

The Link

ISSUE
22 2022

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SEE THE FULL PROGRAMME
AND HOW TO GET TICKETS
ON PAGE 10

Demystifying Language Special



THE LINK SURVEY RESULTS

What do schools think of their current provision for supporting children and young people with SLCN?

Find out on Page 4



MATHS IS NOT JUST NUMBERS – THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERPINNING MATHEMATICAL LANGUAGE

By Karen McGuigan, founder of Maths for Life programme.

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FOETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER (FASD)

Strategies to help children with FASD in the classroom.

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Editor's Letter

A Happy New Year to you all!

We love hearing from readers of The Link and are pleased to be able to feature articles on the topics that you have said you're particularly interested in. Our experts have taken some of your suggestions such as soft skills (page 3), the language underpinning maths (page 6) and challenging behaviour (page 16) and addressed common misconceptions around these areas in this 'Demystifying' special.

Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD) affects more people than ASD in the UK, but how well are we equipped to support children with FASD? **Louise Burton's** research on page 8 really unpicks the disorder and provides robust strategies and ideas for you to use in school to help these children who are so often undiagnosed.

What we do hope will inspire your continued work with children who have SLCN, is this year's conference, **The Link Live 2022: SLCN A Whole School Approach**. Guest speakers **Michael Rosen**, Gogglebox star, **Baasit Siddiqui** and **Jordan Scott** join renowned speech and language therapists to present at the one-day event on 11th March 2022. Go to page 10 for more information about the speakers and the full programme. Don't forget we have a special ticket price for The Link readers (see the Cover Letter) and Speech and Language Link subscribing schools pay just £30+VAT per ticket (standard price £80+VAT per ticket).

Thank you to all those who took part in **The Link Survey** – the results were interesting and unsurprisingly, funding limitations continue to be the biggest barrier to identifying and supporting all children and young people with SLCN. It's good to see that school-based interventions are generally felt to be effective and programmes such as **Speech Link and Language Link** continue to make a positive difference to thousands of children's lives. Find out more about what schools had to say on page 4.

Please continue to get in touch, it might be in the form of a question for our 'Ask a Therapist' feature or perhaps a case study about a child you have worked with that was particularly successful that we can share with our readers. Whatever your news, don't hesitate to contact us at the email address below.

Have a good term and continue to look after yourselves.

Best Wishes

The Link Editor

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By Sophie Mustoe-Playfair, speech and language therapist

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The Link Live 2022 SLCN: A Whole School Approach – 11th March

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Demystifying Behaviour

By Kate Freeman, consultant – speech and language in education

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Celebrating Bilingualism

By Heather Stevens, speech and language therapist



Tickets: speechandlanguage.info/linklive

www.speechandlanguage.info

Contact our Help Desk at
office2@speechlink.co.uk
or phone 0333 577 0784



ASK A Therapist



By Sophie Mustoe-Playfair, speech and language therapist

Question:
What are
'soft skills'
really?

Answer:

Soft skills have been an increasing concern in schools since at least 2019. However, since the pandemic began to have a significant impact on children's education, and especially post-lockdown, the importance of soft skills has become a hot topic for getting children back on track at school.

Previously, we might have associated the idea with adulthood and the 'world of work', but now, talk about soft skills spans education and employment. There is a growing recognition that these are the skills that can dictate success in school, as well as in most, if not all, employment circumstances. Undoubtedly, strength of soft skills can have a profound impact on lifelong outcomes, and it's really important that we provide the opportunities and support necessary so that all children can develop these skills.

However, soft skills are a nebulous concept. It's an umbrella term, which are often very hard to define. We might find that they are so hard to define that they lose meaning. If we are to have a real impact, it's important that we are clear and specific about goals so that we can find a way forward. To bring the

concept into focus, we need to find the features that we can agree are associated with soft skills, and then find the common ground.

So, what are some soft skills that we can agree on:

- Collaboration?
- Emotional intelligence?
- Empathy?
- Time-management?
- Organisation and planning?
- Critical thinking?
- Reasoning and resilience?

All of the above could apply.

This may seem very broad, but as a speech and language therapist, I can see a common thread. Every one of these attributes and strengths which form part of the broader concept of 'soft skills' is underpinned by our speech, language, and communication skills.

In pursuit of developing soft skills, the Department for Education has suggested that pupils should have more opportunities and support to engage with extra-curricular activities, such as music lessons and sports clubs. But does this suggestion go far enough? All children, especially those with SLCN and those with 'hidden' or unidentified language and communication difficulties, can benefit from more explicit, targeted support to develop their speech, language and communication skills in addition to accessing a broad range of extra-curricular activities (and within them!).

If we want to develop children's soft skills, we need to look to the underlying foundation of their communication needs. This would represent an evidence-based strategy for targeting soft skills that leaves no child behind.



THE LINK SURVEY



In the autumn issue of the magazine, we launched The Link Survey to hear what you had to say about your experience of SLCN support.

Your Experience of SLCN Support

As promised, in this issue of The Link we're reviewing the responses to The Link Survey we've received. Thank you for taking the time to contribute, your thoughts have been really interesting.

