

The Link

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BUILDING BLOCKS FOR COMMUNICATION

Using Lego® for Purposeful Play

ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS FOR SCHOOLS

by Lorraine Peterson OBE

DEVELOPING SOCIAL SKILLS

by Alex Kelly SLT

**FREE
RESOURCES**

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Dear Reader,

We hope you have had a wonderful summer and feel ready to face the challenges ahead this academic year.

September is always so busy, ensuring a smooth transition for your new intake and settling all children into their new classes. SATs may be months away but, for your children with SLCN, now is the time to think about access arrangements for children who may need help with tests and exams. **Lorraine Peterson's** informative article, will help you ensure that all children who need support in exams receive it.

Alex Kelly SLT looks at the research behind why social skills are so important and advises how to set specific targets for children and evidence progress of interventions in a meaningful way. We have a **FREE** copy of 'Social Skills – Developing Effective Interpersonal Communication' to give away in our prize draw!

Don't we all love Lego®? **Amy Eleftheriades** shares her structured, activity-based sessions to help develop social skills and we have a FREE copy of her wonderful book 'Building Blocks for Communication' to give away in our prize draw!

October 18th is DLD Awareness Day. **Stephen Parsons** and **Louise Bingham** share how DLD Awareness Day is marked and give ideas for your school to use. **Sign up for our FREE e-newsletter and we will send you our fabulous new communication stickers to help you raise awareness of DLD in your school!**

Last, but by no means least, we are very excited to be launching *The Link's* specialist Facebook group this September. This will allow our readers to interact with us and each other, along with specialists, to ensure that we share good practice and advice in schools for our children with SLCN. See page 11 for more details.

The Link magazine is published by Speech Link Multimedia Ltd and posted FREE of charge to all UK primary schools. We aim to provide helpful speech and language articles for any school staff supporting children with SLCN.

www.speechandlanguage.info

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

FREE SLCN RESOURCES FOR YOUR SCHOOL WORTH £300!

240 schools needed to take part in an exciting new trial

Speech Link Multimedia Ltd is making the Infant Language Link assessment even better, to focus on supporting children with SLCN more accurately and quickly. We need your help. 240 UK Primary and Infant schools that haven't used Infant Language Link before are needed to test our new Reception assessment. This project will take place between January and December 2020 and will be evaluated by the Psychometrics Centre, University of Cambridge. As a thank you we will send your school a super bundle of all our printed speech and language resources (RRP £300). We expect demand to be high so please get in touch soon.

For more details and to see if your school qualifies, please go to www.speechandlanguage.info/volunteer

What does Body Awareness have to do with Language Processing?

By Kim Griffin OT

What is proprioception?

Proprioception is often called our hidden sixth sense. Cells of our body, called proprioceptors, located in our muscles and joints, receive sensory information when our body moves. This lets our brain know where our arms, legs and body are at any given moment and forms the foundation for our body awareness. This includes the stretch on our muscles and the position changes of our joints.

When a child is not processing proprioceptive sensory information well, they have less awareness of where their body is. They may use too much force or too little force during activities. For example, they might constantly touch things to give their brain more feedback or they might use extra movement to help them to know where their body is in space.

How does this fit with language processing?

The proprioceptive and vestibular (balance) senses work quietly in the background and without these we would not be able to sit up, move about or complete skilled tasks like playing football, making a cake or writing. The development of sensory motor skills, including body awareness, relies heavily on the proprioceptive and touch senses. It also includes postural security and motor planning which are essential for speech.

These skills then form the foundation for higher cognitive tasks, such as language processing and academic learning. These are much harder to achieve when there are challenges with sensorimotor and perceptual skills, including the proprioceptive

sense. When a child doesn't know where their body is, i.e. they aren't very well grounded, they need to use some of their cognitive processing to think about this, leaving less capacity for attention and language processing.

What can you do to help?

- Some children need to use extra movement in order to compensate for poor proprioceptive sensory processing. It is important to allow these children to move and not to expect them to be thinking about staying still and also be able to process language! Strategies could include an appropriate fidget toy or a dynamic seat, such as a wobble cushion, weighted blanket or lap pad. The strategy will depend on what works best for the individual child.
- Activate the proprioceptive sense through movement which has a resistance element to it, often referred to as 'Heavy Work' e.g. climbing, pulling, pushing and carrying activities. The child could carry a heavy book or backpack, do some exercises with a resistance band or get on a bicycle or scooter, before they need to sit down and listen. For older children, rock climbing and rowing machines are excellent.

If a child has any challenges knowing where their body is in space, they will find it much harder to sit still and process what you are saying. Consider if they need a sensory strategy to support them in being ready and able to listen and attend.

AUTHOR INFORMATION:

Kim Griffin is a paediatric occupational therapist. For more information about her FREE SPD course visit www.GriffinOT.com/SL

Read Kim's full article online in The Blog at www.speechandlanguage.info.

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) can be described most simply as a condition in which a person has difficulty with language, talking and/or understanding. At around 7.5%, it equates to two students in every class. Even if you have never heard of it, the chances are you know someone with DLD. These students have always been in our classrooms but there has been great confusion regarding terminology and as a result most students with DLD go unidentified.

- 60-90% of children and young people experiencing behaviour difficulties have DLD. It is not surprising that incidents occur when a student is not understanding what is going on or cannot explain their side of the story convincingly.
- 50% of those presenting with dyslexia in mainstream schools have an underlying DLD. A student with reading comprehension difficulties may have DLD.
- As language is so central to learning in the classroom, there is also a good chance that some students who have been categorised as MLD may in fact have DLD.

