

# **SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION NEEDS**

## **UNIT 13**

### **PUPILS WITH SLCN IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

#### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Teachers will:

- Know the research evidence on outcomes for secondary school pupils with SLCN
- Understand issues around transfer from primary to secondary school for pupils with SLCN
- Understand the main issues in pupils' language and communication in secondary school
- Understand how speech, language and communication develops in secondary aged children
- Understand the importance of continuing to develop pupils' speech, language and communication in secondary school, and
- Know effective strategies for developing pupils' speech, language and communication skills in secondary school.

#### **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](http://www.education.gov.uk/lamb)

The first resource for this unit can be found here:  
[www.education.gov.uk/lamb/slcn/secondary/intro](http://www.education.gov.uk/lamb/slcn/secondary/intro)

## BRIEFING 1 - OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH SLCN

Pupils with SLCN are at a greater risk of:

- Lower academic achievement<sup>1</sup>, and school performance failure
- Literacy difficulties<sup>2</sup> - during the secondary years, SLCN can have a significant impact on literacy<sup>3</sup> which, as reading and writing are the main vehicles for teaching, learning and assessment in secondary schools, increasingly limit pupils' educational outcomes.<sup>4</sup>
- Developing emotional, social and behavioural difficulties— both internalising behaviours, such as anxiety and depression, and externalising behaviours, such as anti-social behaviours and are at greater risk of mental health difficulties in adolescence.<sup>5</sup>
- Being excluded from school - pupils with SEN (especially BESD) are nine times more likely to be excluded from school than other pupils.<sup>6 7</sup>
- Social isolation - despite a desire for social interaction, adolescents with SLCN are found to be significantly shyer<sup>8</sup> and have poorer quality of friendships<sup>9</sup>. Coping with the speed and topic change in conversations can be difficult<sup>10</sup> which may lead to low self-esteem<sup>11</sup>.

**See online resource:**

[www.education.gov.uk/lamb/slcn/secondary/risks](http://www.education.gov.uk/lamb/slcn/secondary/risks)

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<sup>1</sup> Lindsay, G., Desforges, M., Dockrell, J., Law, J. & Peacey, N. with Beecham, J. And Knap, M. Bercow Review: The effective and efficient use of resources in services for CYP with SLCD – 2008  
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RW053.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Conti-Ramsden, G. Heterogeny of specific language impairment in adolescent outcomes In C. Frazier Norbury., J.B. Tomblin., and D.E.V.M. Bishop. (eds) Understanding Developmental Language Disorders – From Theory to Practice (2008) Psychology Press

<sup>3</sup> Dockrell, J, Lindsay, G, Palikara, O and Cullen, M (2007) Raising the achievements of children and young people with specific speech and language difficulties and other special educational needs through school, to work and college: DCSF research report RB837

<sup>4</sup> Conti-Ramsden, G and Durkin, K (2008) Language and Independence in Adolescents with and without a history of specific language impairment (SLI): Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research Vol 51

<sup>5</sup> Snowling, M.J., Bishop, D.V.M., Stothard, S.E., Chipchase, B., Kaplan, C. (2006) Psychosocial outcomes at 15 years of children with a preschool history of speech and language impairment Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 47/8 759-765

<sup>6</sup> TreeHouse, (2009) Disobedience or Disability? The exclusion of children with Autism from education

<sup>7</sup> Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008) National Statistics SFR 14/2008 Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions from Schools and Exclusion Appeals in England, 2006/2007  
[http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000793/SFR14\\_2008.pdf](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000793/SFR14_2008.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Wadman, R, Durkin, K and Conti-Ramsden, G (2009) Shying away: teens with language impairments: RCSLT Bulletin, August edition

<sup>9</sup> Durkin, K and Conti-Ramsden, G (2007) Language, social behaviour and the quality of friendships in adolescents with and without a history of specific language impairment: Child Development Vol 78

<sup>10</sup> Snowling, M, Bishop, DVM, Stothard, S, Chipchase, B and Kaplan, C (2006) Psychosocial outcomes at 15 years of children with a preschool history of speech-language impairment: Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry Vol 47

<sup>11</sup> Dockrell, J, Lindsay, G, Palikara, O and Cullen, M (2007) Raising the achievements of children and young people with specific speech and language difficulties and other special educational needs through school, to work and college. DCSF research report RB837

Without support, such difficulties can, therefore, contribute to poor educational attainment and limiting the life chances of pupils, leading potentially to unemployment (in one study 88 per cent of unemployed young men were found to have language difficulties) and relationship difficulties<sup>12</sup> and, in some cases, anti-social and even criminal behaviour.<sup>13</sup>

**See online resource:**

[www.education.gov.uk/lamb/slcn/secondary/employment](http://www.education.gov.uk/lamb/slcn/secondary/employment)

Early identification of SLCN and appropriate intervention can have positive effects<sup>14</sup> and pupils with severe SLCN can make good progress, given appropriate specialist support.

The scale of the impact of poor communication in adolescence has been found to depend on a range of factors:

- the type and severity of SLCN<sup>15</sup>
- non-verbal IQ, early literacy and language skills<sup>16</sup>, and
- socio-economic factors<sup>17</sup>.

While some young people’s SLCN resolve, there is also a group of pupils whose SLCN may only come to light in secondary school due to increasing social and academic demands<sup>18</sup>. In a further group ‘illusory recovery’ has been described, where language difficulties seem to resolve during primary school, only to re-emerge as literacy or learning difficulties in secondary school<sup>19</sup>.

