The Link

THE SPEECH AND LANGUAGE LINK WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH: **WWW.SPEECHANDLANGUAGE.INFO**

WINNING at supporting children and young people with SLCN

The Link magazine is a finalist!
In the free SEND resource category

teach PRIMARY AWARDS 2022 **FINALIST**

WORLD LAND TRUST™

The Carbon Balanced Issue

THE LINK COMMUNITY
Share your news and top tips with other schools. Page 3

NEW!

EARLY PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS
Why we should return to teaching this. Page 14

WELCOMING REFUGEE CHILDREN
How to support their communication needs. Page 18

CONTENTS

Editor's Letter

And just like that it's a new school year! Welcome back and welcome to the community issue of *The Link.*

In this issue we have a brand a new feature, **The Link Community** (pages 3-5). This feature is dedicated to you, our schools, featuring your contributions for supporting your pupils with SLCN alongside providing helpful news and tips, whatever your role and wherever you are based.

Being part of a community can nurture wellbeing and help boost self-esteem. Belonging to a TA Network provides TAs with increased opportunities for CPD and the chance to share best practice with their peers. Encouragingly, more senior managers are recognising the importance of facilitating opportunities for their support staff - to the benefit of the individuals and the school as a wider community. As North Yorkshire's TA Network Coordinator, **Catherine Overdale** says, **"We have an amazingly supportive HT, and so we don't have a high level of staff turnover, once staff start working here, they generally don't want to leave!"** (page 16).

International DLD Awareness Day will be held on October 14th. We are very excited about the coffee morning we are hosting here at SL Multimedia's HQ to help raise awareness. On page 6, **Kate Kempton**, SaLT, provides her tips for helping individuals with DLD to recognise and talk about the things they're good at. She is also giving away 2 copies of her new book **'Supporting Children with DLD'**.

Our other exciting news is that **The Link CPD** modular online training course has now been launched, and the first course will begin in November. Spaces for the first course will soon be snapped up, so don't delay in finding out more about this high-quality, relevant SLCN training (page 10).

Following the recent publication of the **SEND review: right support, right place, right time**, SL Multimedia responded by emphasizing the need in mainstream schools for a significant strengthening of screening and delivery of targeted support. This should go a long way to reducing the need for specialist and alternative provision. We look forward to seeing the outcomes following the consultation period.

In June we attended the Education APPG meeting with Will Quince MP (Minister for School Standards) where we posed our question: **'How will the government support schools to identify and provide appropriate interventions for pupils' communication needs across the whole of pupils' school careers?'** Alas, he was unable to answer our question directly – it seems we still have a way to go before it is understood that identification and support for SLCN goes beyond EYFS!

Although *The Link magazine* has always been fully recyclable, we have gone one step further by printing this issue on carbon balanced paper. This means that the impact of the paper harvested is balanced by the planting of new trees, thus reducing the impact of deforestation. We know many readers keep *The Link* and use it as an SLCN reference library, however we'd love to know what you think for future issues – please fill out our **survey** here.

So, all that is left for me to say, is have a wonderful term and keep in touch.

Best wishes,

Claire Chambers

welcome to The Link Community

A bit about us

SL Multimedia

We've been around for nearly 20 years. Starting with 3 people, we now have 25 dedicated staff including our speech and language therapists, administrators, creatives, IT professionals: many with a wealth of experience of working in schools. Our headquarters is based at Canterbury Innovation Centre, an office building that promotes sustainability, innovation and independent businesses in Kent. However, as some of our team live further afield, hybrid working has become the new norm for us all. We are all working hard to help schools to identify hidden SLCN and to support these pupils, especially those who may not fulfil the criteria for a speech and language referral.

DLD awareness

How are you planning to raise awareness of DLD this year?

With 2 children in every class of 30 having the neurodevelopmental condition, Developmental Language Disorder (DLD), it is essential that all staff have the knowledge to be able to support children and young people with DLD, as their difficulties are not always obvious to the non-specialist.

DLD Awareness Day is on Friday 14th October 2022. SL Multimedia will be hosting a coffee morning - inviting all the different businesses at our centre to join us for a cuppa and a cake (on condition they have a quick conversation about DLD with our team)!

RADLD **Visit RADLD at radld.org for fact sheets, quizzes and teacher resources to help spread the word and find out how your school can become an RADLD Ambassador.**

We can't wait to see how you mark the day as we would love to feature your school in the next issue of The Link.

What we do...

We bring you The Link magazine each term, but did you know SL Multimedia also:

- Provides the SLCN support packages within The Speech and Language Link Whole School Approach (Speech Link, Infant Language Link, Junior Language Link, Secondary Language Link)
- Runs online SLCN training courses, The Link CPD – now CPD Certified!
- Produces and updates our new Free SLCN Support library at **www.speechandlanguage.info**
- Compiles our monthly SLCN eNewsletter
- Creates resources for our free Parent Portal
- Runs The Link Facebook group
- Organises and hosts our annual online SLCN conference, The Link Live

So, we're kicking off this new feature with lots of information about us. However, we want future features to be all about you and what we can do to help you support children with SLCN. Whether you are one of the 4000 subscribers to our Speech and Language Link packages, a reader of The Link, use our Parent Portal or dip into The Link Facebook Group occasionally, you are all part of The Link Community, and we want to hear from you!

What's new?

