

Speech, Language & Communication Needs

**A Guide to Inclusive Practice in
Secondary Schools**

**Teachers/Teaching
Assistants**

**Universal strategies and guidance for inclusive
practice for Secondary Schools**

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guidance is to assist SENCOs, teachers and teaching assistants in identifying children who may have SLCN needs and suggesting ways in which these children can be supported primarily at a universal level within the classroom. For pupils who may need more targeted support, there are also suggested targeted interventions that will support children in specific areas of speech, language and communication.

Why do we need to address Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)?

‘Good communication is the gateway to learning, friendships, academic achievement and success at work.’ -The Communication Trust

SLCN is the most prevalent primary need in almost every primary school in Barking and Dagenham. This has always been the case historically, and the impact of Covid 19 has also exacerbated the situation. It is a national concern and requires all schools to make speech and language a priority. Children with underlying SLCN difficulties are often then re-categorised as having SEMH as their primary need once they are in secondary school.

What do we mean by speech, language and communication needs?

Communication is about receiving and expressing information either verbally or non-verbally. Communication can occur without using verbal language e.g. symbols, signs, body language, eye contact and gesture

Language is the organised system of linguistic symbols (words) used by people to communicate at an abstract level. It is the ability to understand (receptive) and use symbols/verbal language (expressive) to convey their ideas, thoughts and feelings.

Speech is the means by which most people express their language. However, some people may express their language through signing or through other visual communication systems.

What are Speech, Language and Communication Needs?

Pupils may display one or more of the following;

- language delay – this means that their language development generally follows a normal pattern, but is slower than expected for a child of that age
- language disorder – this means that their language development doesn't follow the usual pattern. These difficulties can change over time and are likely to last into adulthood
- poor receptive language (understanding)
- expressive difficulties (use of language)
- social communication difficulties – pupils may not be able to read between the lines or understand the real meaning of what is being said. They may have difficulty understanding the rules and the reasons for social rules and so they may appear to behave in an inappropriate way
- literacy, phonological awareness difficulties and speech sound difficulties - this will affect pronunciation and literacy skills

How does SLCN affect life?

- Academic achievement- children with SLCN often make slower progress than their peers
- Success in the workplace/school- without good communication skills, school and workplace life can be very challenging and is a barrier to success and fulfilment
- Happiness/well-being/confidence- poor language skills can lead to increased anxiety and withdrawal and a sense of being a failure
- Mental health- unable to express how you are feeling or share your thoughts can be very debilitating
- Relationships-building trusted relationships rely on effective communication. In school children need to have secure friendships- this is much more challenging for children with SLCN needs
- Prison System- it is believed that up to 60% Of offenders have an underlying SLCN difficulty
- Behaviour- poor language skills is linked to poor behaviour even in very young children. Children with language difficulties can become quickly labelled as having a behavioural issue if links are not made with any language difficulties.
- Ofsted reports note that a common feature of the most successful schools surveyed was the attention they gave to developing speaking and listening

How does SLCN affect access to the curriculum?

It makes perfect sense that SLCN needs would impact on reading and writing.

You need to be able to **Say it before you can Read it and Write it!**

But have you thought of all the other areas of the curriculum that are affected?

- In English, pupils will need to be able to use spoken language before they can be expected to write it. Reading comprehension is challenging if children do not have age-appropriate vocabulary. *It is also worth noting that whilst some speech problems resolve or are supported by speech and language therapy during Key Stage 1, some children have residual needs which lead to later difficulties with reading and/or spelling. Earlier 'resolved' speech and language needs can lead to unexpected gaps in vocabulary and knowledge.*
- In maths pupils may have difficulty with concepts such as time, quantity, size, sequencing, reciting and recalling number facts
- In science the ability to sequence, classify and categorise, understand cause and effect, predict outcomes and explain observations can all be affected
- In history the concept of 'time' is particularly challenging
- In geography, positional words and lack of personal experience present further problems
- All subjects have subject specific vocabulary that pupils will require support in learning, using and retaining

How do we meet the needs of our children with SLCN Needs?

As educational practitioners, it is essential that we meet the needs of all our children. Our practice within the classroom needs to be inclusive and consistent. The SEN Code of practice and the Teaching Standards state clearly that we have a responsibility to meet our children's needs.

Universal Level

The guidance is the result of a collaborative project with the Speech and Language Therapy Service (SALT) and the LBBB Advisory Service intended to support schools in a whole school approach in the early identification of SLCN needs and the implementation of universal strategies to meet these needs in EYFS, KS1 and KS2. There is accompanying differentiated training for SENCOs/Inclusion Leads, Teachers and Teaching Assistants

Targeted Level

For children with identified SLCN needs, the guidance also offers support and strategies at the targeted level with accompanying training if requested. **Schools can also benefit from universal and targeted online training devised by SALT on specific areas of SLCN which is accessible to all schools.**

SALT Training Programme Information (Appendix 1). Links are also included throughout the guidance.

