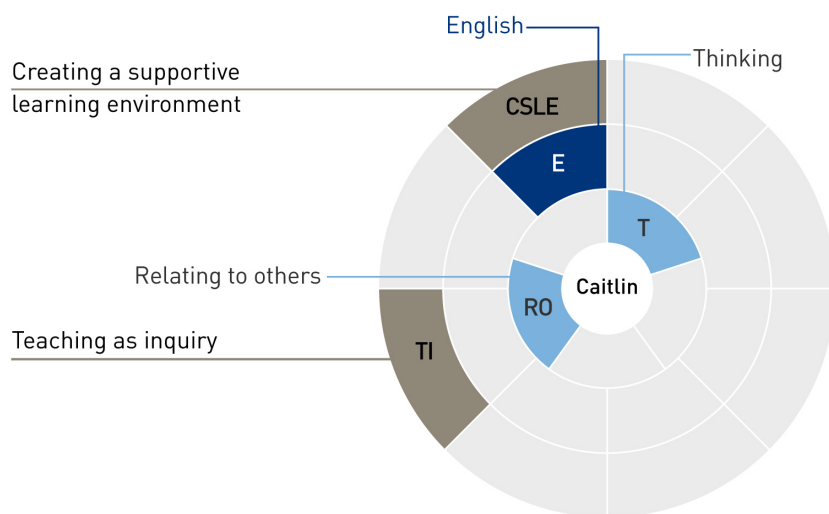


# Caitlin holds a conversation

## Links to the curriculum



## Student background

<b>Name</b>	Caitlin
<b>Age</b>	12
<b>Year</b>	7
<b>School</b>	Intermediate

Caitlin is a student in a year 6/7 composite class of 30 children at a full primary<sup>(1)</sup> school in a rural town. Caitlin enjoys “being one of the girls” and playing with her friends. She is very dramatic.

She has a severe communication disorder, severe dyspraxia, and takes medication for epilepsy and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Caitlin’s school receives 0.1 FTE supplementary learning support (SLS) teacher, on average, four hours of teacher aide support per week and support from a speech language therapist once a fortnight. Caitlin uses language to communicate but most sounds and sentence structures are difficult for others to understand. She initiates some conversations, but this is an area of focus for her, particularly with her peers.

(1) Full primary school includes year 7 and 8 (intermediate) classes.

## Four learning stories

- 1. Caitlin learns a new skill** 8 April 2008
- 2. Caitlin the communicator** 22 April 2008
- 3. A special moment** 9 May 2008
- 4. All by myself!** 21 July 2008

This string of learning stories shows Caitlin learning the skills she needs to hold a conversation (using language, symbols, and texts). She applies these skills as she relates to others. Her growing confidence and sense of belonging allow her to communicate in a variety of contexts.

## Caitlin learns a new skill

<b>Students</b>	Caitlin and Jessica	<b>Date</b>	8 April 2008
<b>Topic</b>	"Socially Speaking" communication	<b>Observer</b>	Denise (SLS teacher)

### Intended learning

- The children will ask questions and model good listening behaviour.

Once a fortnight, Caitlin and two classmates join Naomi (speech language therapist) and Brenda (teacher aide) to participate in a communication programme called "Socially Speaking". This programme is designed to give the children skills they can use when talking with classmates and adults; for example, listening, asking questions, greetings, taking turns, and so on.

Caitlin loves being part of a group where she is able to communicate with her friends. It is good to see her enjoying herself. Today, she is learning to look at the person who is talking to her. Caitlin is also learning about how it feels when the person you are talking to doesn't look at you.

One pair of classmates model the situation and it is then Caitlin's turn to work with Jessica. Jessica asks Caitlin a question, and then promptly shows no interest in her response (which is what she has been asked to do). Caitlin continues to talk.

Well done, Caitlin, for continuing to talk even though your partner is showing all the signs of being a poor listener. Caitlin then explains how it makes her feel sad when Jessica is not interested in what she is saying.

The role play is a success.