Do you get frustrated that informative and useful information relating to speech, language and communication needs is not always easy to access? Well, look no further… we are relaunching our information website and it will offer you a fantastic FREE SLCN support library which will include searchable back issues of *The Link* magazine, *The Ultimate Guide to SLCN* and all our blog posts. Just type a word into the search box and away you go - all the information from the library relating to that topic will be available!

Visit: speechandlanguage.info

Save the Date

The LinkLive 2023

After the tremendous success of The Link Live 21 & 22, we are thrilled to announce that our SLCN online conference returns on **Friday 10th March 2023**. We have a fantastic programme of speakers who will offer schools the very latest thinking, the best advice and effective strategies for supporting children and young people with SLCN from EYFS to secondary aged students.

Tickets cost £80+VAT, but early bird discounted tickets will be on sale after half term. As always, subscribers to Speech and Language Link packages will pay the very special price of just £30+VAT.

Help and Support

We regularly receive lovely feedback about our Speech and Language Help Desk. Maz, Laura, Jenny and Natalie are all experienced TAs and have worked with many children with SLCN. Newbie Natalie has also been a speech and language therapy assistant for the NHS. Between them, they have the answers to your technical and administrative questions. The SaLT team Derry, Sophie, Louise, Juliet and Ali will answer SLCN specific questions regarding Speech Link and Language Link assessment outcomes and the next steps for identified pupils.

helpdesk@speechlink.co.uk

The Link Facebook Group

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

For your Diary

If you are a subscriber to a Speech and Language Link support package, we have some key dates for your diary:

September

- Book your free training webinars for Speech Link and Language Link – details will be on your homepage
- Set up your classes and upload/assign your pupils
- Complete assessments on children who have previously scored blue/red

October

- Screen your new cohorts with Infant Language Link and Junior Language Link

November

- Commence whole class and targeted group interventions
- Book your early bird tickets for The Link Live 2023

The Link magazine is a finalist in the free resource category!

Would you like to write for The Link? Please get in touch with your ideas and we will endeavour to feature them in forthcoming issues.

Best wishes,

The Speech and Language Link Team helpdesk@speechlink.co.uk

School Spotlight

The Link Community

A huge thank you to Lorraine Challen-Johnson a SaLT HLTA from St. Matthews Church of England in Suffolk, who got in touch to share her tips for successful intervention groups.

TOP TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL SPEECH/LANGUAGE SESSIONS

- 👍 **10 second (or more) rule!** Always give the child time to process and answer.

- 👍 Remind children that it's ok to say, "I don't know / I don't understand / Can you say that again please?"

- 👍 Give specific praise. "Good listening / good looking / good thinking / good talking."

- 👍 Give specific feedback. "I liked the way you said that tricky word."

- 👍 If a child is struggling to answer, take the pressure off them by asking, "Are you still thinking or would you like some help?" (I also find that **looking away** when a child is unsure what to say, helps avoid them feeling on the spot.)

- 👍 Provide a **forced alternative**. "Is it a book or a ball?" (When using a forced alternative, always provide the **correct answer first**, as many children will simply repeat the last word they hear.)

- 👍 With EAL children, ask them, "Can you say the word in Polish / Portuguese / Roma?"

- 👍 Say the first sound of the answer. "The clouds are in the s…"

- 👍 Mime or point to the answer.

- 👍 Tell the child, "It rhymes with hop." (I tend to not use this approach with EYFS children as they can find it too difficult.)

Spread the word

Get everyone in your school talking with our **NEW** *Spread the Word Pack,* which is being introduced this term with all new purchases of Infant and Junior Language Link*

Creating an environment which optimises the speech, language, and communication opportunities for all pupils is the ideal. It is also the most inclusive way to put communication at the forefront of school life.

This is why we have created the 'Spread the Word' pack. Use it throughout your school community to add another tier of support which will benefit all pupils.

This pack includes a comprehensive SLCN audit tool enabling your school to identify and build on good practice. Use our Take a break resources at play times to encourage communication and our Good to Go resources for the classroom. Our Grounds and Around posters and stickers will keep everyone talking.

Contact us for more information **helpdesk@ speechlink.co.uk**

The Spread the Word Pack **isn't available in conjunction with any package discounts.*

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.

Helping Children with DLD Talk about Strengths and Differences

By Kate Kempton, community speech and language therapist, Devon

Supporting children to recognise and talk about what they are good at, as well as what they find challenging, is important for self-esteem and can be an important step towards developing self-advocacy skills. Self-advocacy is a practical strategy that encourages people to identify and talk about their strengths and needs, as well as developing the confidence to ask for help. Pocock et al. (2002) suggests that promoting self-advocacy in children and young people with learning needs can support self-confidence and independence.

In my clinical work I see that many children with DLD are aware of their communication differences. It is important that we listen to their views and feelings about their communication. I believe that making time for these conversations can help children to feel listened to and understood. It also encourages me to see beyond a child's difficulties and work in a more holistic and child-centred way.

When I started writing the picture book *Harry's Story*, I wanted to help raise awareness of DLD and create a character that some children with DLD may identify with. Harry shows us some of the challenges he experiences at school, but we also see his strengths and skills. As the picture book and user guide developed, I saw that *Harry's Story* could be used as a springboard to support conversations with children about their own strengths and differences.

Here are some things to consider when talking about strengths, needs and differences:

Ready or not?

Respecting your child's readiness to communicate their own thoughts and feelings is important. Some children with DLD may not be aware of, or ready to talk about, their differences with communication just yet and this is OK.

