

The Link

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Supporting
SLCN together



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Editor's Letter

Happy New Year!

It's reassuring to see that speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) remain in the national conversation, with BBC and Sky articles in November leading on the increase in children needing support. Of course, this need doesn't end at Reception/P1 and so The Link magazine offers a whole school approach for children and young people aged 4-14, as do our SLCN support packages Speech and Language Link.

The Link Live 2023 conference tickets are on sale and the programme has a really strong line-up of speakers offering plenty of takeaways for you to use in school. We have a special discount ticket code for those of you who missed out on the early bird ticket offer. For full details of the event AND your special code, please see page 6.

The articles in this issue focus on supporting communication when a child's difficulties are profound. We kick off with guest speech and language therapist, **Jerusha Massey** who describes the 'Joy' of unlocking new communication skills for a lad with autism.

On page 14, author **Toni Buchan** tells it from a parent's perspective, providing invaluable insight for schools supporting a child with DLD while speech and language therapist, **Sidonie Delaney**, provides a starting point for working with a child who has Developmental Verbal Dyspraxia in our Ask a Therapist feature on page 16.

Our Link Community pages are always fun to put together and hearing from schools using Speech and Language Link is what makes the difference. I can't quite believe that The Link magazine will be 10 years old this summer and, to mark the occasion, we would like to feature in our next celebratory issue the work that you do to support SLCN. Please get in touch and I promise to include your school's work in the next issue!

As speech and language specialists, the team at Speech Link Multimedia Ltd is delighted to be partnering the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and Sheffield Hallam University to deliver a national study investigating the impact of schools using Infant Language Link across year 1.

We are recruiting English schools to help us. Ofsted look favourably upon schools who take part in research and there are many benefits for participating schools. To take part, a school must be in the Education Investment Areas in the North East, North West and Yorkshire and Humber and not have used Infant Language Link before. To find out more visit speechandlanguage.info/study

Have a good term and keep supporting your pupils with SLCN the way you do – you really are making a difference!

Best wishes,

Claire Chambers

(P.S. don't forget to get in touch at claire.chambers@speechlink.co.uk)



Tickets: speechandlanguage.info/linklive

www.speechandlanguage.info

Contact our Help Desk at
helpdesk@speechlink.co.uk
or phone 0333 577 0784



Introducing the SEND Network: A community for SEND professionals

By India Dunkley, Mark Allen Group

The SEND Network is a new, expert-led, digital community for SEND professionals.

Created by the people behind the flagship Tes SEND show, the SEND Network operates as both a resource and a private social platform.

The site has been over a year in the making and is built around an understanding of the SEND profession, including the greatest demands and challenges faced by the sector.

The SEND Network provides a mediated platform for SEND professionals to share their experiences in a bid to alleviate the pressures felt by SENCOs through content and discussions around best practice.

Discussion rooms allow for conversations between professionals to share thoughts and ideas and offer support to peers.

Celebrating the work of SEND professionals is fundamental to the site, with users encouraged to make a visible profile and network with their peers.

It also provides an opportunity to interact with content through leaving comments on articles to spark conversations with experts and peers.

New content is uploaded every week and includes articles from our portfolio of education titles, such as SecEd, Head Teacher, Children and Young People Now and Music Teacher.

Content is optimised for mobile, meaning it can be used as a pocket resource, a reference point of best practice and a friendly reminder of the thriving SEND community.

All content provided on the network is tagged and categorised under the four broad areas of need:

- 1 Communication and interaction
- 2 Sensory and physical needs
- 3 Social, emotional and mental health and cognition
- 4 Learning

Most of the SEND Network is free to access after registration.

Accounts will be validated to ensure the network remains specialised and content stays relevant. Once your user profile is live, you will be able to access free content on the site.

Users can also access a premium option which grants further access to even more content, continuing professional development training videos as well as lectures from SEND professionals, including all the talks from the Tes SEND show.

In order to join, visit send-network.co.uk/, click 'register here', enter your email address and enjoy all of the expertise on offer!



LANGUAGE AND AUTISM: a journey of going from strength-to-strength



By Jerusha Massey, speech and language therapist at Magic Words Therapy Ltd



Joy is a boy with autism and a beautiful heart, whose name has been changed in the following article for ethical purposes. The first time I saw him he was sat at his desk, with ear defenders and a blanket around him, gently reminding me that the world can be so overwhelming at times. We often don't appreciate the efforts that individuals with autism make to be part of a world filled with neurotypical individuals.

Joy feels best supported when he is provided with visuals such as his communication book, a visual timetable and a 'now & next' board. He can answer questions when he is provided with choices, in the form of visuals that he can point to as his answer. He also follows single-part instructions when visual support is provided. Joy communicates his needs by pointing to an object/visual in his book and vocalising an 'ah' sound.