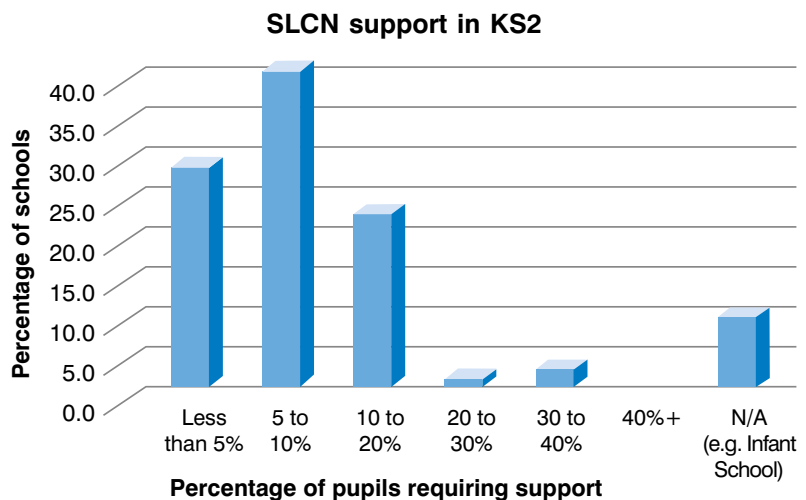
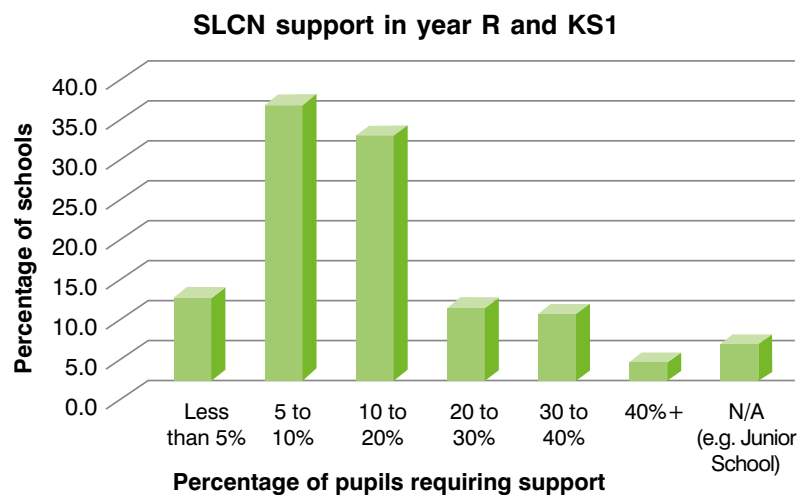
The schools:

Most of the schools, 87%, were primary or infant. 7% of schools had fewer than 100 pupils, 70% between 100 and 400 and the remaining 23% had more than 400 pupils. The respondent from each school was usually a SENCo or teacher.

EAL numbers:

51% of schools reported less than 5% of pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL), with 32% having 5 to 30% EAL, and 17% of schools having more than 30% EAL.

Children receiving any type of support for SLCN:



HAVE YOUR SAY



Congratulations to Mottram CofE Primary, Tameside and a lucky Derbyshire school. Both are winners of our free prize draw for a year's subscription to all the Speech and Language Link support packages. Thank you for taking part in The Link Survey!

It's interesting to note that, while there is a shift towards fewer pupils requiring support in KS2, there is still a significant proportion of pupils in KS2 who require support for SLCN. This indicates a clear need for SLCN support throughout pupils' time in school.

Funding:

When ranking overall funding for SLCN on a scale of 1 to 7 with 1 representing "Little or no funding", 75% of schools gave a score of 3 or less.

However, schools were split roughly 50:50 as to whether they ever used pupil premium for SLCN support 52% "Yes", 48% "No".

When the use of Covid-19 catch-up funding was considered 46% said they planned to use this funding for SLCN related issues.

Effect of the pandemic:

82% of schools felt the incidence of SLCN had increased during the pandemic with 16% being unsure. The remaining 2% of schools felt that the pandemic had not affected the incidence of SLCN.

Our own evidence from Language Link assessments carried out during autumn 2020 indicates a 20% increase in pupils recording the lowest levels of language skills.

Identifying SLCN:

55% of schools felt that a lack of staffing and budgetary constraints were the biggest obstacles to fully identifying pupils with SLCN. Despite these obstacles our speech and language therapy team comment that it is usually not possible to identify SLCN by observation alone, which means that it's really important that schools have access to objective tools for identifying pupils' needs, such as the Language Link screening assessments.

Supporting SLCN:

Schools were asked whether their LA provided any support beyond that given for pupils with statutory support, such as an EHCP. Approximately 44% said "No", 41% had some level of support and the remaining schools were unsure or found support very difficult to access.

Most schools were confident they knew when to involve outside agencies for a child with SLCN. On a scale of 1 to 7 from "Never entirely sure" to "Always certain" 72% responded with 5 or above.

It is encouraging that many schools have confidence that they know when to access support from outside agencies. However, our therapy team comment that this may be because this support can only be accessed in the most severe cases, given the large

proportion of schools that feel there is no support from their LA beyond the statutory level.