Specialist Level

A smaller number of pupils will require more support on an individual basis, over and above the strategies highlighted in this training. SALT will support schools through specific assessments, training and advice.

How to use this guidance?

The guidance is organised into two parts.

Part One- Teachers/Teaching Assistants

This is designed as an easily accessible guide supporting all teachers/teaching assistants in ensuring an inclusive ethos within in their classroom through quality first teaching. It includes information regarding SLCN and a bank of easily implemented universal strategies. This can make a huge difference not to just our children with SLCN needs but **ALL** our children.

There is also a SENCO version which also contains a second part.

Part Two- SENCOs

This has been designed for SENCOs to develop their knowledge of SLCN and to support SENCOs in the identification of a SLCN need. The SLCN areas have been divided into colour-coded sections covering the five main areas. These are further divided into specific areas within these broader areas

- Attention and Listening
- Auditory Processing
- Speech production
- Semantics
- Grammar: comprehension
- Grammar: expression
- Literacy/Learning/Cognition
- Pragmatics
- Additional SLCN difficulties- Selective Mutism and Stammering

Each of the sections contains the following information:

- Definition
- Indicators of need
- Whole class strategies
- Activities/interventions
- Developmental milestones
- Suggested resources

How to use this Guidance

Universal

1. Look at the *speech and language* statements for the appropriate key stage/year group using Universally Speaking Checklist (Appendix ii) and/or the LBBB checklist (Appendix vii)
If the majority of the class or a proportion of the class do not exhibit the expected skill(s) then:
2. Complete the indicators of need from the guidance for the class/children of concern
3. This will indicate the priority areas of need for this class/group and will support target setting
4. Implement the universal strategies suggested for that section of the guidance with the whole class for at least a term.

Targeted

If there are still concerns:

5. Consult the developmental milestones for that section of the guidance, plot where the children are in speech and language age- this will support target setting.
6. Consider intervention for at least 6 -12 weeks on the next milestone at the targeted level, using the suggestions of targeted support from the handbook.

If there is still no progress:

Specialist

7. If there are still concerns the children should be referred to SALT for Specialist assessment and intervention, while continuing with the Universal strategies and Targeted support. Following the above will give you the evidence required for a SALT referral.

Please refer to SALT training on 1c Making a referral beforehand: <https://youtu.be/QfxYYBFcsw>

Teachers and Teaching Assisitants

The Broader Areas of Speech and Language

Attention and Listening	Receptive Language	Expressive Language	Social Language	Literacy
Difficulties engaging in lessons and maintaining concentration/focus	Difficulties in understanding spoken and written language	Difficulties forming sentences, finding the words and sounds to speak	Difficulties in using language skills to communicate effectively with others	Difficulties reading (decoding and comprehending texts) and writing (expressing ideas in a written form)
				
Specific Areas of Possible Difficulties				
• Inability to attend and focus	• Auditory Processing • Grammar – comprehension • Semantics	• Speech Production • Oro-motor difficulties • Grammar – expression • Semantics	• Auditory Processing • Pragmatics/semantics • Non-verbal communication	• Auditory Processing • Phonological Awareness • Cognition
Specific Speech and Language Disorders				
Speech and language delay Speech Disorder Developmental Language Disorder Auditory Processing Disorder Verbal dyspraxia Aphasia Apraxia Semantic Pragmatic Disorder Stammer Selective Mutism				
Associated Difficulties				
Some children experience speech, language and communication difficulties in association with another difficulty: Hearing Impairment Visual Impairment Autism (ASC) Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) Physical Disability (PD) e.g. cleft lip/palate Specific Learning Difficulty- Dyslexia (SpLD) Moderate Learning Difficulty/Global Delay (MLD) Severe Learning Difficulty/Global Delay (SLD) Cerebral Palsy				

Down Syndrome
Foetal Alcohol Syndrome
Brain Injury
Anxiety
Emotional Distress/Trauma

SLCN is a Barrier to ALL Learning and Progress- It is a cycle

In general, children who are not understanding the language and vocabulary of the classroom, will quickly lose interest and attention. These children will often lack motivation and over time, lose the sense of achievement and success. Failure or being reliant on support becomes their normal. These children often stand out as having low level behaviours, diversionary or extreme behaviours, having low-self esteem or will be withdrawn.