Having worked with Joy for some time, I have learnt the following from him:

Allow independence using language:

We can be tempted to fulfil the requirements of pupils even before they ask for it, which only leads to them missing out on the ability to function independently. Take snack time! Using Makaton signing for the word 'eating', I asked Joy if he would like snacks. He imitated the sign for eating and said "ah" and he was provided with his snacks.

Another time, I observed someone offering a paper towel to Joy every time he got a runny nose. The next time I saw Joy in need of it, I said "Runny nose?" (pointing to the nose), and then, "Go and get a paper towel" and pointed to the visual for the paper towel in his communication book. He immediately got a paper towel and wiped his nose. He was learning to use his communication book beyond basic needs and took a step closer to independence.

Model language to teach language:

Joy loves bus rides. Each time he would feel like going on one, he would point to the window. Amazing communication, but how would someone who is not familiar with

him know that he feels like going on the bus? When he pointed out the window one day, I opened his communication book and showed him the visual for "bus" and said, "Joy wants to go on the bus, I understand". The next few times, he was shown the visual for the bus when he pointed outside. Over the next few days, when he was asked if he wanted to do something during his break time, he began pointing to the bus visual!

Add language to pre-existing language:

As I sat with Joy one morning, he tapped me on the shoulder and pointed to a picture on his iPad. It was a picture of him when he was younger. I knew I had found my language stimulation moment! I began adding more language to his communication by saying "That is Joy. Young Joy" and pointed at him. He then pointed to the picture and pointed to himself again. This was followed by him showing me all the pictures in his gallery as I commented in short sentences about all that I saw in a picture, accompanied with a lot of signs and gestures. He might not have picked up on all the language I provided that day, but if repeated on a daily basis - it will soon be in his vocabulary.

Patience really is a virtue:

Sometimes, it may feel like swimming without ever reaching the shore when we are trying to support the young person in communicating. In these moments, it is always best to ponder upon the mode of communication we are striving for. Be patient with them as they are figuring it all out alongside us. At the end of day, it is our role to add to their skills: by allowing them to show us what those are.



Magic Words Therapy is an independent speech and language therapy service for children and adults. Working in schools, specialist settings and in our clinics across the South of England, our mission is to provide affordable therapy services that are accessible to all.

www.magicwordstherapy.co.uk  @MagicWordsSALT



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10 MARCH

ONLINE CONFERENCE Supporting SLCN Together

10th March 09:00



KATE FREEMAN,
CONSULTANT

Speech and Language
in Education

I am very excited to be, once again, hosting The Link Live 2023.

This year our focus will be on Supporting SLCN Together and we have a great line up to look forward to.

The day begins with a keynote speech from Professor Courtenay Norbury. She will talk about the impact of Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) on education and life outcomes - a topic which many of us already have some experience of.

Speaking of personal experience, we are also excited to welcome Mushy Asghar, from Channel 4's Educating Yorkshire programme. Mushy is now a speaker and journalist and will be telling his story of stammering and describing how teachers can make a difference to students like him.

We will also have practical input from Sidonie Delaney SaLT; OT Kim Griffin; and Georgina Durrant, former SENCo, author and founder of SEN Resources Blog, who will look at using play to promote language. Additional presentations focus on the difference between reading and speaking, and also DLD and vocabulary.

There will be plenty of opportunity to post questions in the live chat, so that the presenters can answer as if you were in the room with them.

Can you afford to miss this?

I look forward to seeing you there.

10th March 09:10

KEYNOTE
SPEAKER

Words for Well-being: why language matters for mental health

Professor Norbury will present data from a 10-year longitudinal study of language development and disorder in over 500 children from school entry through the transition to secondary school. Professor Norbury will focus on potential mechanisms explaining the well-established link between language disorder and adverse social, emotional, and behavioural outcome. The data show that early language is predictive of later skill in emotion recognition and emotion regulation. These skills in turn associate with parent ratings of anxiety and depression. However, the relationships are complex and further complicated by limitations in assessment.

These findings have profound implications for young people with language disorder

and their ability to access 'talking therapies' and the verbal strategies we rely on to promote good mental health.

Learning objectives for delegates:

- Describe how different aspects of language may support social-emotional development
- Outline evidence that children with language disorders are at increased risk for poor mental health, but underserved by current services
- List ways in which clinicians, teachers and families may support language for well-being
- Explain why diagnosis of language disorder may be useful for young people and their families

@lilacCourt

PROFESSOR COURTENAY NORBURY

Professor at UCL and Principal Investigator of SCALES, a longitudinal study of children's language and cognitive, social and academic development.



