

# TheLink

PRIMARY

ISSUE  
27  
2023

THE SPEECH & LANGUAGE MAGAZINE FOR SCHOOLS



Brought to you by: Speech and Language Link - visit [speechandlanguage.info](http://speechandlanguage.info)



**FUZZY PHONOLOGICAL REPRESENTATIONS**  
and what we can do to help. Page 4



**ADHD**  
It's more than just hyperactivity and inattention. Find out more on Page 6



**CREATIVE CLASSROOMS**  
building communication skills through storytelling. Page 10

# CONTENTS

3

## Meet the therapist

Introducing Yin Collighan, specialist SaLT for Speech and Language Link

4-5

## Fuzzy phonological awareness

By Juliet Leonard, specialist SaLT

6-7

## There's much more to ADHD than hyperactivity & inattention

By Natalie Strong, specialist SaLT

8-9

## NEW, The Link Live Sessions

Twilight, CPD certified, speech and language sessions

10-11

## Creative Classrooms

By Sarah Eastaff, director of darts

12-13

## Growing up with DLD

By Shelbi Annison

14-15

## Ask a therapist

By Alison Fowle, specialist SaLT

16-18

## The Link Community News

19

## A day in the life of a Speech and Language Link CPD tutor

## Editor's Letter



Dear All,

A big hello and how are you from us all at the **Speech and Language Link** team.

As you are now well into the first term of a new academic year and have begun to get to know your pupils, you might be aware that for some, things aren't going as well as expected. This is the perfect time to begin to screen your new key stage(s) with Infant or Junior Language Link so that speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) are identified as early as possible.

Here at **The Link magazine**, we are as ready as ever to provide you with further support through inspirational and educational articles from our specialist contributors with advice and strategies around particular SLCN diagnoses that your pupils may have.

Talking of which, ADHD is a term that we hear often, and it seems we all have our own idea of what ADHD looks like! Specialist SaLT, **Natalie Strong's** article, on page 6, provides a very interesting read as she highlights other difficulties that pupils with ADHD may have – often a whole lot more than what its name implies.

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) awareness day is on the 20th October and we hope that you will be thinking about how you will raise awareness in your school. Read our heartwarming story from **Shelbi Annison** (page 12) as she shares her experiences of school life with DLD. Shelbi's story has a positive outcome, but just imagine the impact that an

earlier diagnosis would have made on her happiness and wellbeing. (Check out the RADLD website for loads of ideas on how you can help raise awareness: radld.org).

There's lots more in this issue, our regular **Ask a Therapist** feature provides tips on using technology to support SLCN on page 14 and we also meet one of the newest members of our speech and language therapy team, **Yin Collighan** - see opposite.

We are particularly excited about our 'new look' **Link Live sessions** that kick off on Thursday 23rd November. Your feedback told us that late afternoon is the best time for you to attend training and so we have divided this year's conference into 3 termly, twilight sessions. We agree the new time is a sensible change and at just £25+VAT per ticket, an affordable way to obtain SLCN CPD. As the sessions will be available on-demand after the event, they could also be used to train staff on an INSET day. Find out what this term's sessions will be about on pages 8-9.

As ever, we love to hear about what our schools are doing so please get in touch at: [helpdesk@speechlink.co.uk](mailto:helpdesk@speechlink.co.uk) if you would like to share something on our community news pages!

Have a great term.

Best wishes,

Claire Chambers

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

[www.speechandlanguage.info](http://www.speechandlanguage.info)

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



# MEET THE Therapist



Meet **Yin**, specialist speech and language therapist

## Tell us a little bit about yourself.

Hiya! I am Yin Collighan and I am a specialist speech and language therapist who started at Speech and Language Link around 10 months ago. I have worked in a wide range of different areas: my favourites including speech difficulties and Selective Mutism. I am of Chinese-Malay heritage and am proud to say that I am one of 9% of Asian speech and language therapists in the UK. I play the violin, do origami and enjoy running in my spare time!

## Why did you decide to be a therapist?

When my mum was 55, she had a brain haemorrhage and was put into a medically induced coma. When she regained consciousness, a very lovely speech and language therapist came to assess her language and swallowing, talking me through the process. This is where I became fascinated by the profession. I also adore children, so putting the two together, to become a paediatric therapist, made so much sense. I have never looked back.

## What do you do at Speech and Language Link?

A little bit of everything! I'm currently involved in the latest research, support participants on our training course The Link Speech and Language CPD, answer questions from schools via our Speech and Language Help Desk, create videos for Top Tips and provide my therapist's stance on the company's social media! If anyone reading this is in our Facebook group, hello!

My personal values align so well with those of the company - I am so lucky to be in a position where I can support many schools and spread awareness of speech, language and communication needs.

## What advice would you give to those working in schools to ensure students receive the support they need?

Communication skills are essential in all we do, so we must help individual students decide on the best strategies to support their communication and to use them consistently across the school - ensuring staff are on board with them too. A communication-friendly school environment benefits every student, not just those with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) - it breaks down barriers, improves behaviour and promotes inclusivity - think distraction-free spaces, visuals and labels, clear timetables and instructions, and frequent opportunities to participate - whatever a pupil's level of need.



g a t ?

p e r

p o g ?

# Advice from a 'PEACH TERRORIST'



**Juliet Leonard**, “specialist peach terrorist”, discusses fuzzy phonological representations and what we can do to help.

If you have worked with children with speech sound difficulties (perhaps using our Speech Link package) you will be familiar with how children develop sounds. These occur in a set pattern, with most sounds being in place by the time a child is 8 years old.