Talking with others

Encourage your child to talk to different people about what they like, what they are good at, and what they need help with. This supports children to see that we all need help sometimes and we are all good at different things.

Who helps you?

Talk to children about the different places they visit in the week. Talk about what they need help with there and who helps them e.g., at swim club, the swim teacher helps them remember what to do in the pool.

Top Tips

Tops Tips for talking to children with DLD (extract from Supporting Children with DLD):

KNOW HOW THE CHILD COMMUNICATES

If you are not the child's parent, make sure you know them well and how they communicate. For example, if you know the child likes to use picture symbols or photographs to help them communicate make sure these are available for them to use. You will both get a lot more out of the conversation if the child trusts you and feels relaxed talking to you.

TAKE TIME

Be patient and give your child plenty of time to think and respond. It often takes children with DLD longer to understand and respond to what has been said, so it's important they don't feel rushed. Slowing down your own talking, and taking time to pause in conversation, can make a positive difference.

USE SIMPLE LANGUAGE

Children with DLD often struggle with grammar and complicated sentence structures. It is important to simplify your own language to help your child understand what you are saying. Try to use words that the child is familiar with and keep your sentences short and simple.

LISTEN

Listen to what the child is telling you and try hard not to interrupt or ask leading questions. You could occasionally repeat back what the child has said, to show them you have listened and understood.

Small group work

Support children to work with a partner or a small group to identify a character's strengths and needs. This can be done using a picture book; encourage the children to notice what the main character is good at and what they need help with.

Use visual supports

Sort picture symbols or written phrases into groups and explore what children *Like & Don't Like*, or what they find *Easy & Hard*. Aim to include a variety of activities, such as *playing football / writing stories / making my friends laugh.*

You might notice that some children create their own central pile, to show activities that lie 'in the middle'.

Easy

Hard

Kempton 2022 ©

To find out more about how you can support your pupils with DLD, Kate's new Book: *Supporting Children with DLD: A picture book and user guide to learn about DLD,* is available from Routledge **https://bit.ly/3A8Kfiz**

Pocock A, Lambros S, Karvonen M, et al. (2002). Successful Strategies for Promoting Self-Advocacy Among Students with LD: The LEAD Group. *Intervention in School and Clinic*. 37(4):209-216.

Four key areas to consider when using sensory support

By Kim Griffin, occupational therapist

I get a sinking feeling in my stomach when asked to provide quick sensory ideas which schools can use with their students. This is because there is no such thing as a 'quick fix' or a 'simple solution' to support sensory needs. Sensory processing is very complex. I've been studying it for 20 years and am still learning.

Instead of a quick fix, here are four key things you can consider, to make the sensory supports in your school more effective.

1 THE TRIGGER

What is triggering the student's arousal levels and behaviour? The term 'arousal' refers to the level of alertness or energy in the student's body - these will fluctuate across the day and week and change with the environment or the activity.

Many things will impact a student's arousal level. It could be something that happened earlier in the day or something that is happening in the future. It may be the environment or the activity that the student needs to do. Sleep, illness, and digestion also impact arousal levels.

Author information

Kim Griffin is a paediatric occupational therapist with over twenty years' experience supporting children's sensory needs. Her company GriffinOT delivers affordable online sensory training and motor skill development programmes to schools, teachers, and parents. For more information visit **www.GriffinOT.com/SL**

② SENSORY TRAINING

Sensory supports are used in most schools, but only a fraction of staff have received training on using them effectively.

91% of educators and parents completing an introductory sensory training reported that they use sensory supports, but only 26% of them had previously attended sensory training[1]. A recent review cited that only 40% of SENCos had received training on sensory processing[2], concluding that training on sensory processing should be included in the National SENCo qualification.

For supports to be fully understood, ALL staff supporting children with sensory needs will benefit from training.
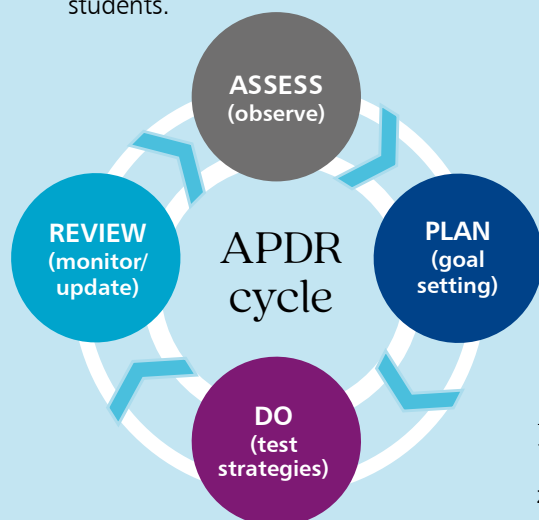
③ USE THE APDR CYCLE

I rarely see this used in schools when implementing sensory supports. If you are using this, I would love to hear from you as I am looking for examples!

APDR helps evaluate needs and impact of student's progress. It stands for:

- **Assess** – assess the situation/ student's needs
- **Plan** – create a plan of action, including goals
- **Do** – implement your plan
- **Review** – review the impact the strategies had on the goal

The plan should include a time frame when it will be reviewed. Here's two examples of how an APDR cycle may look for fidgety students.