Live Q&A

With our expert speakers



GEORGINA DURRANT

Former teacher/SENDCO and author of "100 Ways Your Child Can Learn Through Play"

10th March 10:00

How can play help to develop speech, language and communication skills?

Georgina Durrant aims to answer this question in her presentation and equip you with fun, practical activities that you can use to help develop children's speech, language and communication skills in your school or setting. Play-based activities can be fantastic opportunities to weave in speech, language and communication

skills and Georgina will show you some really enjoyable activities that will get children communicating whilst doing what children do best...having fun! All of the activities are easy and cheap to resource, and they can be tweaked to match the children in your class/setting's interests.

 @senresourceblog



KATIE KERSLAKE

Specialist speech and language therapist and clinical lead for speech in Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust since 2015.

10th March 11:00

Why do speech sound difficulties affect literacy development?

I graduated from Birmingham City University and have worked as a paediatric speech and language therapist within KCHFT since 2009. I have worked within the early years' clinic service, within mainstream schools and was the Early Years Team Lead until 2019.

My presentation will provide delegates with a sound understanding of how literacy and speech sounds are linked and how they can best support the development of these pupils' literacy skills.

 @ChildTherapyEK



KIM GRIFFIN

Occupational therapist

10th March 12:00

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND:

Kim Griffin, occupational therapist and founder of GriffinOT will deliver a colourful and practical presentation for practitioners supporting children who have sensory processing differences and/or motor skill challenges.

Kim looks forward to taking questions from the delegates and discussing strategies and ideas in what aims to be a lively, interactive and practical session.

 @Griffin_OT

morning
session



SUE MARR

Specialist teacher,
Moor House Institute

10th March 14:00

Developmental Language Disorder & literacy difficulties – the overlap

Literacy underpins most things you do in class, but language underpins everything. A child with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) will have significant, ongoing difficulties using and/or understanding language which impacts on speaking and listening, reading, and writing.

In her presentation, Sue, will briefly explain what DLD is and discuss why children with DLD struggle with literacy. Sue will explore the relationship between DLD and Dyslexia; the similarities and differences between these two common childhood disorders and where the overlap occurs.

She will also share some practical activities and approaches to support

the development of literacy skills for children with DLD, with a particular focus on reading comprehension.

Learning outcomes for delegates:

- Understand the key areas of language comprehension that children with Developmental Language Disorder struggle with and how these impact on their literacy skills
- Recognise the overlap between Developmental Language Disorder and Dyslexia
- Know some key activities and strategies to support the acquisition of literacy skills for children with DLD

 @MHResTrain



MUSHARAF (MUSHY) ASGHAR

Speaker and journalist

10th March 15:00

Finding my voice

My name is Musharaf Asghar, better known to many as Mushy. I am 24 years old, the youngest of five siblings, and I'm a keynote speaker with a stammer. Since my story was first told on Channel 4's documentary series Educating Yorkshire, I have devoted my years to spreading awareness about stammering and motivating those who feel life has set them back to be resilient in the wake of their vulnerability.

My presentation will describe the impact teachers and educators

can have on a young person. I will explore in detail how our 'voice' is such a crucial element in developing relationships and how we can support students who feel absent from the class. Furthermore, I'm hoping listeners will walk away with crucial tools they can immediately start using in their classrooms.

 @MusharafAsghar

DON'T FORGET

to use code
TLL23TLMO
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ticket*



Tickets: speechandlanguage.info/linklive

*(normal price £80+VAT)

10th March 16:00

**SIDONIE DELANEY**Speech and language
therapist

How to support pupils with severe speech sound difficulties within the school setting

My name is Sidonie Delaney and I run Speech4Schools and Speech4Kids providing support for schools with their SLCN caseload and also independent therapy for children in our two clinic settings. I love lots of aspects of my job, but my favourite client group is definitely those with really severe speech sound difficulties.

My talk is going to be all about how to support these pupils with severe speech sound difficulties within the school setting. We have all been there; when a child in your class chats away to you and you really haven't got a clue what they have said. It must be so frustrating for them and it's immensely awkward for the adult too. How can you build a rapport with them? Do you stop asking them questions in fear that you won't be able to decipher their response?

My talk is going to be a relaxed, informal chat about where to start with these really tricky cases. I want the listeners to go away with lots of new ideas on how they can practically help, feel really enthused to give it a go and make the world of difference for that child. I will have loads of resources to hand that I hope will inspire you so you feel energised to help crack those speech sound difficulties!

There will also be a chance to ask questions at the end about a pupil's intervention that has gone a bit stale, or that you have just hit a brick wall with your approach!