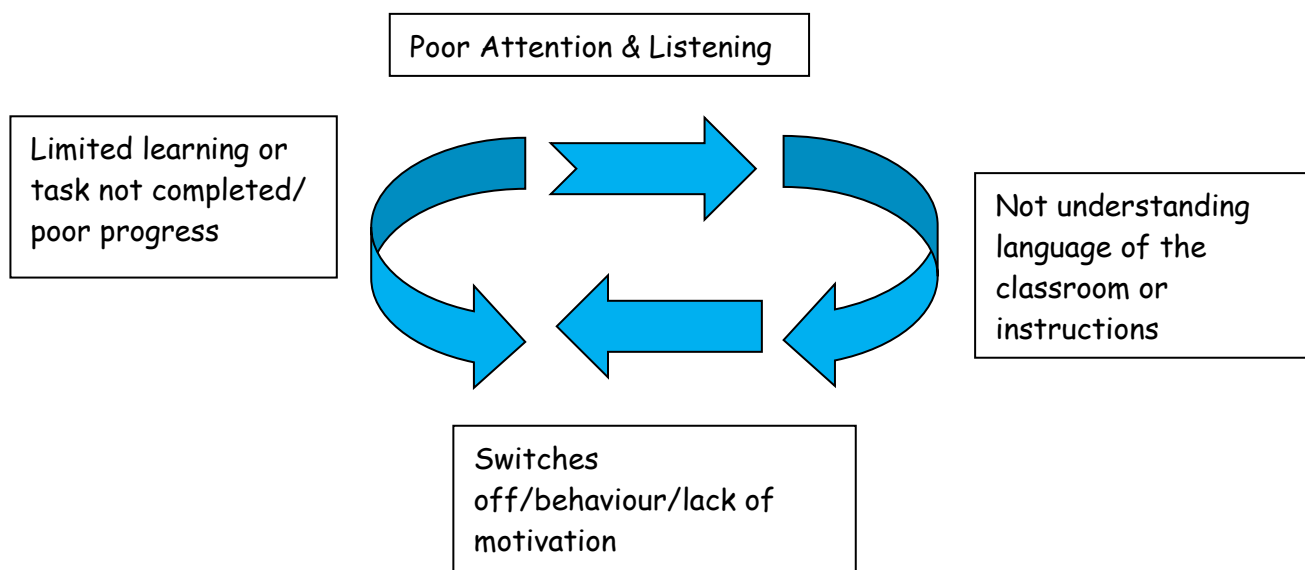
Children with ASC may not see the need or have the desire to actively attend. They may struggle with filtering information and become quickly overwhelmed. They may have sensory needs to consider. Children with sensory impairments find holding attention challenging due to the amount of energy needed to compensate for their impairment.

Children with ADHD will struggle to attend for sustained periods. They can find it difficult to zone out environmental distractions such as noise, movements of others. They can quickly lose the thread of the learning.

Being in a state of anxiety and/or emotional stress/trauma has been proven to significantly impact on our ability to focus both long term and short term.

Children acquiring a second language (EAL) will often struggle to understand key information/vocabulary. The level of concentration required is higher than normal and can lead to 'switching off' as the child becomes increasingly tired of this high-level concentration.

Children with auditory processing will often have difficulty with phonological awareness and will struggle with even basic literacy and phonic skills.



Delayed Language in LBBD

We know that in LBBD through screening in Reception, that our children start school with **delayed language** and as a result, this is the highest primary need on the primary school's SEN registers across the borough. This often becomes a SEMH need as these children transition into secondary school.

What is delayed language?

Delayed language is when a young person has not reached the normal developmental milestones one would expect a child to reach by a certain age.

Why do so many children in LBBD have delayed language?

There are several reasons why this is the case. It is well documented that children from deprived areas have more delayed language- averaging 50-70%. There is the national issue of increased screen time, impact of poor socialisation during the pandemic, poverty results in less life experiences e.g. going to the beach, the zoo and other trips and experiences. This leads to very limited vocabulary knowledge.

What can we do to ensure an inclusive approach for our pupils with delayed language?

Ensuring our pupils can access the curriculum and what we are teaching is everybody's responsibility.

The following page suggests many universal strategies that we can easily implement within our classrooms without relying on support and resources. These strategies will make a significant difference to all pupils, including SEN and EAL, and ensure a communication friendly ethos is established.