## Analysis – what learning is happening here?

### Key competencies

#### Relating to others

Caitlin gets involved quickly with the role play and is keen to play her part in a different situation after seeing it modelled. She listens actively and perseveres to get her peer's attention. She shares her ideas about how the role play makes her feel and works well with classmates.

#### Participating and contributing

Caitlin has the confidence to work within the group to create a successful role play.

## Learning areas

### Level 1 English: Speaking, Writing, and Presenting: purposes and audiences

Caitlin shows that she is aware that conversation involves both words and body language, which together show the other person you are interested.

### Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People

Caitlin is learning interpersonal skills by expressing her feelings. She felt sad when it appeared that her peer was not listening.

## Where to next?

### Key competencies

We want Caitlin to use these new skills in a variety of naturally occurring situations. This will help her to interact and communicate in positive and fruitful ways with others. News time presents lots of opportunities to listen carefully to others. We will start with small group personal news sharing and support Caitlin to use her new skills in this context. Caitlin can take photos and display them on her laptop for her news. This form of presentation could be a whole-class activity.

### Learning areas

We will provide more occasions to practise these skills based on the same approach – observe, practise, role play. I have found this works well for Caitlin, particularly when it has been modelled for her. We also have to be aware of naturally occurring situations where she can use these skills with her peers and adults in the school.

## Caitlin the communicator

<b>Students</b>	Caitlin and Jessica	<b>Date</b>	22 April 2008
<b>Topic</b>	“Socially Speaking” communication	<b>Observer</b>	Denise (SLSL teacher)

### Intended learning

- The children will use the listening skills and body language learnt in a previous lesson to hold a conversation.

What a great communicator Caitlin is becoming.

Today, during our “Socially Speaking” lesson (this includes two of Caitlin’s classmates, the speech language therapist, and the teacher aide), Caitlin had to listen to someone speak and also answer the question, “What did you do in the weekend?” The group are revising last week’s lesson where two people turn and face each other when they are talking. They are role playing the skill Caitlin will need.

Caitlin talks animatedly about her holidays and then turns to say, “And what you do Brenda?”

It is then Caitlin’s turn to ask Jessica a question. Without prompting, she turns to look at Jessica and asks, “What did you do in the holidays, Jessica?”

Her body language shows Jessica that she is interested and she used the correct question structure. Caitlin, you are a star!



## Analysis – what learning is happening here?

### Key competencies

#### Thinking

I am so pleased with how Caitlin remembered the skills she had learnt from our last session and has used them perfectly in a social situation with her friend. She makes sense of information she has learnt previously and applies it in a role play where she is developing an understanding of how to hold a conversation.

### Learning areas

#### Level 1 English: Speaking, Writing, and Presenting: purposes and audiences

Caitlin shows she can be an active participant in a purposeful conversation aware of her audience.

#### Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People

Caitlin continues to practise communication skills enthusiastically with other people and is taking the first steps at spontaneous conversation.

## Where to next?

### Key competencies

We will help Caitlin consolidate and apply these skills by encouraging her to use them in everyday situations. We will develop a social context in the classroom and wider school that provides Caitlin with opportunities to engage in conversation with her peers and use her new conversation skills. This will give Caitlin the chance to practise asking the same questions with a range of people.

### Learning areas

We will provide opportunities for Caitlin to practise initiating conversation, initially with adults and then moving onto classmates.

Caitlin seems to have more confidence. She likes to try things with adults first and then with her peers. We also need to provide Caitlin's peers with information that helps them to initiate a conversation in a way that allows Caitlin to use her new conversation skills. Her peers can also learn to respond in ways that encourage a continuing and natural conversation.

## A special moment

<b>Student</b>	Caitlin	<b>Date</b>	9 May 2008
<b>Topic</b>	Writing a story about Caitlin's holiday	<b>Observer</b>	Denise (SLS teacher)

### Intended learning

- Sharing holiday photos and discussing which photos she will write about.

Caitlin had spent the school holidays in Australia with her family. Today at writing time, I loaded all their photos onto her laptop and we looked at them together. She was very animated and excitedly told me about everything she had done in great detail. I was envious of her holiday and pleased with all the chatter. She chose a photo of Willy Wonka to write about.

