

The Link

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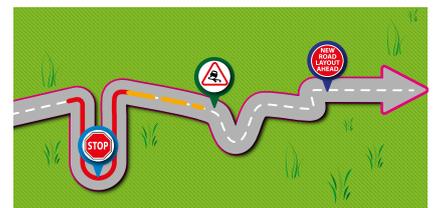
THE LINK LIVE

We review this year's exciting event and let you know what's new for the upcoming year. Page 3



SHARING NEWS

6 ideas for successfully sharing news with others, for those who have difficulties expressing themselves. Page 7



A DECADE OF THE LINK MAGAZINE

Celebrating 10 years of The Link magazine and how it has supported the journey of SLCN. Page 12

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Editor's Letter

Hello and welcome to this very special issue of The Link magazine. I can hardly believe that the publication is in its 10th year, and this is the 26th Issue!

The landscape of education and SLCN support has changed dramatically over the last decade and on pages 12-13 our speech and language therapist, **Juliet Leonard**, takes us through the last decade of SLCN in education and how The Link has endeavoured to support schools during some very tricky times.

How good do you believe the cyber security to be in your school? Speech and Language Link's Data Protection Officer (DPO) outlines how important it is for your school and I'm proud to say that it seems we are highly regarded among IT school suppliers for our transparency and due diligence when it comes to processing schools' data. Page 6.

This issue provides lots of information on supporting pupils to regulate their arousal state. On pages 4-5, SaLT **Yin Collighan** and OT, **Anne Garcia** offer a collaborative approach for supporting attention.

On pages 10-11, teacher **Claire Campbell** presents her 'Silly Session': a great way to get pupils into a calm state where they are ready to learn.

We met so many schools at the recent Link Live conference including SaLT practitioner, **Les Elvin**. We hope you love his positive affirmations as much as we do (see our School Spotlight feature page 17) and that you will be interested to hear about how he helped roll out Infant Language Link at his school in Barnsley on page 19.

Finally thank you to all those who attended this year's **Link Live** conference – it was a truly inspiring day. Read more about it on page 3, where we also bring you some very exciting news about our **new Link Live twilight sessions** commencing in the autumn.

You, our schools, are what makes The Link what it is. Please send in your '**School Spotlight**' features, top tips for supporting pupils with SLCN and requests for future articles to: helpdesk@speechlink.co.uk

We look forward to hearing from you – have a wonderful term!

Best wishes,

Claire Chambers

Editor, The Link at Speech and Language Link, award-winning support for SLCN



Children from Stone Bay primary school in Kent, 'shaking their sillies'. Page 10.

www.speechandlanguage.info

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



The Link Live 2023 a day of CONVERSATION, INSPIRATION and INNOVATION!

Speech and Language Link's annual event was once again hosted by Kate Freeman, consultant - speech and language in education, and the fantastic line-up of presentations kicked off with a keynote from Professor Courtenay Norbury on the impact of development language disorder (DLD) on education and life outcomes.

Mushy Asghar from 'Channel 4's Educating Yorkshire' talked about his life-long stammer and how the incredible support from his teacher enabled him to become the public speaker he is today. A great motivator for school staff indeed.

provided practical ideas and tips for delegates to take back to the classroom.

The conversation between the delegates in the live chat buzzed throughout the day with questions and the sharing of good practice.

"It was an absolutely brilliant day. To listen to such talented and erudite speakers and to share the time with others who are passionate about speech and language was enlightening and a joy. The length of each session was just right, allowing time for Q&A and some breathing space in between. The chat feed was great as we were able to interact with each other throughout.

Thank you!"

Link Live delegate



Great News!

The Link Live has now received accreditation from CPD UK, meaning delegates can count it as 7 hours of CPD.

Get the whole conference on-demand at: bit.ly/43Mf5dF



We were also joined by OT, Kim Griffin; SaLT, Sidonie Delaney; and Georgina Durrant, former SENCo, author and founder of SEN Resource Blog, who all

NEW FOR 2023/24 - THE LINK LIVE SESSIONS

LinkLive

SESSIONS

We are changing the format of The Link Live to enable more people to attend. Still the same great interactive conference, content and speakers but now held over termly, twilight sessions.

We will be bringing you a primary and secondary session each term, beginning this autumn and we are very pleased that Kate Freeman will return as our sessions' host.

THE LINK LIVE SESSION, PRIMARY:
Thursday 23rd November – 15:30 – 17:00

Presenter: Lynn How, owner of Positive Young Minds and editor of Teacher Toolkit
[positiveyoungmind.com](https://www.positiveyoungmind.com)

Topic: Challenges in schools from a SENCo and senior leadership team perspective and how every classroom can be more SLCN friendly as part of high quality and inclusive teaching.

Followed by live Q&A

The new Link Live Sessions will be FREE for Speech and Language Link subscribing schools. Keep an eye out on your subscriber homepage for your free ticket code.

Tickets go on sale on Friday 6th November and cost £25+VAT per session.

review

ASK A Therapist



Q How can I support attention in the classroom?



By **Yin Collighan**, speech and language therapist and **Anne Garcia**, advanced paediatric occupational therapist

“How can we support attention in the classroom?”

Why can you spend hours putting together a lesson, meticulously planning and creating resources - to find it falls flat?

Often, it can be linked to attention. Attention can make or break any activity and plays such an important role in a student's success. Regulation, sensory needs and communication needs can come into play: prior to and during the lesson itself. As a speech and language therapist and an occupational therapist, we share our collaborative approach to help children to engage.

Helping a child to be ready to attend

Before the lesson is introduced, aim for the child to be in a ready, regulated state to focus. To get them there, we should consider two things.

What is their current state of arousal? What does the next lesson involve?

Children will be transitioning from activity to activity and across arousal states too. Activities packed with movement will bring much-needed energy to a tired class, whereas calming activities may bring them down, if they are in a heightened state.

How you communicate with the children should work towards this ready state. For those with lower arousal levels, stepping up our energy so that our voice is expressive and more animated works well. When there is lots of movement, excitement and a frenzy of chatter, it is tempting to try to talk loudly over the activity to gain everyone's attention. In fact, dropping our volume and adding in anticipatory pauses encourages listening and supports calming.