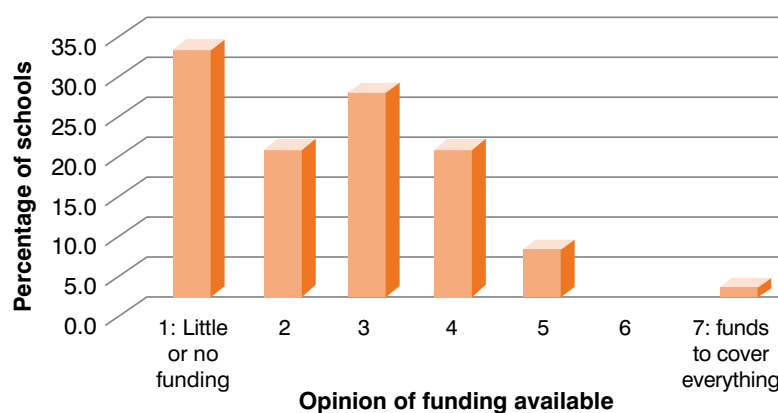
When asked what currently restricts your ability to support pupils' SLCN in school, the answers given in the pie chart below were selected. Respondents could select more than one option.

When asked if they believed school-based SLCN interventions are effective from 1 (often effective) to 7 (rarely effective), 84% gave a response from 1 to 3, showing most respondents felt such interventions are effective.

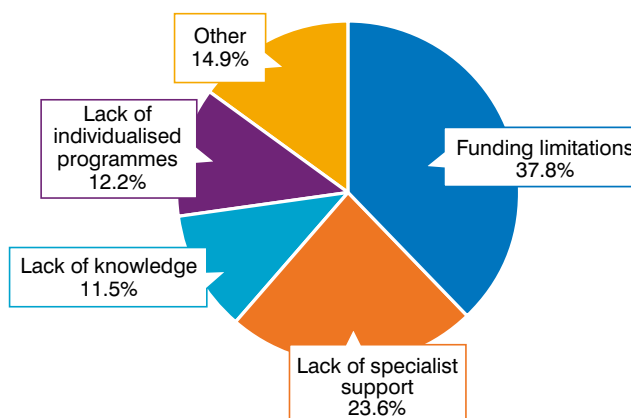
Just over 80% of schools used one or more in-school support package, such as Speech Link and Language Link.

Finally, 63% of respondents had undertaken face to face or online training in supporting SLCN.

Funding for SLCN Support



What restricts ability to support SLCN?



DEMYSTIFYING THE LANGUAGE OF MATHS

By Karen McGuigan, founder and author of the Maths For Life programme

MYTH
BUSTING

When you say 'maths' most people immediately think of numbers... quickly followed by that anxious feeling when their brain makes the connection to times tables. But maths is more than numbers and indeed begins long before numbers with underpinning mathematical language.

'How many blue triangles?' seems such a simple question... however to be able to answer it you need to understand what 'how many' means, realise that 'blue' is a colour and distinguish it from other colours and identify 'triangle' as a shape that has three sides and recognise it amongst other shapes. Suddenly the simple question doesn't seem so simple.



Maths begins with the development of prenumber skills, which are defined as:

- Making simple comparison
- Identifying same and different
- Matching
- Simple classification

These skills are largely developed through play in the early years and form a part of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum delivered at preschool and during the reception year at school. They are assumed to be secure when starting KS1 maths curriculum in year 1. Karen McGuigan, Founder and author of the Maths For Life programme, believes that these prenumber skills should be continued in the curriculum and explored further as a child gains in life experience.

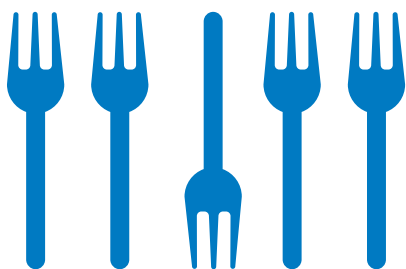
She recognised when she was working with her middle son, Lance, who happens to have Down syndrome, that it was essential to ensure that he had mathematical language to underpin his understanding of numbers. She explains:

“How can we form a ‘5’ with a ‘hat, neck and a big round belly’ if we have no idea what ‘round’ means? How can we draw a ‘7’ as two ‘straight’ lines if no one has ever defined what ‘straight’ means? How can we see that ‘9’ is an upside down ‘6’ if we can’t visualise what ‘upside down’ means?”

By ensuring that mathematical language is modelled daily in everyday life, children can visualise, understand, and apply that language to their learning at school.

“Which one is different?... That one... Why?... Because it’s upside down. Now can you see that a ‘9’ is an upside down ‘6’?”

“Which one is different?... That one... Why?... Because it is the wrong way around.”



“We are too quick to move on from prenumber skills. We tick the box on ‘secured’ when a child can do the obvious ‘the same’ and ‘different’ question. However, it is working through the subtle and classification type questions that really cement the language and connections for the future. It is never about the right answer. It is about being able to articulate the why and having the language to support the rational thought process.”

Karen highlights positional language as another topic that isn’t really seen as maths but again underpins a child’s ability to understand a maths question or indeed a basic instruction.

Mummy, I got into trouble today at school. Miss Jones told me to go stand behind Maya in the line. When I didn’t do it, I got in trouble.

Why didn’t you go stand behind Maya?

Mummy, I don’t know what ‘behind’ means!