When we were packing up the laptop, she suddenly turned to me and said, "And did you have a good holiday, Mrs Jackson?"

For the first time, Caitlin had initiated conversation with me by asking a question about my holidays.

What a great moment Caitlin! You are learning to have a conversation and are practising the skills Naomi and Brenda (teacher aide) have been teaching you. I am so proud of you!



### Parent's voice

As I repeated this special moment to Caitlin's Mum, she commented on how pleased she was with Caitlin's conversations at home. When Dad comes in from work, Caitlin asks, "How was your day at work, Dad?" After he answers this, she then asks, "What did you do today?"

In the car, she asks her little sister if she had a good day at kindy and follows that with "What did you do?"

## Analysis – what learning is happening here?

### Key competencies

#### Relating to others

Caitlin is gaining confidence with her conversation skills and takes a risk at initiating one with me. It is a great success and her pride is obvious.

#### Thinking

Caitlin transfers skills she has learnt in a small group to a real life situation by using questions that encourage a response.

### Learning areas

#### Level 1 English: Speaking, Writing, and Presenting: ideas

We have a camera for home and school to record activities so that Caitlin has a file of things to discuss and write about. Here, Caitlin used photos as a conversation trigger. She expressed her own ideas and feelings and spontaneously sought my thoughts and comments by asking a question.

## Where to next?

### Key competencies

We will provide many opportunities for Caitlin to practise conversation skills. We will work with the children and adults in her school environment to encourage this.

### Learning areas

We will help Caitlin extend the types of questions she asks in a conversation by modelling a variety of question types for her.

## All by myself!

<b>Students</b>	Caitlin, Hannah, Kasie	<b>Date</b>	21 July 2008
<b>Topic</b>	Classroom routines	<b>Observer</b>	Amy (teacher)

### Intended learning

– Caitlin will initiate conversation with classmates in a variety of situations.

The first day back at school after the holidays is always a noisy, exciting time as children share holiday stories.

Today, a lot of Caitlin's classmates are milling around before school, talking.

After Caitlin arrives at school, she walks up to her group of friends and says to Hannah, "Did you have a good holiday, Hannah?" Hannah starts telling her about what she has done. Caitlin listens and then tells her friends about her little sister starting school.

Fantastic! You are having great conversations with your classmates. And congratulations Hannah – you have helped create an environment where Caitlin can practise and use her new conversation skills.

After break, the class line up outside their room to go to physical education.

Caitlin walks over to her classmate Kasie and says, "Will you be my partner?" I was about to intervene as I could see Kasie hesitate and expected her to say she could not be Caitlin's partner.

However she replied, "Mmmm... yes."

Caitlin, I really like the way you are asking people to be your partner rather than waiting in line for someone to ask you.

### What a champ!

## Analysis – what learning is happening here?

### Key competencies

#### Relating to others

How exciting it is to see Caitlin initiating conversation with her friends; to know that they understand her and then include her in the chatter or respond to what it is she has asked is very heart-warming.

#### Participating and contributing

Caitlin has had holiday experiences similar to everyone else, so it is easy to find something to talk about with her friends. This is the beginning of being an active social member of the classroom.

## Learning areas

### Level 1 English: Speaking, Writing, and Presenting: purposes and audience

Caitlin expects her conversation to be understood, responded to and appreciated by her friends as she talks about her little sister starting school (they go out to help Caitlin care for her at playtime). Caitlin uses a variety of question forms that have been modelled for her.

### Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People: interpersonal skills

Caitlin is developing interpersonal skills as she expresses her need to find a partner, when lining up.