 @Speech4Schools

Online
live chat
throughout
the day

The Link Live 2023 Programme

- 09:00** Event begins – welcome from Kate Freeman
- 09:10** Professor Courtenay Norbury, keynote speaker
- 10:00** Georgina Durrant
- 11:00** Katie Kerslake, specialist speech and language therapist
- 12:00** Kim Griffin, occupational therapist
- 12:50** Lunch Break
- 14:00** Sue Marr, specialist teacher, Moor House Institute
- 15:00** Musharaf Asghar
- 16:00** Sidonie Delaney, speech and language therapist
- 16:45** Round up of the day from Kate Freeman
- 17:00** Event finish

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BUILDING Emotional Awareness



By Clare Williams,
Author & Creator **Hamish & Milo - Wellbeing Resources**

Helping children to notice, recognise and begin to express how they are feeling allows them to develop key emotional literacy skills such as self-awareness and self-regulation, which are vital for emotional and social development.

Acknowledging that all emotions are valid and needed for us to be emotionally healthy, is a core element of the **Hamish & Milo Wellbeing Programme**. We recognise that whilst some emotions can feel uncomfortable, they are not negative - all feelings are valid and help us to recognise our experiences and communicate our needs.

All children need multiple, repeated experiences of empathic adults noticing, labelling and validating their emotions in a safe, relational way and these experiences reinforce and acknowledge to the child that all feelings are acceptable and safe to have.

Helping children to recognise and notice sensations is the first stage in building emotional awareness and these sensation and emotion cards are invaluable in enabling

children to begin to apply language to their feelings, to help regulate their emotional world, increase self-confidence, enable aspiration and achievement and contribute to healthier social relationships. They support children's emotional development by helping children to:

- ✔ **Recognise** that there is a huge range of emotions
- ✔ **Notice** what different emotions may look and feel like
- ✔ **Develop** vocabulary for sensations as well as emotions
- ✔ **Talk** about emotions, even those that are uncomfortable. This gives them permission to express a whole range of feelings and talk about their experiences
- ✔ **Think** about the emotions that they often feel or seldom feel
- ✔ **Develop** empathy and recognise the feelings of others
- ✔ **Understand** how there is a range of feelings and intensities within a core emotion e.g., anger, irritated, frustrated, rage and furious

The Hamish & Milo Sensation & Emotion Cards help children to recognise, communicate and express their feelings by developing their emotional awareness and vocabulary. The cards can be used with individual children or with groups and help to open conversations, validate experiences and allow curiosity in exploring a range of feelings, and the context of experiences.

“This empathic engagement with a child enables a ‘felt’ sense of being understood and activates changes in the child’s neurological system allowing them to calm down, physiologically and psychologically.”

Clare Williams



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We are offering a special discount for The Link readers - £30 inclusive of P&P. Go to the website, use the code 'LINK' at checkout.

<https://hamishandmilo.org/sensation-emotion-cards/>

ONE TA TO ANOTHER

reverse – Pathetic Fallacy

“Whether the weather be fine, Or whether the weather be not,
Whether the weather be cold, Or whether the weather be hot,
**We’ll weather the weather Whatever the weather, Whether
we like it or not!**” So says the adage and, for everyone working
in a school, it couldn’t really be more accurate!

With the wind howling, rain pouring, and the chill of winter nipping at your nose, it’s easy to see how the playground can quickly become a platform for varying levels of pupil hysteria. The wind tousling their hair, their volume switched to max as they shout at the top of their voices to reach their friends over the noise of the wind. They’re running and jumping and pushing and shoving and whirling and spinning and spiralling out of control.

Then the whistle blows.

“And quickly now, get in line, quieten down and walk quietly back to class – show me you’re ready to learn.” Sound familiar?

So, how much does the weather impact behaviour?

Certainly, sensory processing is a significant factor – a state of arousal can be heightened (or lowered) due to extreme changes in the weather such as:

- Starting school cold and wet
- Starting school hot and sweaty
- Being restricted to class in the heavy rain
- Being able to take part in sports and other physical activities due to hot temperatures
- Suffering from Seasonal Affective Disorder

As far back as Hippocrates, there have been mentions of the weather and the effect it has on us as a species. It is certainly something I have heard many times in schools as a teacher looks out of the window with trepidation and says the dreaded words: “Wind’s up, playtime’s going to be a nightmare!”

So how true is it?

- 1 We certainly believe it - A survey of hundreds of UK headteachers in 2020 found that 74% believed that strong wind is the worst weather for pupil’s behaviour.
- 2 A study from the University of Nevada in 1990 looked at a range of weather variables. The researchers concluded that the children seek out more human company when the weather makes them feel uneasy.
- 3 But a 1989 study by researchers at the University of Lancashire actually found that slightly fewer children were sent to a ‘quiet room’ on windier days.