APDR cycle

- ASSESS (observe)
- PLAN (goal setting)
- DO (test strategies)
- REVIEW (monitor/ update)

Fidgety Student 1 Oliver:

A: Oliver is fidgety and distracted directly before break, lunch and going home - he is the first to run to the toilet after lessons

P: TA/teacher to prompt Oliver to use the toilet between lesson input and independent work. Goal – Oliver will stay focussed on and engaged in work throughout the entire lesson.

D: TA/teacher prompt Oliver for 2 weeks

R: Oliver is starting to take himself to the toilet when needed, fidgetiness has stopped, and he stays engaged in lessons

Fidgety Student 2 Mia:

A: Mia is fidgety and distracted during lesson input, especially when the teacher is talking a lot. Language processing and other learning needs have already been ruled out and the teacher thinks it might be a sensory need.

P: Mia to have a movement break before lesson input and to have a wobble cushion. Goal – Mia will stay focussed during lessons, put her hand up to answer questions and start work independently after lesson input.

D: Use the above strategies for 2 weeks

R: Mia is still fidgety during lesson input and is messing about on the wobble cushion

P: Discuss with OT, who suggests movement break to include more heavy work and to trial a weighted blanket

D: Use the above strategies for 2 two weeks

R: Mia is much more engaged after movement break but does not really like the blanket

P: Continue with movement breaks with heavy work throughout the day

④ BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT IS STILL IMPORTANT

I want to give you permission to use behaviour management strategies with student's sensory supports. An effective sensory tool must be used correctly and if the student is not using the sensory tool safely or as intended, it is OK to put boundaries in place. When you review the student's progress, you might change the student's plan if you conclude that the support is more of a distraction than a help.

Make an impact

It is important that the sensory supports you are using with your students are having an impact. Training, setting behaviour expectations and the APDR cycle can all help you to ensure that the supports you are using are having maximal impact for the student.

If you want to learn more about the senses and using sensory supports correctly, you can join Kim's training on her website
www.GriffinOT.com/SL

1. Griffin & Allen (2021) *Auditing the impact of sensory online training for educators, parents, and professionals.* https://www.griffinot.com/the-impact-of-sensory-processing-with-griffin-ot/
2. Quinn, Pedlow & Bleakley (2022) *What is the current level of knowledge and confidence of mainstream school SENCOs in sensory integration theory and using sensory strategies within education?* https://nasenjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1467-9604.12396

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) IN SCHOOLS

Among The Link magazine's goals is helping school staff to develop their professional skills and knowledge, providing the most effective support for pupils with SLCN. We want to inspire and support you in school, so that you can help children to reach their best potential in and out of school. We firmly believe that developing a skilled workforce through easy access to up-to-date evidence-based information for immediate use in the classroom will nurture happy and successful pupils. CPD - high quality, relevant, and engaging training - is an investment with far-reaching impact, rewarding the whole school community.

SL Multimedia is proud to announce the launch of The Link CPD - our speech and language training package for school staff. Our passion and expertise enabled this innovative new approach to professionals' online learning, focusing on real-life practice and individualised support for all stages of your career.

Our modular courses build on participants' everyday practice using different learning tools, developing practical knowledge and easy to apply skills for support children with SLCN. Our team of speech and language therapists will support your learning and development throughout the course – helping you achieve the best outcomes as learners. Your speech and language therapist tutor provides regular feedback and practical guidance, developing your confidence in applying your learning with real pupils. Courses are suitable for all staff working with children with SLCN in schools, including teaching assistants/learning support assistants, SENCos, teachers, and speech and language therapy assistants.

This term welcomes our **Language Course,** comprising two flexible modules, suitable for those new to SLCN as well as more experienced practitioners.

> "Schools will benefit from staff who are knowledgeable about speech, language and communication development and how effective SLCN support can be implemented every day in all facets of school life."

MODULE 1*
INTRODUCTION TO SPEECH AND LANGUAGE

This module develop participants' understanding of the terms 'speech', 'language' and 'communication', and how children acquire speech and language skills. Participants learn about the impact of SLCN on learning and how to create a communication-friendly environment within the classroom and the wider school environment, supporting all pupils to access education.

Cost £150+VAT per person

MODULE 2
LANGUAGE INTERVENTION

This module focuses on understanding language difficulties in education. Participants learn about effective strategies to support the understanding and spoken language skills of children within the classroom (and around school!), as well as staff skills for planning and delivering successful language interventions at targeted and specialist levels.

Cost £150+VAT per person

*Module 1 is completed before Module 2.   **Both modules complete The Language Course.

Our training utilises a blended learning approach:

✅ Each course starts with a short introductory live web meeting hosted by the qualified speech and language therapist course tutor, introducing the course to each small group of learners.

✅ Next, participants complete lessons, which include short videos with real examples of high-quality practice and explanations of key concepts, work through interactive activities, and undertake assignments transferring the skills they have learnt into classroom practice.

✅ Participants are encouraged to join their course online forum, open only to each small group, discussing learning points and classroom practice, and sharing observations, ideas, and questions with peers.

✅ Throughout the course, your speech and language therapist tutor provides personalised feedback on activities and assignments, coaching you through your learning and practice and ensuring you meet your goals.

✅ The online platform facilitates flexible learning, with participants able to access the course materials at their convenience, working through each lesson and activity at their own pace.

✅ The Link CPD offers a practical workforce development solution for school staff.

✅ Schools benefit from staff who are knowledgeable about speech, language and communication development and how effective SLCN support can be implemented every day in all facets of school life.

