knowledge, it changes how they see the world forever and the more they know, the more they are able to learn. Pupils' acquisition and command of vocabulary are therefore key to their learning and progress across the whole curriculum.

## **How do we develop vocabulary at Carlton Road Academy?**

Developing vocabulary occurs in two ways:

1. Through indirect instruction:
  - Using oral language and rich reading experiences to grow vocabulary 'naturally'

However, if we relied only on indirect instruction, our struggling readers would become stuck in a cycle of deficit, as children who struggle with decoding lack the competency to derive meaning from the context

it is presented in. This is because their working memory is full to capacity with identifying the word and is unable to make the necessary links to their wider web of knowledge to establish the meaning of it.

2. Through direct, robust vocabulary instruction which:

- Develops vocabulary accurately, building on pupils' current knowledge and making explicit links which allow for the meaning of words in different contexts to be established.
- Increases pupils' store of words in general (exposing them to increasingly complex language)
- Makes links between known and new vocabulary and discuss the shades of meaning in similar words.
- Provides children with multiple exposures through rich and varied activities to meaningful information about the word in order to help pupils process and embed meanings.

### Which words do we teach?

- Tier One: The most basic words, e.g. **clock, baby, happy.**
- Tier Two: High frequency words for confident word users, e.g. **insist, mischievous, gentle.**
- Tier Three: Often with very specific contexts, best learned when needed, e.g. **metamorphosis, symmetrical, phoneme.**

Our approach to developing children's vocabulary is focussed predominantly on developing children's Tier 2 words. Nevertheless, we recognise that some pupils might require Tier 1 words, in particular if they are in the early stages of learning English.

We select our Tier 2 words based on their:

- Importance and utility i.e. those words which appear frequently across a variety of contexts
- Conceptual understanding i.e. words which pupils understand the general concept behind, but lack a sophisticated way to express it
- Instructional potential i.e. words that offer a variety of contextual meanings such as 'settlement'

Settlement = a place, typically one which has previously been uninhabited, where people establish a community.

Settlement = an official agreement intended to resolve a dispute or conflict.

### Vocabulary Acquisition

In EYFS & Y1 we follow the recommendations of Kelly Ashley, author of 'Word Power', to introduce 10 new words a week to 'power up' children's expressive and receptive language. These words are directly taught in context using the high-quality texts around which the EYFS wider curriculum is built. To make this word learning 'stick', we find ways to help children connect the 'new' with the 'known'. We do this through:

- A language-rich environment with high-quality interactions through play.
- Encouraging parents to support their child's vocabulary development at home
- Retaining and recalling all words that are directly taught as part of the weekly top ten at a variety of points across the year to strengthen word memory over time.

## **Years 2 - 6**

In KS2, our main vehicle for the development of vocabulary is through quality texts that are used across all areas of the curriculum. We:

**S**elect the really useful vocabulary

**T**each the selected vocabulary in a structured manner

**A**ctivate the meaning by using the words in context

**R**eview the taught words to ensure they are retained



### ***Blachowicz and Fisher (2010): Teaching Vocabulary in All Classrooms***

Vocabulary walls are also a feature of every classroom: new vocabulary is added and regularly revised and re-visited to embed those words within the children's long-term memories.

Carlton Road Academy also uses Bedrock Learning: a digital, online, interactive vocabulary curriculum. This multi-modal programme, is designed to immerse pupils in aspirational, academic (Tier 2) vocabulary.

The package starts with a pre-test, which assesses their core vocabulary and identifies their starting points. Children are then assigned their personalized word list in various contexts (fiction and non-fiction) and explore it from several different angles in order to commit it to long-term memory.

Children are introduced to three new words in each lesson; there are five lessons in each topic and there are 13 topics in each block. Each block takes approximately one year to complete. However, the program uses data analysis to continually assess the children, and automatically sets an appropriate level of challenge.

### **Our chosen Foreign Language (KS2):**

As an Academy we have chosen to teach the children Spanish from Year 3 through to Year 6. Spanish is the second most-spoken language in the world.

English and Spanish share roots in Latin and, as such, studying Spanish increases children's understanding of the English language and how different languages evolve, which can also help with learning English.