The kinds of difficulties experienced by these two groups of pupils are shown in Fig. 2 and Fig. 3 below.

Figure 1: Characteristics of persistent language difficulties in older children and young people

Areas of Difficulty	Description
<b>Narrative</b>	Young people may be able to produce long stories but there are still lots of errors, particularly when asked to give specific information, e.g. in an

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.ican.org.uk/~media/ican2/Whats%20the%20Issue/Evidence/ICAN\\_TalkSeries10.ashx](http://www.ican.org.uk/~media/ican2/Whats%20the%20Issue/Evidence/ICAN_TalkSeries10.ashx)  
<sup>13</sup> Brownlie, EB, Beitchman, JH, Ecsobar, M, Young A, Atkinson, L, Johnson, C, Wilson, B and Douglas, L (2004) Early Language Impairment and Young Adult Delinquent and Aggressive Behaviour: Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology Vol 32  
<sup>14</sup> DCSF (2008) The Bercow report: A Review of services for children and young people (0-19) with Speech, Language and Communication Needs  
<sup>15</sup> Snowling M, Bishop, DVM, Stothard, S, Chipchase, B and Kaplan, C (2006) Psychosocial outcomes at 15 years of children with a preschool history of speech-language impairment: Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry Vol 47  
<sup>16</sup> Conti-Ramsden, G, Durkin, K, Simkin, Z and Knox, E (2009) Specific language impairment and school outcomes: Identifying and explaining variability at the end of compulsory education International: Journal of Language and Communication Disorders Vol 44 (1)  
<sup>17</sup> Clegg, J, Stackhouse, J, Finch, K, Murphy, C and Nicholls, S (2009) Language abilities of secondary age pupils at risk of school exclusion: A Preliminary Report Child Language Teaching and Therapy Vol 25 (1)  
<sup>18</sup> Larson, VL and McKinley, NL (2003) Service Delivery Options for Secondary Students with Language Disorders: Seminars in Speech and Language Vol 24 (3)  
<sup>19</sup> Sothard, SE, Snowling MJ, Bishop, DVM, Chipchase, BB and Kaplan, CA (1998) Language Impaired preschoolers: a follow up into adolescence: Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research Vol 41 (2)

	explanation, recounting an event.
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Understanding vocabulary seems to worsen over time
<b>Social communication</b>	Difficulty joining in and keeping up with conversations or tuning into others' verbally expressed interests - symptoms often characteristic of an ASD. Generally, in older children, difficulties with the meaning and use of language are more pronounced than grammatical aspects – inappropriate interaction stands out.
<b>Understanding Figurative and non-literal language</b>	Difficulty understanding complex sentences, such as reversible sentences, which means that using language for a wider range of purposes such as negotiating, compromise and solving problems can be hard.
<b>Information processing</b>	Working memory capacity and speed of processing are affected which means that coping with large amounts of frequently new and complex spoken information will be difficult

Figure 2: Aspects of the poor language more associated with social deprivation

<b>Language difficulty</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Restricted vocabulary</b>	Limited use of complex words, though young people may often be aware of the importance of 'long words', linking them with intelligence and not 'fitting in' socially
<b>Poor narrative skills</b>	Problems with longer stretches of spoken language such as explanations, even when simple sentence structure is adequate.
<b>Inappropriate register</b>	Difficulty moving from one style of language to another leading to appearing rude or inappropriate by using an overly casual style of talking.

**See online resource:**

[www.education.gov.uk/lamb/slcn/secondary/difficulties](http://www.education.gov.uk/lamb/slcn/secondary/difficulties)

**BRIEFING 2 – TRANSFER FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY SCHOOL**

Times of transition, between educational phases, key stages and even between classes needs careful planning and a collaborative approach to ensure information is available and all concerned understand the implications of SLCN on individual pupils.

The move from primary to secondary school means different vocabulary, subjects, curriculum, teachers, teaching style and organisation. This can be challenging for all pupils. Shifting from one teacher style to the next, understanding technical terminology, making links between different subject areas and managing less structured social 'free' time are all dependent on pupils having effective, flexible language and communication skills<sup>20</sup>.

For young people with SLCN, secondary school can be particularly demanding. Pupils identify secondary school as being more difficult than their subsequent college

<sup>20</sup> Afasic (2009) Including young people with speech, language and communication difficulties in secondary school [www.afasic.org.uk](http://www.afasic.org.uk)

experience<sup>21</sup>. Parents of pupils with SLCN express concern about the academic focus in secondary schools<sup>22</sup> as well as quality of life issues such as friendships, social skills and choice<sup>23</sup>. Despite a growing number of packages that prepare pupils for the transition between primary and secondary school, there is evidence that continued support and resources are needed.<sup>24</sup>

### **BRIEFING 3 - THE MAIN ISSUES IN PUPILS' LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION DURING THE SECONDARY PHASE OF EDUCATION**

Although school census data report a fall in the numbers of pupils identified with SLCN compared to primary school, studies do not support this. Over time, pupils with SLCN often make progress in language development but remain significantly behind their peers.<sup>25</sup> With continued support, these pupils have the potential to do well at school

- ***The profile of SLCN changes over time***

The profile of SLCN changes over time, with social communication difficulties becoming more prominent<sup>26</sup> and the nature of difficulties becomes more complex. Associated BESD or literacy difficulties may be most visible and be identified as priorities. Language difficulties can be misinterpreted – a pause for processing can appear as sullenness<sup>27</sup>. Good 'surface' language skills<sup>28</sup> or clear speech<sup>29</sup> may make everyday conversation manageable, effectively masking underlying SLCN. Studies based on pupil self-report suggest that, as they get older, pupils are more likely to deliberately hide their difficulties<sup>30</sup>.