The environment has a large impact on regulation. Stripping back overly busy, bright displays, closing doors or dividers and putting up curtains to block out visual and noise distractions are definitely worth considering. Busy patterns and

bright colours on clothes and strong perfumes may be overwhelming too.

The Activity

Ensure that the activity is at the appropriate attentional skill level for your learners to lead to increased success and engagement in sessions. Some children cannot listen and do at the same time. The adult can help by waiting for them to finish what they are doing and then giving the next instruction. The same distinctive reintroduction phrase used across staff to get the child's attention back may help e.g., “OK, OK and - back to me.” or a countdown to prepare them that they will need to switch attention soon.



A CHILD WITH ATTENTION DIFFICULTIES MAY FIND IT HARD TO:

- Follow instructions, especially whole class instructions
- Follow large chunks of spoken information
- Stay on track when talking
- Participate in conversations
- Take turns and follow social cues

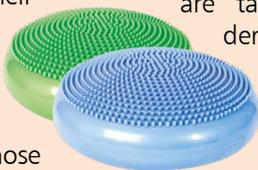
Posture

Supporting the core makes all the difference. If a child is not supported, their sense of instability can take up some of their focus. The core can be supported by having an appropriate height chair and table and modelling leaning on the back of the chair to encourage upright sitting. For those children who may need additional support to sit up on the carpet, using a cushion may help.

Activities do not have to be seated as some children benefit from standing activities to have a break from prolonged sitting. Movement breaks and changing positions will help support attention.

Useful tools

Trial small equipment such as fidgets for those pupils who seek sensory stimulation to regulate their arousal level; drawing or doodling may work too. The use of a wobble cushion will support attention for those children who have difficulty sitting still and require additional movement feedback when seated.



Chewelry (or a drink to sip) may help those who benefit from oral sensory stimulation to focus, those we may observe to chew or mouth items, for example.

Other considerations

Eye contact can be stressful for some individuals, and insisting on eye contact can stand in the way of being able to focus. You can reduce the stress by making it easier for children to 'facewatch', e.g., sitting at an appropriate level when you are leading a group. Understanding a child's unique signals that shows they are attending would be important.

For some children, just being present in the classroom can be challenging enough. Our priority at this stage is to work on how to keep them regulated, not focus on if they are taking in the information or demonstrating overt listening behaviours. Placing further expectations here might be overwhelming.

Communication

Lastly, it is very important to consider **how** what we say impacts on attention. How many of us have 'zoned out' during a meeting at least once? Attention is a huge struggle for many children with SLCN and we should consider our use of universal strategies to scaffold what we say:

- Breaking language down
- Providing clear explanations
- Checking understanding as we go
- Providing visuals to help children to attend and engage

Agreed, there are plenty of things to consider here. This is where we call for the support of the fellow adults in the class to observe children's attention behaviours and feed back to you.

It's not always easy - but if you get it right - all of that meticulous planning and lovingly-crafted resource making will have been worth it!



How safe is your children's data?

By **Paul Strout**, Managing Director of GDPR Assist and **Annette Henry** – Data Protection Officer, providing data protection support to subscribing schools in the South West.



Schools have a vast array of technology available to them to support their pupils' learning and development. Where that technology is provided as a cloud-based tool, schools should be mindful of the data sharing with external organisations which occurs and ensure that the sharing and processing by the school and the supplier doesn't introduce any unnecessary risk for their children or their staff.

Under UK GDPR, schools have an obligation to conduct a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) when the processing is "likely to result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms [of people]". The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) helps to clarify the meaning of this phrase by giving examples of activities which would indicate a "high risk", and which would then require a DPIA. There are two examples which are of particular relevance to schools:

- Using systems or processes which are new to the organisation, and
- Processing personal data of vulnerable people

Given that children should always be considered as being vulnerable people, and that any proposed cloud system or process would be new to the school, it is clear that schools should be doing their due diligence and conducting a DPIA prior to implementing new technology which will be processing pupil data. The rise of cyber risks including ransomware attacks and data thefts also means that schools should be paying particular attention to these risks.



Annette Henry provides Data Protection Officer support to schools in the South West on behalf of Devon County Council. Annette says, "The benefits of conducting a DPIA and engaging your school's DPO for advice and support from the outset will help with early identification of any potential problems. The DPIA process helps to identify and reduce privacy risks to safeguard

personal data, reducing the potential for damage or distress as well as reducing the risks of reputational damage to a school in the event of a data breach. Some providers make the DPIA process a challenge, but Speech Link Multimedia Ltd knew exactly what information I was looking for when I approached them. This enabled me to provide the school with the assurances needed".

Speech Link Multimedia Ltd is committed to helping our schools with their obligations around DPIAs. Our DPO, Paul Strout, says "we regularly receive questions from schools when they are looking at deploying our assessment products and we are very transparent about the processing involved with our products. As a processor acting under the instruction of the school, we ensure that our contractual terms include the protections a school should expect to see under UK GDPR, and we provide privacy information in plain language which describes what data will be processed on the school's behalf and how we will do it. Any school is also welcome, indeed encouraged, to talk to us about any specific questions they might have". He says that common questions include:



- Do we have a Data Processing Agreement? (Yes, we do - within our published terms)
- Do we transfer data out of the UK? (No, all processing is within the UK)
- Do we encrypt data? (Yes, we do - both when it is being moved between the school and us, and also when it is being stored by us)

- Do we use any non-UK suppliers to process data? (No, we don't)
- What security certifications do we have? (We hold Cyber Essentials Plus, and our UK hosting provider is certified to ISO 27001)

Paul also says, "Where an application is designed to be used directly by the pupils then it will also need to comply with the Age-Appropriate Design Code. Our products aren't specifically designed to be used in this way; however, we have assessed them against the code and can reassure schools that our products do comply".

"GDPR Assist provide data protection support and outsourced DPO services to commercial organisations and charities".

When schools within Devon were recently implementing our products Annette Henry contacted us as part of their DPIA process.