Classifying - “It is important to remember that there might be more than one way to classify or answer a question. It is always good to accept the choice given and ask the question why? It leads to more understanding on the thought process of the student.”

“Children are like lemmings – they follow each other.”

Reception teachers rely on the older children in the classroom to understand the instructions and for the younger children to follow them. It is assumed that by following the instructions all the children will develop the understanding of what they mean. This isn’t always the case. It is essential to explicitly teach this positional language and ensure that every child understands.

Positional language is not only used daily in instructions, but it also underpins understanding of maths questions. Think of this question, “How many prime numbers are there in between 10 and 20?” Even if you know what a prime number is, you can’t answer this question correctly if you don’t understand the meaning of ‘in between’.

“When we read an English comprehension or a book, we can get the general gist of the story and context without understanding every single word. We can answer questions and explain what is happening in our own words. In maths it is important to listen and understand all aspects of the question. For example, if we take the question ‘How many boys play football after school on a Wednesday?’ – when we look at the data to select the answer, we must understand that it is only boys, playing football, after school and on a Wednesday that we need to count.”

Positioning - “Getting a student to model positional language using their own body during play or PE is a fantastic way to engage and ensure that concepts are understood.”

Although Karen’s programme ‘Maths For Life’ is a differentiated approach to teaching maths for students with additional learning needs, she believes the principles apply to all children.

“Maths is a series of building blocks and connections. Just like when building a house, you need solid foundations. A key element of this is mathematical language. I believe that if we spend more time ensuring that the language of maths is understood in real life, children will have a more secure platform to make the connections in maths. Parents, teachers, teaching assistants can all make a difference by being more aware of mathematical language and using it daily outside the remit of the maths lesson.”



MYTH
BUSTING

FASD – The Invisible Brain-Based Condition

By Louise Burton,
speech and language
therapist

Would you be surprised to hear that Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is thought to be the most common non-genetic cause of learning difficulty? A study completed by the University of Bristol in 2018 indicated that 6% of the research cohort had FASD. This is equivalent to 4 million people in the UK, which is higher than the number of people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This means that you are very likely to come across children in school affected by this condition.

FASD is an umbrella term representing the range of effects caused by exposure to alcohol in utero. It is a neurodevelopmental condition resulting in lifelong cognitive, emotional and behavioural challenges, as a result of damage to the brain. Many people will have heard of the term Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), which is a type of FASD.

Despite the prevalence and impact of this condition, many children go

unidentified, due to it being known as a hidden disability. It is a common misconception that children need to present with specific facial features in order to get a diagnosis, however it is estimated that less than 10% of children on the FASD spectrum have these distinct facial features. Some children do not present with any obvious characteristics and their symptoms will be purely behavioural, meaning that many go undiagnosed.

Is it estimated that 85% of children with FASD are in the care system, and this can make diagnosis more challenging as information about maternal alcohol use may not be available. It is important to remember, however, that FASD occurs across socio-economic groups. The amount of alcohol necessary for damage to occur is unclear, therefore there is no known safe amount of alcohol that can be consumed during pregnancy.

In addition, many children with FASD are misdiagnosed as having ASD, ADHD or OCD. These co-existing disorders usually have overlapping symptoms; students with ADHD present with hyperactivity and impulsivity, which are common features of FASD.

These challenges mean school

settings are often unaware that they have children with FASD in their classrooms; the children's difficulties are not identified, and appropriate strategies are not in place. Having FASD can be a considerable barrier to learning because the child's affected brain learns in a different way to their peers. This unusual style of learning and, at times, challenging behaviour can be very difficult for school staff to manage.

“Keeping routines, rules and expectations consistent between home and school helps children to learn and remember what is expected of them.”

Each child with FASD will have individual learning strengths and difficulties, as these depend on the extent of damage caused to the developing brain. There is, however, a typical profile of shared characteristics that many children with FASD will present with. Their spoken language skills are often in advance of their understanding, meaning that they can present as very articulate, masking their difficulties understanding what is being asked of them. They often present with symptoms of hyperactivity, impulsivity, inattention, and sensory-seeking behaviours. They have significant difficulty with executive functioning, working memory and social communication skills.

FASD has a significant impact for learning across the curriculum as the damage results in difficulty acquiring new information, linking new information to previously learned information and generalising knowledge to other contexts – all the things that make you a successful learner. The good news is there are strategies that can help children with FASD in the classroom. Some strategies may work with a particular child, and some may not, and this may change on different days, so persistence is essential.

Strategies to help children with FASD in the classroom

DEVELOP A CHILD PROFILE



If you are informed that a child has FASD, or you are concerned about a child, start by gathering information during focused observations to develop a profile; what is known about the child, what are their learning strengths and needs, which learning methods appear to be the most beneficial (e.g., visual, kinaesthetic), and how do they cope with obstacles and react to change? This can help to identify priority learning needs that will guide staff in determining appropriate strategies.

WORK AS A TEAM



Children with FASD are best supported when those around them work together. Parents know their children better than anyone and can often provide invaluable information about their child's strengths and difficulties. Keeping routines, rules and expectations consistent between home and school helps children to learn and remember what is expected of them. Seek advice from professionals to support your understanding of the child, such as Occupational Therapy (OT) to support sensory processing needs.