- ***Difficulties in identifying SLCN***

Additionally, the lack of specialists<sup>31</sup> such as speech and language therapists in secondary schools coupled with lack of confidence of school staff<sup>32</sup> and limited

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<sup>21</sup> Palikara, O, Lindsay, G and Dockrell, J (2009) Voices of young people with a history of specific language impairment (SLI) in the first year of post-16 education. *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders*, Vol 44, No 1

<sup>22</sup> Conti-Ramsden, G, Durkin, K, Simkin, Z and Knox, E (2009) Specific language impairment and school outcomes II: Educational content, student satisfaction, and post compulsory progress: *IJLCD* Vol 44 (1)

<sup>23</sup> Markham, C and Dean, T (2006) Parents' and professionals' perceptions of quality of life in children with speech and language difficulty. *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders*, Vol 41, No 2

<sup>24</sup> Roulestone, S and Ayre, A (2009) Identifying the scope and format of resources to support the transition of pupils with SLCN to secondary school. *The Communication Trust*

<sup>25</sup> Nippold, MA and Schwartz, IE (2002) Do children recover from specific language impairment? *International Journal of Speech-language Pathology* Vol 4 (1)

<sup>26</sup> Conti-Ramsden, G, Simkin, Z and Botting, N (2006) The prevalence of autistic spectrum disorders in adolescents with a history of specific language impairment: *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* Vol 47 (6)

<sup>27</sup> Reed, VA (2005) *An Introduction to children with language disorders*, 3rd edition Allyn and Bacon/Pearson

<sup>28</sup> Wetherall, D, Botting, N and Conti-Ramsden, G (2007) Narrative in adolescent specific language impairment (SLI): a comparison with peers across two different narrative genres: *International Journal of language and communication disorders* Vol 42 (5)

<sup>29</sup> Clegg, J, Stackhouse J, Finch, K, Murphy, C, and Nicholls, S (2009) Language abilities of secondary age pupils at risk of school exclusion: A Preliminary Report *Child Language Teaching and Therapy* Vol 25 (1)

<sup>30</sup> Simkin, Z and Conti-Ramsden, G (2009) 'I went to a language unit': Adolescents' views on specialist educational provision and their language difficulties: *Child Language Teaching and Therapy* Vol 25 (1)

<sup>31</sup> DCSF (2008) *The Bercow Review of services for children and young people (0-19) with speech, language and communication needs*, 00632

<sup>32</sup> Wetherall, D, Botting, N and Conti-Ramsden, G (2007) Narrative in adolescent specific language impairment (SLI): a comparison with peers across two different narrative genres: *International Journal of language and communication disorders* Vol 42 (5)

knowledge of typical language development in adolescence, mean that it is hard to identify when students fall behind<sup>33</sup>. For these reasons, identifying SLCN in secondary school pupils can be difficult for school staff and, even for the specialist, accurate 'diagnosis' can be a challenge<sup>34</sup>. In addition, difficulty in finding appropriate assessment tools<sup>35</sup> for the complex nature of SLCN in secondary pupils can result in either under<sup>36</sup> or over<sup>37</sup> identification.

- ***Speaking and listening is not a priority in secondary schools***

To develop effective communication skills, pupils need opportunities to interact. Yet one survey of secondary schools in an inner city identified in some lessons that adults talked for up to 90% of the time.<sup>38</sup> Despite a number of initiatives to increase the amount of speaking and listening in schools, in many schools there continues to be a focus on written language<sup>39</sup>, with lessons often dominated by teacher talk that is rarely used to help improve spoken language.<sup>40</sup>

- ***The lack of support for pupils with SLCN at secondary school***

A national survey of provision for pupils with SLCN, carried out in 2000, reported there to be a lack of support for young people with SLCN in secondary schools<sup>41</sup>. While there is evidence of some service development, the Bercow Report<sup>42</sup> shows little change. In some areas, for example, there is no funded speech and language therapy service for adolescents with SLCN<sup>43</sup>. There is a perception that by secondary school, it is too late to make a difference in pupils' language development<sup>44</sup>. Early intervention is a concept often misinterpreted because it is almost exclusively applied to the early years. It is more usefully understood as intervening promptly before SLCN has an impact, whatever the age<sup>45</sup>. And yet support is often viewed as inappropriate to what should be happening anyway through the secondary English curriculum<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> Reed, VA (2005) An Introduction to children with language disorders, 3rd edition Allyn and Bacon/Pearson

<sup>34</sup> Damico, JS (1988) The lack of efficacy in language therapy Language, Speech, Hearing in Schools

<sup>35</sup> Wetherall, D, Botting, N and Conti-Ramsden, G (2007) Narrative in adolescents with a history of (SLI) in relation to non verbal IQ score Child Language Teaching and Therapy Vol 23