DLD

AWARENESS DAY

FRI 18 OCT 2019

**RAISING AWARENESS OF DEVELOPMENTAL
LANGUAGE DISORDER**

By Stephen Parsons SLT, Chair, NAPLIC, UK representative
on the RADLD international committee

WHAT CAN YOUR SCHOOL DO TO RAISE AWARENESS OF DLD?

By Louise Bingham SLT

Watch out if you have compliant students who rarely talk. A quick screen of their understanding will help work out if they are reluctant talkers or are at risk of DLD. For bilingual or EAL pupils, the language difficulty needs to be in the home language as well as English and so to formally diagnose DLD a bilingual assessment is required. Students with unidentified DLD have very poor outcomes in terms of education, employment and mental health but with the right support they can thrive. If you do have concerns about a particular student, then refer to a speech and language therapist.

In 2017 the terminology confusion was sorted by international consensus and we held the first international *Raising Awareness of DLD* day. **Friday 18th October 2019** is the date this year. To mark the day a number of landmarks around the world will be lit purple, including Niagara Falls. The theme this year is **'DLD: you and me'** and so we will be collecting the stories, both written and videoed, of children and young people with DLD and their families. At a local level we are encouraging staff teams to host events such as talks, information stalls, cake bakes and staff meetings. And if you want to lead in your local area then you can volunteer to be a RADLD Ambassador.

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WAYS TO RAISE AWARENESS OF DLD THIS YEAR:

- ✓ **Learn more about DLD:**
naplic.org.uk/dld
- ✓ **Keep up to date with this year's campaign:**
[radld.page](https://www.facebook.com/radld) on Facebook
[@radld](https://twitter.com/radld) on Twitter
- ✓ **Become a DLD Ambassador:**
radld.org/get-involved/ambassadors/
- ✓ **Submit stories or videos:**
radld.org/news/tell-us-your-story/

The more we know about DLD, the more children and young people with the condition can get the right information, help and support. Everyone working with children and young people has a role in spreading the word about DLD.

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IDEAS FOR WAYS THAT YOU CAN SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL DLD AWARENESS DAY IN YOUR SCHOOL:

1. Head to the RADLD website for all things DLD including stickers, posters and logos. The website is full of information and resources to share with colleagues and families, including videos and fact sheets.
2. Arrange an informal staff meeting or parents' coffee morning to share information about DLD, which could include watching the DLD 123 award-winning video or completing the RADLD DLD quiz!
3. Have a 'No Pens Wednesday' (or in this case Friday!) in school where teachers and pupils put down their pens and have a day of speaking and listening activities. The idea, run by the Communication Trust, has been hugely successful in raising staff and pupils' awareness of SLCN. There is a focus in schools to develop children's reading and writing ability but children need to have a good understanding and use of oral language before they will be able to apply this to reading and writing. Children with DLD struggle to manage understanding and using spoken language within the classroom, let alone applying the required squiggles and shapes (letters). Completing activities that focus on talking and listening is more inclusive.
4. Hold a t-shirt or poster design competition, using the DLD logo. Pupils can talk about what they have learnt about DLD and how they made their creations.
5. Be inspired by the article written by Kim Griffin OT in our previous *The Link* 14 magazine and complete activities exploring language using the senses. Use physical or creative tasks and encourage children to talk about these, for example, what paint feels like. You could encourage classes to get outside during the day (very weather dependent in October!) and enjoy a nature trail.
6. One of the most important things to remember is to share your stories and pictures of your celebrations on social media. Use [#DLDYouandMe](https://twitter.com/hashtag/DLDYouandMe) to promote DLD Awareness Day and [@speechlink](https://twitter.com/speechlink) so that we can feature your ideas and stories to inspire others.

Sign up to The Link e-newsletter at speechandlanguage.info and we will send you FREE communication stickers to help you to promote DLD within your school. Then, look out for information about our team's fun activities for promoting DLD on social media [@speechlink](https://twitter.com/speechlink), as well as in our e-newsletter and SLCN Blog.



Access Arrangements for Pupils with Speech, Language and Communication Needs

By Lorraine Peterson OBE, Lead Consultant, LPEC



Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) is the umbrella term for a variety of disorders in which an individual can struggle to listen, understand and communicate. It is thought to be one of the most common disabilities amongst children. Not only do children with SLCN often struggle in the classroom but they also struggle in tests and exams.

What are Access Arrangements?

Access Arrangements (AAs) fall into two categories; reasonable adjustments and special considerations. **Reasonable adjustments** are considered when a disabled learner is at a substantial disadvantage to others when taking an examination or assessment test. This judgement is made prior to the exam, whereas a **special consideration** is made if the learner is temporarily affected by illness, injury or another indisposition and will therefore be unable to complete an assessment to their 'normal' capability. This judgement is made post-exam.

There will be some children who require support during tests and examinations but they may not be on your SEN Register because they do not require anything that is additional and/or different to their peers, due to the daily adjustments made as part of the differentiated, high quality teaching in the classroom. However, they may require a scribe, use of a laptop, a reader or extra time which is provided as the students' 'normal way of working' within the classroom and during internal tests.

What are Reasonable Adjustments?