ADAPT THE ENVIRONMENT



Often the most successful strategies are those that change the environment around the child, rather than trying to change the child, who has a lifelong neurological condition. Try and create a calm classroom space and remove as many distractions as possible, to support the child to focus on what is important. Have clear and consistent routines and rules, backed up by visual support, and try to prepare the child for any changes. Provide time for regular learning breaks, including opportunities for movement.

KEEP IT SIMPLE



Children with FASD often have difficulty understanding and processing spoken information. They will have difficulty carrying out multi-step instructions and often need considerable help to organise and complete tasks. Break down instructions and tasks into small steps and provide visuals, such as task management boards. Abstract language and concepts, such as mathematical or time concepts, can be particularly difficult for children with FASD. Use concrete, visual representations, such as calendars or sand timers, to back up abstract spoken language. Be prepared to repeat key learning as children with FASD need more practice to learn and make tasks automatic.



You can find out more information about FASD and lots of strategies to support children at <https://nationalfasd.org.uk/>



11 MARCH

ONLINE CONFERENCE SLCN: A Whole School Approach



KATE FREEMAN,
CONSULTANT

Speech and Language
in Education

11th March 09:00

I am so excited to be acting as host on the second Link Live event on 11th March. Now that the 'new normality' is settling in, we recognise the benefits of keeping some of what we have experienced over the last two years, so the Link Live will be held again as a virtual conference.

We have an amazing line-up of speakers, with some extra-special guests (including the national icon, Michael Rosen and Gogglebox's Baasit Siddiqui) to bring the subjects alive!

Everyone joining us will have the opportunity to hear up-to-date research, practical applications for the classroom and for small groups, as well as first-hand experience of what speech, language and communication needs mean to individuals. Other topics include the speech, language and communication needs of looked after children, under 5s, primary and secondary aged pupils. Additionally, we will hear local authority experiences of support packages.

The sessions all provide opportunities for learning that will support the children, young people and families that you work with.

In this edition of The Link magazine, The Link Live speakers provide a taster of what you will be able to access through the conference.

I look forward to seeing you there!

11th March 09:10

Children and young people with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN): Reducing Vulnerabilities and Increasing Life Chances

Over the last decade, we have learnt much more about the many vulnerabilities of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). We know these children need more support to learn, engage with their peers, develop their self-esteem and confidence and to transition into independent life. I will talk about what we know about the vulnerabilities of children and young people with SLCN.

for and support them. The talk will focus on children and young people in looked after care and the urgent need to support their SLCN and to enable services to effectively meet their needs. This has the potential to reduce their vulnerabilities and increase their life chances.

 @JudyClegg2

We will listen to the voices of young people with SLCN and those who care

Live Q&A

With our expert
speakers



Tickets: speechandlanguage.info/linklive



30-day
on-demand
access



.....
BAASIT SIDDIQUI,
Managing Director of
Siddiqui Education Ltd.
.....

11th March 10.00

Digital Story Tellers

The pandemic has highlighted the value of digital technology in and out of the classroom. I am really looking forward to joining you all for The Link Live 2022 and being able to share with you my experiences of working with disadvantaged young people and how technology can be used in exciting ways to help them share their story, celebrate their skills, and build their confidence. Through my 'Digital Storyteller' presentation I will share examples of the amazing activities and workshops that are out there for your school and young people to explore. From pitching ideas for television shows, to creating a Podcast celebrating inclusion we shall explore and celebrate the power of technology combined with effective teaching and how this can be used to foster collaboration, creativity, and communication. I am proud to be able to use the platform and experiences Gogglebox has given me to champion the incredible work schools, teachers and organisations are doing to support young people and I look forward to sharing these with you in March.

11th March 11:00



.....
JORDAN SCOTT
Poet and Children's Author
.....

Fluency is a Fiction: stuttering, poetry, and the dysfluency of all things

Scott has written five books of poetry and was the recipient of the 2018 Latner Writers' Trust Poetry Prize for his contributions to Canadian poetry. Scott's debut Children's book (illustrated by Sydney Smith) *I Talk Like a River* was a New York Times best Children's book of 2020 and the recipient of the Schneider Family Book Award which honours authors for the artistic expression of the disability experience.

 @jscottwrites

Instagram: @squeezedlight

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www.siddiqui-education.co.uk
www.time-training.com

 @SiddiquiEdu

 @TimeEdu

morning
session



Tickets: speechandlanguage.info/linklive



DR SARAH SPENCER
Speech and Language
Therapist and Senior
Lecturer – University
of Sheffield

11th March 13:00

A Whole School Approach to Inclusion for Pupils with SLCN in Secondary Schools

This conference session will argue that secondary school is the perfect place to support development of all pupils' spoken language skills. We will also review the evidence of how to successfully include young people with SLCN in busy secondary school classrooms. We will consider:

- Why the stakes are high: we need to get support for spoken language development right during the secondary school years
- Why adolescence is a time of opportunity as well as challenge for those pupils with SLCN
- Approaches to facilitating successful transitions from primary into secondary school
- Preparing young people for life after secondary school

- How whole-class interaction can scaffold and support spoken language skills
- Strategies for teaching new words and concepts in secondary schools

Dr Sarah Spencer is a senior lecturer at the University of Sheffield and a specialist speech and language therapist with expertise in working with secondary schools to boost spoken language skills. Sarah has led projects to support spoken language development in secondary schools and she is the editor of *Supporting Adolescents with Language Disorders*, a book published by J&R Press in 2018.