<sup>36</sup> Ripley, K (2009) The Multi-disciplinary approach to the assessment of speech, language and communication needs (SLCN): a personal perspective. Papers from NAPLIC conference Assessment of SLCN: supporting effective teaching and therapy, April

<sup>37</sup> Spencer, S (2009) Language and Socio economic inequality: ability and attitudes presentation at RCSLT Older children and young people's special interest group, January

<sup>38</sup> Sage, R (2005) Communicating with students who have learning and behaviour difficulties: A continuing professional development programme Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties Vol 10 (4)

<sup>39</sup> Pring, R et al (2009)

<sup>40</sup> Ofsted (2009) English at the Crossroads: An Evaluation of English in primary and secondary schools 2005/8 ref 080247

<sup>41</sup> Lindsay, G and Dockrell, J with Mackie, C and Letchford, B (2002) Educational provision for Children with Specific speech and language difficulties in England and Wales. IoE and CEDAR

<sup>42</sup> Bercow (2008) Review of Services for Children and Young People with SLCN

<sup>43</sup> DCSF (2008) The Bercow Report: Review of services for children and young people (0-19) with speech, language and communication needs. DCSF 00632

<sup>44</sup> Lenneberg, EH (1964) Biological Foundations of Language. Wiley

<sup>45</sup> 3 DCSF (2008) The Bercow Report: Review of services for children and young people (0-19) with speech, language and communication needs. DCSF 00632

<sup>46</sup> Larson, VL and McKinley, NL (2003) Service Delivery Options for Secondary Students with Language Disorders Seminars in Speech and Language Vol 24 (3)

- **Involvement of parents**

Parental involvement in education has a significant effect on educational achievement well into adolescence and adulthood<sup>47</sup>. For pupils with SLCN this is even more important. Parents continue to be a vital source of support socially and emotionally as well as academically<sup>48</sup>. Parents often have different views of pupils' communication strengths and needs because of their knowledge of them over time<sup>49</sup>, so maintaining an effective relationship between home and school is important. However this is often difficult when, typically, contact with school becomes less as pupils move through secondary school<sup>50</sup>.

#### **BRIEFING 4 - THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPEECH LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION IN THE SECONDARY YEARS**

Speech, language and communication development continues for all pupils throughout school and into adulthood<sup>51</sup>.

**See online resource:**

[www.education.gov.uk/lamb/slcn/secondary/development](http://www.education.gov.uk/lamb/slcn/secondary/development)

Certain aspects of language develop during secondary school:

- complex verbal reasoning
- understanding and using figurative language, and
- telling more involved stories and using increasingly sophisticated social communication skills.

All of these skills are needed to access both the academic and social curriculum of school, to cope with the demands of adolescence and to ensure a successful transition to further or higher education or work. (See Fig 1)

Fig 1: Language Development in the secondary years

	<b>Understanding and reasoning</b>	<b>Vocabulary</b>	<b>Sentence structure and narration</b>	<b>Social interaction</b>
<b>General trends through secondary school</b>	Understands longer and more complex instructions.  Pupils use language to solve more complex	Vocabulary increases.  Pupils learn approximately 7-10 words per day.  Understands	Gradually sentences get longer.  More complex ideas can be explained.	Use of sophisticated language skills such as persuasion and negotiation to be successful socially.

<sup>47</sup> DCSF (2008) The impact of parental involvement on children's education research report, 00924

<sup>48</sup> Palikara, O, Lindsay, G and Dockrell, J (2009) Voices of young people with a history of specific language impairment (SLI) in the first year of post-16 education.

<sup>49</sup> Lindsay, G, Dockrell, JE and Strand, S (2007) Longitudinal Patterns of behaviour problems in children with specific speech and language difficulties: Child and contextual factors: British Journal of Educational Psychology Vol 77

<sup>50</sup> DCSF (2007) Parental involvement in children's education 2007 research report RR034

<sup>51</sup> Nippold, MA (1998) Later Language Development: the school age and adolescent years. Proed

	problems.  Understands figurative language, sarcasm and word play for jokes.	double meanings and 'learning vocabulary' as well as subject words.	Stories and accounts become more interesting and engaging.	Can keep up with rapidly changing adolescent talk.  Ability to switch language styles according to situation.
	Students develop the ability to reflect on and analyse their language skills e.g. "I'm good at working in groups but I can go on a bit."			

A key characteristic of adolescent language development is that much of it happens through wide and vociferous reading as well as educational exposure<sup>52</sup> and social experiences<sup>53</sup>. Young people who experience difficulties with language often have associated literacy and social difficulties. They will therefore find it hard to develop more sophisticated language without support.

**Video related task**

Watch the video clip "A structured approach to teaching language".

**See this clip:**

[www.education.gov.uk/lamb/slcn/secondary/structured-approach-video](http://www.education.gov.uk/lamb/slcn/secondary/structured-approach-video)

The primary practitioner talks of quality first teaching. Make notes on what in the clip illustrates this. Now think of any children in your secondary school who would need additional interventions. Why might they need these? How might the strategies in the video clip need to be adapted in light of the above changes regarding SLCN during secondary school. Who would you need to involve in ensuring these children get appropriate interventions?

Observe a colleague's lesson and note anything that builds on the Every Child a Speaker strategies. Feed back to your colleague. What other strategies are in place in your school to develop language?