The Equality Act 2010 requires an Awarding Body to make reasonable adjustments where a disabled

person would be at a substantial disadvantage in undertaking an assessment. A reasonable adjustment for a particular person may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available Access Arrangements. How reasonable the adjustment is will depend on a number of factors including the needs of the disabled candidate/learner. An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it involves unreasonable costs, timeframes or affects the security or integrity of the assessment. There is no duty on the Awarding Bodies to make any adjustment to the objectives being tested in an assessment.

When first identifying a pupil's needs, it is really important that schools (no matter what the age of the pupil) think about what Access Arrangements might be needed later in the year at the point of a test or exam. This will enable them to evidence the 'normal way of working' in everyday classroom practice during the year. Schools should then refer to the relevant documentation (STA for KS1 and KS2) to ensure that they understand which arrangements are at the discretion of the school and which need to be applied for.

Access Arrangements for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2

Each year the Standards and Testing Agency (STA) produces two documents setting out the Access Arrangements for those children participating in the key stage 1 (KS1) and key stage 2 (KS2) national curriculum tests.

The 2019 guidance can be found on the STA website:

Key Stage 1:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-1-tests-access-arrangements

Key Stage 2:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-2-tests-access-arrangements



Due to the diversity of pupils' needs, this guidance does not list every circumstance where it would be appropriate to use access arrangements. When planning for the tests, schools should think of any needs their pupils have and whether they receive additional support as part of normal classroom practice. Some pupils may not be able to access the tests, despite the provision of additional arrangements.



During a monitoring visit, local authorities may ask to see evidence that any additional support provided in the tests is also regularly provided as part of normal classroom practice. Evidence will vary according to the type of arrangement and the tasks it is required for. Evidence may include notes recorded in teaching plans, individual pupil support plans or a pupil's classwork, to demonstrate the type of support provided in the classroom.

Access Arrangements for children with SLCN

There are a number of arrangements that can be used for children with SLCN at the end of KS1 and KS2. These need to have been used within the classroom on a regular basis and evidence of how they are used should be recorded and kept:

- Additional time
- Rest breaks
- Scribe
- Transcript
- Word processors or other technical or electronic aids
- Reader
- Prompts
- Administering the test in another location (1:1 or small group)
- Use of accessibility objects in the mathematics test

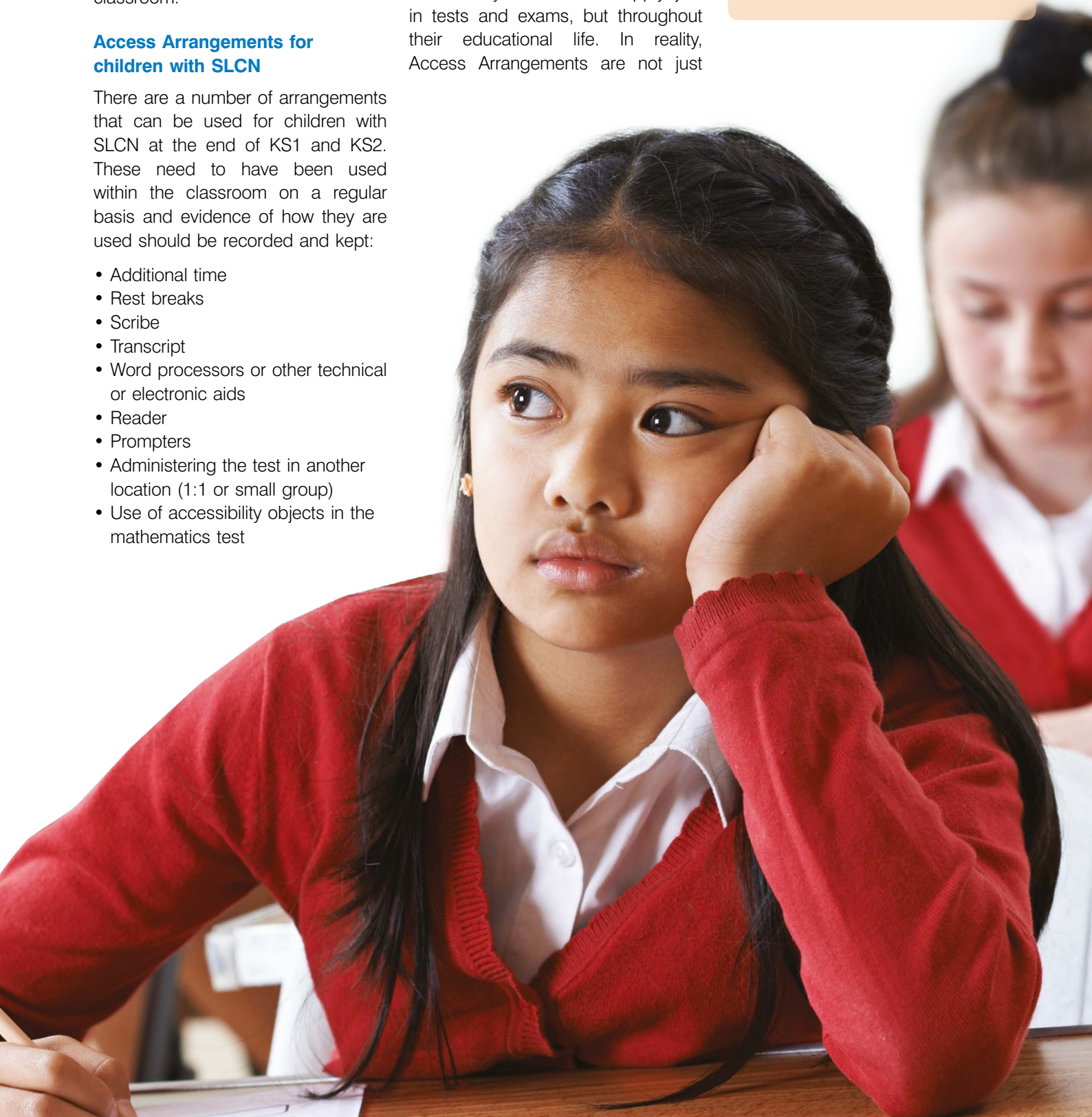
What about EAL Learners?