"I was impressed with the enthusiasm Speech Link Multimedia Ltd showed for engaging in this process and the way they were able to transparently describe the processing involved. They clearly understand the importance of schools conducting a DPIA and really did help us meet our obligations."

We're proud of the work we have done to demonstrate to schools that we are deserving of their trust. There is a huge variety of vendors and technologies out there and schools should not presume that all are safe for use, instead schools should engage their DPO and do their due diligence, conducting a DPIA and ensure that they are appropriately safeguarding children's data.

For simple, clear GDPR help and advice get in touch with Paul at: gdprassist.co.uk

Sharing News



By **Alison Fowle**, speech and language therapist

Like many children her age, my 6-year-old can be reluctant to talk about her school day at pick-up, preferring to share precious nuggets of information as I'm leaving the room at bedtime. I'll say, "See you later alligator" and she'll casually respond with something like "I stroked baby chicks today. They were called Fluffy and Barry", having not mentioned this at all in the 4 hours since coming home.

She caught me off guard on Friday when she ran out of school desperate to tell me about something that had happened that morning. She excitedly explained that during a lesson about flammable materials, the burning of the straw had got a little out of hand, damaging a table and setting off the fire alarm. The school had to be evacuated, and the start of lunch was disrupted (this was an important detail for a child who loves her food). She recounted the event with much enthusiasm, pausing occasionally to check my response to her tale. She clearly recalled and

explained the key events, hopping from one foot to the other with excitement, finally exclaiming "Can you believe it? The fire alarm went off because of a real fire!"

This little exchange reminded me of the joy and connection that can come from sharing news and the challenges that young people with SLCN might experience when attempting to do this. With this in mind, here are some ideas for how you can ensure that those who experience difficulties expressing themselves have the opportunity to successfully share their exciting news with others.

MY 6 TOP IDEAS

- 1 **Provide a good model:** briefly outline your own weekend activities. Demonstrate use of time concepts, such as 'first...then'. Explain how activities made you feel and why. Hearing a good model of how to share news will support the young person to understand how to share their own.
- 2 **Use visuals/props:** encourage the young person's family to send in some pictures via the class email, along with a short explanation of the news they want to share. Alternatively, they could draw (and label if they are able to) a picture to share with the class or bring in an object that relates to their news.
- 3 **Provide a structure:** help the young person organise their ideas using visuals. For example, you could use the **Talk Template** - describe what happened from the *Language Link* programme to help the young person organise their ideas and ensure that they get all the key information across to the listener. It might be helpful to work through the template with the young person 1-1 to practise what
- 4 **Use questions wisely:** open questions are a great way of encouraging expression, but some children will find them challenging to answer. They may struggle to work out what it is you want to know and give you a huge amount of detail or no information at all i.e., "What did you do at the weekend?" – "Nothing". Try asking questions that give the child more guidance about what you want to know, e.g., "What was the best thing you did at the weekend?" or "What made you smile?"
- 5 **Adapt your questions to the child's level:** for children who do not yet have the language skills to respond to an open question, you will need to adapt your questions to their level, e.g., "Who did you see?" "Where did you go?" "How did that feel?" - the short explanation from home will give you the context to enable you to do this. Use the *Language Link Question Cue Cards* alongside
- 6 **Try something different:** an alternative to sharing news would be to encourage the young person to talk about what they DID NOT do at the weekend. For example, "At the weekend I did NOT go to Mars in a rocket, and I did NOT share my picnic lunch with a Martian". Let their imaginations run wild. The child might find it helpful to draw a picture of what they have not done at the weekend first, so that they can use this to support them when feeding back to others.



Find out more about how *Language Link* helps support pupils share their news at: speechandlanguage.info/infant

How do you teach about periods to a Year 6/P7 class?

By Trudy Cross, Yasmine and Tom Consultant



This is a lesson that many teachers dread, but you don't have to. As a Year 6 teacher for 15 years, I have always found this lesson to be valuable to all pupils. Having a good rapport and establishing ground rules with the class also helps during this lesson so pupils are respectful towards each other.

Beforehand, ensure that you collaborate closely with parents/carers when planning to deliver this lesson. Invite parents/carers into school so you can discuss what will be taught, address any concerns, and help support parents in managing conversations with their children on these issues. It can be useful to discuss any barriers to understanding that the pupil with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) may have with their parents so that these can be considered when planning the lesson.

“Clear communication and explanations without euphemisms or other figurative language are needed.”

Depending on the dynamics of the class you may wish to teach in single sex groups; however, it is a huge help to girls, and others who menstruate, for boys to know what's going on. It provides an opportunity to model that periods

can and should be discussed openly, and that periods and menstrual products don't have to be hidden or kept secret. For pupils who have speech, language and communication difficulties (SLCN), it would be beneficial to them if you pre-teach key vocabulary beforehand in a small group or 1-1. Use pictures and photographs to support new vocabulary.

Use: Welcome to *Growing Up with Yasmine and Tom - Relationships, Lesson 8 Periods interaction*. This online resource is interactive and includes colourful animations to support language and as such supports understanding for children in the class. Encourage the pupils to write down any questions they may have (anonymously if they wish) and pop them in a box. A pre-made question slip, supported with pictures or symbols will be useful for children who might struggle with literacy, which many children with SLCN do. Provide time after the video so that those children who may need a little more time to process the information and formulate a question can have the chance to do so. Pupils should also be given the opportunity to talk to

a trusted adult, away from the class if they have questions about periods at any time.

Reiterate that all questions are valid, and no-one should feel embarrassed.

Show the pupils a range of menstrual products. Some pupils may have already started their periods, but many will not have so it is important to explain how to use the different products. FPA have a brilliant information sheet which explains how each product is used if you are not familiar with a product. In the lesson I took a period pad and showed the class how to take off the covering on the sticky strip and put it into a pair of pants. My friend who was a nurse, gave me a set of photographs which showed the sequential order of changing a period pad. This visual resource was perfect for all learners, as they could see exactly what to do. One child even commented, “Oh that's what those are bins are for in the toilet”.