Some of the common patterns we see, when children change sounds within words, are predictable. For example, they may change every 'k' sound to a 't' sound. Cat will become 'tat' and car will become 'tar'. Children's speech sound systems mature with age, but some children might need extra help to learn to listen for and say these sound differences. There are also children who make inconsistent errors and may need a different approach

to support their speech sound development.

Many children start their reception year/P1 with unclear speech. At the age of 4 or 5, they still have sounds to learn and include in their talking. Usually, rapid progress occurs in the first few years at primary school, because of the focus on phonological awareness work in the classroom, that is: developing skills in listening, sound segmentation and rhyming. Children learn how to 'play' with

sounds - to change them around, to split them up and to make up funny new rhyming words.

Being able to listen for the sounds in words is also a crucial skill for learning new vocabulary. When we learn and store a new word, we need to remember both its meaning and the sounds that are in the word. This helps us to remember and to retrieve the word when we need it.

But what about those children who have all their speech sounds intact, but have some words that are produced incorrectly? These words can be understood within the context of the conversation, but you can tell that

# 4 TOP TIPS

So, what can teaching and support staff do to help children with fuzzy phonological representations?

**1 Revise sounds and meanings.**  
When teaching or talking about a new word, make sure that you talk about the sound components (i.e., the first and last sounds and the syllables) as well as the meaning of the word. This will help with storing, categorisation, and retrieval.

“Let’s say that word together: kan- ga- roo  
What is the first sound?  
Let’s clap the syllables.  
What does it mean?”

“Let’s make a funny poem.  
First, let’s think about what rhymes with ‘power’.  
It needs to have the ‘ower’ sound at the end.  
Shower! Flower! Sour!”

**2 Revisit phonological awareness activities,** even if the child has already done these in the past. Syllable clapping, rhyming and segmentation activities will help the child learn to listen for sounds and play with the parts of words. Within Infant Language Link, you will find lots of these games and activities in the Listening Groups. Speech Link includes Classroom Listening Games.

**Identity**  
“What does that word mean? Can you think of other words that mean the same, or similar?”

**3 Make links between groups of words,** to help children store and retrieve information.

“You had spaghetti?  
Spa- ghe- tti!  
Spaghetti is a sort of pasta!”

**Spaghetti!**  
“Can you think of other words that start with a ‘sp’ sound?  
Spot, sponge, spider...”

**4 Model the correct word, using segmentation and reinforcing the sounds.**  
This can be done gently and without the need for the child to feel that they have been ‘corrected’.

**Listen out for children who use fuzzy phonological representations in your classroom and think about what strategies you can introduce to help them to build firm links between words, their sounds and their meaning.**

For more information on how Speech Link and Language Link can help support phonological awareness and attention and listening visit: <https://speechandlanguage.info/>

they have not quite understood the meaning or the sounds within them.

Welcome to ‘**fuzzy phonological representations**’ - technically, this occurs when the child’s mental representation of the sounds and combinations of sounds in a word is not fixed. Simply - the word is stored incorrectly.

These children will say words, often with the correct sounds, but in the wrong sound sequence. They may call vegetables “venchtables”, a kangaroo might be a “kangareen” and spaghetti might be “persghetti”.

These children may have acquired all the target speech sounds for their age, but are still making errors, because they don’t have the firm foundation of phonological awareness, to understand the sound components in the words.

Fuzzy phonological representations are a good indicator that a child does not have the firm foundations that are needed for their reading, writing and vocabulary to be optimised and can be a symptom of an underlying gap.

# There's much more to ADHD than hyperactivity & inattention



By **Natalie Strong**,  
specialist speech and  
language therapist

When you think of ADHD, what first springs to mind? Hyperactive, misbehaving boys, day-dreaming girls? ADHD might stand for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder but there's a lot more to it than hyperactivity and inattention. A more accurate acronym would be more like this: **A.D.H.I.E.D.R.S.D.E.F.D** - and that's the short version!

Whilst hyperactivity (**H.**) and attention deficit (**A.D.**) (alongside impulsivity (**I.**), which doesn't even make the title) are the key diagnostic features, there are

several other evidence-based traits associated with ADHD. These include emotional dysregulation (**E.D.**), weak executive functioning (**E.F.**) (*planning, organising, problem-solving*), mental health problems including depression and low self-esteem, and rejection sensitivity dysphoria (**R.S.D.**) (*emotional over-reactivity/ sensitivity to criticism or rejection*). Oppositional behaviour is also a common issue, and for girls, the interaction of hormones and ADHD means that they are more likely to have severe pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS). Add this to the evidence

that "70% of those with ADHD have a comorbid condition" (NICE, 2018) - often ASD and anxiety - but also eating disorders, tics, learning disabilities and dyslexia, and an array of associated physical conditions including asthma and epilepsy, then we are looking at a very complicated condition. Unfortunately, its significance and impact on all areas of life is widely overlooked.

An even lesser-known characteristic of ADHD is language difficulties - children may find it hard to formulate sentences, to find the

# 5 Signs of ADHD

right word and to process the information they hear. This is partly because they find it difficult to listen and poor executive functions make it difficult to order thoughts. Research shows that it affects social language too. Children who find it difficult to process and articulate sentences, struggle to listen, and are constantly talking, butting in, and getting over-excited, not only find conversations hard, but are likely to struggle with making and maintaining friendships too.

It is estimated that "1.9-5% of children in the UK have ADHD" (Murphy et al, 2014) but it is largely under-identified, particularly in girls. The long-accepted ratio of boys to girls as 4:1 is now disputed due to the strong male bias in assessments and the different presentation of ADHD in girls (*more likely to have the inattentive type and fall under the radar*). Yet despite the numbers and the huge impact ADHD has on learning, social participation, wellbeing and life outcomes, teachers are taught little about ADHD in their training.

