



Strategic Partnership Boards
SAFETY SAFEGUARDING WELLBEING



Bitesize video guide: Voice of the child

Hello my name is Andrew Stansfield and I'm a Deputy SENCO and today I'm going to talk to you about how we can ensure we ask for and hear the voices of children.

Children have told us that they would like adults to be vigilant and to notice when things are troubling them. They would like to be able to understand what is happening to them, to be heard and understood; and have a response to their concerns. For this to happen children need to develop stable and trusting relationships.

Children are able to make judgements and decisions and this needs to be recognized. Children want to be informed, involved and to participate in decisions and plans that affect them. They want an explanation of the outcome of assessments and decisions, and to be told the reasons when decisions are taken that are different to what they wanted.

To help children do this they may need advocacy to assist them in putting forward their views.

Some things to consider when working with children:

- When working with children who are pre-speech think about how the child is behaving. How are they interacting with adults and their carers or parents? Are they smiling, laughing or crying? Are their clothes appropriate for the weather conditions and their age?
- When working with children with additional needs, identify how they choose to communicate. Remember that research has shown that only 7% of communication is verbal! Be persistent and creative.
- As professionals we need to give time, and be patient and show compassion - and a willingness to ensure that children's voices are heard. Being observant is very important as children may say one thing but their body language and behaviour may signal something different.
- The voice of the child can often be dismissed or minimalised by professionals when the voice of the parent is very dominating. As professionals we must work to ensure that the voice of the child is not only heard but also used to inform our practice.

Your three messages to take away are:

1. Be observant of behaviour and body language and children's chosen way of communicating. Be creative and persistent in findings ways to hear their voice.
2. Be aware of the messages that children are trying to give, which means interpreting their behaviour, always remember they are children, not adults.
3. And finally, be aware of the child's voice being dismissed or minimalised because the parent's voice dominates.