At this point, you could lead a discussion about how everyone has their own choice about which product they use, for ease, comfort or environmental reasons. I then explained that menstrual products need to be changed regularly and disposed of in a sanitary bin or wrapped up in a tissue, disposal bag and placed in a bin.

One of the many questions asked is, "Do periods hurt?" Explain how some girls have stomach cramps during their periods while others do not. Exercise, warm baths and a hot water bottle placed on the stomach can help. But if these are not enough, they may need to take a mild pain reliever. Ensure that you explain that all periods are different for each person.

Finish this part by being reassuring and positive about periods emphasising that they are not something to be embarrassed about or not talk about. They are a sign that a body is growing up and that the body is healthy.

Finally for the plenary, answer the questions in the box factually and honestly. Use visual support in the form of gestures, pictures, objects and diagrams to help you to scaffold the explanations appropriately for those children with SLCN. After this part it is also

useful to give out booklets, period packs and clarify where pupils can get period products from if they start in school. Remember, a pupil with SLCN needs to know exactly what to expect, what to do if they are at school, what a period will look like and how it may feel. They only really work with the information they are given so clear communication and explanations without euphemisms or other figurative language are needed.

As a teacher, you have a wonderful opportunity to prepare the pupils in your class for their monthly period. Teaching a pupil about menstruation before they have their first period is the best way to make sure they know what will happen. It's also a great time to combat social taboos and false information about menstruation that can hurt a pupil's wellbeing.



the sexual health company

Family Planning Association (FPA) started as a movement in the 1930s with the aim of providing contraception to married women and in 1961 the contraception pill was first prescribed in FPA Clinics. We have been supplying unbiased and up to date information on Relationships and Sex Education, Sexual and Reproductive Health, and Postnatal Health and Wellbeing ever since. Many of our products are aimed at primary and secondary children to help teachers navigate RSHE in the classroom.



Silly Session

By **Claire Campbell**,
teacher Stone Bay School, Kent



My name is Claire Campbell. I have been a primary school teacher for twelve years, I have specialisms in languages, music, and forest school, and I now work in SEN and lead on Sensory Integration. All our pupils at Stone Bay are autistic and have other severe and complex learning needs. During my time working to support sensory integration needs at Stone Bay School I have created a session called a 'Silly Session'. We love Silly Sessions at Stone Bay School and I am excited to share why!

What is a Silly Session?

A Silly Session is a session that practises self-regulation, encourages positive interactions, and develops communication skills. It aims to leave the group of pupils in a calm and regulated state where they are ready to learn. In this sense, it is a little like a sensory circuit as children are taken through different activities in a prescribed order with the end goal of achieving calm. In a sensory circuit however, there is an element of expectation that the children, with some support and adult modelling, will engage with certain resources in a specific way; that they will pick up the bean bags and aim them at the target and not in fact collect

them all and stash them in a corner, or organise them by colour, or intently get to work at trying to release all the beans! You may know and love a child that would be more interested in the latter options - we certainly do (many!) at Stone Bay School! The Silly Session takes away this expectation, takes away the resources, and offers energising fun through positive (and silly!) interactions with grown-ups and peers.



So what actually happens in a Silly Session?

- 👍 It starts with a song to a familiar tune to support setting your space up for a relaxed session, making the space as comfortable as possible for your learners.
- 👍 Now get everyone nice and silly - our favourites include, tickles, silly faces and laughter yoga
- 👍 Next is 'choice', which allows children to choose an activity and use their preferred method of communication to request more. This section can be tailored to your group and their interests. I enjoy offering trays of flour and rice to sprinkle and pattern in, twiddle toys to explore, and coloured scarves to wave and flutter. But it could be something very different for your group - perhaps books to read, or puzzles to complete.
- 👍 Finally shake their sillies out with a lively song and dance before settling down for calm time.



What are the benefits of a Silly Session?

Laughter is the best medicine! Finding ways to get children silly and laughing has many health benefits. Laughter strengthens the immune system and lowers blood pressure. Laughter can also help to relieve anxiety as it allows you to skip to the relief stage of the stress cycle.

Communication:

Laughter is a form of communication. It is an accessible way for children to communicate whether they are verbal or pre-verbal. Sharing smiles and laughs with someone can be very bonding and using the ethos of 'Intensive Interaction'¹, there is a real opportunity to connect with the children, responding to children's actions and vocalisations, respecting their communication style, allowing them to feel listened to and developing many non-verbal communication skills, such as facial expressions, eye contact, and body language. There is also a section of this session that is called 'choice'. In this section children are able to practise using their preferred communication system, whether it be PECS, a communication book, an iPad, or spoken language. This is teaching the children that they can request tickles and silly faces as they would anything else using their communication system. This is therefore supporting the children in developing independent self-regulation skills.

Self-regulation:

These sessions aim to give the children a fun and playful opportunity to practise their self-regulation skills alongside the 'Zones of Regulation'² - a system which is well embedded at Stone Bay School. How often do we say to children 'calm down'? I wonder how many children actually know how to calm down? What does calm feel like? How do I achieve this? The children have lots of fun getting silly and moving themselves firmly into the 'Yellow Zone'. They are then supported to become calm and move themselves back to the 'Green Zone'. They are learning what silly feels like, what calm feels like, and specific activities that they can use to get calm.

"Get everyone nice and silly with tickles, silly faces and laughter yoga."

Listening and Attention Skills:

This session involves several mini transitions that include changes such as being on the floor or sitting at a table, following something on a screen, being part of a group, or interacting with an adult 1:1. This is excellent practice in following routines, transitioning between activities, tolerating preferred activities finishing, and switching between using skills needed to interact with others and those needed for independent activity.



WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

If you would like to find out more about 'Silly Session' then I would love to hear from you. Please complete the Google form via this link to express your interest: bit.ly/42mrHXB

¹ <https://www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2016-11/Intensive%20Interaction%2004.pdf>

² <https://www.zonesofregulation.com/index.html>

A journey through a decade of SLCN



By **Juliet Leonard**, speech and language therapist

10 years ago, the idea for The Link magazine was conceived. Its aim? To provide the SENCo of every UK primary school with clear, accessible information on supporting SLCN (speech, language and communication needs) in the classroom.

