

SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION NEEDS
UNIT 11
IMPROVING ACCESS, INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Teachers will:

- Understand the importance of 'Quality First Teaching' for pupils with SLCN
- Know the features of a learning environment and teaching that is supportive of pupils with SLCN
- Carry out an audit of a colleague's practice and work with them, over a period of time, to make their lessons more accessible for pupils with SLCN
- Understand the importance of evidence-based practice and explore a study on classroom talk, and
- Work with the SENCO to consider ways to make the school more accessible to pupils with SLCN

ONLINE RESOURCES

The content and tasks throughout these PDFs are supported by online resources that are designed to facilitate and supplement your training experience.

Links to these are signposted where appropriate. The resources use graphics and interactive elements to:

- Highlight salient points
- Provide at-a-glance content summaries
- Introduce further points of interest
- Offer visual context
- Break down and clearly present the different stages and elements of processes, tasks, practices, and theories

The online resources offer great benefits, both for concurrent use alongside the PDFs, or as post-reading revision and planning aids.

Please note that the resources cannot be used in isolation without referencing the PDFs. Their purpose is to complement and support your training process, rather than lead it.

You should complete any learning or teaching tasks and additional reading detailed in this PDF to make full use of the Advanced training materials for autism; dyslexia; speech, language and communication; emotional, social and behavioural difficulties; moderate learning difficulties.

To find out more about the resources, how they work, and how they can enhance your training, visit the homepage at: www.education.gov.uk/lamb

The first resource for this unit can be found here:

www.education.gov.uk/lamb/slcn/access-inclusion-participation/intro

BRIEFING 1 – QUALITY FIRST TEACHING FOR PUPILS WITH SLCN

An important role of a teacher with advanced and specialist knowledge and skills in SLCN is to help colleagues improve their practice. Colleagues may be unsure of how to approach teaching pupils with SLCN but ‘Quality First Teaching’ is the place to start.

‘Quality First Teaching’ is of great benefit to pupils with SLCN, for example:

- highly focused lesson design with sharp objectives
- high demands of pupil involvement and engagement with their learning
- high levels of interaction for all pupils
- appropriate use of teacher questioning, modelling and explaining
- an emphasis on learning through dialogue, with regular opportunities for pupils to talk both individually and in groups
- an expectation that pupils will accept responsibility for their own learning and work independently, and
- regular use of encouragement and authentic praise to engage and motivate pupils (DCSF, 2008¹)

See online resource:

www.education.gov.uk/lamb/slcn/access-inclusion-participation/quality-first

There are relatively simple strategies which can be put in place in class that make access to the curriculum easier for those with SLCN, as well as many other pupils.

In order to advise a colleague on how he or she might improve the learning environment and everyday teaching to include pupils with SLCN more effectively, it is useful to observe the teacher and class at work and to audit both the learning environment and teaching and learning for speech, language and communication friendly practice. A number of checklists are available to help with such observations, e.g. the Better Communication Research Programme’s ‘Guidance on Completing Communication Supporting Classrooms Observation Checklist’² (early years and primary) and Talking Point’s checklists for primary and secondary schools.³

A checklist based on these and other audit tools is given below. You will need to adapt it to suit your particular situation, e.g. if the class you are observing is early years, primary or secondary. You may also wish to add to it in response to your increasing knowledge of what works for pupils with SLCN through completing this

¹ Personalised learning – a practical guide 00844-2008DOM-EN

² <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/cedar/better/>

³ www.talkingpoint.org.uk

course.

A speech, language and communication-friendly classroom benefits all pupils, not just those with SLCN.