School staff are in the unique position of being able to spot differences in the way those with ADHD interact, behave and learn compared to their classmates. However, it is not an easy task, especially with the often-subtle characteristics or masking behaviours of girls. It is not uncommon for students to suppress their symptoms and then go home to have a meltdown.

Infant and Junior Language Link's assessments can be used by schools to screen all pupils to ensure early identification of SLCN needs, including some of those associated with ADHD.

**So what can schools do to help enable the all-important early identification of ADHD and reduce ADHD's impact on their pupils' education?**

- 1 Train staff on how to recognise ADHD and encourage timely assessment referrals via the SENCo or family. Training should cover practical strategies to support students both academically, socially and emotionally.
- 2 Primary SENCos need to carefully plan transitions with their secondary counterparts. At secondary school, children will face increased academic, organisational and social demands which could push their ADHD to its limits (already elevated in girls during puberty).
- 3 Teaching staff should look out for a disparity between a pupil's contribution in class, versus their achievement. In particular:
  - Unintentional mistakes
  - Inattention to detail
  - Difficulties: sustaining attention, listening, following instructions, taking turns, completing tasks, organising activities, quietly engaging in physical activities
  - Frequent loss of belongings
  - Forgetfulness
  - Fidgeting and/or frequently leaving seat; always 'on the go'
  - Excessive talking, frequent interruptions
- 4 Children should be offered additional support in the classroom and during tests, taught behaviour and anxiety management techniques, and adjustments should be made to the classroom layout (i.e., sitting the child with ADHD at the front to minimise distraction and provide quiet spaces)



### Other support could include:

- Visual aids e.g., visual timetables and 'Now and Next' boards to help remind and focus
- Giving children more time to formulate their thoughts and find their words – silently count to 10 before asking again
- Giving plenty of planning time before written tasks – provide story planners
- Getting the child's attention before speaking to them
- Providing written and verbal instructions, broken into short steps
- Reducing the length of independent tasks and homework and providing extra time
- Providing a fidget-toy, stress ball or wobble cushion
- Allowing regular movement breaks or time-outs
- Providing adult-guided small-group social opportunities
- Encouraging barrier games and activities which model good turn-taking
- Regular check-ins to ensure the pupil has heard and understood
- Social skills and attention and listening interventions



Find out more about  
Infant and Junior Language Link at  
[www.speechandlanguage.info](http://www.speechandlanguage.info)

# LinkLive

## SESSIONS

**\*FREE**  
tickets for Speech and  
Language Link subscribers  
– visit your subscriber  
homepage for more details



### DATE

Thursday 23rd November '23

### VENUE

Online (and available on-demand)

### TIME

15:30-17:00

### PRESENTERS

**Kate Freeman**, consultant – speech and language in education

**Lynn How**, SENCo, education consultant and founder of Positive Young Minds

### TOPIC

The Role of the SENCo in SLCN – Barriers and Solutions

### SUITABLE FOR

SENcos, teachers and support staff and all who support pupils with SLCN

**20%**  
DISCOUNT  
FOR THE LINK  
MAGAZINE  
READERS\*

\* Use code: TLLP1123TLM at checkout and pay just £20+VAT per ticket (normal price £25+VAT)



### Kate Freeman

**Consultant** – speech and language in education and author of the 'Word's Together' series, designed to support children to understand and use two-word sentences.

Chairing The Link Live conferences for the last three years, I have been overwhelmed by the knowledge, wisdom and experiences of the participants, let alone the speakers!

The conferences have been remarkable in providing opportunities to hear inspirational presentations from a speaker and then to discuss the content of the presentation, unpicking how it applies practically in a range of situations.

Our conferences, held online, came at just the right time with pandemic restrictions in place. Since then, there is recognition that an online platform for events means reductions in time and costs of travelling and yet still gives people the chance to share and plan together.

With this in mind, and also recognising that, going forward, not everyone is able to give up a full day to participate in events such as The Link Live conference, we are planning twilight sessions for staff wanting to know more about supporting students with SLCN (speech, language and communication needs).



The opportunity for online twilight sessions with particular focuses can suit a large number of people. There will also be a chance to catch up with these sessions at another time if there is a last-minute situation that prevents you from taking part on the day, as they are available on-demand for one month.

We will kick off the autumn term and our new Link Live Sessions programme by welcoming Lynn How, former SENCo and teacher who will be addressing the challenges SENcos face when supporting pupils with SLCN and offering ideas to help overcome them. There will also be an opportunity to develop your knowledge of speech, language and communication as a whole and to identify tools for SENcos, as well as useful strategies for all staff in primary schools to use.



**BOOK NOW:** [speechandlanguage.info/linklive](https://speechandlanguage.info/linklive)

NEW speech and language twilight sessions from Speech and Language Link – CPD certified just £25+VAT per ticket



## Lynn How

**Presenter:** Lynn How, SENCo, freelance writer, author, editor of @TeacherToolkit and educational consultant

**Presentation:** The Role of the SENCo in SLCN - Barriers and Solutions

My 20 years' experience as a practicing SENCo, educator and leader includes working in an enhanced provision for speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). I well understand SENCos' trials and tribulations. Join me on the 23rd November for my session: **The Role of the SENCo for SLCN - Barriers and Solutions**.

Many SENCos are aware of the pandemic impact on the lack of access to valuable speech and language opportunities. Spinning plates and trying to be effective provides upward struggles. These hints and tips come from my experience and will hopefully help you too.

### • Training/support

Large numbers of SENCos need SLCN advice and lack specific training. With Zoom, a variety of excellent courses have become easier to access.