✅ Effective CPD promotes staff engagement and role commitment. Individual staff wellbeing improves with increased confidence and skill.

✅ Pupils benefit from an inclusive environment with increased understanding of their needs and effective support strategies.

We look forward to supporting your professional development this Autumn.

The Link CPD
SPEECH AND LANGUAGE

To find out more about The Link CPD and to register your interest, go to: **speechandlanguage.info/cpd**

The Link CPD
SPEECH AND LANGUAGE

A CASE STUDY

By Natalie Crawley, HLTA Chartham Primary School

Sofia's story

I have used Language Link for several years in our school, but I felt my understanding of SLCN was limited. When the opportunity arose to complete The Link CPD course, I jumped at the chance to participate.

I now have more confidence in identifying children with SLCN and being able to adapt the way I support them to meet their individual needs.

A Case Study

Just as I began The Link CPD Language Course, the second Covid-19 lockdown changed 'school life' to 'bubble life'. I was assigned to work with a year 2 group of children and here I met 7-year-old Sofia*. Sofia attended school regularly but had low-level behaviour issues, poor concentration skills and was working at a lower-than-expected level for her age. She had a family history of ASD.

I decided to use the course to find out what difference I could make to the support we were offering her.

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT SOFIA FROM MY COURSE NOTEBOOK:

Language

Sofia's language is often limited to the subjects that interest her most and she uses quite simple language most of the time. If she slows down and has the time to think she can use a wider variety of language. She can generally express her needs and opinions although these don't always follow a logical sequence.

Sofia can ask questions and talk about things she has done using simple language. Largely, she can explain why she thinks something has

happened and she can retell a story using straightforward language. I feel her language level is similar to what we might expect for a 4-5-year-old, as she is not yet demonstrating the understanding and use of language skills that would be expected for her age.

Social Interactions

Sofia often plays alone but appears happy to do so. She doesn't always understand codes of behaviour and rules and isn't always aware of who is around her or how to differentiate her language for adults to children. She doesn't always listen well to others and has poor concentration. She does not always pick up on body language or make eye contact.

Supporting Sofia:

After speaking with her teacher and following the videos in the second module, I realised that Sofia's difficulties lay in her expressive language. When speaking she does not always take the time to think about her responses and that is where we see grammatical errors.

Sofia will often mix up pronouns when speaking and some of her language is not in context, resulting in her struggling to get her message across. The way in which she orders words to create phrases, clauses and sentences are often mixed up as well as confusing tenses/pronouns.

Targets for Sofia:

I set the following targets as the next steps for Sofia in the hope that we would see improvements in her speaking skills which would help support her social interactions.

Targets

- ✅ I am trying to use plurals and past tense verbs
- ✅ I can use pronouns, like 'he', 'she' and 'they'
- ✅ I can take more time to think about my responses
- ✅ I can slow down my talking

After completing the course, I shared my findings with Sofia's class teacher and TA and made them both aware of different strategies they could use with her.

Sofia is now in year 3 and doing well, she interacts better with her classmates and her concentration has improved.

From my Reflective Journal:

The biggest impact The Link CPD course had on my own practice, is my increased knowledge and confidence when supporting small group work or 1-1 interventions. The course has equipped me with a host of strategies to use when working with children that I wouldn't have even considered before. I would say I have a good sound knowledge of SLCN now and feel able to share this knowledge and advice with other members of staff with confidence.

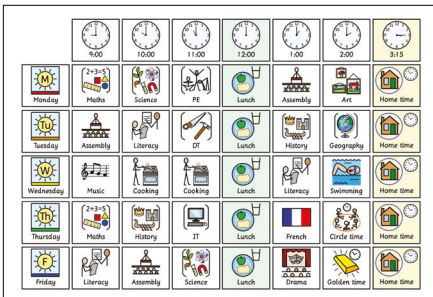*name has been changed for the article.

Speaking up for VISUAL LEARNING

By Sue White, former teacher, SENDCo, local government advisor and senior educational specialist at Widgit

Reduced vocabulary can delay a child's spoken and written language, which may limit progress and make social aspects of school life challenging.

Any child can be affected, regardless of their background or whether they have additional needs, but schools can support pupils using visual aids in the form of symbols.

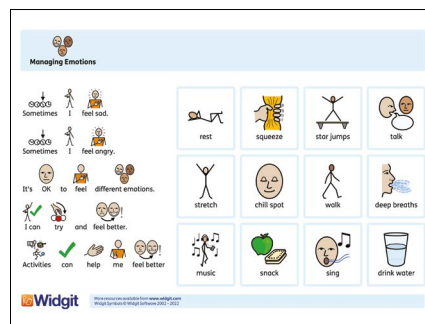So, how can symbols help?

Encourage independence

Lesson timetables can include a symbol for each subject – a book for literacy hour or a written equation for maths, for example. Teachers use an arrow to indicate which subject is currently being taught.

Symbolic timetables give children with limited vocabulary a simple way to see what is being taught now, what's coming up next and when to expect learning breaks. They can

boost skills such as sequencing and time awareness and eliminate the pressure to interpret written text quickly, helping children to be more self-sufficient in school.

Support wellbeing

No child will be ready to learn if they come into the classroom anxious or distressed. Emotion cards which include symbolic facial expressions make it easier for pupils to indicate how they are feeling when they don't have the language to verbalise it.

