



Hearing the Child's Voice Policy

Legislative Framework

This policy has been developed in accordance with:

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers (Effective 1 September 2026)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Article 12
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (where applicable)

Aim

At Clare House Nursery, we believe every child has the right to be listened to, valued and respected. Our aim is to create a nurturing, inclusive and child-centred environment where children feel safe, confident and supported to express their thoughts, feelings, wishes and experiences in ways that are appropriate to their age and stage of development.

Practitioners play a vital role in recognising children's verbal and non-verbal communication, responding sensitively to their individual needs and ensuring that the child's voice is central to all decisions that affect their wellbeing, learning and development.

Policy Statement

Children communicate in many different ways. Some children use words confidently, while others communicate through facial expressions, body language, behaviour, gestures, signing, sounds, play or their interactions with others.

At Clare House Nursery, we recognise that every behaviour is a form of communication and practitioners take time to understand what children may be telling us through their actions, emotions and responses.

Listening to children is embedded throughout our daily practice and is fundamental to safeguarding, promoting wellbeing and ensuring every child feels valued and respected.

How We Hear the Child's Voice

Practitioners will:

- Build warm, trusting and secure relationships with every child.
- Spend quality time engaging in child-led play and conversations.
- Listen carefully without interrupting or making assumptions.
- Observe children's verbal and non-verbal communication.
- Respect children's views, choices and preferences whenever possible.
- Respond sensitively to children's emotions and behaviours.

- Use age-appropriate communication strategies.
- Support children to express their feelings through play, stories, pictures, signs, visual prompts and sensory experiences where appropriate.
- Encourage children to make choices and develop independence throughout the day.

Creating Opportunities for Children to Express Themselves

Practitioners create daily opportunities for children to share their thoughts and feelings by:

- Following children's interests during play.
- Offering choices throughout the nursery routine.
- Supporting children to make decisions.
- Reading stories that encourage discussions about feelings.
- Using emotion cards, mirrors and visual resources.
- Encouraging children to talk about their experiences.
- Using singing, music, role play and creative activities.
- Supporting communication using Makaton, visual prompts or alternative communication methods where appropriate.

The Role of the Practitioner

Every practitioner is responsible for ensuring children's voices are heard and respected.

Practitioners will:

- Be emotionally available and approachable.
- Follow the child's lead during interactions.
- Notice changes in behaviour, mood or communication.
- Recognise that behaviour may be a way of communicating unmet needs.
- Respond calmly, sensitively and without judgement.
- Record significant observations where appropriate.
- Share concerns promptly with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Practitioners understand that listening to children is not limited to hearing spoken words but involves recognising all forms of communication.

Hearing the Child's Voice in Safeguarding

Listening to children is an essential safeguarding responsibility.

Where a child makes a disclosure or practitioners become concerned through observations or changes in behaviour, practitioners will:

- Listen carefully without leading or asking unnecessary questions.
- Remain calm and reassuring.
- Take all concerns seriously.
- Record the child's own words wherever possible.
- Complete the nursery's Record of Concern Form.
- Share concerns immediately with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Children's wishes and feelings will always be considered when making decisions about their welfare, in line with their age, understanding and developmental stage.

Partnership with Parents and Carers

We recognise that parents know their children best.

Practitioners will work closely with families to:

- Share observations.
- Celebrate achievements.
- Discuss children's interests.
- Understand children's communication styles.
- Identify any changes in behaviour or wellbeing.
- Work together to meet children's individual needs.

Supporting All Children

Some children require additional support to communicate.

Practitioners will adapt their communication according to each child's individual needs, including children who:

- Have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND).
- Use English as an Additional Language (EAL).
- Have speech, language or communication needs.
- Use Makaton, PECS or other communication systems.
- Are neurodivergent.
- Communicate primarily through behaviour or sensory responses.

Every child deserves to have their voice heard, regardless of how they communicate.

Reflective Practice

Practitioners regularly reflect on their interactions with children to ensure they are providing meaningful opportunities for every child to express themselves.

Reflection takes place through:

- Supervision meetings.
- Team meetings.
- Peer observations.
- Safeguarding discussions.
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

Monitoring and Review

The Nursery Manager and Designated Safeguarding Lead will monitor the implementation of this policy through observations, supervision, safeguarding audits and reflective practice.

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if legislation, guidance or best practice changes.

Clare House Commitment

At Clare House Nursery, we believe that every child has a voice, even before they have words. By building trusting relationships, valuing every form of communication and listening with curiosity, empathy and respect, we ensure that every child feels heard, valued and safe. Children's voices influence our practice every day and remain at the heart of everything we do.