**BRIEFING 5 – THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING PUPILS’ SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

In the secondary classroom, language is a fundamental skill for participation in, and access to, most aspects of the educational curriculum. For example:

<sup>52</sup> Reed, VA (2005) An Introduction to children with language disorders, 3rd edition Allyn and Bacon/Pearson  
<sup>53</sup> Locke, JL and Bogin, B (2006) Language and Life History: A new perspective on the development and evolution of human language: Behavioural and Brain Sciences Vol 29



- Many aspects of written language, such as producing a narrative or understanding text can be limited by weak oral language skills
- By secondary age there is an increasing amount of figurative language in text books and in ‘teacher talk’ – 37per cent of teacher instructions in secondary schools contain multiple meanings, 20 per cent with at least one idiom
- As learning becomes more reliant on independent study, language enables pupils to make contact with others; to organise, manage and evaluate experiences; and to influence and inform<sup>54</sup>

Adolescents spend more time than younger children talking to others,<sup>55</sup> so becoming adept at switching between styles or ‘registers’ of language. Socially, interactions become more complex and sophisticated and interaction becomes increasingly reliant on competent verbal skills; being able to hold a conversation and to put together sentences into a story or report (narrative) is integral to creating and maintaining social relationships. Language is fundamental to a range of everyday personal skills such as telephoning, texting friends and organising independent travel; communication also plays a key role in the creation and maintenance of social groups, in negotiating norms, status and trust. The informal style they use with friends, which includes slang and jargon, is based on figurative language and the ability to use this has been linked to peer acceptance<sup>56</sup>.

A focus on speech, language, and communication is seen by some as the key for young people to fit into society,<sup>57</sup> and language difficulties are identified as a risk factor in becoming NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training)<sup>58</sup>.

## **BRIEFING 6 – EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING PUPILS’ SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL**

For all pupils, the developmental ‘surge’, which happens during adolescence, can be a further opportunity to help develop pupils’ speech, language and communication skills.

Despite evidence of the persistent nature of language impairment, it is also recognised that with high quality support secondary school pupils with complex SLCN can make good progress<sup>59</sup>. This briefing draws on evidence to explore key features of effective practice in secondary schools, for all pupils including those with SLCN.

### **See online resource:**

[www.education.gov.uk/lamb/slcn/secondary/effective-practice](http://www.education.gov.uk/lamb/slcn/secondary/effective-practice)

<sup>54</sup> Durkin, K (1995) *Developmental Social Psychology*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell

<sup>55</sup> Reed, VA (2005) *An Introduction to children with language disorders*, 3rd edition Allyn and Bacon/Pearson

<sup>56</sup> Nippold, MA (1998) *Later Language Development: The school age and adolescent years*. Proed

<sup>57</sup> Larson, VL and McKinley, NL (2003) *Service Delivery Options for Secondary Students with Language Disorders Seminars: Speech and Language Vol 24 (3)*

<sup>58</sup> Scottish Executive Social Research (2005) *Literature of the NEET Group*

<sup>59</sup> Carroll, C and Dockrell, J (2010) *Leaving Special School: Post-16 outcomes for young adults with specific language impairment*. *European Journal of Special needs education*, Vol 25, No. 2

- **Ensuring communication is embedded at a universal level**

For all pupils, there is increasing evidence to show that a focus on pupils' spoken language in secondary schools can have an impact on achievement. Using speaking and listening activities to help pupils think for themselves has been highlighted as indicative of an effective school<sup>60</sup>.

In one project, introducing whole school level activities such as a consistent approach to reinforcing good listening in class, led to improved results in English<sup>61</sup>.

A number of initiatives, including I CAN's *Secondary Talk Programme*<sup>62</sup> and Afasic's practical resource,<sup>63</sup> offer support to develop communication-friendly environments in secondary schools. Coupling this with consultant support and classroom-based activities can have an impact on practice in secondary schools<sup>64</sup>. For pupils with SLCN, a whole school approach is essential in changing how schools think about communication difficulties<sup>65</sup>.

- **Skilled and confident staff**

For all pupils, including those with SLCN, what adults do can have a huge impact on their communication and attainment. Simple strategies such as allowing more processing time<sup>66</sup> or directing positive feedback towards social as well as academic behaviours<sup>67</sup> have been shown to increase engagement and performance<sup>68</sup>.

There is an increase in the number of materials available to support school staff in working with all young people's language and communication, e.g.:

- Talking Time<sup>69</sup>
- The Inclusion Development Programme<sup>70</sup>
- TDA undergraduate and induction training modules<sup>71</sup>
- I CAN Secondary Talk<sup>72</sup>

And with those with SLCN:

- Elklan<sup>73</sup>
- Language for Learning<sup>74</sup>, and
- I CAN Secondary Talk<sup>75</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Ofsted (2009) English at the Crossroads: An Evaluation of English in primary and secondary schools 2005/8 ref 080247

<sup>61</sup> Rowe, K and Topping, C (2007) Developing spoken communication skills in secondary aged children: final project summary report Islington Primary Care Trust

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.ican.org.uk/the%20talk%20programme/secondary%20talk.aspx>

<sup>63</sup> Afasic (2009) Is your school a communication friendly school? A resource for mainstream schools [www.afasic.org.uk](http://www.afasic.org.uk)