If a child with limited vocabulary arrives in class upset because they had an argument with a friend before school, they could be encouraged to point to the image of a sad or angry face. Teachers can then open a discussion and help.
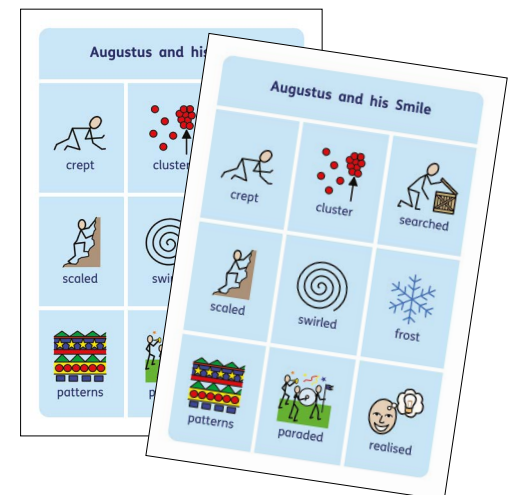
A dedicated mindfulness area in the classroom can give pupils somewhere they can go to learn self-calming

techniques too, such as deep breathing when they are stressed or anxious. Designing the space with symbolised images of the techniques will automatically make it more accessible for children with limited vocabulary as the relaxation activities are displayed in a very visual way.

Build vocabulary

Teaching Tier 2 words such as 'crept' or 'scaled' in advance of a lesson helps build children's understanding and retention of these words in written and spoken form enabling teachers to focus lesson time on embedding learning objectives.

Symbols provide a simple visual prompt to help children with gaps in their vocabulary develop and retain the language they need to engage in learning and succeed.

If your school uses Language Link, you'll find a comprehensive set of visual support resources in our classroom support section.

Sue White is co-author of Walking the Talk: A vocabulary recovery plan for primary schools. For more information on how symbols can support your pupils, visit **www.widgit.com**

Right from the Start

Juliet Leonard, speech and language therapist, explains why boldly returning to early phonological awareness teaching impacts positively on children with delayed literacy skills.

patterns
"
Aa
words
phonemes
listen
"
Gg
syllables
skills

Learning to read is an exciting step that generally receives a kickstart when a child starts at primary school. Watching a child go from recognising sounds, to blending them into words and on to early reading is a delight to see for teachers, parents, and carers. There is nothing quite like the moment when a child 'becomes a reader' – of anything and everything – from road signs to birthday cards, magazines and of course books.

Literacy is a vital strand in educational attainment; research shows that lacking vital literacy skills holds a person back at every stage of their life. Furthermore, this cycle impacts on future generations of families, having a long-term effect on social mobility.

Whilst a reading epiphany is sometimes seen in children as they move through Key Stage 1, the skills that they have been practising in their pre-school years and continue to practise in school are fundamental foundations for literacy development. Without these building blocks in place, literacy cannot continue to develop.

Emergent literacy skills, more commonly referred to as 'phonological awareness' are the ability to listen to and attach meaning to sounds, to hear rhythms and patterns, to retain these to blend them together and to be able to split a word into its sound parts.

Children who have not acquired and embedded these skills before they are introduced to phonemes and letters will struggle to develop their literacy skills. In addition, they may struggle to produce and blend sounds and words, making repeated sound errors. Their ability to start categorising words according to their sounds typically develops later and this impacts their learning, retrieval, and retention of vocabulary.

Stage over age

When children do not acquire literacy skills in Key Stage 1 as the curriculum might expect, it is important to revisit the phonological awareness ladder and consider which parts of this journey have not been attained by the child. It may be that skills were taught at a pre-school stage, but the child was not developmentally ready to take the concepts on board; or that these skills were missed due to environmental or situational reasons.

Children cannot gain a deep understanding of literacy without well embedded and well understood phonological awareness skills.

Listening is an area we take for granted; a skill which is used the most by students in schools and yet taught the least (Jean Gross, 2013)*. This is a vital early ingredient for successful learning.
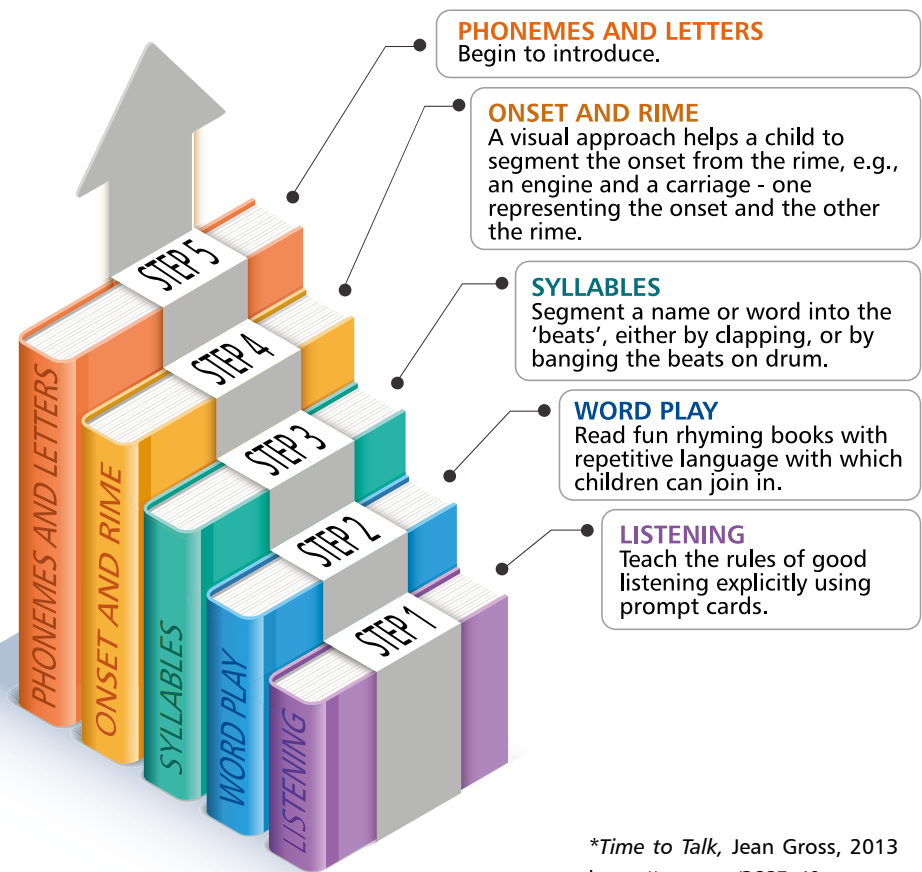
A struggle to learn something can result in a disinclination or disinterest in that area. The ability to enjoy moments of play with words is fundamental for developing a love of literacy. In the recent The Link Live conference, Michael Rosen shared fond memories of playing with sounds and words, making silly sentences, and reciting favoured rhymes with his family.

