What Are Blank's Levels of Understanding?
A friendly guide for our families

At school, we know that understanding language is just as important as being able to speak. Children need to understand what is being said to them, make sense of information, answer questions and share their thoughts and ideas. These skills are an important part of learning, communication and building relationships.
To help us understand and develop each child's language and thinking skills, we use an approach called **Blank's Levels of Understanding**.
So, what are Blank's Levels of Understanding?
Blank's Levels of Understanding is a framework that helps teachers and support staff understand how children process and respond to language.
It looks at how children understand questions, think about information and use language to explain their ideas.
The framework has four levels, which gradually increase in complexity:

- **Level 1 – Naming:** Understanding and identifying objects, people and things that are directly in front of them.
- **Level 2 – Describing:** Talking about what things look like, what they do and how they are similar or different.
- **Level 3 – Retelling and reasoning:** Thinking about information, making simple predictions and explaining what might happen.
- **Level 4 – Justifying and explaining:** Using more complex thinking to explain ideas, make connections, predict outcomes and give reasons for their answers.

Every child develops these skills at their own pace. The levels help us recognise what a child can already understand and identify the next steps in their language development.
How does it work?

- Staff use everyday conversations, classroom activities, stories and play to explore children's understanding of language.
- Children are asked different types of questions, ranging from simple questions about what they can see to more complex questions that encourage them to think, explain and give reasons.
- Staff consider how a child responds and whether they need additional time, visual prompts, repetition or support to understand a question.
- The information helps staff choose language and questions that are appropriate for the child's current level of understanding.
- As children develop, staff gradually introduce more challenging questions to extend their thinking and language skills.

Why do we use Blank's Levels of Understanding?
Because they help us to:

- Understand how a child processes and makes sense of language.
- Identify strengths and areas where additional support may be helpful.
- Develop children's listening, understanding and spoken language skills.

- Encourage children to think, reason, explain and express their ideas.
- Support children to answer questions and follow instructions with greater confidence.
- Make sure adults use language and questions that children can understand.
- Gradually develop children's confidence with more complex language and thinking skills.

What happens next?

Staff use the information gathered to adapt the way they communicate with your child and plan opportunities to develop their understanding.

This might include using simpler language, giving children extra thinking time, using pictures and visual prompts, modelling answers or introducing carefully planned questions to encourage further thinking.

As children become more confident, staff will gradually introduce more challenging language and questions to help them develop their skills.

We believe that understanding comes before confident communication. By meeting children at their current level and gently extending their thinking, we can help them become confident communicators and independent learners.

Blank's Levels of Understanding help us make sure that we are speaking with children, not just speaking to them, giving every child the opportunity to understand, think, respond and flourish.

If you'd like to know more about Blank's Levels of Understanding or how we use them to support your child, we'd be very happy to chat. Working together, we can help every child develop the language and understanding they need to succeed.