Fig.1

Observation checklist

Features demonstrating good practice for supporting pupils with SLCN	Present or absent
<p>Learning areas within the classroom are clearly defined.</p> <p>There are quieter areas where pupils can retreat to have 'down time' or engage in smaller group activities or individual study. These areas are less visually distracting.</p>	
<p>The learning environment is not too cluttered and stored equipment is clearly labelled with a picture and a word saying what it is.</p>	
<p>The teacher and other staff make good use of visual support systems, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - gestures - prompt cards/posters - labelled storage systems - visual timetables - targets on the desk or on the whiteboard - symbols and signs, where appropriate. <p>Where pupils are taught in more than one class, the visual supports that they find useful are used consistently by different teachers in different classes.</p>	
<p>Teaching incorporates use of visual and tactile approaches including use of real objects, practical activities, pictures/photographs, video etc. to ensure that pupils understand what is being taught.</p>	
<p>Pupils' speech and language therapy targets are incorporated into lessons wherever possible.</p>	
<p>There are opportunities for a pupil to work at their own level, following their own task or targets if needed. This might mean that a pupil works on slightly different work, at the right level for them, with some extra support from a teaching assistant.</p>	
<p>Background noise levels are managed so that pupils and adults are able to hear one another with ease.</p>	
<p>The teacher does not talk for the whole lesson.</p> <p>The teacher speaks facing the class and stops speaking when writing on the whiteboard.</p> <p>The teacher's language is not too complicated and instructions are short and repeated for those who need it.</p> <p>New or difficult vocabulary is explained. There is repetition and lots of opportunity to hear and use new vocabulary.</p> <p>The teacher avoids using idioms and other non-literal or figurative language. Where such language is used, it is explained</p>	
<p>Specific vocabulary, relating to each subject, is planned in advance of the</p>	

lesson. This means it can be taught before the lesson to pupils with SLCN if needed.	
The teacher uses strategies to ensure a child is paying attention, for example, saying their name before giving an instruction.	
Staff use non-verbal communication to support what they are saying, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gesture • pointing • signing, where appropriate. 	
Teaching assistants have necessary skills and knowledge to work with pupils with SLCN because they have received some training/briefing about how to support pupils with this type of difficulty in the lesson.	
Information is left on the whiteboard long enough for pupils to read and understand.	
Seating arrangements allow pupils with SLCN to be near to the front, facing the teacher, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tables placed in a horseshoe shape, or • tables that can be easily moved around. <p>With very young children, adults get down to their eye level when interacting with them.</p>	
Attempts are made to include all pupils in small group activities.	
Pupils are encouraged to ask questions and seek clarification.	
Pupils are given time to respond to questions to allow time for them to think	
There are planned opportunities for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - structured conversation between adults and pupils - structured conversations between peers, e.g. talking partners - role play 	
Teacher/adult pupil interaction (as appropriate): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pacing: adults use a slow pace during conversation and give pupils plenty of time to respond and take turns in interacting with them - Pausing: adults pause expectantly and frequently during interactions with pupils to encourage participation - Confirming: adults do not ignore child's communicative bids but respond to the majority of pupils' utterances by confirming understanding of the child's intentions, e.g. <i>Pupil: 'My auntie has just come over from America'. Adult: 'That sounds interesting, tell me about her visit later'</i> - Imitating: adults imitate and repeat what the pupil says more or less exactly, e.g. <i>Pupil: 'Look at our bridge?' Adult: 'Oh wow, look at your fantastic bridge!'</i> - Commenting: adults comment on what is happening or what pupils are doing at that time. Comments are directed at pupils about the immediate situation. - Extending: adults repeat what the pupil says and add a small amount of syntactic or semantic information - Labelling: adults provide the labels for familiar and unfamiliar actions, objects, or abstractions - Open questioning: adults ask open-ended questions that extend pupils' thinking - what, where, when, how and why questions - Scripting: Adults provide a verbal routine to the child for carrying out an activity, e.g. <i>First, you do this Then.....you say that</i>, and engage pupils in known routines, e.g. <i>'Now it is circle time. What do we do first?'</i> - Adults use contrasts that highlight differences in lexical items and in syntactic structures, e.g. <i>'It's not just a boat, it's a hovercraft.'</i> - Adults model language that the children are not yet producing. 	

See online resource: www.education.gov.uk/lamb/slcn/access-inclusion-participation/supporting-conversation	
Pupils are praised for their listening skills.	
Pupils are praised for their non-verbal communication skills.	
Pupils are given time to plan work before they are required to begin writing.	
Additional resources are available, if needed, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT • alternative recording sheets with less information or where less writing is needed • work planning sheets • writing frames. 	
Transitions within lessons are managed effectively, so that noise levels are not excessive and pupils know what to expect next.	
Homework is given on a printed sheet or is available to refer to online.	

TASK 1 – CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Carry out an observation of a colleague’s lesson using an observation schedule that you have adapted for the purpose. You should allow about an hour for the observation and it should take place during an ordinary classroom session.

Mark each element ‘present (P)’ if it is observed during the session.