The ability to segment words into parts is also crucial for reading, writing and vocabulary skills. Manipulating words into syllables, breaking the first sound away from a word (the 'onset') to leave the end (the 'rime') are ways in which children learn about sound combinations and begin to produce their own rhymes.

Only when all these steps are in place, is a child ready for the introduction of blending phonemes and reading words.

Phonological awareness is a vital pre-requisite for literacy development and difficulties can be an early sign of SLCN. Targeted support in the early years can make a long-lasting difference to both language and literacy development, as well as supporting early identification of literacy differences such as dyslexia, which require a more individualised approach.

PHONEMES AND LETTERS
Begin to introduce.

ONSET AND RIME
A visual approach helps a child to segment the onset from the rime, e.g., an engine and a carriage - one representing the onset and the other the rime.

SYLLABLES
Segment a name or word into the 'beats', either by clapping, or by banging the beats on drum.

WORD PLAY
Read fun rhyming books with repetitive language with which children can join in.

LISTENING
Teach the rules of good listening explicitly using prompt cards.

STEP 5 — STEP 4 — STEP 3 — STEP 2 — STEP 1

PHONEMES AND LETTERS · ONSET AND RIME · SYLLABLES · WORD PLAY · LISTENING

*Time to Talk, Jean Gross, 2013
https://amzn.to/3SS5pJ0

One TA to Another
— TA Networks

Our resident TA talks to HLTA, Catherine Coverdale, about how she became the Yorkshire TA Network Coordinator.

How did you become a TA?

Six years ago, I was working in banking while studying part-time for my degree. I had always wanted to teach but taking the plunge into school was a little scary. An unexpected TA role came up at a local, small village school and, feeling brave one day, I applied! I got the job and have never looked back. Fast forward a couple of years and I now work in the same lovely school as an HLTA in Year 2 and in the Research School in my role as the Network Coordinator.

Our school is very fortunate. We have an amazingly supportive headteacher who is always keen for people to attend training. Because of this we don't have a high level of turnover; once staff start working here, they generally don't want to leave! Our school is like a family, we are all treated equally and have a great relationship with one another.

How did the idea of forming a TA network for Yorkshire schools first come about?

The need for a TA network was identified by the North Yorkshire Coast Research School and backed by the local Opportunity Area. I was appointed as the Network Coordinator at the start of September 2021.

What difficulties did you face when trying to set this up?

As the TA Network had been identified by the Research School, everyone was on-board with supporting me to develop the Network. Generally, the feedback from head teachers in other schools is positive as they too have recognised a gap in the support available for their TAs and have encouraged them to join the Network and attend training. I had

> "We wanted TAs to meet colleagues face-to-face to network with each other, share their experiences and talk about their roles."

not, however, anticipated just how fast things would progress and so I have had to learn (very quickly) on the job which at times is challenging. I really feel I am helping to make colleagues' work-life easier and more fulfilled, which spurs me on.

Can you describe the process of setting up the Network?

Initial discussions identified the focus of the Network to be a **'Greater Impact of TAs in School'**. This then took two distinct strands, one which involved senior leaders and the EEF Guidance 'The Effective use of TAs', looking at how successful deployment means clarity and consistency for TAs and a more effective impact on the school and its pupils. In the second strand, we wanted the focus to be around how a happy and motivated TA, with good subject knowledge, could positively impact the school.

We then looked at what we could offer to help TAs feel valued and motivated. This included the development of a newsletter and a website for the Network providing information on conferences and training opportunities. I spent many hours contacting local schools to tell them about the Network and building a social media presence. I contacted many organisations, agencies, and colleagues to ask for support in providing training for our TAs and

was lucky to receive lots of positive help from them.

Did you receive support from other TA networks?

The support of the founder of Suffolk TA Network, Abi Joachim, has been invaluable. Abi was kind enough to share the wins and woes of setting up a network, having gone through the process herself the previous year in Suffolk. This support has continued, and our networks have worked together on a TA development programme that is currently being piloted across the country.

