

THE  
ULTIMATE

GUIDE TO

SLCN

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SPEECH & LANGUAGE THERAPISTS

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# PREFACE

Here at Speech Link Multimedia Ltd, we are on a mission to bring Speech and Language Therapy knowledge and expertise to every school in order to help all children reach their full communication potential. We aim to support all school staff – wherever you may be – to identify and support Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) successfully, so that no child is left behind at school or in life.

To this end, we have developed a series of innovative and award-winning support packages for children with SLCN from Early Years Foundation Stage through to Key Stage 3.

As qualified Speech and Language Therapists, who have both worked extensively in schools throughout our careers, we are really passionate about this cause and we have drawn on our own real experience as well as the world of research to pour our expertise into these pages.

We hope you'll join us on our mission - and that's why we've written this book. Inside, you will find an accessible reference guide to help you identify and understand the needs of the children in your classroom, along with practical strategies that you can put in place right now in order to support them throughout their education. We will explain diagnoses and terminology relating to SLCN and attempt to banish some common misconceptions.

To find out more about our packages, see pages 140-143.

# HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The Ultimate Guide to SLCN is designed to help SENCOs, teachers, teaching assistants (TAs) and other staff to support all pupils with SLCN within the classroom.

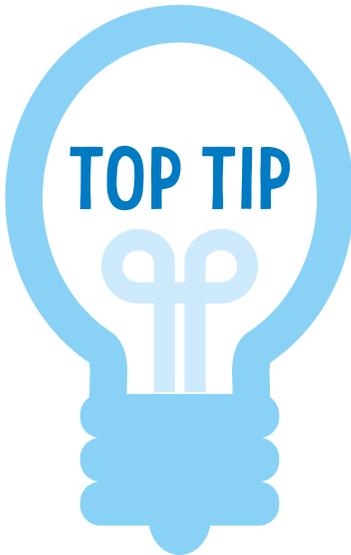
10% of all children present with SLCN and this number rises sharply for students in areas of social disadvantage where as many as 50% of children start school with language and communication needs. It is, therefore, crucial that all school staff have the skills and knowledge to support children with SLCN within the classroom. For existing children in your class with SLCN, or new pupils arriving with a specific diagnosis, you can pick up this eBook for advice on how to support them.

The first part of the eBook is written for all staff working within schools, supporting children with SLCN. This section explains: common terminology related to SLCN, the role of a Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT) and quality first teaching strategies to put in place to support all pupils. There is a checklist to use if you have concerns about a child's speech, language and/or communication skills in your class and guidance on how to become a communication friendly school.

The second part of the book focuses on specific diagnoses that children with SLCN may have. This includes conditions that are diagnosed by a SaLT, such as Developmental Language Disorder (DLD), but also other diagnoses that would not be given by a SaLT but may result in SLCN. Each different diagnosis is outlined including the difficulties the child may experience within the classroom and specific strategies for supporting them. Use this section of our eBook to dip into when you have a child in your class with a diagnosis and want to know where to start.

Enjoy!

**Look out for these as you read on...**



Our Top Tips will highlight important points to think about throughout the book.

We've done the research for you and fact-checked some common misconceptions to set the record straight.



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# PART 1 BACKGROUND

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# TERMINOLOGY

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The terms speech, language and communication are frequently used within school settings and by Speech and Language Therapists, however, the meaning of each term can sometimes become confused. These terms are frequently used to describe children's difficulties and need to be understood in order to identify appropriate strategies for supporting them.

## Speech

Speech refers to the physical production of sounds that we use to build up words, phrases and sentences. To achieve clear speech, we need to be able to say sounds accurately and in the correct places in words.

## Language

Language is the term used for the words (vocabulary), grammar and sentences that we understand and how we organise them to communicate. Language ability is both **receptive** (understanding what others say) and **expressive** (what we ourselves use). Children's receptive language ability is usually in advance of their expressive language ability, for example a one year old will be able to understand many words that are said to them, but they will be able to say very little. This continues as children get older, as they need to understand a word, concept or sentence structure, before they will be able to use it.

## Communication

Communication is the way that we use language to interact with other people. We need to be able to use language in different ways and for different functions including to comment, inform, question, explain and reason. We need to understand the non-verbal rules of communication, such as facial expressions and body language. We also need to understand the social rules of language including taking turns and adapting our use of language to suit different situations. Communication can apply to information that is conveyed with words (spoken or written), noises, facial expressions or gestures and signs.

# COMMUNICATION

## SPEECH

### Speech sound production

- Phonological awareness – identify and manipulate sounds in words

## LANGUAGE

### Receptive Language

- Vocabulary – words understood
- Grammar – how words combine
- Meaning – understanding complex sentences
- Verbal Reasoning – Inferences, prediction, problem solving

### Expressive Language

- Vocabulary – words used
- Grammar – using complex sentence structures
- Narrative – describing events and experiences

## SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

- Interaction – mutual and reciprocal
- Conversation
- Pragmatics – using language in social context
- Non-verbal – facial expression, body language, tone of voice, eye contact

# THE ROLE OF THE SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPIST

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Speech and Language Therapists (SaLTs) are specially trained to diagnose and treat children with disorders of speech, language and communication. Many are employed by the NHS, some are employed through the local authority and some work in independent practice. Some schools (or groups of schools) employ their own SaLT or commission therapy services from local providers.