<sup>64</sup> Clegg, J, Leyden, J and Stackhouse, J (in press) An evaluation of I CAN's Secondary Talk programme. University of Sheffield

<sup>65</sup> Dockrell, J, Lindsay G, Palikara, O and Cullen, M (2007) Raising the achievements of children and young people with specific speech and language difficulties and other special educational needs through school, to work and college DCSF research report RB837

<sup>66</sup> Hartshorne, M and Major, G (2009) Using Action Learning Sets to change practice in supporting pupil's speech, language and communication in secondary schools at [www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk](http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk)

<sup>67</sup> Swinson, J and Harrop, A (2005) An Examination of the effects of a short course aimed at enabling teachers in infant, junior and secondary schools to alter the verbal feedback given to their pupils Educational Studies Vol 31 (2)

<sup>68</sup> Rowe, K and Topping, C (2007) Developing spoken communication skills in secondary aged children: final project summary report Islington Primary Care Trust

<sup>69</sup> [http://www.ioe.ac.uk/about/documents/About\\_Staff/PHD\\_JD\\_Publications\\_TALKING\\_TIME\\_Handbook.pdf](http://www.ioe.ac.uk/about/documents/About_Staff/PHD_JD_Publications_TALKING_TIME_Handbook.pdf)

<sup>70</sup> Where are they now?

<sup>71</sup> Where are they now?

<sup>72</sup> [www.ican.org.uk](http://www.ican.org.uk)

<sup>73</sup> [elklan.co.uk](http://elklan.co.uk)

<sup>74</sup> [www.languageforlearning.co.uk](http://www.languageforlearning.co.uk)

Initiatives using guided learning through:

- Portfolio work<sup>76</sup>
- The use of Action Learning Sets<sup>77</sup>, or
- Concept maps<sup>78</sup>

The above have been successful in supporting the transfer of learning into practice. One project which trained teaching assistants and provided on-going mentoring showed an impact on pupil's language, social and educational outcomes<sup>79</sup>.

Crucial to the support for young people with SLCN is recognition of the changing role of specialist support such as speech and language therapists (SALTs), which is now more flexible.

- **Close links with the curriculum**

For all pupils, despite concerns about how it aligns with the content needed for exams, building speech, language and communication skills teaching into the curriculum has been shown to have an impact both on the quality of teaching and on social and academic outcomes for pupils<sup>80</sup>.

For pupils with SLCN, working closely with the curriculum is particularly important given its language demands. This represents a significant shift in approach away from remediating language impairment, to supporting access to learning thereby making language intervention more meaningful for older pupils. Although uncommon in secondary schools, an approach where specialists work closely together on aspects of the curriculum has reported benefits for both teacher and pupils<sup>81</sup>. Working through narratives is a way of doing this, through scaffolding story or report writing<sup>82</sup>, but also through creating a communication-based curriculum<sup>83</sup> or through focused vocabulary teaching<sup>84</sup>.

- **A functional approach**

Secondary school pupils can continue to need support with aspects of language such as vocabulary and grammar.<sup>85</sup> However, it is also important to focus on associated emotional and social aspects such as friendship or independence. A focus on these functional aspects of communication is useful for the development of all pupils and an increasing number of resources reflect this, including the SEAL

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<sup>75</sup> [www.ican.org.uk](http://www.ican.org.uk)

<sup>76</sup> McLachlan, H (2007) Evaluating the effectiveness of Elklan training courses. A learner questionnaire [www.elklan.co.uk](http://www.elklan.co.uk)

<sup>77</sup> Hartshorne, M and Major, G (2009)

<sup>78</sup> Wilson G, Nash M and Earl, G (2010) Supporting students with language learning difficulties in secondary schools through collaboration: the use of concept maps to investigate the impact on teacher's knowledge of vocabulary teaching *Child Language Teaching and Therapy* Vol 26 (2)

<sup>79</sup> [www.elciss.org.uk](http://www.elciss.org.uk)

<sup>80</sup> RSA (2008) Opening Minds: Impact update [www.thersa.org](http://www.thersa.org)

<sup>81</sup> Nash, M (2009)

<sup>82</sup> Montgomery, JK and Kahn, NL (2003) You are going to be an author: adolescent narratives as intervention: *Communication Disorders Quarterly* Vol 24 (3)

<sup>83</sup> Brown, J (2007) Pontville School: a communication based curriculum conference presentation at Edgehill University, 'Communication: the key to success?'

<sup>84</sup> Fusaro, M (2009) Building Vocabulary to improve reading in middle school, accessed online at <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/blog/uk/2009/05/buildingvocabulary-to-improve-reading-in-middle-school-2.html>

<sup>85</sup> Sanger, D, Moore-Brown, BJ, Montgomery, J, Rezac, C and Keller, H (2003) Female incarcerated adolescents with language problems talk about their own communication: *Journal of Communication Disorders* Vol 36 (6)

programme (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning)<sup>86</sup> and Circle Time<sup>87</sup>, which can develop communication skills such as teamwork, empathy and emotional literacy. For pupils with SLCN with good 'surface' language skills, there is a danger that they will only get the support they need unless a holistic approach is taken<sup>88</sup>. Successful programmes include training young people as 'buddies' to resolve familiar school scenarios positively<sup>89</sup>, social skills training<sup>90</sup> or the specific teaching of social skills through class-based Circle Time<sup>91</sup>.

