**Attention & Listening – Strategies for supporting children and young people:**

The development of listening and attention skills is essential for promoting understanding and use of language. You can help by:

* Always addressing the child by name before you speak.
* Approaching the child before you speak.
* Getting down to the child’s level whenever possible.
* Encouraging (but not trying to force) eye contact.
  + Hold objects / pictures up to the side of your face to encourage gaze in the right direction.
* Using visual prompts, natural gesture and a range of facial expression and tones of voice to engage the child’s interest.
* Using individual symbols or a poster to reinforce listening skills.
* Using visual supports are much as possible, e.g., pictures, symbols, objects, demonstrations, mime, gesture, and video.
* Trying to avoid the child being seated near possible distractions, e.g., book racks, toys, and equipment drawers.
* In whole class activities, sitting the child near the teacher so that attention can be refocused when needed.
* Standing near to and facing the child when giving instructions in group situations, e.g., lining up, P.E., to reduce distractions.
* Keeping activities short, using a kitchen timer to encourage the child to stay focused for a set time. Stop the activity when the timer rings, even if the task is going well.
* Giving specific feedback to the child about his/her listening skills, e.g., ‘thank you for looking at me’, ‘well done for waiting your turn’, etc. Use motivating rewards for good listening.
* Negotiating breaks with the child, e.g., giving 5 minutes free time once they have achieved a certain amount.

**Attention and Listening Activity Ideas**

* **Musical chairs**
* **Musical statues**
* **Barrier Games –** put some noisy objects behind a screen or box. Use the object to make the noise and then ask the children what they think they heard. Keys, instruments, and different objects like a crisp packet work well for this game. If it is too hard for the children, show them the objects before they go behind the screen and / or give them choices.
* **Kim’s game –** Show the children a tray of a few objects, take one away and let them guess what is missing.
* **Simon says –** ask the children to point to two or three body parts at a time.
* **Listening to sounds on CD** – there are commercial materials available, or you can make your own. Ask the pupils to listen to a sound and guess what it is or stand up when they hear a particular sound.
* **Sound bingo** – listen to sounds on CD and covering the correct picture.
* **Sound walk** – listen for different sounds they hear on a walk outside or around school, then use these to paint a picture or compose a group display.
* **Share reading** – using big books to help focus attention on the visual cues.
* **Circle-time activities** – when one child is speaking, they could hold a listening shell, which means that everyone else (including the adults) must listen to what they say.
* **Chinese whispers** – pass an action message round the circle. E.g jump up and down. The last pupil to receive the message has to perform the action.
* **Listen and colour/draw** – draw or colour a picture by listening to the instructions.
* **Read a paragraph** and ask the children to put their hand up when they hear a particular word.
* **Use musical instruments** and other sounds to talk about long, short, quiet, loud sounds.
* **Tap a rhythm pattern** and ask the child to repeat.
* **State a topic and then read words or sentences**. The child is to accept or reject if it is relevant to that topic. For example, say that you are talking about animals, name some animals and then name a different object.