So, the studies are a bit inconclusive, can we say that the weather effects a child’s behaviour? Does ‘reverse’ pathetic fallacy play a part here? We love to give human attributes to the weather, perhaps this works two-ways?

Whether the weather be good or bad, whatever the weather may be, you work with it as always. You are brilliant!





THE VOICE OF THE CHILD



By Dr Samantha Weld-Blundell, child psychologist,
The Little Psychology Company

“At The Little Psychology Company, our mission is to eradicate the barriers that delay or prevent children, educators, families and caregivers from accessing the support they need, when they need it”

Listening to the views of children and increasing the opportunity for participation in decision-making is a priority outlined by the SEND CoP and the Children and Families Act (2014). Despite this, there remains a dearth of methods available for children who are non-verbal, pre-verbal or who have emerging language (Goldbart, Chadwick, & Buell, 2014).

Children with SEND are a heterogenic group and their unique communication patterns can pose challenges for those working with them, not only due to the nature of the communication, its validity and reliability, but also because attempting to simplify the medium of communication could lead to misinterpretation (Detheridge, 2000).



WHAT DOES ‘VOICE OF THE CHILD’ MEAN?

- A means of directing others’ attention, not only to where they are, but also to how they feel.
- A child’s voice can be a powerful event, sometimes heard by unintended hearers in the whole neighbourhood (Kupfer, 2011).
- Listening can allow others to recognise the child’s emotional states such as joy, curiosity, satisfaction, boredom, anger or despair (Harcourt, 2011).
- Voice is a basic means for directing others’ attention in a social situation and establishing an encounter.
- Metaphorically speaking, a child’s voice can represent the current landscape of childhood studies, such as children’s rights, participation, social inequality, perspectives, inclusivity and autonomy.
- Physiologically speaking, the meaning of voice relates to aspects of the anatomy that produce vocalisations and sounds.

How can children with difficulties in language and communication contribute their views?

Gaining understanding of the child through person-centred planning meetings, or completing a person-centred information document (e.g., Pupil Passport or All About Me) can help with planning communication approaches.

- Demographic information
- Details of the child’s needs
- What is important to them?
- What is important to keep them healthy and safe?
- What do others admire about them?
- What are their likes and dislikes?
- What makes them happy or sad?
- What are their preferred communication methods?
- How do others communicate with them?
- Where do they feel most comfortable/content/happy?
- Who are the important people in their life?
- What are their gifts, qualities, and skills?
- What are their self-care needs?
- What is the information about their learning in curriculum?
- What other agencies or services are involved?



REMEMBER TO

CONSIDER THE SYSTEMS AND PEOPLE AROUND THE CHILD WHEN LOOKING TO DEVELOP METHODS OF ELICITING CHILDREN'S VOICES:

Individual Child

- 👍 Knowledge of the child's SEND contributes to their safety and wellbeing and informs methods of communication and interaction.
- 👍 Consideration of the physical, cognitive, language, sensory, social and emotional developmental stage of the child.
- 👍 Recognition of developed and emerging skills to differentiate the level of activity/communication appropriately.

Micro-system: looking at the child's strengths and needs

- 👍 Shared understanding and a joint attentional frame can minimise communication barriers, as known communication partners can strengthen interpretations, predict behaviours and preferences.

Meso-System: communication partners are a great resource

- 👍 Multi-method approaches provide a range of opportunities and increase motivation to communicate and interact.
- 👍 Observation looks at theory in practice ('what people actually do') instead of espoused theory ('what people say they do').
- 👍 Increasing communication motivation through approaches used and the encouragement and praise given.
- 👍 Interactive technology can be added to the multi- methods accessible.

- 👍 A naturalistic play environment can minimise disruption and encourage child-led communication and participation.
- 👍 Using child-centred language, along with consistency and repetition.
- 👍 Using visuals, objects of reference or signing if required, increases understanding and responsiveness from the child.

Exo-System: supporting verbal language with visuals

- 👍 E.g., sign language, pictures, objects of reference, helps the child to process what is being communicated and also it is a sharing of strategies the child may adopt in their own communication.

Macro-System: a high level of staff collaboration

- 👍 Customising tools and approaches (e.g., interactive technology) can aid communication with children from diverse backgrounds and minimises cultural barriers.