## Where to next?

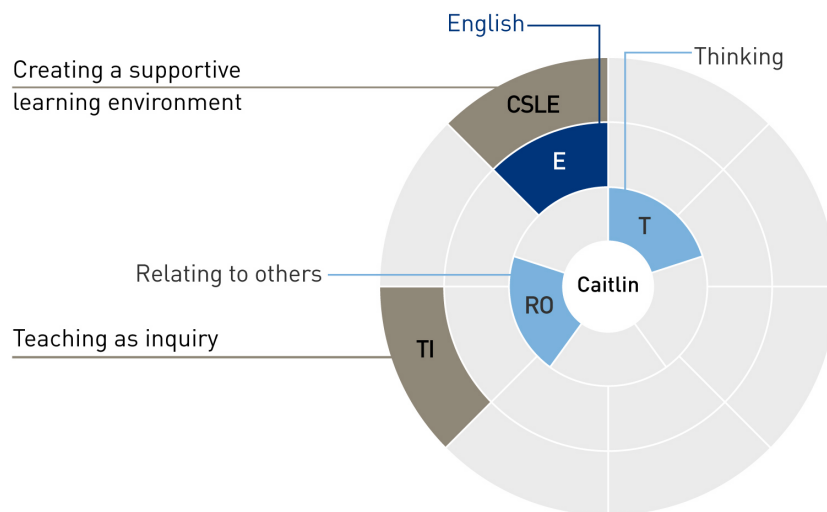
### Key competencies

We will continue to encourage Caitlin to hold conversations with her friends. We need to work with Caitlin's peers by supporting them to learn how to initiate and engage in conversations with Caitlin. We also need to be watchful and look out for naturally occurring opportunities for Caitlin and her peers to engage in positive and supportive conversation.

### Learning areas

We have found that Caitlin learns best when she has opportunities to practise a skill first before using it in naturally occurring situations. We need to continue to provide role play situations where Caitlin can increase the complexity of questions that create and sustain a conversation; for example, by asking "Did you do anything else?"

## Reflection – what these stories exemplify



## Key competencies

Caitlin shows a growing confidence in her ability to relate to others as she initiates conversation with an increasing number of people. Caitlin demonstrates thinking by applying the conversation skills she has been taught to specific situations.

### How might these stories strengthen Caitlin's identity as a learner?

Caitlin shows mindfulness by asking questions to initiate conversation (agency). Over time, Caitlin has developed the ability to ask questions relevant to the situation (depth). She

does this with an increasingly wide range of people, such as peers, family members, and her teacher. This learning occurs in a variety of settings – the communication programme, the classroom setting, before school, and at home (breadth).

For more information on the four dimensions of agency, breadth, continuity, and depth (ABCDs), refer to *Narrative assessment: a guide for teachers*.

## Learning areas

### Level 1 English

This learning is in English in the speaking, writing, and presenting strand. By asking questions, Caitlin is using oral language to create meaning and is demonstrating an awareness of purpose and audience through appropriate choice of content.

## Effective pedagogy

### What does this tell us about teaching and learning in this setting?

Caitlin learns by seeing rather than by hearing information, so modelling through role play is a powerful strategy to teach Caitlin effective conversation skills. Caitlin is now using the skills independently – knowing a student's interest (e.g. drama) and being prepared to use this as a teaching strategy has paid off (teaching as inquiry).

Caitlin's ability to converse is supported by a positive relationship with her teachers, teacher aide, and peers. All those involved in Caitlin's learning talk regularly about her programme and about what's working. They have a collaborative approach (creating a supportive learning environment).

### Reflective questions for the reader

"What learning activities would allow this student to participate more fully with others in the class?"

"How do I extend my students' learning?"

"What e-learning can I access to support oral language learning?"

### Useful resources

Schroeder, A. (2000). *Socially speaking: a pragmatic social skills programme for primary pupils*. Cambridge, UK: Learning Development Association.

Schroeder, A. (2000). *"Let's communicate, Let's be friends, and Let's practise" Socially speaking: a pragmatic social skills programme for primary pupils*. Cambridge, UK: Learning Development Association.

Schroeder, A. (2008). *The friendship formula*. Cambridge, UK: Learning Development Association.

Schroeder, A. (2001). *Time to talk: a programme to develop oral & social intercourse skills at reception and key stage 1*. Cambridge, UK: Learning Development Association.