 @SSpencerSALT



MICHAEL ROSEN
Headline Speaker

KEYNOTE
SPEAKER

11th March 14:00

Using vocabulary to inspire a love of language and literacy

Michael Rosen is one of Britain's best loved writers and performance poets for children and adults. His first degree was from Wadham College, Oxford and he went on to study for an MA and a PhD. He is currently Professor of Children's Literature at Goldsmiths, University of London where he co-devised and teaches an MA in Children's Literature.

Michael is also a popular broadcaster and has presented BBC Radio 4's acclaimed programme about language, "Word of Mouth" since 1998, as well as regularly presenting documentary programmes for BBC Radio 4 and BBC Radio 3, including the Sony Gold Award-winning "On Saying Goodbye".

In his presentation, Michael will be sharing ideas that encourage rich vocabulary through practical games/activities that teachers and TAs can use in the classroom and tips for working with older children who can be trickier to engage.

www.michaelrosen.co.uk

 @MichaelRosenYes

11th March 15:00



SANDRA BOWEN

Team Leader
ISEND CLASS

Language Link in East Sussex

East Sussex began their partnership with Speech Link Multimedia Ltd back in 2009.

At that time LLSS (The Language & Learning Support Service) were involved in running a pilot project to support schools in meeting the needs of pupils experiencing difficulty with language and communication.

When I joined the service as a Practitioner in 2013 the pilot was extended to include support to parents/carers of pupils identified as having a language & communication need. Hear about how one of the schools in a deprived area of East Sussex embraced the project and developed the offer across the school.

Our partnership has continued and has resulted in other projects being undertaken including with the Virtual School in East Sussex who support Children who are Looked After across the county, I will give a brief overview of this project.

In 2015 the newly named Communication Learning & Autism Support Service (CLASS) began to use Secondary Language Link as part of assessment work they carried out. Over the last few years schools have used the free trial offer to explore how the programme can fit into the school day and now 16 of the 26 secondary schools in East Sussex are using the programme. I will talk about how schools are using the programme and how CLASS plan to offer support to encourage schools to use all aspects of the programme.

I look forward to seeing you.

<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk>

Online
live chat
throughout
the day

11th March 15:30



LOUISE BURTON

Speech and Language
Therapist, Speech and
Language Link

The Effectiveness of Infant Language Link in Reception

At Speech and Language Link, evidence is at the core of all our work. As part of product development, we rigorously evaluate our packages to ensure that they are making a significant difference to children's speech, language and communication skills, as well as practitioner's confidence and classroom practice.

We are very proud of the relationships we have built over the years with schools, local services and agencies across the country, such as with Sandra Bowen in East Sussex. These relationships enable us to work as partners, to ensure that our assessment and intervention packages work in real-life settings and impact on outcomes for children and school staff.

I am a speech and language therapist, and in my role I lead on our research and evidence base. At The Link Live conference, I will be speaking about a research study we completed to investigate the effectiveness of Infant Language Link for children identified with language difficulties on school entry. For the study, we compared progress in oral language skills made by children in schools using the package, with children in schools that were not using any package to support SLCN. At my talk, I will be sharing the results, which importantly show that a realistic intervention schedule, that fits in with school practice, is highly effective for developing language skills.

louise.burton@speechlink.co.uk



Tickets: speechandlanguage.info/linklive



DR SAMANTHA
WELD-BLUNDELL

BSc. (Hons) MSc.
DECPsy. CPsychol

11th March 16:00

Communication and interaction in the under 5s

Samantha has a particular interest in working with adults to support the emotional wellbeing and effective learning of their children. Sam's professional qualifications include a BSc in Forensic Psychology from Leeds University, a MSc in Child and Adolescent Mental Health from King's College London and a Doctorate in Child and Educational Psychology from the University of East London. Samantha worked in London for 7 years before joining the Educational Psychology team for the Jersey Government. Sam is now back in the UK and the proud founder and CEO of her online independent Child and Educational Psychology service, The

Little Psychology Company - a new online platform designed to respond to the needs of modern families.

Samantha's presentation will look at preverbal and verbal communication styles. What is communication? What is the recipe for healthy brain and language development? Ages and stages, what should we expect? Relationships, attachment and how as adults we can support positive communication and interaction.

samantha@thelittlepsychology.co
www.thelittlepsychology.co



TICKET
£80+VAT

gives entry to all
sessions and
on-demand access
for one month



Meet our Exhibitors

nasen
Helping Everyone Achieve

Our new modular CPD programme, linked to the nasen Recognised Teacher/Practitioner of SEND award, provides a comprehensive introduction to SEND and effective support for children and young people.

Fundamental topics and core messages are introduced through webinars from our Knowledge Hub with further opportunities for extensive examination of this content through dedicated live sessions and reflective practice.