How many members do you have?

We have 270 members, most are based in Yorkshire, but we do have some further afield. Numbers are rising every day.

What sort of events and opportunities have you offered your members?

As new TAs register, we gather information on the training they are interested in. Initially, we wanted our TAs to come together and meet colleagues face-to-face to network with each other, share their experiences and talk about their roles.

Subsequently, we have hosted 15 free training sessions including

advice on SLCN, STEM science, SEMH, self-regulation and most recently a wellbeing development day. We already have several training opportunities planned for the next academic year and look forward to working with other organisations in the future.

What are your aspirations for the future?

I hope that the Network will continue to thrive and become a well-known and a trusted source of information and training across the county. My own long-term plan is to undertake my PGCE and teach as I adore being in the classroom with the children. I think that having such an in-depth understanding of the value of a TA, will stand me in very good stead to make a good class teacher!

What are you most proud of?

I feel very privileged to be fundamental in the development of the TA Network and be at the heart of everything it stands for. The role is away from the classroom and working with the children, and this sometimes takes me out of my comfort zone. Imposter syndrome is a regular occurrence for me and I'm proud that I manage to push it down and rise up to provide the best network for our TAs!

Find out more about the Yorkshire TA Network at:
www.yorkshiretanetwork.co.uk

🐦 @YorkshireTAs

ASK A Therapist

By Ali Miller, speech and language therapist

Q. "How can our school best support the communication needs of our new refugee children?"

Starting a new school is a daunting process for most children, especially if you don't speak the language and there are no familiar faces. Many new arrivals are also coping with trauma, separation and bereavement. School plays a huge part in creating a stable, safe and supportive environment. (Bell Foundation)

Most new arrivals do not have SLCN. They just have limited exposure to English and will go on to become competent communicators. Most children will develop functional English in the first 2 years of schooling in English, but will need continued support to gain academic proficiency. (NALDIC)

Dual language development is very important. Consistent exposure to a child's home language maintains relationships, cultural identity and acts as a scaffolding for learning a new language. (Harris, 2019) Generally, learning two languages does not cause any additional language difficulties.

BEFORE THE CHILD STARTS SCHOOL

Meet with Parents/Carers

- Find out as much information about the child as possible. Interpreters may be required. Include their personality, interests, strengths, likes, dislikes, educational history. What language do they speak and to whom? How often? How proficient are they?

- Does the child have an SEN? What is it? If a child has SLCN this is likely to occur in both the home language and English.

- Agree ways to share information between home and school.

- Ask parents for key words in their home language(s).

- Encourage parents to speak and read to their child in their home language/s as much as possible.

Prepare School and Parents

- Build staff knowledge of where the child has come from and languages spoken.

- Ensure staff know how to pronounce and spell the child's name correctly and perhaps learn to say hello in the child's home language.

- Talk with children and parents at school about creating a safe, welcoming environment. Using resources, help children understand the refugee experience.

- Ensure there are multicultural resources available such as, dictionaries and translator apps. Incorporate cultural references across the curriculum whenever possible.

- Be aware of cultural differences that may be incorrectly interpreted as SLCN, e.g., use of eye contact may be different.

USE THESE LANGUAGE LINK STRATEGIES TO BUILD COMMUNICATION SKILLS

General

- Provide as many opportunities as possible to allow the child to experience success.
- Continued use of the child's home language should be encouraged. The child should feel comfortable speaking in their own language to other children or staff who speak the same language. Translanguaging (the use of different languages together) enhances learning. (Garcia)
- Encourage all attempts by the child to communicate, e.g., pointing, gesture, facial expression, pointing to symbols, drawing.
- Do not place the child under pressure to speak. Grow their confidence and their language will follow.
- Include new arrivals in whole class teaching as much as possible.
- Sit new arrivals where they can see the teacher clearly and next to children who have no language difficulties so they can hear good language models.

Visuals

- Visual supports 'back up' spoken words. Use everyday objects, videos, photos, pictures, symbols, key written words and demonstration.
- Use facial expression, body language and hand gestures.
- Use visual timetables to support transitions between different lessons/activities.
- Use labels - display key vocabulary in English with a picture or symbol, e.g., toilet. Use the same symbols across the school and at home. Include some pictures to convey emotional language: happy, tired.
- Graphic organisers can be used for explaining, sequencing and classifying information, e.g., diagrams and timelines.

Break it down

- Reduce the length and complexity of language.
- Avoid using figurative language or teach explicitly what words mean. For example, 'it slipped my mind'.
- Pause regularly while speaking, to give new arrivals time to process information.
- Use sentence and story planners to help children structure spoken and/ or written tasks.

Explain clearly

- Pre-teach key vocabulary – use a multi-sensory approach and word webs.
- Modelling is important for introducing new vocabulary and learning language structures. Children need to hear language used in a meaningful context before they can use it. Add specific words to extend the child's vocabulary.

Check as you go

- Check that children have understood. Use confidence indicators. If they haven't understood, rephrase the instruction and use visual support.
- Provide lots of repetition in different contexts.

Games Ideas

Play games that build confidence and participation, without a pressure to speak; snap, cards, draughts, dominoes, Connect 4, noughts and crosses, pairs, lotto and action songs are some examples.

The experience of welcoming refugee children in school is an opportunity, to find out about another culture and language and learn about kindness, resilience and courage during challenging times.

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>
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