THINK ABOUT

Increasing child participation by using:

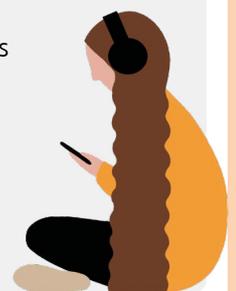
- Joint attention
- Interpersonal support
- Providing opportunities
- Checking understanding/ interpretation of communication
- Motivational activities
- Song and rhythm
- Technology
- Books
- Gesturing and body language
- Visuals, symbols and pictures
- SEND knowledge

Recording your observations of:

- Facial expressions
- Eye contact
- Pre-verbal vocalisations
- Gestures
- Symbol use
- Verbal vocalisations
- Imitating behaviour/noises
- Sign language and Makaton
- Eye gaze
- Objects of reference
- Body movements
- Termination and re-engagement with activities
- Time spent exploring the objects
- Rejection of, or disinterest in, objects

Using tools and methods:

- Choices board
- Objects of reference
- Visuals/pictures
- Picture Exchange System (PECS)
- Talking Mats
- Technology (iPad/buttons/eye gaze)
- Colouring and drawing activities
- Small world play
- Puppets and stories
- Emotional literacy



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Lost in Translation

— What I would tell my child's teacher about Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)



By Toni Buchan, author of *The Social Child – Laying the foundations of relationships and language* (Routledge 2015)

The things I wish all educators knew about recognising, enabling and supporting children with DLD are subtle, but are insights that only come when you have lived the life with your child.

As a mum of a (nearly) 12-year-old boy who has DLD and verbal dyspraxia we have had a long evolving, and at times seemingly unending, journey through his earliest years. As we prepare to see him finish primary school, I find myself reflecting on the things his language and communication profile has taught all of us, as well as the many insights I would like to share with any educator new to the orbit of a child with such language difficulties...

- Children need to have maximum exposure to the largest possible community, and so in turn maximum exposure to different characters, different accents, different speech patterns and the faces that go with them.
- The awakening of emotions is a distinct arena of challenge for children with DLD. Feelings come secondary to them registering the 'feeling' of those feelings, and consciously identifying the physical impact in their bodies.
- Injury can often elicit a disproportionate rage and overreaction centred on their primal need to make you stay away. The instinct of the onlooker to ask 'What happened?' can add a layer of distress and upset from an unwanted language load that distracts from their primal need to salve their own response to the physical pain as a front brain response.

- Boundaries that are consistently applied and make sense are crucial. And when I say 'make sense', they should make sense to the child.
- Practising the more difficult social skills as young as possible alongside a trusted friend, teacher or buddy helps them mirror and imitate social cues visually and first-hand.

Often children with DLD are some of the smiliest and most animated of all pupils in the mid-primary years. Once the confusion of the early years has washed over them, and with the right support, they can coast through. But don't be fooled as there will come a moment, as there is with any prepubescent, when the shift to anxious acceptance of their awareness and extent of their difficulties can become keenly felt.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the lived experience of the anger, disappointment and frustration that children with DLD can go through. It can be hard to witness and is always inflammatory for all the relationship dynamics within a family. This may well be at home at the end of the school day when they have managed to keep a lid on things all day. There are so many strategies that can help these children and, much like baking a cake, the individual ingredients for each one can only be fine-tuned with commitment and time spent to get the recipe right.

"There are so many strategies that can help, much like baking a cake, ingredients for each one can only be fine-tuned with commitment and time spent to get the recipe right."