Derry Patterson, lead speech and language therapist for Speech and Language Link, noted in the foreword of the first issue of The Link in 2013: "It seems today, that we are constantly expected to provide more for less. All public services are being asked to use innovation to provide first class services with reduced budget". So, what has changed in the last ten years? Many readers may consider that the challenges

have become even greater and the obstacles more difficult to overcome. And yet school staff continue to astound us by adapting with resilience and innovation - two potent and effective antidotes to managing complex changes and challenges. All of this, during a decade of unprecedented events which will go into the history books of generations to follow.



2014

THE BIRTH OF THE EHCP

The 'Statement of Special Educational Needs' is replaced by the Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) to and speed up and streamline the process of identifying and supporting children with SEND in a timely way.

IN THE LINK:
advice to engage parents and pupils with target setting:

rb.gy/97zif



2015

RESEARCH CONTINUES

A widening body of research continues, looking into service provision and the impact of SLCN on emotional health, wellbeing, and future prospects (Gascoigne et al, 2015; Law et al, 2017, Hollo et al, 2014; Norbury, 2016, SEND Code of Practice 2015).

IN THE LINK:
summary of the recent 'Funding for Disadvantaged Pupils' Report:

rb.gy/axdqo



2017

DLI

'Developmental Language Disorder' replaces the previous diagnosis of 'Specific Language Impairment' or 'Language Disorder' to increase recognition, understanding and access to services

IN THE LINK:
the first of many articles aimed at informing and supporting schools about DLD.

bitly.ws/CSDi



2018

BERCOW 10 YEARS ON

John Bercow's follow up of services and identification of speech, language and communication needs finds that, despite wider recognition and awareness of SLCN, little has changed in terms of services and support available, and a greater level of resource is still needed.

IN THE LINK:
school staff are sign posted to practical support materials following the report.

bitly.ws/CSCn

The Link wins the David Ryan Publication award at the 2019 nasen Awards.



2020**COVID-19**

The pandemic brings about sudden changes in our freedoms as well as children's education forcing us to quickly find innovative ways of working. Overnight, teaching staff become technological gurus, emotional supporters and crucial carers.

IN THE LINK:

Schools are offered a free summer subscription of Infant Language Link.

50,000 assessments of Infant Language Link, autumn 2020 showed an increase of 20%+ in the number of Yr R pupils starting school with the lowest levels of language.

2022**AFTER THE STORM**

The impact of COVID-19 on wellbeing, support and educational attainment becomes more apparent. Once again, schools step up to bridge the attainment gap for children with SLCN.

IN THE LINK: schools get free summer access to the Junior Language Link support package and Speech and Language Link launch their new SLCN training modules for support staff – The Link CPD.

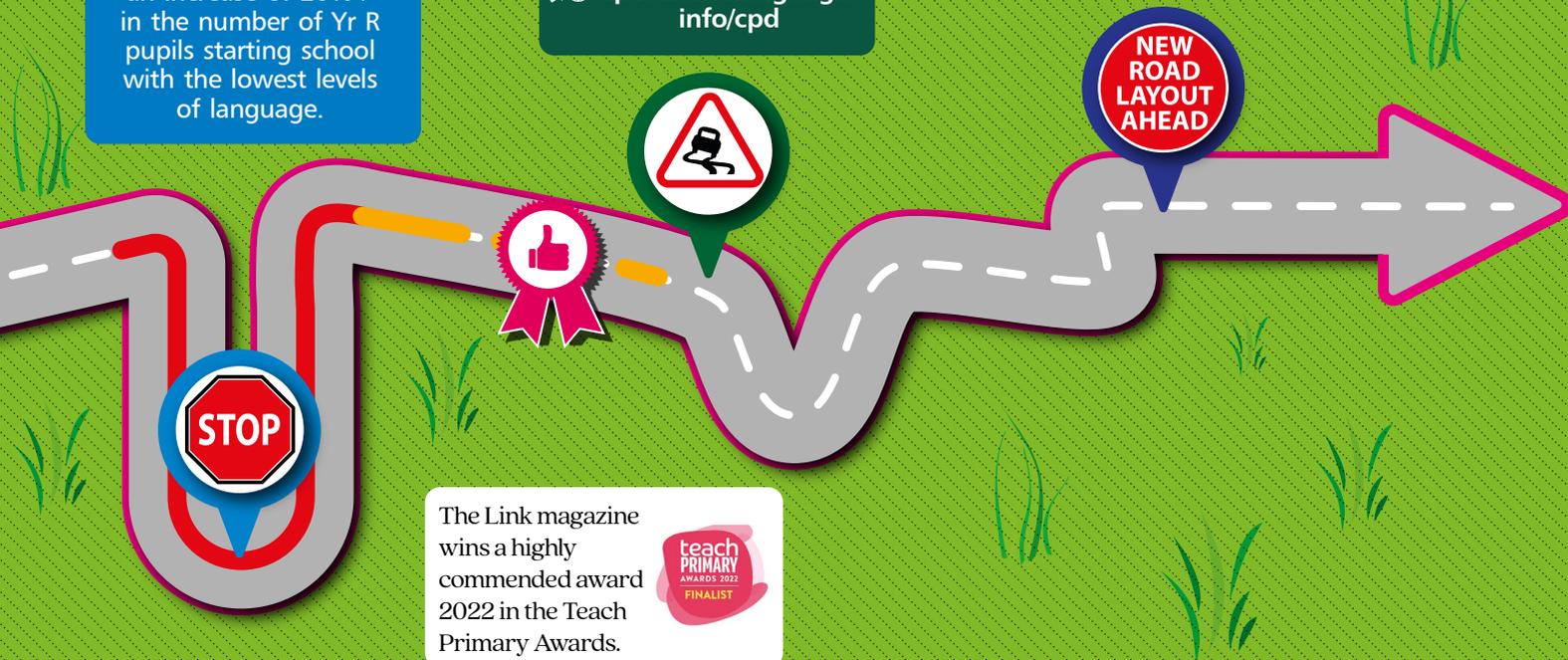
 speechandlanguage.info/cpd

2023**A NEW LANDSCAPE**

Transformational reforms are introduced regarding EHCPs and the provisions for mainstream schools supporting children with SEND.