Soon after the lesson, discuss your observations with the teacher.

Together draw up a list of strengths and discuss how the teacher might build on these.

Then discuss the elements that were absent. As a result of your discussion, prioritise three areas for the teacher to work on to make his/her class more speech, language and communication friendly. Discuss how these will be implemented and how the teacher will judge their success.

Arrange to observe a similar lesson after a few weeks. This time focus on the changes that your colleague has made. Soon after the lesson, discuss the success of the changes with your colleagues and use the checklist to decide on next steps.

Now listen to the audio - “Collaborative Approaches to SLCN. How far would some of the changes you have identified in this task benefit from such approaches? Who would you need to involve? Make a note of your observations in your learning log.

Listen to this clip:

www.education.gov.uk/lamb/slcn/access-inclusion-participation/collaborative-approaches-audio

BRIEFING 2 – EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE: CLASSROOM TALK

The professional standards for teachers⁴ emphasise the importance of teachers basing their practice on evidence of what works.

Excellent teachers should research and evaluate innovative curricular practices and draw on research outcomes and other sources of external evidence to inform their own practice and that of colleagues.

Evidence-based practice represents the practitioner's commitment to use all means possible to locate the best evidence for any given problem (Bloom et al⁵). It is more ethical to develop services which are based on some knowledge about 'what works' (Raines⁶ 2008).

Sometimes the research evidence needed is not always available. Nonetheless it is important to be aware of what evidence is available and to work, as far as possible, in ways that are informed by evidence.

When looking at research, it is important to consider the context in which it was carried out and how much of its findings can be applied to your setting. The Universal unit will help you to utilise opportunities to carry out your own research.

This briefing looks at a summary of a sample of research concerning aspects of class teaching that can affect pupils with SLCN. One of the aspects you will have considered during your classroom observation in Task 1 was classroom talk and the importance of the teacher not dominating classroom talk, especially when teaching the whole class. This summary describes a study in which groups of twelve primary teachers and school leaders explored this issue with the support of a team of researchers from the University of Exeter. The study took place over a two and a half year period and had two phases. The first phase offered the teachers the opportunity to observe and reflect on classroom interactions that they were part of. The second phase provided the opportunity for teachers to adapt their approach in the light of the professional learning they had acquired.

It is recommended that you read a full account of the research, which can be found at: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20111114220736/http://www.gtce.org.uk/tla/rft/talk_prim0506/⁷. This resource also contains case studies, further reading and examples of staff development activities that you might wish to pursue with your colleagues. A very brief summary of the research is given below.

⁴ Professional Standards for Teachers, TDA, 2007

⁵ Bloom, M, Fischer, J. & Orme, J. (2009), *Evaluating practice: Guidelines for the accountable professional* (6th Ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

⁶ Raines, J. C. (2008). *Evidence-based practice in school mental health*. New York: Oxford University Press.

⁷ Based on Myhill, D., S. Jones and R. Hopper. *Talking, listening learning: effective talk in the primary classroom*. Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2006

SUMMARY

- Whole-class interactive teaching involves teachers working in ways that give pupils opportunities to learn through speaking. Teachers can enhance pupil participation in classroom talk through good questioning. But the demands of classroom teaching can make it hard for teachers to resist dominating classroom talk.
- The research showed that, initially, teachers tended to prioritise group delivery over developing individual pupil understanding when teaching the whole class because they were anxious about covering curriculum objectives. They also tended to spread questions widely among the class, rather than explore any individual pupil's understanding in greater depth, probably because they were concerned about ensuring participation by as many pupils as possible. But over the course of the project, teachers started to make changes to their practice, implementing strategies that enhanced pupils' engagement in whole class question and answer sessions.
- Teachers reflected on videos of their lessons and identified strategies likely to extend pupils' participation and to improve the quality of pupils' contributions. Some teachers:
 - decided to use more effective question and answer strategies, e.g. experimenting with pupils writing down what they thought or discussing their answers with a partner during whole-class teaching, rather than answering the teacher directly
 - operated a 'no hands up' policy, in which they chose a pupil to answer from the whole class to avoid only those with the confidence to put their hands up being involved in classroom talk, and
 - tried giving children more time to think about their answers, with the aim to open up to a wider range of pupils to take part and increase the quality of the answers.
- Teachers decided to use several strategies to improve pupils' understanding, including by:
 - using more open questioning to discover and build on pupils' current knowledge and understanding,
 - giving clearer, more succinct explanations
 - using well-chosen examples with visual materials for support
 - explaining new technical terms carefully
 - limiting the number of new words, concepts and ideas used, and
 - using visual means of gaining a clearer view of the extent of pupils' understanding across the class, e.g. individual whiteboards, cards of happy/sad faces thumbs up/down to signal understanding or confusion.
- Teachers also broke the teacher-pupil-teacher-pupil pattern of discourse by:
 - inviting other pupils to respond to something one of them had said
 - allowing pupils to answer one another directly
 - leaving silence and allowing more time for pupils to think about an answer, and
 - encouraging one pupil to make several responses to a question.
- The research showed the importance of:
 - active participation by more children in class
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to talk directly to one another, and