The candidate must have an impairment in their first language which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect. A candidate does not have a learning difficulty simply because their first language is not English, Irish or Welsh.

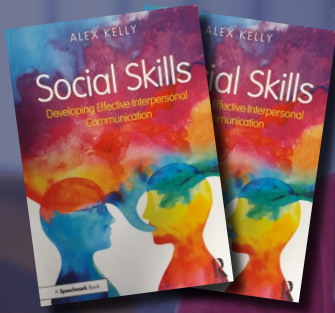
It is really important that we give every child and young person an equality of opportunity, even though they may have a learning difficulty or disability. This doesn't apply just in tests and exams, but throughout their educational life. In reality, Access Arrangements are not just

for Year 2 and Year 6 but should be applied daily in every classroom as this is what will ensure that each individual pupil can access their learning across the whole curriculum.

If you have any questions for Lorraine regarding access arrangements, please send them to office2@speechlink.co.uk and she will answer them in October's Q&A Blog at www.speechandlanguage.info



FREE PRIZE
DRAW



WIN A COPY OF ALEX'S
LATEST BOOK

To enter, email
office2@speechlink.co.uk
with the subject header
Social Skills.

The winner will be announced
on 31 October 2019

DEVELOPING SOCIAL SKILLS IN SCHOOLS

by Alex Kelly SLT

The keys to a successful approach

The importance of being socially skilled cannot be underestimated. We all need these skills to communicate effectively in order to listen to others, to express ourselves, to be taken seriously and to make friends. However, not all children develop social competence naturally. Some children are socially unskilled and require intervention. As a result, some struggle with their self-esteem and most struggle with friendships. But where do we start? What can we do? And how can we evidence what we have done?

Why are social skills so important?

Firstly, good social skills help children to stay out of trouble. A recent study showed that between 60 and 90% of young people who pass through young offender institutions have communication difficulties and this includes problems with social communication skills.

Secondly, our self-identity and self-worth come from our relationships and indeed friends often take centre stage in a child's life. We also know

that having friends helps children's social, emotional and cognitive development. A growing body of research suggests that children who do well socially are more likely to do well academically and that social competence is a critical variable in predicting success in future life.

This is not new information. We have known this for many years. When schools attend systematically to students' social and emotional skills, their academic achievement increases, the incidence of problem behaviours decreases and the quality of the relationships surrounding each child improves.

The trouble is, in a world where evidence is essential and measuring outcomes is mandatory, social skills are mostly not prioritised in school. But can social skills work be measured effectively and then seen more as a priority? I believe it can, and over the past 10 years I have been working with schools to evidence the impact of their work. The results have been encouraging across all schools but there are five factors that are essential if schools are to measure their success effectively.

1. Use a quantifiable assessment as a 'before' and 'after' measure

Schools ideally should complete an initial assessment of the child's social skills and then repeat the assessment at the end of the work. Any social skills assessment can be used as long as the results can be quantified and then the pre and post scores can be used to identify areas of improvement. However, if you are using the Talkabout programme, you can assess a child's self-awareness and self-esteem using the Talkabout Interview and their social skills using

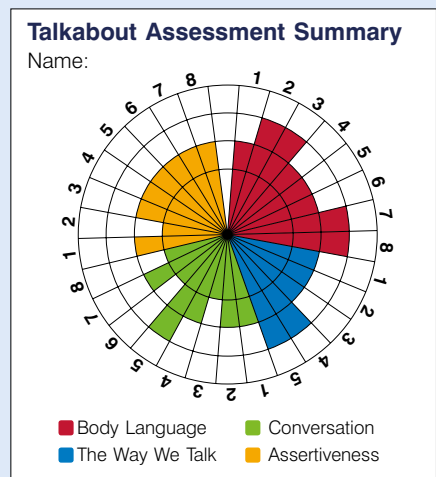


Fig 1: A Talkabout Assessment

the Talkabout Assessment Tool (see figure 1). This is your long-term measure of success and can be done several times throughout a child's time at school. We usually recommend that once a child has been identified as requiring this work, a baseline assessment is completed and then repeated annually.

2. Use a hierarchical approach to teaching social skills

Following assessment, it is important to identify areas of need and then to work on skills that will set the child up to succeed. Schools that spend time developing the foundation skills of self-esteem and self-awareness, and then concentrate on body language prior to the more complex areas of conversational skills, friendship skills and assertiveness, are more likely to see progress with their pupils (see figure 2).

