

Many children with Special Educational Needs will have difficulties in one, some or all of the areas of **speech, language and communication**. In many cases, speech and language difficulties are part of a pattern of more general learning difficulties. Pupil's will need to continue to develop their linguistic competence in order to support their thinking as well as their communication. The range of difficulties will encompass children and young people with speech and language delay, impairments or disorders, specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia and dyspraxia, hearing impairment and those who demonstrate features within autistic spectrum; they may also apply to some children and young people with moderate, severe or profound learning difficulties and will include those for whom language and communication difficulties are the result of permanent sensory or physical impairment. (Code of Practice (7:55))

These children may require some, or all, of the following:

- flexible teaching arrangements
- help in acquiring, comprehending and using language
- help in articulation
- help in acquiring literacy skills
- help in using augmentative and alternative means of communication
- help to use different means of communication confidently and competently for a range of purposes, including formal situations.
- help in organising and co-ordinating oral and written language
- support to compensate for the impact of a communication difficulty on learning in English as an additional language
- help in expressing, comprehending and using their own language, where English is not the first language.

Speech and language difficulties may show themselves in the following ways:

- problems with the production of speech;
- difficulty in finding words and joining them together in meaningful and expressive language;
- problems in communicating through speech and other forms of language;
- difficulties or delays in understanding or responding to the verbal cues of others;
- difficulties with the acquisition and expression of thoughts and ideas;
- difficulty in understanding and using appropriate social language;
- frustrations and anxieties arising from a failure to communicate, possibly leading to apparent behavioural difficulties and deteriorating social and peer relationships.

At lower levels of difficulty and for younger children the school's first response may well be similar to the School Action taken for children with more general difficulties. Where a communication and interaction difficulty is suspected more frequent and careful monitoring and reviewing is

important to ensure that any specific speech and language difficulties are identified and specialist assessments can be undertaken.

For children with a specific language impairment lower levels of difficulty may show themselves in the following ways:

- measurable speech and language skills which are somewhat below those of the majority of peers;
- speech which is not easy to understand and which limits pupils' ability to participate in group activities, question-and-answer sessions and other activities involving speech;
- problems with following instructions or with understanding relational or abstract concepts, requiring additional time for explanation and clarification;
- difficulties with communication with peers and in using appropriate social strategies such as turn taking and rapport in conversation which restrict the social interactions of pupils;
- participation in most aspects of classroom life and progress within areas of the curriculum which are less language –dependent,

For children with **specific speech and language difficulties** higher levels of difficulty may be indicated by:

- measurable speech and language behaviours which are significantly below those of the majority of peers
- difficulties with speech production which severely limit participation in classroom activities such as following instructions or using abstract concepts;
- difficulties in communicating with peers which lead to social isolation and apparent behavioural difficulties;
- frustration on the part of pupils at their inability to participate in the classroom or interact with peers;
- low rates of progress in many areas of the curriculum and particularly in literacy.

As for all pupils, the central form of action for most children experiencing speech and language difficulties will be that which the class or subject teacher is able to take using resources and strategies available in the ordinary classroom.

Basic differentiation

- accept how the child speaks without correction;
- don't demand verbal responses from children;
- don't ask the child for lengthy verbal responses;
- simplify your own language;
- give the child time to respond – if necessary give the questions before the input to help with attention;
- reduce visual, auditory and movement distractions when speaking to the child to maximise attention;
- use commentary to encourage joint attention;

- use visual strategies – cue cards, visual timetables etc.;
- use discussion and visual planning to support the production of written work;
- make the implicit – explicit;
- consider referral to outside specialist (SESS, SALT)