- the benefits of questioning and building upon knowledge pupils have gained outside school.
- The second phase of the project showed positive change in some areas of practice, e.g. a major change in the pattern of classroom talk during whole class teaching, but it also showed that teachers found it difficult to make major changes to other areas of practice, e.g. questioning strategies.

See online resource:

www.education.gov.uk/lamb/slcn/access-inclusion-participation/classroom-talk

TASK 2 – EXPLORING THE RESEARCH

Look through the ‘Better Communication Research checklist’. Read some of the research articles that seem most applicable to your setting. Make a note of any changes you will explore or actions you will take as a result of what you have read.

Now listen to the audio clip “Professor Julie Dockrell Part One”. Make a note of anything that is pertinent to your setting and the research articles that you have identified as relevant.

Listen to this clip:

www.education.gov.uk/lamb/slcn/access-inclusion-participation/julie-dockrell-1

Do the same for the audio clip “Professor Julie Dockrell Part Two, this time identify any questions that arise from the research you have identified.

Listen to this clip:

www.education.gov.uk/lamb/slcn/access-inclusion-participation/julie-dockrell-2

BRIEFING 3 – CREATING A COMMUNICATION FRIENDLY SCHOOL

In Briefing 1 and Task 1, you considered how you could help your colleagues to improve their everyday teaching to make it more accessible to pupils with SLCN. However, such changes are always most effective if they take place within a supportive whole school context.

You can audit the school environment in the same way that you audited your colleague’s learning environment in Task 1.

See online resource:

www.education.gov.uk/lamb/slcn/access-inclusion-participation/school

Browsing the internet will reveal a number of tools that you might use to carry out this task but some key indicators are listed in the checklist below. Again, you may wish to adapt or add to this list to suit your setting or to reflect your increasing knowledge through completing this course.

Fig.1

School audit checklist

Features demonstrating good practice for supporting pupils with SLCN	Present or absent
Staff development and communication	
There is a designated member of staff who is responsible for overseeing SLCN development and a reasonable allocation of time is given for this role.	
Staff know who to approach in school if they have concerns about an individual pupil.	
Staff have undertaken a self-evaluation audit to identify areas for development and training needs.	
Staff have undergone appropriate training in teaching/working with pupils with SLCN.	
There are systems to ensure that information is shared efficiently about pupils with SLCN to ease transition to another class/school, e.g. communication passports.	
Parents	
Parents views are sought and considered and their views help inform provision.	
Parents are shown how approaches to improving communication used in school can help at home, e.g. visual timetables to assist with organisation.	
A range of information is available to support parents to understand speech language and communication issues, e.g. home-school diaries (where appropriate), noticeboards, leaflets, meetings.	
Pupils	
Pupils' views are sought and considered and their views help inform provision.	
Provision for pupils with SLCN is recorded, mapped, monitored and regularly evaluated and these records are readily available to all involved.	
The school environment	
Information is clearly available about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • who works in the school, e.g. photographs of staff in the entrance foyer, and • where they work 	
The school is laid out well so pupils with SLCN can find their way round easily, e.g. subject rooms are colour-coded, specialist rooms are labelled, using symbols, where appropriate.	
Notices around the school and in classroom set out school rules and regular routines. Text is supported by objects, photographs or symbols, as appropriate so that all pupils can understand them. These are consistent throughout the school.	
There is a good acoustic environment so voices can be heard clearly.	
Materials are readily available and labelled, using photographs or symbols to support text. Labelling is consistent throughout the school.	
There is good light.	
There is an awareness of visual distractions and 'low arousal areas' with fewer distractions are available to pupils.	
Social and emotional environment	
Support is available for vulnerable pupils at unsupervised times such as before school, at break and lunchtimes, including alternatives to being out in the playground, e.g. lunchtime clubs, organised activities, buddying, peer mentoring, use of a quiet area.	
Systems are in place to help pupils to mix socially, e.g. lunchtime supervisors have been trained to encourage group activities and social interaction for pupils who need support, there are social skills groups.	
There are opportunities for pupils to have a mentor if required.	