Speech and Language Link partners with the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and Sheffield Hallam University to deliver a national study investigating the impact of using Infant Language Link across year 1.

 speechandlanguage.info/study



The road has certainly not been a simple one to navigate. Strains on public services have brought about many shifts in the way that SLCN is supported. Health care services have been stretched to capacity and have had to make difficult decisions regarding service levels. The education sector has become a more prominent part of the support

offered and taking on additional responsibilities for identification and intervention of this group of children and young people. This paradigm shift has resulted in a higher level of awareness of SLCN within schools, as teaching staff look at the ways in which they can most ably support these pupils to achieve their potential.

So, ten years on, what have we gained?

Despite the twists and turns that have made working with children and young people so challenging over the past 10 years, we are all still here - with a passion to make a difference, and with creativity, innovation and dedication in abundance!

Vocabulary is linked to word reading, not just comprehension



By **Rose Brooks**, University Tutor, LACIC (Language Impairment in Children), Sheffield University, Department of Human Communication Sciences.



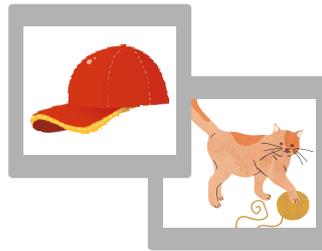
Vocabulary teaching has been featured in a number of previous editions of *The Link*. It is appropriate to continue this focus given vocabulary's crucial influence on attainment, behaviour, wellbeing and future employment¹. While schools understand the impact of vocabulary instruction for improving reading comprehension², they often do not realise that vocabulary also contributes to the learning of word-level reading skills such as phonemic awareness (orally breaking words into individual phonemes) and word reading.

To better understand this relationship, we need to differentiate between two dimensions of vocabulary. Vocabulary *size* relates to the quantity of known words, whereas vocabulary *depth* reflects how well a word's meaning is understood. Research suggests that vocabulary size is a predictor of children's phonemic awareness and word recognition skills, as shown by the dotted arrows in the diagram. Studies indicate that vocabulary contributes between 4-15% of a child's phonemic awareness skill^{3,4} and 6-11% of phonic reading^{5,6}. The wide range of results is linked to the varying age groups and tests used in the studies.



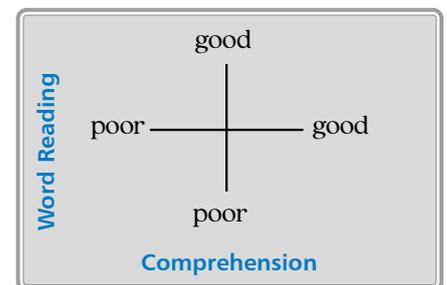
One explanation of the relationship between vocabulary and word recognition can be found in the lexical restructuring hypothesis⁷ which suggests that words are initially stored as wholes, but as children learn more vocabulary the sound structure of words in the lexicon (internal dictionary) begins to overlap,

for example if the word 'cat' is already known and the word 'cap' is introduced. In this way, vocabulary is stored in an increasingly distinct and segmented way that helps the child sound out words for reading.



Vocabulary continues to predict phonemic awareness and decoding ability until around the age of 8, which is when phonological skills typically reach maturity^{8,9}. Thereafter, vocabulary mainly influences improvements in comprehension skills. Although vocabulary does not predict phonic reading after this point, it still has an influence on irregular exception word reading, such as the word 'yacht'^{10,11}. Exception words cannot be read purely through phonic decoding and require access to the child's understanding of the word's meaning. This aligns with the changing influence of vocabulary as a predictor of comprehension over decoding in Key Stage 2.

Literacy teaching in the UK is based on the Simple View of Reading¹² comprised of two separate strands for word recognition and comprehension. The previous discussion has demonstrated that vocabulary and word reading are not separate but rather inter-related skills. My presentation at The Link Live 2021 conference described a vocabulary teaching approach that emphasises both sound and meaning aspects of words. Results showed that vocabulary instruction enabled young children to improve not only their vocabulary, but also their phonemic awareness and phonic reading.



Viewing vocabulary and word-level reading as highly connected skills¹³⁻¹⁵ presents a challenge for schools. Since vocabulary is linked not just to comprehension but also to word reading, teaching can be carried out in a more integrated way. For example, the sounds and the meaning of new vocabulary can be highlighted, as well as the link to print. Working on vocabulary in this way creates the opportunity to increase vocabulary as well as growth in phonemic awareness and phonics, particularly in younger pupils and potentially also for those who struggle with language and literacy.

Read on for more information...

If you are interested in developing your knowledge, understanding and skills in language and literacy development to support your work or future career, take a look at the 'Language and Communication Impairment in Children' (LACIC) course at Sheffield University. There are a range of postgraduate distance learning qualifications to choose from, including the Postgraduate Certificate (one year); Postgraduate Diploma (2

years) and MSc programmes (2 or 3 year options), all based on part-time online study supported by tutors and occasional study days.