Universal Inclusion Strategies for pupils with SLCN and delayed language

Developing an ethos where pupils feel secure and confident enough to ask for help or for instructions to be repeated.
Pair pupil with a study buddy to repeat instructions and demonstrate tasks.
Add Speech & Language targets to weekly planning as a visual cue for you to incorporate them into everyday practice
Consider seating arrangements to meet the needs of differing classes and tasks and environmental noise e.g.door/window
Chunk instructions and information to avoid auditory/working memory overload
Ensure that all pupils are quiet during teaching time and when instructions are given. Give directions before, but not during an activity.
Keep verbal instructions simple, and in the order you want them carried out. Be aware of how many 'information-carrying' words you are using : 'Get your maths book from the pile on my desk ; on a clean page , write the date and then copy down the calculations on the board ' has more information-carrying words than many adults will be able to remember.
Ask pupils to repeat instructions to clarify tasks. Check for understanding - ask the pupil to tell you what they have to do.
Introduce Word Maps for new subject specific vocabulary- Communication in Print/Symbols for Science
Speak slowly and clearly and beware of idioms and too much 'adult' language.
Give pupils processing time and/or a choice of responses. Give pupil time (at least 10 seconds) to respond and then, if necessary, repeat what you said. Use the same words unless you think the vocabulary was too difficult to understand.
Introduce a Thinking Time Visual- support the ethos consistently
Give pupil time to think, or to talk to a partner before answering a question, or say 'I'm going to come back to you in a minute to ask you xxxx. But first I'm going to ask xxxx a question
Use a variety of different questioning. Are your questions always closed? Do you differentiate them? (Blank 4 levels of questioning)
Use a hierarchy of questions - start with an open question ("What do you think might happen next?"), then if support is needed frame the question as alternatives ("Do you think x or y?")
If pupil can't answer a question, scaffold/support till they can rather than saying 'Can anyone help x?'
Question pupil after some other pupils have given examples of what is required.
Keep clear lines of vision within the classroom. Good /exaggerated use of facial expression and body language.
Make active listening high profile and model good listening skills.- Good Listening Poster
Use cued listening – give pupil a small number of questions in advance that they will have to answer after listening to teacher presentation or video input.
Use pupil's name before asking a question or giving an instruction.
Positive praise and reinforcement for good listening, following instructions, verbal expression.
Give immediate feedback whenever possible to build confidence.
Use positive language. Avoid too many 'don't do'.
Encourage turn taking and beware of the pupils who always have their hands up and are always eager to participate. (Random lollipops/no hands)
Adapt language used within the class for SEN, EAL and SLCN pupils.
Encourage a range of activities to promote learning and confidence e.g. partner work, talk partners, group work, peer support, circle time etc.
Cue pupil in to a change of topic of conversation/presentation- say 'Now we are going to talk about ...'

Begin work on a new topic with pupil's existing knowledge and experiences - make a mind map or other visual representation of what they already know.
Consider using a TA for pre-teaching as a strategy - to support pupils by preparing them for a task so that they come to it already knowing the key vocabulary and concepts and thus build confidence.
When you start a new topic, add the new vocabulary (with visuals) to the learning walls that the pupils will find useful or need to learn.
Build in opportunities to practise and reinforce new learning and skills.
Make links between new learning and prior learning.
Use a range of teaching activities to incorporate the different learning styles e.g. kinaesthetic learning.
Use visual summaries of discussions – mind maps, flow charts, diagrams, comic strip format.
Support your oral presentations /teaching with pictures, real objects or mime.
Put up a list of key vocabulary for a particular topic or lesson and teach the meaning of each word.
Encourage 'thinking skills' by actively modelling/thinking out loud
Encourage the children to solve their own conflicts. Drawings may help.
Try and avoid allowing other pupils or adults to speak for a child.
Avoid pre-empting needs. Encourage pupils to develop the skills and confidence to express their needs.
If you cannot understand what the pupil has said, do not pretend you have – ask for repetition in different words.
Accept pupil's spoken utterances but rephrase and give them back in a grammatically correct and expanded version.
Encourage conversation by commenting rather than asking too many questions.
Agree a private signal pupil can use to show you they have not understood.
Introduce a Help Card that the pupil can use discreetly
Support oral work with talk frames /key phrases ('First...next...finally', 'I think ...but on the other hand')
Support writing with writing frames and lists of vocabulary to choose from.
Use a range of ways of recording so that learning is not limited by the pupil's ability to write full English sentences: - bullet points and mind maps - ordering tasks – for example, ordering cut-out words to make a sentence, or sentences to make a sequence of instructions; - matching tasks, such as matching labels to pictures/diagrams/maps; - cloze procedure, where they fill in missing words in text; - annotating a print-off page - PowerPoint presentations - making posters, oral presentations, dramatic reconstructions
Provide the pupil with a support pack – glossaries of key subject vocabulary with visuals, highlighter pens, glue stick, post-it notes, index cards to make their own mind maps/cartoon strips/key word lists, templates for writing up science experiments etc.
Allow extra time to complete tasks and be aware of the fatigue the pupil may experience because of the amount of effort they have to put in to learning.
Write down homework for pupil, or give it on a pre-printed sticky label or sheet they can stick into their book, or record your instructions on a dictaphone. Allocate a homework buddy they can ring if they have forgotten what to do ('phone a friend').