There is a comprehensive and robust anti-bullying policy, which is enforced.	
The school environment supports social and emotional aspects of learning.	

TASK 3 – SCHOOL AUDIT

Discuss the school audit tool, adapted as necessary, with the school SENCO.

Arrange to carry out the audit.

Discuss your findings with the SENCO and prioritise the school-wide changes that you would like to make and how you will evaluate the impact of any changes you make.

Discuss how you might take the work forward, e.g. through a report to the senior leadership team or by leading a staff meeting or undertaking some training with groups of colleagues. Briefing 4 (below) looks at the potential impact of staff training on improving provision for pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties.

Implement your changes and evaluate the impact on pupils' speech, language and communication.

Now view the video clip "SLCN -Parents".

Watch the clip. Make notes on how the teacher engages the parents in the activities which are employed in class.

See this clip:

www.education.gov.uk/lamb/slcg/access-inclusion-participation/parents-video

Organise a meeting for parents and relevant members of staff in your school to look at the practices/strategies that are widely used to encourage language development in your school. Encourage them to try some of these at home and monitor progress. You could design a quick monitoring chart for them to use. You may be able to compare outcomes from different strategies to help to decide which are most effective.

BRIEFING 4 – WORKING WITH COLLEAGUES TO IMPROVE PRACTICE

Lack of confidence in identifying pupils with SLCN, differentiating provision and support such pupils can often prevent teachers and other staff working with pupils with SLCN implementing quite simple changes to their practice that would benefit pupils with SLCN. Training and mentoring support can often give staff the confidence they need to improve their practice.

As a teacher with advanced and specialist skills in teaching pupils with SLCN, part of your role will be to train and support your colleagues to improve their practice. Research evidence suggests that such training and support can be effective in changing practice in the longer term.

Three examples of the potential impact of training and mentoring colleagues are given below:

- Wellington and Stackhouse⁸ - the article describes a training and mentoring programme delivered to teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) in seven mainstream primary schools. It involved a group training session outlining the nature and identification of children with SLCN, the impact of SLCN on pupils' access to the curriculum, and visual strategies and techniques for supporting learning. This was followed by six, weekly mentoring sessions in the classroom with a speech and language therapist. Pre- and post-training questionnaires and classroom observations were used to examine the impact of this programme, which were repeated after one term to establish if the use of visual support had been maintained. The study found that teachers and TAs increased their use of visual support strategies in the classroom following the training they received and this was maintained after all training had stopped.
- Sutherland⁹ - the study shows how coaching trainee secondary school teachers improved their skills both in planning and sustaining effective group talk, and
- Crosskey and Vance¹⁰ - the study evaluates a training package, delivered in a mainstream primary school, which focuses on supporting pupils' listening skills. Changes in teachers' practice following the training were evaluated by comparing responses to a questionnaire completed by pupils two months prior to the training, immediately preceding the training and three months after the training. Pupils' responses suggested positive changes following the training. Pupils were more aware of the specific skills that they needed to practise to develop good listening. They also indicated that school staff were using a wider range of strategies to support listening activities in the classroom.

The unit on coaching and mentoring will help you to devise and deliver supportive training opportunities to address issues in your school.

⁸ Wellington W and Stackhouse J (2011) Using visual support for language and learning in children with SLCN: a training programme for teachers and teaching assistants. *Child language Teaching and therapy* Vol 27, No. 2, 183-201

⁹ Sutherland, J. (2006) Promoting Group Talk and Higher-Order Thinking in Pupils by "Coaching" Secondary English Trainee Teachers *Literacy* Vol 40, No. 2 106-114

¹⁰ Crosskey L and Vance M (2011) Training teachers to support pupils' listening in class: An evaluation using pupil questionnaires. *Child language Teaching and therapy*, Vol 27, No. 2, 165-182