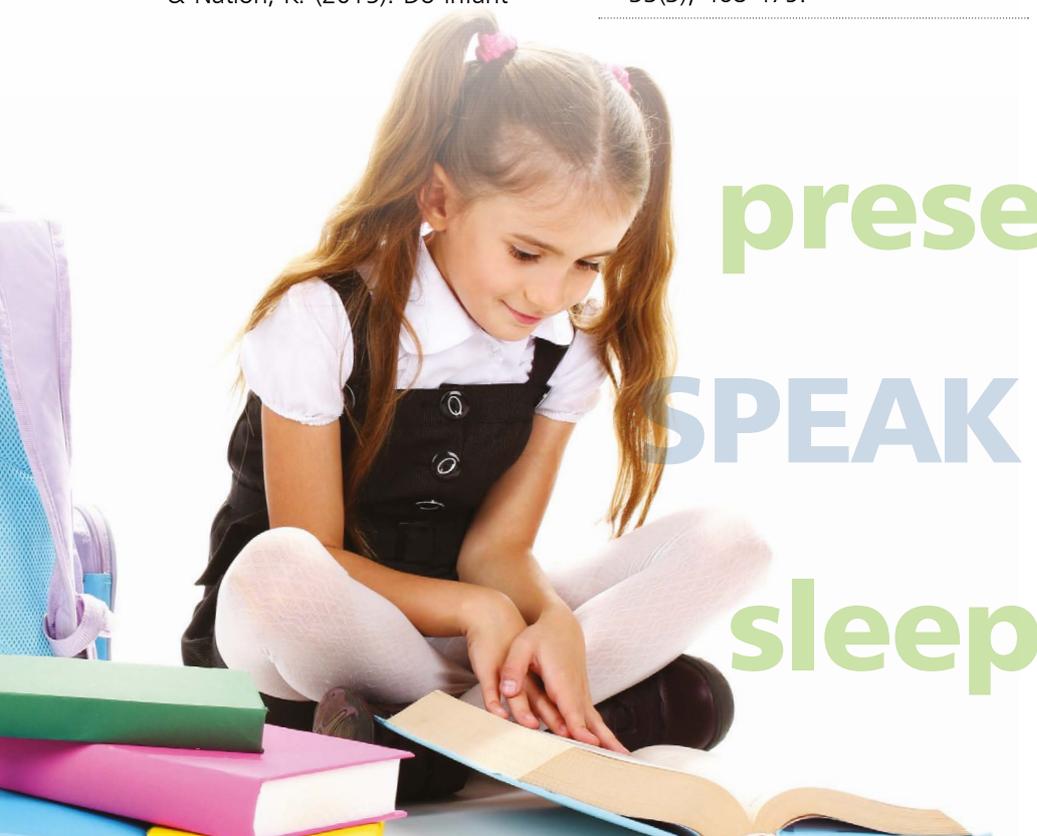
The course would be relevant if you are you are a teacher, early years lead, SENCo, literacy co-ordinator, advisory teacher, educational psychologist, speech and language therapist or other professional with a specific interest in supporting children's language and literacy development.

Please visit the website for further details:
<https://bit.ly/41Z7mYa>

The university is offering **100+ scholarships** worth **£10,000** each for home fee paying students starting a taught course in 2023.

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The Link Community

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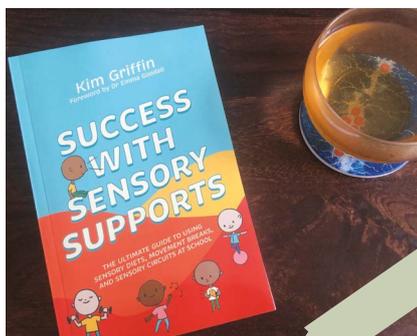


The Link magazine exclusive giveaway.

We have 2 copies of occupational therapist, Kim Griffin's new book, *Success with Sensory Supports* to give to the first 2 schools pulled 'out of the hat' on Friday 14th July 2023.

Sensory needs are being recognised as a vital part of learning, development and engagement within the classroom and are being used more often to make education both accessible and fun.

For a chance to get your hands on a copy, just email: helpdesk@speechlink.co.uk



TAKE PART IN OUR INFANT LANGUAGE LINK STUDY

There is just enough time for primary schools in Education Investment Areas (EIAs) in England to register to take part in our Infant Language Link study in partnership with Education Endowment Foundation and the Sheffield Hallam University. The national study will be investigating the impact of schools using Infant Language Link across Year 1.

There are many benefits to schools participating in research. Your school will be adding to the evidence-base of what works in education in England helping drive forward reform and excellent practice.

Find out more at: speechandlanguage.info/study

Sheffield Hallam University

Sheffield Institute of Education



Education Endowment Foundation

Hands up who wants to know more about supporting language difficulties in the classroom?

We can help you to support the language needs of students with our speech and language therapist-led Link CPD Language Course.

NEXT COHORT COURSE DATES

Module 1: 28th September 2023

Module 2: 15th January 2024

visit: speechandlanguage.info/cpd



FREE Cyber Security Training

After reading about the importance of safeguarding your pupils' data (page 6) you might be interested in some training for yourself and other staff members.

The NCSC has produced FREE Cyber Security Training to raise awareness and help school staff manage some of the key cyber threats facing schools and comprises of a 'self-learn' video and a presentation pack for group delivery. A certificate is available on completion of the training.

Access the training here: www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/cyber-security-training-schools

SLCNews

Not a subscriber to Speech and Language Link? Then sign up to The SLCN News online newsletter for the latest speech, language and communication news, tips and advice on supporting speech and language in the classroom.

speechandlanguage.info/linknews



School Spotlight

Speech and Language Practitioner, Les Elvin says: "Cudworth and Barnsley are very special places to be, where everyone has a place of belonging!"

Churchfield School works on the motto 'Grow, Achieve and Shine'. However, these are much more than words or a motto. At Churchfield we enable all our children to **grow** as independent learners, **achieve** more than they ever believe they could and **shine** as unique individuals."

I always say:

- 👍 I'm passionate, not perfect. No child is ever the same and it's good to be different.
- 👍 A question a day will keep their own doubt away!
- 👍 If you grow as a professional so will the children. How full is your toolbox?
- 👍 Don't dread it, buy into it as a long-term project.
- 👍 Success can be measured in smiles too not just progress tables and pie charts in reports.
- 👍 If you need a moment out or are feeling overwhelmed, make sure you take a coffee with you and remember it's not always as bad as it may seem.
- 👍 Teamwork does make the dream work!

And finally remember that,
"In life one thing is certain,
Friday will come"



Speech and Language Link subscriber information for this term

Here's a quick checklist of things that need to be complete before the end of July:

- Post-Intervention measures entered
- Intervention groups closed
- Reports printed where necessary
- Please DON'T create your 2023-2024 classes or enter new pupils before September, as we will be 'rolling over' classes during the holidays. Your new cohort can then be uploaded quickly and easily in September, using a CSV file exported from SIMS or any other MIS.
- Look out for your monthly subscriber newsletter.
- Our team will be exhibiting at nasen Live in Birmingham on July 7 - come and say hello!