- **A strategy-focused approach**

Successful learning occurs when pupils reflect on their strengths and difficulties and know what they are aiming for<sup>92</sup>. The same applies to language—being able to reflect on and analyse language is central to developing language in adolescence<sup>93</sup>. Pupils need to know 'how', rather than just 'what' to learn—strategies rather than skills. Strategies such as listening to parents as models, practising words and asking for help have been identified as useful by young people<sup>94</sup>.

In one study, teaching strategies such as the use of visual organisers, 'pause time' for planning, and ways of recognising feedback to support self-monitoring resulted in positive outcomes in both written and spoken language<sup>95</sup>.

- **Support at transition times**

The transition from primary to secondary school can be a potentially difficult time for all children and young people academically, organisationally and socially. The amount of support given by the secondary school in skills such as note taking and 'how to write an essay' is crucial to ensuring a successful experience<sup>96</sup>. Not surprisingly, because of their difficulties in all of these areas, both children and their families with SLCN can find this a particularly stressful time<sup>97</sup>. Groups held during the summer holidays before making the transition to secondary schools are useful in lowering anxiety and preparing for both social and academic changes<sup>98</sup>. Successful

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<sup>86</sup> Where is it? Evaluation is here. Ofsted (2007) Developing social, emotional and behavioural skills in secondary schools: a five term longitudinal evaluation of the secondary national strategy pilot, [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

<sup>87</sup> Kulchy, L (2009) Establishing a Circle Time Group Based Upon Boundary Setting, unpublished Masters dissertation <http://ted.coe.wayne.edu/sse/finding/Kulchy.doc>

<sup>88</sup> Damico, JS (1988) The lack of efficacy in language therapy: Language, Speech, Hearing in Schools

<sup>89</sup> Rowe, K and Topping, C (2007) Developing spoken communication skills in secondary aged children: final project summary report Islington Primary Care Trust

<sup>90</sup> Stringer, H (2006) Facilitating Narrative and Social Skills in Secondary School Students with Language and Behaviour Difficulties in Clegg, J and Ginsborg, J (eds) Language and Social Disadvantage: theory into practice. Wiley

<sup>91</sup> 7 Canney, C and Byrne, A (2006) Evaluating Circle Time as a support to social skills development – reflections on a journey in school-based research British Journal of Special Educational Vol 33 (1)

<sup>92</sup> 8 Assessment Review Group (1999) Assessment for Learning: Beyond the Black Box: Cambridge University School of Education

<sup>93</sup> Nippold, MA (2007) Later Language Development: School aged children, adolescents and young adults, 3rd edition Pro-E

<sup>94</sup> Spencer, S, Clegg, J and Stackhouse, J (2010) 'I don't come out with big words like other people': interviewing adolescents as part of communication profiling Child Language Teaching and Therapy Vol 26 (2)

<sup>95</sup> Singer, BD and Bashir, AS (1999) What are executive functions and self regulation and what do they have to do with language learning disorders? Language, Speech & Hearing Services in Schools Vol 30 (3)

<sup>96</sup> Evangelou, M, Taggart, B, Sylva, K, Melhuish, E, Sammons, P and SirajBlatchford, I (2008) What makes a successful transition from primary to secondary school? DCSF research report RR019

<sup>97</sup> Ayre, A and Roulstone, S (2009) Transition to secondary school: supporting pupils with speech, language and communication needs at [www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk](http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk)

<sup>98</sup> Tucker, K and McLean (2008) Secondary starters week: RCSLT Bulletin, November

elements have been the use of pupil passports, practising using a timetable and exploring new and different vocabulary<sup>99</sup>.

- ***Involving young people***

Listening to the voices of pupils has been shown to have an impact on policy and practice, on learning, confidence – and also on communication skills<sup>100</sup>.

Pupils value a focus on communication in school and are very able to say what adults can do to support this<sup>101</sup>. Pupils with SLCN can reflect on their language strengths and difficulties and develop good insight and awareness of the outcomes they want. Involving young people in assessment or activities shows that they very often have different perspectives and priorities than adults, which can be valuable in planning intervention. While some young people may feel support is unnecessary, others give insight into what is most helpful, such as explicit teaching of vocabulary and visual support or use of colour coding. Without this involvement, there is a risk of getting the focus of an intervention wrong. With it, there is evidence that it can contribute to improved engagement and behaviour.<sup>102</sup>

- ***Opportunities for specialist intervention where difficulties are severe and complex***

For pupils with significant and often specific SLCN there is a growing body of evidence to show the benefit of focused, specialist intervention. Pupils with significant SLCN continue to need to be taught language skills explicitly<sup>103</sup>, but this needs to be planned within the context of a secondary environment<sup>104</sup>. This can be challenging. Often 'off the shelf' programmes may not be appropriate due to the diverse nature of language impairment. However, it is both possible and effective. The involvement of specialists such as speech and language therapists is crucial - either through direct intervention or by training others. Groups run by trained teaching assistants, focusing on developing narrative or vocabulary skills and planned into a mainstream timetable schedule, showed improved language skills<sup>105</sup>. Likewise, specialised and differentiated speech and language therapy programmes, such as visual support for learning grammar<sup>106</sup>, integrated into the curriculum in specialist settings can support young people to achieve a full range of academic and social outcomes<sup>107,108</sup>.