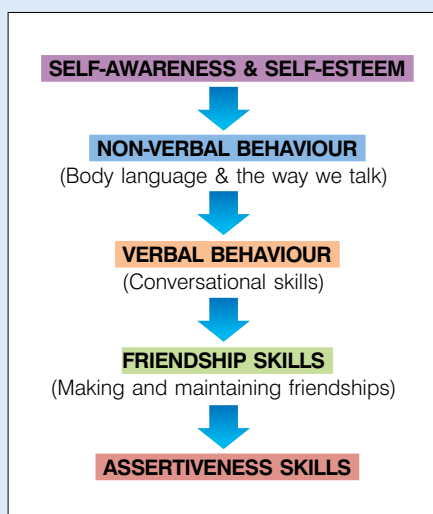


Fig 2: The hierarchical model of intervention

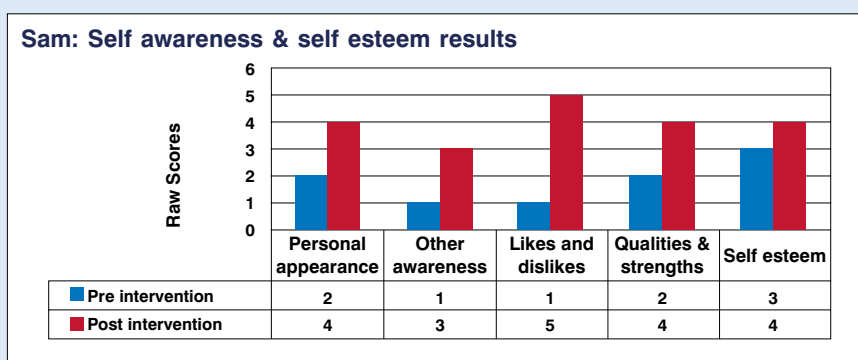


Fig 3: Results of self-esteem work

3. Set specific targets

Schools should be encouraged to set short term targets that will evidence progress in a more detailed way. For example: 'Sam will to be able to give 3 positive qualities about himself'. These can then be assessed on a 6-point rating scale from 'skill not present' to 'skill present and consistent in all situations'. These scores can also be entered into a spreadsheet to provide a visual summary of progress (see figure 3).

4. Staffing

Schools are naturally at an advantage where a few key staff have had training in social skills. This doesn't have to be the SENCo or a teacher. Some of the best examples of practice have been seen in schools where one or two teaching assistants have coordinated the intervention. They do need to have certain skills, such as good social skills themselves and an ability to facilitate a small group. They also need some knowledge of the subject, such as knowing the rules for appropriate eye contact and how to help pupils develop this skill. It is also useful to have an awareness of other techniques for teaching social skills, such as using modelling, social stories or comic strips.

5. The school climate and school management

This possibly should be the first step to success but, as it is the hardest to define, I thought I would tackle it last! The wider context of the school climate and management is important because it is known to influence peer (and staff) relations in schools in a number of ways. We know that social skills interventions are more effective if they are supported by the environment through encouragement and opportunity; through motivations and rewards being considered and used consistently; and a physical environment that is enabling and communication friendly.

In summary

It is the same story in so many schools I go into both across the UK and abroad; schools know that social skills difficulties can affect self-esteem, educational achievement and general behaviour. The problem is that, if they are going to spend time on developing these skills, they need to be able to measure the effectiveness of the work to give it credibility. Our work over the last ten years has been encouraging. Schools that have invested in doing this work and have followed the previous five points have seen good results and all of them have been able to continue or extend this to other pupils.

A bit about Alex Kelly

Alex Kelly is a speech and language therapist with 33 years' experience of working with people with social skills difficulties. She is the author of the best-selling TALKABOUT resources and lectures internationally on social skills, self-esteem and friendship skills. She has authored 13 books and numerous activity resources and last year published a theory book on social skills. Alex can be contacted at alex@alexkelly.biz

For information about Alex's work and the Talkabout resources visit her website www.alexkelly.biz

From One TA to Another

TA to Teacher to TA

by Claire Chambers, former HLTA

On joining my primary school, I was a bit unnerved to find out that occasionally I would be expected to cover the class if a supply teacher couldn't be found or if there were unforeseen circumstances.

It made sense that the TA would cover the class from time to time:

- The TA knows the children and so it can be less disruptive for them than to have a supply teacher
- The TA knows which children have SLCN and what works best to support them
- The TA knows the teacher's expectations for the class and can ensure that these are met
- The TA knows the class and school rules and so children don't 'try it on'
- The TA understands the relationships between children and so is mindful of this when grouping children, lining them up, etc

But when I found out I was to cover my teacher's PPA for six consecutive Thursday afternoons, I had so many sleepless nights. Why? Confidence – or should I say lack of it!

OK, I knew the curriculum; my teacher was an excellent planner and therefore I would know what the

class was expected to do. I knew the children's capabilities and felt able to think on my feet and extend activities should the lesson finish earlier than planned. The children would be making mobile phone cases in their DT lesson – in theory this would all be quite straightforward.

In practice it wasn't quite the case:

- I was taking the class WITHOUT TA support!
- The class still viewed any cover as an opportunity to relax a bit
- Less structured lessons like needlework meant more talking, more movement around the classroom - more opportunities to be off task

Week 1 didn't go too badly and I felt my confidence begin to grow. Having already designed their cases, the class spent the session cutting out the basic felt shapes for the case. Yes, there were a few minor wrangles over material and some squabbles about trimmings but, all in all, a good session.

Week 2 arrived and everyone

appeared to be industrious and making headway with their project. A knock at the door and the head, escorting a couple of prospective parents around, popped into the class just as this 'perfect' lesson screeched to a halt.