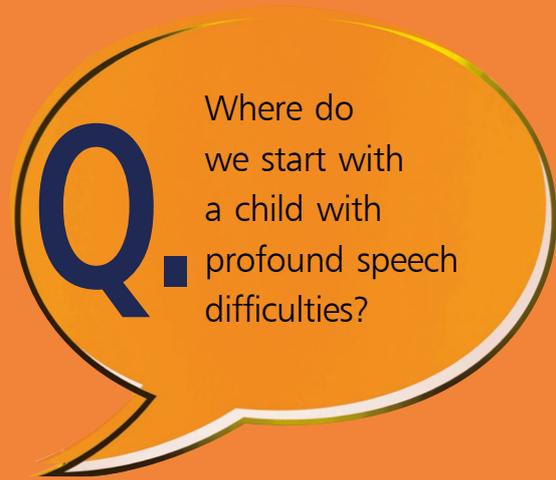
MY TOP TIPS



- ✔ **Give them time** - 'count to ten' is the hardest but most valuable rule, especially in a new relationship with a child or young person.
- ✔ **Find all the languages** - Learn Makaton as a universal whole school approach or establish a range of mutually understood words and their visual signs for them to feel connected and represented in their classroom.
- ✔ **Help build their personality portfolio** - Give children with DLD a camera of their own. The images they collect can be a great insight to their emerging understanding of concepts, their patterns of interest and early categorisations in a visual way.
- ✔ **Pick your moments** - The most important times for 1:1 or buddy attention are at break and lunchtime. Often children with DLD do not lack communicative intent, but the necessary word finding or speech sound skills make it difficult for them to take part fully and keep up in these more fluid times of the day.
- ✔ **Behaviour is always emotion** - Offer clear boundaries for pro-social behaviour as a choice.
- ✔ **Be in the moment with them as often as you can** - The shared points of reference can be a useful trigger of memory for children with DLD, and the words that go with the memory.
- ✔ **DLD's Got Talent** - Find the thing that they are good at. Try lots of physical activities, explore retained reflexes and movement sequences that strengthen their co-ordination, balance and core strength. For children with DLD, moving on to emotional regulation securely can only happen once they are the drivers and masters of their own physical bodies. Let them move, and often.
- ✔ **Future proof friendships** - Grow friendship groups around them, offer team games, associative play opportunities and a chance to just hang out.
- ✔ **Smile** - No matter how difficult children with communication difficulties find life and school learning, it's all they know and they need your friendship and support. They are the students that take the most effort because they talk a different language, but they will teach you the most about how real communication works.

ASK A Therapist

By Sidonie Delaney, SaLT, Speech4Schools



It's daunting when a pupil has such severe speech sound difficulties that you can't understand what they are trying to say. It can be hard to build a rapport with that child; do you ask them what they got up to at the weekend or is it just putting you both in a difficult position when you then can't decipher their response?

Some children's speech sounds are so severe that they are diagnosed with Developmental Verbal Dyspraxia (DVD). This is when a child has trouble placing and co-ordinating the muscles in the precise positions needed to produce clear speech. The messages the brain sends to the muscles are affected and these children can be particularly challenging to work with as their speech can be quite unusual. They often have a 'preferred sound' they use lots of the time, and they make inconsistent errors, so their attempt at a word may vary each time they try it. These children are going to need lots of support.

So where do we begin with speech sound difficulties?

- 1 Ask the family for pointers - do they know which sounds the child struggles with and what they substitute instead? Are there any key functional words that we might be able to learn to recognise?
- 2 A home-school contact book is an oldie but a goodie! Record things that have happened at home and things from the school day that the child may be bursting to share.
- 3 Use pictures and symbols to indicate the most important functional things like needing the toilet, being hungry, thirsty, or feeling poorly.
- 4 Use some basic signs with the child and encourage them to use them too.
- 5 Select sounds to work on that are going to have the biggest impact. Your SaLT might be able to help with this! If the child can see they are improving, they will be more motivated.
- 6 Have a 'speech book' with key words for that child... practice these daily and reward with stickers!
- 7 Do lots of listening work and check the child can hear the difference between sounds. I love using my giant foam thumbs-up for this and letting them be the teacher by telling me if I am saying sounds or words right or wrong. Don't underestimate the importance of the listening stages!
- 8 There are loads of cool tricks to help elicit particular sounds e.g., for 'k' try putting their finger on their tongue to depress it and encourage the tongue into the 'back' position that is required, or even try lying down flat on their back as gravity will help the tongue back!
- 9 Sequences of sounds. We roll my giant dice to select a vowel sound (V) and then add their target consonant (C) either before or after it – CV or VC. Try consonant sound sequences too.
- 10 Nonsense words are great as the child doesn't already have (an incorrect) stored way of saying the word – bizarrely, for the same reason, brand new vocabulary can be easier too as they will be learning it correctly from the start!
- 11 Minimal Pair pictures are a great way for the child to realise that the word they said, sounded different for their listener e.g., key-tea.
- 12 Start with segmented words; they don't need to be perfectly blended straight away. It's more important that they get the sounds right and don't insert any extra sounds.
- 13 A child won't be able to correct their speech errors if they don't realise they are making any. Gently support them to identify their errors and monitor their own speech more.
- 14 It takes time for a child to generalise a new sound into their everyday talking but if all involved know the target then we can support the child to begin to correct their own errors.

Top Tips

-  Have rewards; bribery always motivates!
-  Get on the move! I get the children finding items around the room or jumping on their target word or throwing a beanbag onto their word and saying it.
-  Feelie bags containing items with sound are great or, if you can cope, hide items in glittery sand to find!
-  Speech work can be done successfully in groups too; the children can share a joint activity but just have different target sounds or words.



A bit about me

I have been a SaLT for 20 years and have worked in the NHS in both Bradford and Ashford. Soon after having children, I decided to set up my own independent practice, **Speech4Schools**. We support over 50 schools across Kent with SLCN. I also run two clinics in Kent called **Speech4Kids** offering private assessment and therapy for children with a wide range of SLCN.