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<sup>99</sup> Arditti, N and Swift, D (2008) Dead good Transitions: Speech and Language therapy in Practice, winter

<sup>100</sup> Halsey, K, Murfield, J, Harland, J and Lord P (2006) The Voice of young people: an engine for improvement? Scoping the evidence: NfER

<sup>101</sup> The Communication Trust (2009) Children and young people's views: what do children and young people think about speech, language and communication skills? at [www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk](http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk)

<sup>102</sup> Hartshorne, M and Major, G (2009) Using Action Learning Sets to change practice in supporting pupil's speech, language and communication in secondary schools at [www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk](http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk)

<sup>103</sup> Ebbels, S (2007) Teaching grammar to school aged children with specific language impairment using shape coding: Child Language Teaching and Therapy Vol 23 (1)

<sup>104</sup> Reed, VA (2005) An Introduction to children with language disorders, 3rd edition Allyn and Bacon/Pearson

<sup>105</sup> Joffe, VL (2011) Secondary School is Not too Late to Support and Enhance Language and Communication. Afasic Newsletter, Winter Edition. London, UK: Afasic

<sup>106</sup> Ebbels, S (200

<sup>107</sup> Carroll, C and Dockrell, J (2010) Leaving Special School: Post 16 outcomes for young adults with specific language impairment: European Journal of Special Needs Education Vol 25

<sup>108</sup> Ansorge, L (2009) Life Outcomes in adults with childhood histories of severe and complex communication difficulties who attended a special residential school: A summary of a PhD project (unpublished)

- **Continuing beyond the end of statutory education**

Communication continues to play an important role post-secondary school and onward into the world of work. For all pupils integrating communication skills into vocational studies can enhance self-confidence, dispel anxiety and extend opportunity<sup>109</sup>. Very few colleges offer specialist support for young people with SLCN. However, evidence of the positive impact this can have on psychosocial outcomes<sup>110</sup> and on successful transitions to employment or further training<sup>111</sup> suggests there is a need for this continued support. Despite continuing academic and literacy difficulties, students themselves are generally more positive about post-16 provision than their secondary school; good social networks being a key factor in this<sup>112</sup>. There are growing numbers of resources available to support the transition into the workplace with a focus on communication skills, including:

- BT Personal Skills Journey<sup>113</sup>
- National Literacy Trust 'Words for Work'<sup>114</sup>, and
- I CAN 'Secondary Talk'<sup>115</sup>.

## **TASK 1 – AUDITING STAFF SKILLS**

The Communication Trust<sup>116</sup> emphasises the importance of developing the school workforce to develop and support communication for all pupils.

The Trust has developed the Speech, Language and Communication Framework (SLCF), which is a competency-based framework, enabling those working with pupils to identify the skills and knowledge they have and those which they need to develop in order to support the communication of all children, including those with SLCN.

The Communication Trust has also developed *Communication Help Point*, a website to support the children's workforce in understanding SLCN. A number of relevant resources are available to support staff in understanding speaking and listening skills, and implementing strategies within the classroom<sup>117</sup>.

Look also at:

- The speech, language and communication modules of the TDA's CPD materials which supports professional development for trainee and newly qualified teachers
- [The Inclusion Development Programme \(IDP\)](#) which supports professional development, in schools for children with SLCN

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<sup>109</sup> HMEI (2004) Student Learning in Scottish Further Education Colleges, a report for SFEFC

<sup>110</sup> Anson, L (2009) Life Outcomes in adults with childhood histories of severe and complex communication difficulties who attended a special residential school: Unpublished PhD Sheffield University

<sup>111</sup> Dawn House Transition case study at:

[http://www.transitionssupportprogramme.org.uk/pdf/CSNottinghamshire\\_DawnHouseSchool.pdf](http://www.transitionssupportprogramme.org.uk/pdf/CSNottinghamshire_DawnHouseSchool.pdf)

<sup>112</sup> Palikara, O, Lindsay, G and Dockrell, J (2009) Voices of young people with a history of specific language impairment (SLI) in the first year of post-16 education: IJLCD

<sup>113</sup> The Personal Skills Journey (2010) [www.bt.com/learningskillsresources](http://www.bt.com/learningskillsresources)

<sup>114</sup> Melvin, S (2010) Words for Work Evaluation report. National Literacy Trust

<sup>115</sup> Stringer, H (2006) Facilitating Narrative and Social Skills in Secondary School Students with Language and Behaviour Difficulties in Clegg, J and Ginsborg, J (eds) *Language and Social Disadvantage: theory into practice*. Wiley

<sup>116</sup> [www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk](http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk)

<sup>117</sup> [www.ican.org.uk/talkingpoint](http://www.ican.org.uk/talkingpoint)

- I CAN's *Secondary Talk* a programme, which supports systemic change within schools to support the communication skills of all pupils, pupils with delayed language to 'catch up' and pupils with long-term communication needs to work to their potential.

Spend some time familiarising yourself with these resources.

Staff training and development needs to be part of a school's long-term strategic planning and developing the school workforce can have significant resource implications. In partnership with the SENCO and with the agreement of the school's senior leadership team, use the SLCF to audit the training needs of a group of school staff. Use your local knowledge and *Communication Help Point* to put together a strategy for ensuring that your school workforce has the skills it needs to meet the needs of pupils with SLCN. Make sure that your plan contains success criteria, which will help you to evaluate and review the success of the programme upon completion.