Being a lone SENCo can feel lonely. Try forming a cluster with local schools and bounce SLCN ideas around, or access social media, YouTube channels or SENCo Facebook groups (see mine below). Set aside weekly work time for CPD, explaining to your line manager how social media or YouTube are used for professional purposes.

### • Senior leadership team

Many amazing heads know how to identify, support and include SLCN, but unfortunately not all. Heads unaware of their lack of knowledge can provide particular challenges. I recommend research, stats and impact information. Consider what the head or CEO wants (better results), then make links with improving pupils' speech and language. SLCN is a relatively easy fix in the early years, with increased later academic outcomes.

Ask leaders to enable relevant SLCN CPD. Remind them of their own need for basic training and encourage them to attend relevant meetings. After all, good SLCN provision supports all pupils' learning and improves teaching quality and overall learning.

### • High-quality teaching

Retaining staff can be challenging, with frustrations over the cycle of re-training staff. Consider HQT in staff induction, alongside training webinars for later use. Regularly drip-feed information into staff meetings. Create individual pupils' zippy folders with specific resources.

### • Lack of screening

Many needs are hidden or masked - secondary pupils apparently with SEMH (social, emotional and mental health) needs may have missed screening for SLCN.

Use a screening package systematically for new pupils, whatever year they enter your school.

### • Lack of external support

With the increasing need and fewer NHS resources, schools struggle to access professional

help. Much can bridge the gap - download SLCN activities, making interventions from those that pupils struggle with. Consider termly speech and language therapy sessions to set individual targets if funding allows, then download appropriate activities. **Speech and Language Link's** packages provide all the resources needed to support the language development of identified pupils. Find out more here: [speechandlanguage.info](http://speechandlanguage.info)

### • Pupils' continuing high needs

My junior school experiences highlighted pupils meeting their NHS SLCN targets by year 2 and then their support ending. Please don't assume that, once signed off, pupils no longer have needs. If necessary, re-refer, alongside continuing in-school interventions.

### • Technology

Technology can be challenging and time-consuming. Fast-moving changes include helpful and well-priced SLCN apps and resources (voice recorders, speech-to-text tools, widget symbols, audiobooks, etc.).

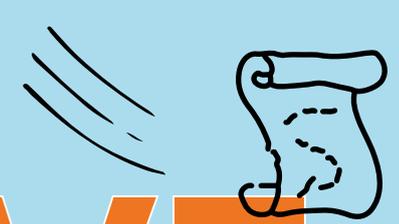


Hopefully, this whistle-stop tour of barriers and solutions is helpful – DM me for a free 30-minute meeting/chat.

Access freebies/CPD materials at: [www.positiveyoungmind.com/senco-resources](http://www.positiveyoungmind.com/senco-resources)

My Facebook Group: [www.facebook.com/groups/theswearysenco](http://www.facebook.com/groups/theswearysenco) offers SENCo wellbeing - and a bit of ranting!

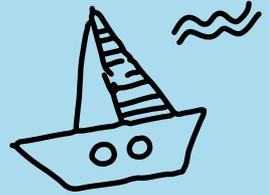
I look forward to meeting you in November.



# CREATIVE Classrooms



By **Sarah Eastaff**,  
Director (Arts and Education at darts)



It's a Monday morning at West Road Primary School in Moorends, Doncaster, and you could hear a pin drop in Year 1's classroom. They aren't preparing for a test or in quiet reading time, they are taking part in Creative Classrooms. Emma and Verity, the expert drama practitioners in the room, are leading a nuanced and thoughtful conversation about our emotions. Students are offering their own understandings of feelings and providing suggestions for how people can process their emotions. Year 1 have been exploring one story, *Storm Whale* by Benji Davies, for six weeks. The children have been directing the storyline and controlling how the characters communicate with and support each other.

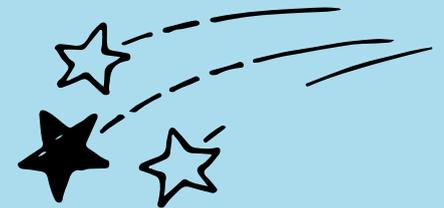
"He needs to tell his dad how he feels," says Kelsey, and Emma nods emphatically, "How does he feel?" Everyone in the class is listening to Kelsey, quietly paying attention as he says, "He feels like he's not as important as dad's job and dad doesn't really care about him." Other children nod and add other suggestions, and these are played out with acting and storytelling in their classroom.

For the last three years, darts has delivered Creative Classrooms in five schools, funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, with students from Year 1 to Year 6 to build their emotional literacy, vocabulary, and communication skills slowly and surely through storytelling. Exploring one story for six weeks allows a class to immerse themselves in a new world where they can make mistakes, explore characters' differing emotions, and imagine alternative endings.

In 2019, teachers in Doncaster primary schools shared that their students were struggling to communicate effectively, build confidence in the classroom, and listen and retain information - all key skills necessary for effective learning. This feedback was reiterated consistently following the pandemic, and is supported by significant evidence of a national crisis in children's mental health (ADCS Report on Children's Mental Health, Nov 2022, CYP Mental Health by Health and Social Care Committee, Dec 2021.)

Students have told us that in Creative Classrooms, "We try really hard and show all our feelings," and that "The best thing about it is I get to show what I'm good at." Our drama practitioners have seen students who have recently arrived in the country come out of their shell in these sessions, they've seen the class

down explain what anger feels like and quieter children take control and shout when they become the monsters in *Where The Wild Things Are*. The practitioners make space for this happen by encouraging students to be playful and to have a





go while building a routine that the children can rely on. Every week, they become story explorers, donning their imaginary costumes, and checking in about how they are feeling. All feelings are welcome and validated by the Creative Classrooms practitioners, while making sure students are safe throughout.