So far this academic year, our Speech Link and Language Link users have:

- 👍 Carried out 207,203 assessments
- 👍 Created 13,288 intervention groups to support speech and language skills

This means we've helped identify thousands of pupils with having speech, language and communication difficulties who can now be supported with Speech Link and Language Link interventions, both in-class, 1-1 and in small language groups.

Well done to our amazing schools!




Get in touch

WE'D LOVE TO HEAR YOUR SCHOOL NEWS

Have you got something speech and language focused that you would like to share with our community? It could be your own top tips, a case study, or something else you think other schools would be interested to read about. Send over your ideas to claire.chambers@speechlink.co.uk and we will feature as many schools as we can. We look forward to hearing from you.



Events Team.

In March we set off for Liverpool to co-present a bespoke Link conference in partnership with Knowsley LA. We have been working with Knowsley LA for the past 6 months to create and deliver a speech and language conference in line with their current 0-25 strategy for speech and language support and we were delighted to meet the 100+ delegates that attended on the day.

The event consisted of live presentations from Kate Freeman, consultant: speech and language in education and the Knowsley local authority team along with carefully selected recorded sessions from our previous Link Live conferences, including the fantastic author and poet, Michael Rosen and Baasit Siddiqui, from Channel 4's Goggle Box.

The Link Live team are really excited about the prospect of future partnerships with local authorities and multi-academy trusts to create and deliver tailored speech and language conferences for their schools.

If you would like to know more about these conferences, please email the team at: linklive@speechlink.co.uk



PICTURE BOOKS TO HELP YOU TALK ABOUT TOUGH TOPICS

Every teacher and TA will need to support pupils going through difficult times and picture books are a great way to help pupils with SLCN make sense of something that may be difficult for them to understand.

The Book Trust, the UK's largest reading charity has some lovely picture books to help you talk about tough topics while exploring emotions your pupils might be experiencing.

These are great books to signpost caregivers to, as shared reading with their child will also support the child's emotional wellbeing.

Books support across the age ranges 3-8 years. Find out more here:

www.booktrust.org.uk/booklists/t/picture-books-to-help-you-talk-about-tough-topics/



The Speech and Language Link Facebook Group

Join the conversation with 700+ 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.



Have you heard of The Thirty Million Word Gap?

In what has become iconic research, disadvantaged four-year-olds in the US were found to have heard 30 million fewer words than other children. This is a staggering and extraordinary idea. Researchers also identified a difference in the type and quality of interactions experienced by less well-off children with quality and quantity found to be of equal importance.

Read more at: <https://bit.ly/3L0ZjD8>

One SaLT practitioner to another – using Language Link



Meet Les Elvin, speech and language practitioner at Cudworth Churchfield Primary school in Barnsley, South Yorkshire and find out about how Infant Language Link works in his school.

Tell our readers a bit about your role.

Les: I have been working at Churchfield School for almost 17 years supporting children with various needs. 13 of those years have been spent working with children aging from 5-11 years old with SLCN. Churchfield School is a two-form entry school with 400+ children on roll. Cudworth and Barnsley are very special places to be where everyone has a place of belonging!

In September 2022 Barnsley LA bought Infant Language for all the 69 primary schools in its area. How did you go about implementing the package in your school?

Les: We needed to ensure that the staff leading and delivering the interventions had sufficient time within their timetables to assess children, get familiar with the Language Link website, understand the structure of Language Link and also prepare the resources from Year R to Year 2. Resource printing time is vital for a smooth start to this intervention.

How many children did you screen and in which year groups?

Les: We used the online assessment to screen the 42 children in Year R and a selection of children from Years 1 and 2.

Did you find the programme easy to use?

Les: We found the in-package training videos vital to the setting up process and running of this package for our children. The videos were very clear and were more helpful than just reading a self-start guide.

What other things were useful?

Les: The Speech and Language Link Help Desk is a fantastic free resource and probably the best resource tool you will have during your time delivering Language Link as they're very knowledgeable and can save you so much time.

Do you have any other tips for schools using Language Link for the first time?

Les: Ensure the person leading the interventions meets regularly with class teachers, phase leaders, the school SENDCo and other, relevant, staff so that a holistic approach



is taken for supporting each child identified with SLCN. Also stick to the planned sessions by Language Link and don't be tempted to divert away from the detailed and structured planning.

So overall a good start?

Les: Absolutely yes! We feel we have had the best start to this package and have seen effective outcomes for the children receiving the Language Link interventions. Early identification of SLCN has helped us give support to the children who require it much sooner enabling us to be more proactive rather than reactive. We will continue to use it in years to come.



Our fabulous and friendly Speech and Language Help Desk was a finalist in the Bett Awards 'Service and Support' category 2021.



See for yourself the difference Language Link can make to the outcomes of your pupils with SLCN. Take a FREE trial here: speechandlanguage.info/trial

CPD accredited online speech and language training

LEARN HOW TO IDENTIFY AND SUPPORT SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION NEEDS (SLCN) IN THE CLASSROOM WITH **THE LINK CPD – LANGUAGE COURSE.**

Developed by Speech and Language Link's speech and language therapists for school staff who want to make a real difference to the long-term outcomes of children.

The course consists of 2 modules:

Module 1: Introduction to Speech and Language

Module 2: Language Intervention

The online course offers flexible learning at a pace to suit you. Receive individual feedback and support from your speech and language therapist tutor and consolidate and embed learning with interactive activities and practical assignments.

“ I feel I am now much more confident in all areas of speech and language (and) I have already spoken to members of staff and given suggestions on things that maybe beneficial for them and for them to use within their classrooms.”

Link CPD participant

Next cohort course dates

Module 1: 28th September 2023

Module 2: 15th January 2024

Places are limited so book now to avoid disappointment:

speechandlanguage.info/cpd

Each Module costs £225+VAT and offers 10-15 hours of learning spread over 8-10 weeks.

