

## Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service

# Teaching Linguistic Concepts

Concept words are relational words that describe features of the world including attributes such as - size, colour, texture, shape (e.g. hard/soft, rough/smooth), time (before/after), positions (under, above), number/ quantity.

Many pupils with Speech, Language, Communication Needs find concept words difficult because the meaning often changes due to the context in which they are used. For example, where something depends on the perspective of the viewer. *A dog is big when compared with a mouse, but not when compared with a cow.* Also many concepts are abstract therefore are more difficult to learn (e.g. time).

It is necessary for pupils to learn basic concepts before they move onto more complex concepts. For example, an understanding of *same/different* is a prerequisite to learning other concepts such as big and small.

### Strategies to help with the teaching concepts -

- Concept words within a lesson should be identified so that they may be taught explicitly. Pupils who have SLCN will need to learn one concept at a time rather than several at once (e.g. 'heavy' rather than 'heavy' and 'light')
- Pupils need to understand basic concepts first before they can learn to compare them e.g. 'heavy' before 'heavier/heaviest'.
- A multi-sensory approach is needed to demonstrate concepts. That is the use of real situations, pictures or objects.
- Young children learn best when they experience it themselves e.g. going under the parachute before placing objects under the table before sorting pictures of people/animals under the furniture . Only then should they be writing about it.
- Completing activities in a range of situations, whilst repeating the use of the identified concept ensures generalisation of understanding as well as ensuring that the concept is being correctly applied.
- Provide lots of models of the concept child needs to learn in their environment e.g. 'big'. Give instructions which include the concept 'show me the big chair' (use visual aid/pointing to help the child at first).
- Create opportunities for the pupil to use the concept word in spoken language. Encourage the concept word to be used in a full sentence.
- New concept words need to be linked to previous knowledge or experiences. For example, "depth is about how deep something is. Here is a whale in the ocean, it is deep. Depth is the distance from the top to the bottom."