Teachers take part in sessions too; 100% of participating teachers have seen improved confidence and engagement in their students both during Creative Classrooms and in lessons, while 96% agree that their students are better able to communicate their thoughts and feelings effectively. Year 4 teacher Janet said, "I couldn't find a single fault with the project. Students are more confident across year groups, and teachers are using the skills they've learnt in their own lessons."

Creative Classrooms is rooted in darts' 30 years of experience working with children and in the importance of play for child development. We've been informed by the knowledge and expertise of the teachers, senior leaders, and teaching assistants across

Doncaster. Teachers can choose one of these areas to focus on for their half term:

- **Self:** Understanding myself and my feelings
- **Relationships and Empathy:** Understanding other people and making friends
- **Curiosity:** Trying new things through exploring and taking risks
- **Feeling Calm:** Finding ways into feeling calm, creating boundaries
- **Choose What You Do:** Agency, having power and ownership

We extend this learning by providing in-school CPD for teaching staff to encourage them to pick and choose the techniques which might benefit their lessons. Helen, KS1 lead at one of these schools, has told us "Creative Classrooms is the best CPD you could ask for. The children are collaborative, cooperative, accepting of each other and creative. This isn't always the case in our classrooms, and it was an absolute joy to see."

"The children are collaborative, cooperative, accepting of each other and creative. This isn't always the case in our classrooms, and it was an absolute joy to see."

We design this work in partnership with schools, having collaborated with 15 schools locally and recently confirmed funding to continue this work with 9 primary schools as part of the Rose Learning Trust. We are working closely with additional schools to secure funds to continue this work across the borough. The teachers, senior leaders and teaching assistants we work with know that this work is a chance for children to learn life skills – skills which help their ability to learn, to communicate and understand themselves.



**darts**

### Creative Classrooms in your school

To explore how Creative Classrooms could support your school, please contact Sarah (Director: Arts and Education) via: [sarah@wearedarts.org.uk](mailto:sarah@wearedarts.org.uk) or on **01302 493844**.

# GROWING UP WITH DLD, in my own words

By Shelbi Annison

Hello, my name is Shelbi – I am an adult with dyslexia and Developmental Language Disorder (DLD). I was diagnosed with dyslexia towards the end of secondary school and DLD only three years ago as an adult.

I went to a mainstream school, college and passed university (with a lot of support!). I currently work for a service that has an amazing, supportive and understanding team.

## What was your experience like as a child, including at school?

I have always had a difficulty with my speech and language – I would point to things that I wanted, mumble my words and get very frustrated when people did not understand me. I had speech and language therapy when I was in primary school.

I always felt “different” but I did not know why. I think I was in a bubble – where I knew I couldn’t speak right but in my head I was saying the word right and didn’t understand that I wasn’t. I received unkind comments, but it wasn’t until secondary school where I became more aware of my difficulties. I’m so glad that I had my sister, she is a year older, so I relied on her so much and she always stood up for me when people were unkind.

## Did other people recognise your difficulties growing up?

My speech difficulties were obvious – I needed someone to explain what I was trying to say and advocate for me. However, I don’t think people really had fully understand all my difficulties.

People thought it was just a “delay” that I would “grow” out of it – which I did not. Some people thought I was

“rude”, “lazy”, “stupid” or had “bad behaviour”.

I did receive support throughout primary school, secondary school, college – but it was not until I went to university where I felt I had the most support with my dyslexia (full assessment & support) and my mental health.

The service I work for now – is the first one where I feel my needs are understood, supported and accepted. I work with such a supportive, amazing team and have an incredible manager that goes above and beyond for me! She sees all my qualities and abilities which I may not realise or see.

I know this is not always the situation for others with DLD and work.

## What are some of the biggest challenges you face now, as an adult with DLD?

So many! I have not outgrown them. Some key ones are expressing my ideas, thoughts and knowledge, making speech errors, talking to new people, transitions, word-finding, answering questions, spellings and grammar, short term memory if it is out of sight it is out of mind! It is so exhausting trying to process, understand and complete a task.

All the difficulties I have does have an impact on my mental health, self-esteem, self-confidence and how I view myself.

## Do you think that you stand up for yourself and your beliefs in social and work situations? If yes, how do you do it?

When I was younger I definitely did not – or I tried to but failed as when I was emotional it was extremely difficult to get the words out at all. Some people may have said I was cheeky in front of others as I tried to fit in and to be liked.

I am still working on the self-love part. I am more aware of my difficulties as these does not define me as, “I am more than a label; I am more than capable and able!” I want to encourage others with hidden disabilities that it is ok to be who you are, be yourself and love who you are!

## What advice would you give to teachers working with students with language difficulties?

To listen and recognise their thoughts, feelings and needs. To look beyond their difficulties and see their abilities.

Some people may stand out or blend in or even go unnoticed. Make a communication-friendly classroom where everything is named and labelled with clear visuals.

You play an important role in supporting and changing their lives. Your support and help matters more than you know!

## What false ideas do people have about DLD that you want to change?

That DLD is a “delay” or “you grow out of it” – DLD is a lifelong condition that does not go away when you’re



an adult. Everyone with DLD is different.

DLD desperately needs more public recognition, awareness, understanding, training, funding, research and support for adults!

**If you had been diagnosed with DLD when you were younger do you think your school years would have been less of a struggle?**

Yes, massively - the diagnosis is so important to ensure you receive the right support. It would have removed the negative misconceptions and judgement. It would have helped those working with me to understand me better, know why I have these difficulties and know how to support me. It's very difficult to explain my difficulties and what DLD is - when not many people are aware of the invisible disability. It would have improved the way I viewed myself, self-esteem, confidence, reassure me that there isn't anything wrong with me and improved my mental health.