Booking is now open! nasen.org.uk/mcpd



Modular CPD Features:

- Flexible delivery - modules contain both on demand content and live sessions
- Ability to complete modules as standalone CPD or in combination as part of the nasen Recognised Practitioner/Teacher of SEND award
- Opportunities to apply your learning to your role

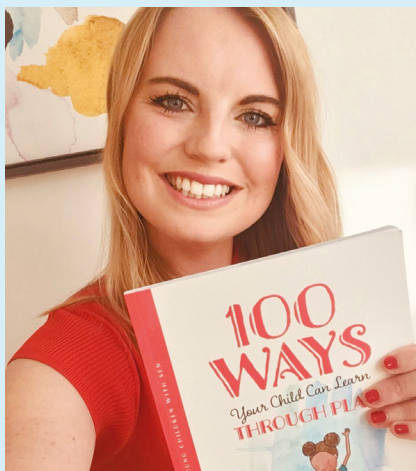
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'...what the pupil is communicating can be tricky. This might be frustration, anxiety, sadness, confusion, or insecurity to boundary testing.'

DEMYSTIFYING BEHAVIOUR

MYTH
BUSTING

By Kate Freeman, consultant speech and language – in education



I recently watched BBC2's series '*Don't exclude me*'. It provided insights into how pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) display as behaviour that challenges. The programme examined impacts on teachers, classes, families and individual pupils. One criticism of the programme is a lack of focus on understanding any special educational needs or disabilities (SEND)¹.

Despite DfE guidance identifying: "Where there are concerns about behaviour, the school should instigate an assessment... to determine whether there are any underlying factors such as... difficulties with speech and language"², many pupils with SEND do end up being excluded. In these instances, the SEND is often not fully identified or left unsupported: The Institute for Public Policy Research's report highlighted excluded children as "twice as likely to be in the care of the state, four times more likely to have grown up in poverty, seven times more likely to have a special educational need and 10 times more likely to suffer recognised mental health problems".

Behaviour that challenges has strong impacts on teachers. This can disrupt developing positive pupil relationships. The New Teacher Project study found 40% of teachers identified "having students who are behind academically or behaviourally challenging" as among the top three barriers to feeling like an effective teacher⁴.

Deep down, we probably all recognise that behaviour is communication. Understanding this, at a conscious level, is important. Identifying roots of behaviour, what the pupil is communicating, can be tricky. This might be frustration, anxiety, sadness, confusion, or insecurity leading to boundary testing.

The behaviour may also arise from difficulties processing and responding

to communication demands: A Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) publication⁵ identifies 81% of children with emotional and behavioural disorders have significant unidentified speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)⁶. The useful publication continues, "In a study of pupils at risk of exclusion from school, two thirds were found to have SLCN"⁷.

Australian-based **Complex Needs Capable** describes approaches to understanding behaviour.⁸

- **The internal approach** – behaviours are seen as originating from the individual, including mood, mental health, character. (This might include SEND).
- **The external approach** – behaviours are linked to the environment (such as noise levels, lengths of instruction, pressure to speak etc.).
- **The interactional approach** – considers the interaction of both internal and external factors.

The organisation recommends the **interactional approach**, helping us to understand both internal and external factors influencing a person's behaviour.

So, it is vital to understand the pupil's underlying difficulties, as well as how the environment can support or exaggerate these. The RCSLT factsheet⁹ and its evidence for a review on exclusions¹⁰ identifies how a pupil's SLCN can present in a classroom. They also highlight

strategies to minimise difficulties for the pupil, and ultimately the teacher and the rest of the class. For example:

- A lack of ability understanding instructions can impact on indirect requests, such as "I'm waiting for the class to be quiet".
- Some pupils with poor attention and listening skills / working memory may be prone to distractions and may need instructions presented in chunks of information.
- Pupils who struggle naming emotions can find it difficult to calm themselves through 'self-talk', leading to emotional regulation difficulties.
- SLCN also impacts on literacy leading to difficulty accessing the curriculum.

As well as focusing on increasing pupils' speech, language and communication skills, it is important to identify any sensory needs, which may present as wriggling in chairs and apparent increased energy. Guidance provided by an occupational therapist could include a weighted lap-pad, wobble cushion or elastic resistance band wrapped around the table legs the pupil could kick against.

Useful tools to explore managing emotions include social stories¹¹ and zones of regulation¹². We also know that the use of visuals to reduce language load can be very effective.

Finally, numerous therapies which support mental health are delivered verbally. These 'talking therapies' may be much harder for children with underlying SLCN to access – another reason to boost pupils' speech and language skills!

¹ <https://www.specialneedsjungle.com/dont-exclude-me-send-first-thought/>

² Department for Education (2016). Mental health and behaviour in schools. Departmental advice for school staff.

³ Institute for Public Policy Research (October 2017). *Making the difference breaking the link between school exclusion and social exclusion*. Kiran Gill, with Harry Quilter-Pinner and Danny Swift

⁴ https://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP_Perspectives_2013.pdf

⁵ <https://www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/media/Project/RCSLT/rcslt-behaviour-a4-factsheet.pdf>

⁶ Hollo, A, Wehby, J.H. and Oliver, R.M. (2014). *Unidentified Language Deficits in Children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders: A MetaAnalysis*. *Exceptional Children*; 80(2), 169-186.