Get in touch at:
sidonie@speech4schools.co.uk



Scan the QR code and watch a wonderful before and after video of a delightful girl with DVD. I promise it will be the most uplifting thing you see all day! This is how much of a difference our speech work can make.



The Link Community

welcome to

The Words Together series

We asked SaLT and consultant Kate Freeman to tell us more about her new book series.

"As a speech and language therapist, I know the importance of good communication skills and their impact on learning, friendships and successful lives. I also understand how these skills develop and the key stage which involves children moving from being able to say individual words to connecting two words together. Some children do this very easily and some children find it very difficult, but all children benefit from having a model to follow.

I couldn't find any books that supported this stage of development. I could only find picture books with individual words and story books with longer sentences, but nothing in between. It was then that I decided to write some!

There is a set of four books for children at this very early stage of language development: *Hello!*; *Sleep Time*; *Gone to the Park*; *Down the Slide*. *Helping Children Find their Voices* is the guidebook for practitioners and parents..

www.routledge.com/Words-Together/book-series/WTOG



For your Diary

February

- Send us your news and tips for our next School Spotlight feature
- Continue to work through recommended **Speech and Language Link** interventions with pupils identified using the Speech and Language Link online assessments
- Get your ticket for The Link Live 2023 SLCN conference and save £35 per ticket with The Link magazine discount code TLL23TLMO speechandlanguage.info/linklive

March

- Friday 10th March – Join us for The Link Live 2023 online event

April

- Make sure that all intervention results are entered onto the system after completing a language group or a speech programme

Thank you

We would like to thank everyone who took part in our first Link Live session in November to help us to test our platform for The Link Live 2023. Nearly 100 people tuned in to watch a presentation by Jean Gross CBE.

The Link Facebook Group

Join the conversation with 600+ members and receive weekly videos and posts from our speech and language team, take part in fun, short polls and surveys and share good practice.





School Spotlight

Fun SLCN Games!

Louisa Rowlands is Deputy Head and SENCo at Wimborne Primary in Southsea.



Louise says, "Portsmouth is the UK's only city island. Furthermore, it is the most densely populated city in the UK. Our school's motto is **Reach for the Stars** and we have 556 children on role. I have used Language Link for over fifteen years."

We love to... *Play the Barrier Game.*

This game is brilliant because you can use it for ANY lesson!

How to...

Children sit in pairs with a screen between them. Someone reads out instructions and the children draw or move objects on a whiteboard or paper.

Lift the barrier to see if both children have the same picture/sum/model. Guess what? **NO PREPARATION IS NEEDED!**

We love to.... *Use Mind Maps.*

When sharing content or information with a group of children, an adult can start to mind map.

How to...

Capture some of the important words or even draw a simple picture to represent part of the content. The children then don't have a blank piece of paper to start their work, key spellings are ready for them and....**NO PREPARATION IS NEEDED!**

Simple! Always start to mind map in the right-hand corner and work clockwise - it's how the brain works apparently!



Out and about

It's great to head out and about to meet likeminded companies and say hello to our lovely Speech and Language Link school subscribers. This past term has been busy with events...

The team headed to the Tes SEND Show in London where we celebrated the launch of our new Link CPD speech and language training course.

The nasen awards were held in Birmingham where we were shortlisted for the Innovation for Technology award for Infant Language Link.

We held a coffee morning for International DLD Awareness Day. Our speech and language therapists, Juliet, Sophie and Niamh were on hand to provide lots of information to all who joined us for a cupcake.

Nancy and Claire were at The Education People show in Kent where they caught up with lots of our Speech and Language Link subscribing schools.




LinkLive 2023

The Link Live annual online SLCN conference is back on Friday 10th March 2023

We are offering The Link readers a very special ticket price of £45+VAT speechandlanguage.info/linklive (normal price £80+VAT per ticket).

Is your school a Speech and Language Link subscriber? Visit your homepage for your very special discount code.

Supporting SLCN Together

JOIN SPEECH AND LANGUAGE
LINK AND PRIMARY AND
SECONDARY SCHOOLS FOR
A DAY OF CONVERSATION,
INSPIRATION AND INNOVATION.

FRIDAY 10TH MARCH 2023 • VENUE: ONLINE

Our 7 eminent speakers will share their expertise and knowledge and provide you with lots of ideas for best supporting pupils with SLCN.

- Hosted by speech and language therapists, presented by education experts and driven by you!
- Live Q&A
- Special ticket price for The Link magazine readers



Use code TLL23TLMO
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just £45 per ticket*
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Tickets: speechandlanguage.info/linklive