This poster gives information to teachers about language and communication development in secondary pupils. It may help teachers identify those pupils who have an underlying speech, language and communication need.

Language development in the secondary years is a gradual process with many subtle but important changes taking place.

Pupils may fail to develop age appropriate language skills for a range of reasons including:
- They may have general learning difficulties
- They may have had less support at home to develop their language and communication skills fully
- They may have a specific difficulty with language which is out of step with their potential to learn
- Children with English as an additional language are at the same risk of speech, language and communication needs as any other child, however, this can be more difficult to spot.

**By Age 11**
- Can follow complex directions: Get the rectangular box that’s on the bottom shelf of the stationary cupboard.
- Understands question words used in context: I couldn’t keep a straight face.
- Telling interesting stories and original stories with stories within stories: Told an interesting story about a friend who won a prize.
- Average length of spoken sentences: 7 to 11+ words

**By Age 14**
- Understands instructions which don’t follow the word order of the sentence: Before you cut out your shapes, complete the worksheet and file it in your folder.
- Can identify and understand sarcasm when prompted: Getting noisy in here... What is implied. You need to be quiet.
- Can use ‘dictionary type’ instead of ‘personal definition’ to explain words: ‘Brave’

**By Age 18 onwards**
- Has knowledge of ‘personal’ definitions to explain words, even if the person they are talking to finds them exaggerated: ‘Swaggered’
- Can confidently explain the meaning of instruction words: Mustn’t, Have to, Should, Can’t
- Fully understands sarcasm and is able to use it well: ‘No difficulty following complex directions.’

**Understanding & reasoning**
- Pupils use language to solve more complex problems
- Can follow complex directions: Get the rectangular box that’s on the bottom shelf of the stationary cupboard.
- Understands question words used in context: I couldn’t keep a straight face.
- Telling interesting stories and original stories with stories within stories: Told an interesting story about a friend who won a prize.
- Average length of spoken sentences: 7 to 11+ words

**Vocabulary**
- Pupils learn approximately 7 to 10 words per day
- Instruction words are hard to understand: ‘because’ ‘so’ ‘also’ ‘before’
- Telling interesting stories and original stories with stories within stories: Told an interesting story about a friend who won a prize.
- Average length of spoken sentences: 7 to 11+ words

**Sentence structure & narration**
- Pupils can explain more complex ideas
- Uses a range of joining words in speech and writing: ‘because’ ‘so’ ‘also’ ‘before’
- Tells interesting, entertaining and original stories with stories within stories: Told an interesting story about a friend who won a prize.
- Average length of spoken sentences: 7 to 11+ words

**Social interaction**
- Understands jokes based on double meanings: I said to the Gym instructor, ‘Can you teach me to do the splits?’ He said, ‘How flexible are you?’
- Adjusts the pleasantness of their language to who they are talking to: ‘Sorry Mr Jones I didn’t mean to make you angry.’
- Is able to talk through problems with peers: ‘It is a bit hard for me to make a decision.’
- Moves from topic to topic quite often in conversations: ‘I use bigger and posher words in school than with my mates.’

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