Early screening and intervention is so important this is why I love **Language Link and Speech Link** - a great tool for primary and secondary schools to screen and monitor all children's speech and language needs throughout school. I can't tell you how much of a positive impact this will have on all aspects of a child's life.

You could say I am a very creative person - I like to write poems. Two have now been adapted into children books "*DLD Why Can't You See Me?*" and "*I'm just like Nora May*".

To purchase copies go to: [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)



*Shelbi Annison,  
If someone tells you "you cannot do something" prove them wrong! You are NOT ALONE!*

**Is there anything else you would like to add about the speech and language therapy you received?**

I am very grateful to the speech and language therapy professionals - who inspired me to help others and how important it is to use your voice to communicate. Thank you for all that you do to support those with SLCN.

**What message would you like to share with students with DLD who are currently going through the school system?**

Do not give up or lose hope! I understand how challenging and difficult it is but keep going, and if someone tells you "you cannot do something" prove them wrong! You are NOT ALONE!



# ASK A Therapist

# Q

I'd like to make better use of technology in my classroom to facilitate speaking and listening but I'm not sure where to start. Any ideas?



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

welcome  
to my  
channel



## Answer:

Speaking and listening skills are often overlooked in comparison to written language skills and yet, to succeed in education and in life beyond the classroom, we need to be able to use language for a whole range of purposes - to share jokes and experiences, to talk about feelings, to strengthen friendships, to gather information and for learning. Use of technology in the classroom can provide a wealth of exciting opportunities to support and develop language and communication skills.

Here are a few ideas for how technology can be used as part of collaborative learning opportunities to capture and share thoughts, ideas and experiences.

### Retelling a story:

Ask pupils to sequence pictures and tell their story, recording it on an audio device. You could even create a digital photo album story by taking photos of learners acting out key scenes of a topic book, giving them the opportunity to re-tell the story using this.

### Recording instructions for others to follow:

Task pupils to create video or audio instructions for how to complete a task or play a game. The recording can then be passed on to another group, who then complete the task following the instructions given.

### Capturing an experience or memory:

Support pupils to prepare a video or audio record of an experience or memory. For example, get them to reflect on a school trip. What did they learn? Did anything unusual or exciting happen? How did the experience make them feel? Smaller recording devices, e.g., Talking Tins (devices which record short bursts of audio; played back at the push of a button) could be attached to a display of photographs of the experience.

### Recording a podcast to share learning:

Recording a podcast is a great way for pupils to share their ideas and learning, without having to write things down to prove what they know. Podcasts could be created for a whole host of reasons. For example, to explain the outcome of an experiment or the method used, as a how-to guide, or record an interview with a well-known fictional character.

### Making a news report to summarise a key event:

Support pupils to work together to film a news report, capturing a historical event. There are lots of lovely collaborative working opportunities here as the group will need to agree their roles, agree on the content of the report and work together to film it. Ensure that opportunities are built-in so that children of all abilities can join in - perhaps some pupils can help to draw and find images to create the storyboard, or make props, act as 'extras', or take on the role of camera operator.

### Sharing learning with others:

Arrange a video call with another class to share learning on a topic they have been working on. Or perhaps make a video for sharing in assembly.

### Supporting listening ideas could include:

-  Play a short YouTube video (Simon's Cat are fun and short) and students have to answer questions about them.
-  Record sets of increasingly long instructions on a recording device and play them back and ask students questions about them, e.g., "Find me a pen and a green book," to "Place a red pencil on top of the table at the back left of the room and then jump in the air!"
-  Students recording themselves talking for one minute about their last holiday, or what they did at the weekend (they can be supported in planning what they are going to say by the teacher - using a who, what, where, when, why template). Then record this for small groups to listen to and then to see how much of the info they can recall.

WWW.

Talking Tins: <https://tinyurl.com/2p9bspnm>

Simon's Cat: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=gR\\_i3r-s468](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gR_i3r-s468)

## Speech and Language Link is speaking at the TES SEND Show, London

The TES SEND Show is the biggest annual event on our calendar and we always look forward to meeting so many of you there. This year is extra special for us as we have been asked to speak at the conference. On Saturday the 14th October, our consultant speech and language therapist, Kate Freeman, will be presenting 'Behaviour or Language? How early intervention impacts young people and their future from KS2 and beyond'

The session provides an understanding of SLCN's changing profile across key stages and why investing in effective assessment and intervention is key to pupils' progress across their school careers.

Don't forget to book your session in advance here [www.tessendshow.co.uk](http://www.tessendshow.co.uk) to avoid disappointment. Come and say hi to us on stand 165.

## LinkLive SESSIONS

**JOIN US AT THE FIRST LINK  
LIVE SESSION ON THURSDAY  
23RD NOVEMBER '23  
TICKETS ARE ON SALE NOW,  
JUST £25+VAT!**

Conversation, inspiration and innovation for supporting SLCN.

Use code: TLLP1123TLM and pay just £20+VAT per ticket

[speechandlanguage.info/  
linklive](http://speechandlanguage.info/linklive)

## EXCITING NEWS

**We are finalists for TWO Teach Primary Awards 2023**



**The Link Live Conference 2022** in the 'CPD category'  
– resources schools can use to develop staff and standards of education

**Junior Language Link** in the 'SEND category' – resources to support the care and development of children with special educational needs and disabilities.

**Winners will be announced in November... watch this space!**

## THE LINK SPEECH AND LANGUAGE CPD

We have spaces left on our next speech and language training course in the new year.