⁷ Clegg, J. (2004). *Language and behaviour: an exploratory study of pupils*

in an exclusion unit. British Psychological Society Conference, University of Leeds, UK, September 2004

⁸ <https://www.complexneeds capable.org.au/understanding-behaviour.html#:~:text=%20Behaviour%20is%20a%20means%20of%20communication%2C%20and,a%20person%20being%20perceived%20as%20having%20challenging%20behaviour.>

⁹ Ibid rdclit.org

¹⁰ <https://www.rcslt.org/wp-content/uploads/media/Project/RCSLT/exclusions-review-rcslt-written-evidence.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/communication/communication-tools/social-stories-and-comic-strip-conversations>

¹² <https://zonesofregulation.com/index.html>



CELEBRATING Bilingualism



By Heather Stevens, speech and language therapist

Ciao!

Marhaban!

Ola!

Hi!

In recent years the number of learners speaking English as an additional language (EAL) in UK schools has seen a huge increase. The percentage of pupils who are bilingual or have EAL varies from school to school and across areas but there are more than a million children between 5–18 years old in UK schools who speak in excess of 360 languages between them. The National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC) reports that EAL learners represent the norm in schools in the UK, and that bilingualism is the most common human state, being more common than monolingualism globally.

With figures like these, it's clear that all teachers need to feel confident in teaching EAL learners. Having to support pupils speaking a number of different languages can seem a daunting task but armed with the appropriate knowledge and resources it is a rewarding challenge. The most important step in any challenge is the first step. The first step in gaining confidence in teaching children who have EAL is to have a positive attitude towards bilingualism and to gain an appreciation of the advantages that it offers pupils.

It's not difficult to understand that bilingual speakers might have an advantage when learning other languages and have better linguistic skills but research shows us that the benefits extend beyond language learning. Learning another language stretches your mind intellectually, requiring you to focus on the structure and sounds of the language and to understanding implied meaning.

The part of the brain called the executive function has been proven to be stronger in bilinguals and this means that they find it easier to focus and are better at avoiding distractions. Executive function also gives bilinguals better cognitive control over information, allowing them to switch tasks and multitask more easily and be better at problem solving and critical thinking

As well as linguistic and cognitive advantages, there are great social advantages to being

bilingual. Bilingual children develop a strong sense of cultural identity which can impact on their sense of self-worth and their mental health. The more languages a person speaks, the more people from different cultures they are able to communicate with and learn from, giving access to a much wider "world view". Being fluent in more than one language makes travel easier and opens up international job opportunities.

Having taken the first step towards appreciating the advantages of speaking more than one language, the next step is to provide appropriate support for pupils in your class who have EAL. Here, too, having a positive attitude helps. Having pupils from a wide variety of cultures provides a good starting point for classroom discussion and information gathering about other cultures. Pupils can be invited to share their traditions and stories with their classmates. Not only does this provide a learning opportunity for everyone in the class but it also helps to reinforce the bilingual pupils' self-worth as well as their pride in their cultural heritage.

Although children with EAL have a number of linguistic and cognitive advantages, they cannot be thought of as a "homogenous" group. It is important to find the strengths and weaknesses of each individual pupil when they join your school. Limited exposure to English or limited experience of formal education shouldn't be mistaken for a learning

or language difficulty. Children with EAL should not be included in language intervention groups with children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). Giving a pupil with EAL inappropriate tasks that don't challenge them cognitively is likely to impact on their self-image and self-esteem. They should be supported to engage activities which are increasingly challenging, using their own language to scaffold their learning and the classroom environment, where they are surrounded by good models of English, is the best place for this to happen.

Despite these advantages, there will be students who have English as an additional language who do have language difficulties. These difficulties can only be identified through thorough investigation which will involve discussion with the parents and carers and where possible, input from other speakers of the child's first language. Only if the child is struggling to develop their first language should they be considered as having a speech, language, and communication need (SLCN).

Although Language Link cannot be used to identify a language difficulty in any language other than English, it can prove a useful tool in identifying which areas of English a pupil finds challenging. It can also be used to check that a pupil with EAL is making progress and that the difference between their understanding of English and that of their peers is narrowing.

Rather than being daunted by the challenge, welcoming and celebrating difference in the classroom will lead to a much more fulfilling experience for teachers and all pupils, whatever their cultural or language background.

Bonjour!

Hello!

Hola!

Q: How can we develop a
**Whole School
Approach**
to supporting pupils with SLCN?

A: Use Language Link to identify and support hidden SLCN from 4-14 years

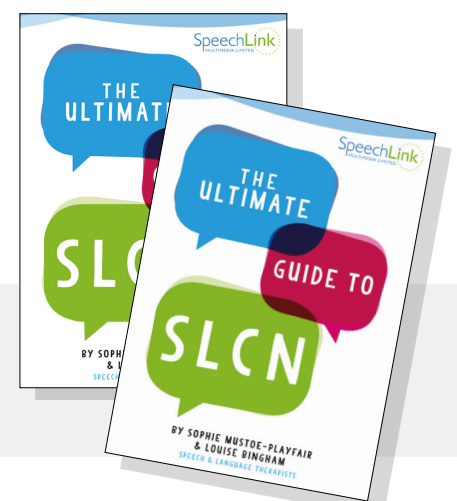
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Work in partnership with parents/carers using the Parent Portal and home-learning resources

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* Written by speech and language therapists, the handbook offers step-by-step guidance for fostering a communication-friendly environment, engaging all staff and integrating straightforward but highly effective strategies.