Bobby realised he'd sewn his finger to his shorts and began to scream, Amy was unable to walk as she was bound by the ankles with embroidery thread and began to scream and very naughty Eric had thrown 'top table' Maisie's pin cushion out of the window (and yes, Maisie began to scream). And worse, as if it COULD get any worse, was the humiliating telling off the class got for 'behaving disrespectfully to Mrs Chambers' in front of a mortified Mrs Chambers...

Perhaps some TAs find covering class easy, but I always found it difficult to make the transition from one role to another. A TA's relationship with the children is a bit different from the teacher's relationship and, although my style complimented my teacher's, it wasn't the same.

Dear TAs, please share your stories of class cover, when things go wrong or when things go right - we'd love to hear from you. We have a couple of sets of classroom posters to give away for the funniest story and for the best tip, which we will share on The Blog at www.speechandlanguage.info. Please contact office2@speechlink.co.uk





INTRODUCING The Link Facebook Group

Our **new online community** is making it even easier to **stay up-to-date**, seek and share **best practice and advice** for all things **Speech, Language and Communication!**

Join The Link Facebook Group today and let's share knowledge to support every school, SENCo and speech and language therapist.

Together we can help all children reach their full communication potential.



Join The Link Facebook Group today:

www.facebook.com/groups/thelinksupportingchildrenwithslcn



BUILDING BLOCKS FOR COMMUNICATION;

using Lego[®] for Purposeful Play

By Amy Eleftheriades (PGCE, MEd in SEND), Director of Alpha Inclusion and Communication

Traditionally Lego has been viewed as a toy, however this is not necessarily the case anymore. Lego is increasingly being used as a tool to encourage and develop creativity, improve language and communication and teach and enhance team building skills. I have used it with all ages, in schools, homes and businesses. I've also seen it used incredibly well as a tool to teach STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) and a box of these colourful bricks can more often than not be found hiding away in a cupboard in most schools!

Building blocks for communication

Lego is great for those who like structure, predictability and rules in which to explore their creativity and construct their thoughts. Lego provides a way for those who struggle to communicate to do so. It is not just their ideas that they are able to communicate but also their thoughts, perceptions and processes. The activities help promote different types of communication: technical language, social and emotional communication and social interactive skills. Each activity has an aim – a speech, language or communication goal – but the 'process' and the 'feel' of the activities are strictly informal and fun.

Here are a few activities to try with individuals and groups:

Lego to help conversation

There is no doubt that young people are more likely to relax sooner and start chatting more confidently if they have Lego bricks in their hands. Think of Lego on these occasions as a processing tool. Some people process thoughts better if they are 'doing' whilst talking.

- Put a pile of Lego on the table/floor
- Start to build and encourage those with you to build anything they like
- When ready, start a conversation. Keep focused on the Lego and don't worry about long pauses or needing to do this a few times before the chat gets going

Lego for playing together

Sort it

- Put a pile of Lego on the table/floor
- Explain you are going to sort it
- Encourage discussion around how to sort. Point out there is not a 'right' or 'wrong' way to sort Lego, and there may be different ideas. Examples may be by colour, shape, number of studs, etc
- Start sorting together, discussing the pieces and which piles/boxes they should go in
- Use visual cards if needed to distinguish the different criteria for sorting



PRIZE DRAW

Win a copy of Amy's book *'Building Blocks for Communication; Activities for Promoting Language and Communication Skills in Children with Special Educational Needs'*.

To enter, email office2@speechlink.co.uk with the subject header 'Building Blocks for Communication'.

The winner will be announced on 31 October 2019.



Listen and Build

- Put a pile of Lego on the table/floor
- Have instructions on a piece of paper or card. Start simple, e.g. build a model using 3 blue bricks, 8 red bricks and 2 bricks with four studs on
- Each person gets to create and read out the instructions for the rest of the group. You may decide to give 'awards' for the most creative models

Lego for sharing thoughts and feelings

Many children experience sensory overload in the school environment. This can make concentration very difficult and their experiences of the classroom overwhelming. A lot of the children may not be able to express how they are experiencing an environment and in some cases they don't realise that their experience is any different to that of their peers. Getting them to build their classroom in Lego can help them communicate their experiences. Put a pile of Lego on the table and explain to the child they will be building their classroom.

Ask them to:

- Make tables for the children and a desk for where the teacher sits. Help them if needed
- Take some Minifigures and ask the child to pick one which represents them, their teacher/friends/support staff
- Put their Minifigure in the place they feel most comfortable in the classroom
- Explain their reasons for their choice
- Put the Minifigure of the person who most makes them feel ok next to their Minifigure
- Put themselves in the model where they feel least comfortable/ok

Continue with this explorative questioning to help the child express their experiences and feelings. It will help you understand the issues and start the conversation to find solutions.

Lego is a great, simple, fun tool to support communication – why not give it a go?

READ AMY'S FULL
ARTICLE IN THE BLOG AT
www.speechandlanguage.info



TOP TIPS FOR YOUR ACTIVITIES:

- ✓ Think of it as structured play – know what you want to teach but keep it fun
- ✓ Allow time to learn – repeating activities will increase confidence
- ✓ Keep activities short initially, increasing the length of time as they become familiar
- ✓ Adapt for your group – there is no 'right' way
- ✓ Include free play as well as structured activities
- ✓ Give the children some control – play their games their way!
- ✓ Model it – do it first to show the children what to expect
- ✓ Make sure you evidence and show impact. We provide regular training on how to do this with your personalised sessions (see www.blockbus.co.uk)

Amy Eleftheriades is a qualified teacher specialising in Autism and Social Communication difficulties. Find out more at her website: www.blockbus.co.uk



Ask a Therapist

by Louise Bingham, Speech and Language Therapist

5

WAYS TO GET THE BEST OUT OF YOUR SLT TIME

Across the country, SLT services have had to ration what they can provide, due to cuts in spending on SLT. This means that services work in very different ways and have to plan how best to use the limited resources that they have to support children, parents and education staff in their area. For many schools, this means that there may be less frequent contact with SLT services and the type of support that is offered may look different, for example, focusing on indirect support and training rather than directly working with pupils.