**Introduction to Speech and Language module**

**Next available course date:** 16th January 2024

**Cost:** £225+VAT (per participant)

**Language Intervention module**

**Next available course date:** 22nd January 2024

**Cost:** £225+VAT (per participant)



All of our tutors are SaLTs and are on-hand throughout the course to guide learning, mark assignments and facilitate discussion in the course forum.

**Find out more [www.speechandlanguage.info/speech-language-linkcpd](http://www.speechandlanguage.info/speech-language-linkcpd)**

## Exciting News - SENSible SENCO Partnership!

We are now a proud Platinum Sponsor of SENSible SENCO CIC. SENSible SENCO is THE place to go for SENCO advice and resources. The SENSible SENCO (Abigail Hawkins) is committed to making a positive impact on the community of schools and SENCOs they support. At Speech and Language Link we recognise the growing demand for speech and language support among students, and we understand the significance of providing all staff with the latest advice, resources, and assistance. This partnership aims to enhance the support provided to students and enable staff to stay updated in their work.

**Find out more about becoming a member for FREE here  
[www.sensiblesenco.org.uk](http://www.sensiblesenco.org.uk)**





## Leeds SEN Conference

On the 16th May our team spent the day at the Leeds SEN Conference meeting some of you. It was great to hear all about the different support you have within your settings. Well done to Helen from Bramley St. Peter's Church of England primary school for winning our Pocket Pack Bundle (worth £60+vat).

## Subscribe to our Speech and Language eNewsletter

Sign up for the latest speech, language and communication news, tips and advice on supporting speech and language in the classroom.

[speechandlanguage.info/linknews](https://speechandlanguage.info/linknews)

**SIGN UP**

## FREE GIVEAWAY

Soundswell has been delivering independent speech and language therapy services to schools for more than 10 years. They have seen funding come and go and have witnessed first-hand, the TA workforce diminishing and the difficulties in accessing speech and language therapy from local public services.

Observation and detective work from school staff, alongside timely assessment, can lead to early identification of difficulties which is essential to help students to catch up with peers and to reduce the risk of long-term academic, social and behavioural difficulties. With professional guidance, targeted and measurable interventions can be implemented as soon as possible.

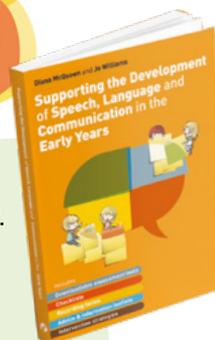
Their book, **Supporting the Development of Speech, Language and Communication in the Early Years** [published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers] is primarily aimed at the EYFS. However, as we know, developmental difficulties can persist and pervade throughout a child's school life and beyond. The book includes a wealth of ideas to support later-developing skills such as vocabulary and narrative group interventions.

<https://shorturl.at/fk68>  
[www.soundswellspeech.com](http://www.soundswellspeech.com)

@SoundswellSLT

We have a **FREE** copy of **Supporting the Development of Speech, Language and Communication in the Early Years** to give away. Just email [helpdesk@speechlink.co.uk](mailto:helpdesk@speechlink.co.uk) and we'll enter you into the draw.

(Winner picked Friday 24th November 2023).



**OUR FACEBOOK GROUP: SPEECH AND LANGUAGE SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS**

Join the conversation with over 900 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.



## LANGUAGE LINK STATS 2022-2023

- Schools subscribing to the Infant and Junior Language Link packages assessed a whopping **172,381** pupils in Year R/P1 - Year 6/P7 using our standardised online screener.
- **51,835** pupils were identified as having a language need and recommended for targeted intervention groups and in some cases, to be discussed with the local SaLT team.
- Schools completed **14,842** fully resourced Language Link intervention groups.

What a fantastic difference to the lives of so many pupils our Language Link schools have made – well done!

## Diary

### THIS TERM

Access our library of speech and language resources by signing up to our FREE membership pages and start your year off with everything you need!  
<https://rb.gy/azyhk>

### 13TH-14TH OCTOBER

TES SEND Show, Islington London – Don't miss Kate Freeman's session, 'Behaviour or Language?'  
[www.tessendshow.co.uk](http://www.tessendshow.co.uk)

FIND  
US ON  
STAND  
165

### 20TH OCTOBER

DLD Awareness Day, check out how your school can get involved: [www.radld.org](http://www.radld.org)

### 7TH NOVEMBER

Link CPD 'Introduction to Speech and Language' begins.

[Register here](#)

[www.speechandlanguage.info/speech-language-linkcpd](http://www.speechandlanguage.info/speech-language-linkcpd)

### 8TH NOVEMBER

Education People Show, Detling, Kent. Come and say hello to us on stand 403 – we always look forward to seeing you!  
[www.theeducationpeopleshow.co.uk](http://www.theeducationpeopleshow.co.uk)

### 16TH NOVEMBER

Book your Link Live twilight session at:  
[speechandlanguage.info/linklive](http://speechandlanguage.info/linklive)

## The Link Secondary magazine!

We are proud to be launching the first issue of The Link Secondary magazine this month. This will be full to the brim of advice and resources for Secondary schools. Please signpost your secondary colleagues to the online copy at: [speechandlanguage.info/the-link-magazine](http://speechandlanguage.info/the-link-magazine)



## WHILE WE ARE ON THE TOPIC OF EXCITING NEWS!

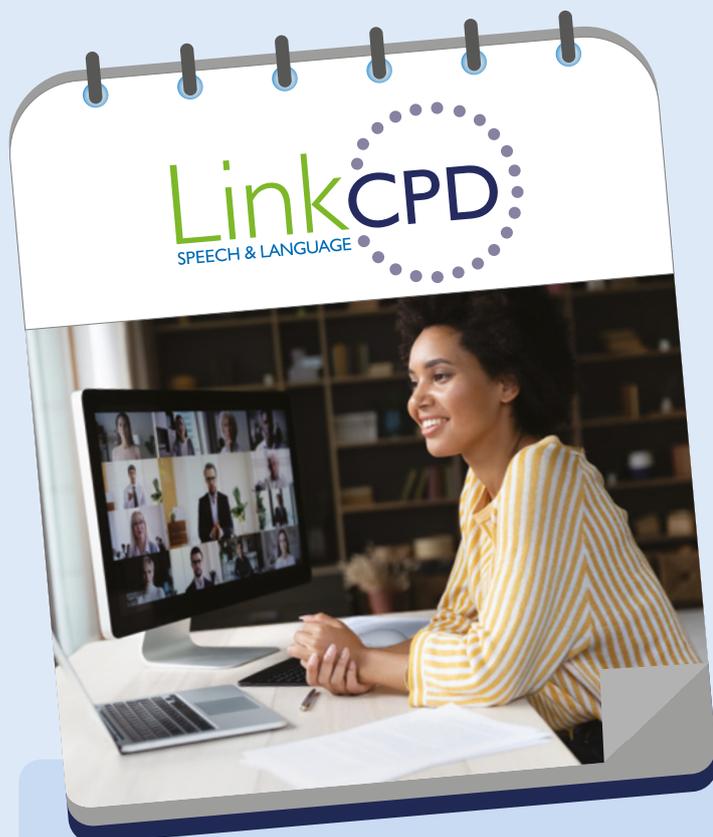
Speech and Language Link have been commissioned to produce the speech and language information and support area on Medway's online Family Hub in Kent!

Well done to our therapists for all the hard work they have put in so far. We can't wait to see this resource come to life and become a go-to for Medway families!

Get in touch

### WE'D LOVE TO HEAR YOUR SCHOOL NEWS

Have you got something speech and language focussed 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](mailto:claire.chambers@speechlink.co.uk) and we will feature as many schools as we can. We look forward to hearing from you.



# A day in the life of a Speech and Language Link CPD tutor

**7:00am:** Early wake-up, duty calls! I have a bowl of porridge and banana for breakfast - good brain food for my day ahead.

**9:00am:** Today I am delivering Day 1 of Speech and Language Link's training programme, **The Link Speech and Language CPD**, to a new cohort of school staff. They will be participating in the **Introduction to Speech and Language module**. The aim of this module is to give staff an understanding of speech and language development in children and equip them with strategies to enhance their learning.

**10:30am:** I run through my meeting notes, ensuring that they clearly explain the main procedures and content of the course. I want the information to be easily digestible and practical for the school staff.

**11:00am:** The welcome meeting starts online. Ten friendly faces join me for an informal chat on 'Teams' - it's a mix of TAs, teachers and SENCos. I give a brief introduction to the online module.

**12:30am:** The meeting ends and everyone is enthusiastic and eager to get started. The module kicks off with a questionnaire. Lots of "hellos" ping up on the forum, our place to chat and connect with each other online. Questionnaires come flooding back to me. I read them and note what participants expect from the course as I want to make sure that the feedback I provide is meaningful for each participant.

**1:00pm:** Break for lunch! A mug of soup and a couple of toasted sandwiches in the garden is absolute heaven for me.

**1:45pm:** I get an email notification about the **Language Intervention** module that I'm overseeing with another group. One of the TAs on this module has submitted a lesson focused on organising and tailoring groups to optimise children's learning. I provide feedback and 'quick wins' on how to fine-tune activities and offer a video call to chat more informally. Connecting this way adds a personal touch to the process and often leads to enriching conversations.

**3:00pm:** Receive some feedback from another TA who has completed the **Language Intervention** module. She said she really liked the online activities and practical assignments, which was great to hear. I encourage her to share the success she had with the "working wall" assignment with the other forum members. It is always inspiring for others when a fellow learner reports the significant impact their assignment has had on the children they work with.

**4:00pm:** As I speak to the participants in the new cohort, I jot down any key questions relating to speech and language, which I will post on the forum in the weeks to come.

**5:00pm:** My day has officially finished! Time to switch off. It's important to relax and recharge. After dinner, I spend the rest of the evening with my family and watch a silly film together. There is no better way to unwind!

# The Link Speech and Language CPD

“The **Introduction to Speech and Language** module has been so insightful, I have gained a wealth of knowledge to support me in my role and new skills to help me effectively support the children I work with. The support and the feedback from the tutor has been invaluable.”

Chennel Robertson

## Flexible Speech and Language Training from Speech and Language Link

We know how busy you are in school. It's not always possible to get time to attend training or cover the costs of supply staff. That is why our specialist speech and language therapists have developed a **flexible online course** that you can work through at a time that suits you.

### The course consists of 2 modules:

- Introduction to Speech and Language
- Language Intervention

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

### NEXT COURSE DATES

#### Introduction to Speech and Language module

- 7th November 2023 (FULLY BOOKED)
- 16th January 2024

#### Language Intervention module

- 22nd January 2024
- 7th February 2024 (FULLY BOOKED)
- 16th April 2024

- 👍 Each course is led by a speech and language therapist tutor who will offer tailored support and individualised feedback so that you can meet your learning goal
- 👍 Our online learning platform enables you to access the course materials at your convenience, working through each lesson and activity at your own pace
- 👍 Lessons feature video content with real-life examples of high-quality practice and explanations of key concepts, alongside interactive activities and practical assignments to help you to consolidate your learning

Places are limited so book now to avoid disappointment:

[www.speechandlanguage.link/whole-school-approach/the-link-cpd/](http://www.speechandlanguage.link/whole-school-approach/the-link-cpd/)