This 'postcode lottery' of support was outlined in the England Children's Commissioner's report *We need to talk: Access to speech and language therapy*, published in June. The report revealed a huge disparity in spending on SLT support across the country, with spending cuts in many areas. This received media attention within an article by the BBC News Education Reporter and was featured in our SLCN blog.

As a result of spending cuts, schools can feel that they are left to manage the impact of SLCN themselves and it can feel that the time available from SLT is very limited. With that in mind, here are five ways that you can make the most out of your time from SLT:

1 Have a clear plan for each visit:

You may not always feel that you have a say in what your visit time is used for but it is very beneficial to make a plan jointly with your SLT. This means that you know what to prepare for the visit and the information that the SLT needs. You may have children that you would like to discuss with the SLT and it is often easier to plan and timetable this in rather than trying to catch the SLT when they are in school.

This could include developing a joint checklist for discussions about pupils so that both the SLT and school have all the key information needed to have a valuable discussion.

2 Identify a key member of staff for SLCN:

If you haven't already, think about identifying a key member of staff to have a specialist role in working with pupils with SLCN. They can then observe sessions with the SLT to increase their skills and knowledge, picking up hints and tips immediately to transfer to their work with children and making the best use of the SLT's time.

3 Get quality first teaching strategies in place:

All children benefit from working in an environment which supports development of speech, language and communication skills. Having quality first teaching strategies in place at a universal level means that it is easier to identify those children that need additional specialist support. Supporting good practice at a universal level will enhance the development of language and communication skills for typically developing children as well as those with SLCN.

4 Have a system for screening children:

Having a system in place to screen children means that you can identify pupils who need further specialist assessment and advice from a SLT. Then your SLT time can be used to speak about children who really need that level of specialist support and you can more quickly put in place support for children that need in class strategies or intervention groups within school.

5 Get together with other schools:

Speak to other schools in your area and identify areas of training need that you have in common. It would be easier and more time effective for the SLT service to provide training to a group of schools at the same time to discuss and demonstrate an intervention with staff at different schools. If you have a key member of staff working with pupils with SLCN, they could arrange time to meet with staff working in a similar role in other schools, to share knowledge and skills.

From my experience, SLTs are feeling just as frustrated and stressed as you are in trying to support children with SLCN and have the same challenges in doing this successfully. Having a conversation with your SLT about making a joint plan for support could help to make your SLT time more efficient and successful for both your school and the SLT service.

Literacy Difficulties?

It could be SLCN



SLCN the hidden difficulty

SLCN is the most common primary area of need for pupils with SEN at 23%. However, when it comes to getting support through an EHCP, Autism Spectrum Disorder and Specific Learning Difficulties are identified far more frequently. So why is SLCN so often missed or mis-identified?

As young people progress through school their underlying language problems can be disguised as poor behaviour, weak literacy or even learning difficulties. In fact, it is often struggles with reading comprehension tasks that first alert staff to SLCN. Some higher level language difficulties only become apparent as the language demands increase within the curriculum e.g. using language to solve problems and understanding idiomatic language.

Schools need tools they can trust to accurately identify and support SLCN at all stages of a child's school life. Boosting language skills can increase attainment and life chances for individuals, and that has to be worth striving for.

Literacy difficulties?

Early SLCN is a significant predictor of later literacy difficulties

Snowling, 2006

Dyslexia?

50% of children diagnosed with dyslexia have underlying SLCN

40%

CHILDREN WITH SLCN MISSED
OR MIS-IDENTIFIED

BERCOW 10 YEARS ON, 2018

Junior Language Link

This award winning, innovative online package combines a standardised assessment, planned interventions, resources and measured outcomes. Empowering schools to take control of their own SLCN needs, Junior Language Link improves children's understanding to boost their literacy skills, enabling them to access the curriculum. It maximises time, budget and specialist provision.

Standardised assessment and robust reporting

Junior Language Link is the only standardised language assessment designed specifically for school staff. Use it to quickly screen children to identify any language comprehension difficulties.

Fun, quick and easily accessible, this powerful accurate assessment screens children's understanding across 7 key areas, enabling schools to identify where language difficulties are underpinning poor behaviour or under achievement.

Instant results and reports highlight a child's specific areas of need, so the school can act quickly in providing appropriate information to parents, staff and specialist services. Our inspection-ready reporting and provision maps provide the SENCo tools to show the impact of SLCN work throughout the school.

Key Areas of Language:

Grammar

Verb Tenses
Negatives
Complex Sentences

Vocabulary

Concepts
Association

Meaning

Figurative Language
Narrative Inferences



Junior Language Link WINNER 2018 for

Primary Resource Tool for
leadership, management
& assessment



THE JUDGES SAID:

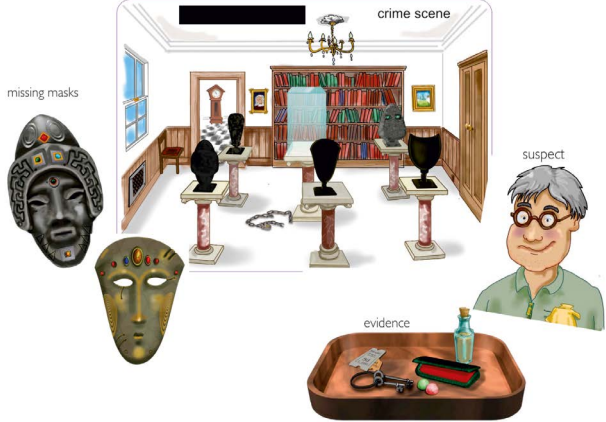
"Highly impressed – the platform not only offers opportunities to track and trace student progress, but also provides well-designed suggestions and strategies for teacher intervention."

Intervention and support

Junior Language Link provides planned and resourced interventions for a graduated approach to supporting SLCN. Our whole class strategies and resources allow teachers to support children at a universal level, cutting down on planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time.

Our fully resourced language intervention groups are delivered by support staff. Over 600+ resources are available for staff to use, including an extensive range of support materials for parents.

Junior Language Link is further supported by our experienced and knowledgeable Help Desk. Staffed by SLTs, teachers and support staff, we can provide specialist advice and support promptly to schools.



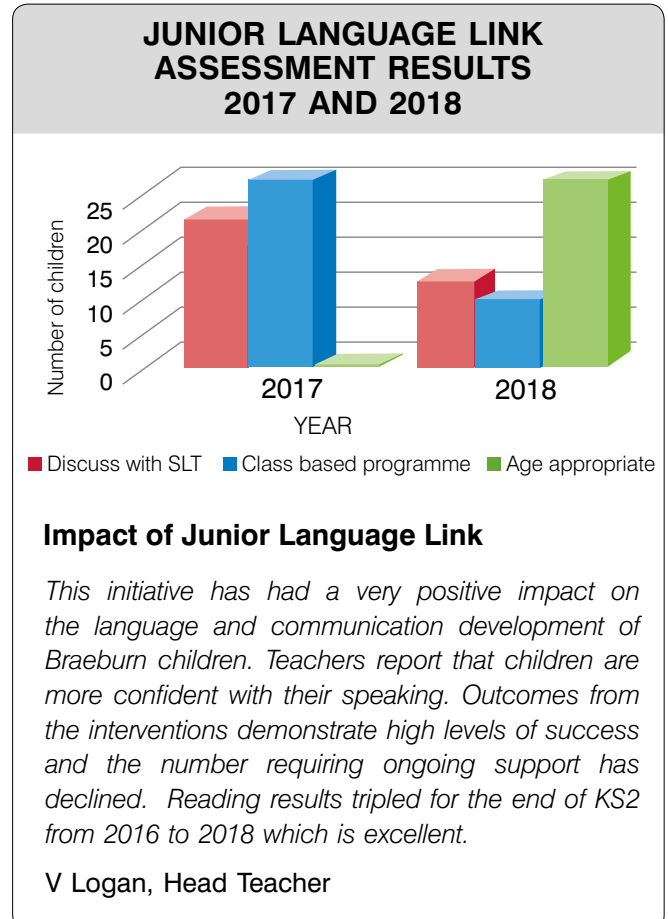
LANGUAGE FOR ASSESSMENT GROUP RESOURCES

Students use their language skills to **examine, describe, investigate, evaluate** and **contrast** evidence to solve the mystery at Morley Manor!

Impact on learning

The Language Link approach has measurable impact on children. Across one year, children participating in interventions made on average 16 months' progress in just 8 months. 69.2% of staff surveyed believed that Language Link had a positive impact on attainment and 93% reported they had seen improvements in understanding, communication, listening and participation in class.

Staff have also reported changes in their practice from using Language Link with a significant increase in the use of appropriate classroom support strategies.



BOOK A
FREE
TRIAL

www.speechandlanguage.info

Making a difference

We asked some of our customers to tell us about the difference Junior Language Link was making in their schools.

A year 5 girl went all the way through the school but without making the expected progress. No-one was sure why. We used the Junior Language Link assessment and she came out as significantly impaired – everyone was really surprised. She was struggling with the complexity of the language and was struggling to retain instructions.

Aldermoor Farm School

This year we rolled out Language Link across the whole school. We were amazed at the progress. The children cannot wait to come to the sessions and carry the skills (learnt) through into the classroom.

Primary School, Isle of Wight

VALUE FOR MONEY

Less than
£8 per pupil
per year!

**ANNUAL
SUBSCRIPTION**

£275+VAT pa*

*additional setup
cost of £150+VAT
for 1st year

**WATCH OUR
VIDEO FOR
FURTHER
INFORMATION AT**

www.speechandlanguage.info



The intervention sessions are easy to follow and recording the progress of the children is simple. Within the first few weeks there was noticed improvement in the children's listening and concentration skills. The children have also now begun to support each other within the sessions and the peer support given is now evident in class situations too.

Teacher, Overdale CPS

Something to shout about this term - £40 discount

**BUY
NOW**

Junior Language Link enables schools to identify and support hidden language and communication difficulties.

Junior Language Link includes

- > Standardised assessment
- > Interventions and resources
- > Measured outcomes
- > Training
- > After sales specialist support

Buy all this for only £385+VAT*

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* For all children and all computers

* RRP £425+VAT in the first year
£275+VAT in following years

* Offer ends 31st October 2019