Sadly nationally, SaLT services are often in a position where they have to ration what they can provide, due to cuts in spending. This means that local 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 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. It is important that schools discuss this with their local SaLT service so the level and type of support that can be offered is understood.

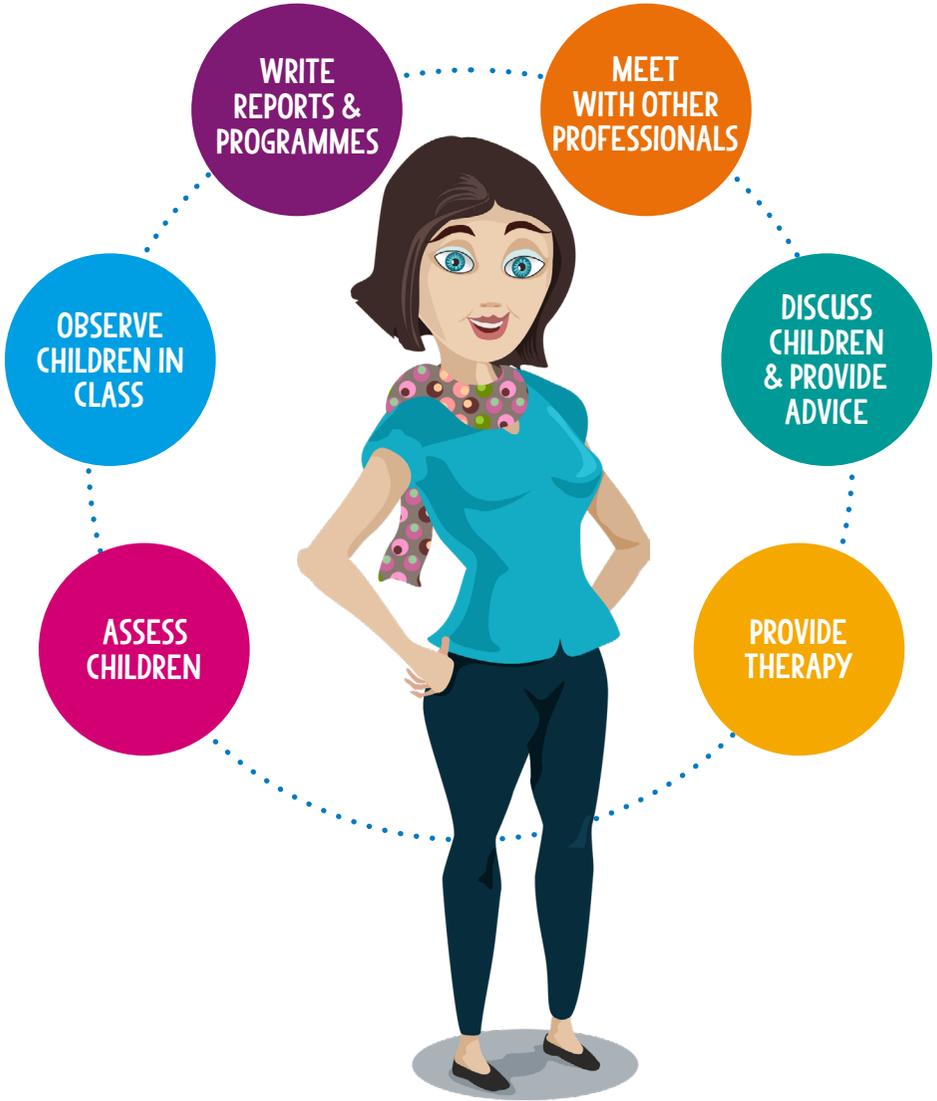
The role of a SaLT involves assessing, planning, delivering and evaluating support for children with a range of SLCN. The following information outlines support that may be provided by SaLTs, but this will depend on the service in each school's local area.

## **Assessment**

Children are referred to SaLTs when there are concerns about speech, language and/or communication skills. Each service has criteria for children that they will accept for assessment. Once accepted, if the assessment is completed in school, the therapist will usually complete an observation of the child within the classroom and work with the child to complete formal standardised assessments. They will speak to parents and key school staff to build up information about the child's strengths and difficulties, and the impact of any difficulties on their learning and ability to socialise. Sometimes assessments are completed within a clinic setting with the child and their parents. Children with SLCN are also assessed by a SaLT as part of an application for an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP).

The therapist will use all of the assessment information to determine the child's profile of needs and provide a diagnosis if appropriate. They may recommend a referral to another professional for further assessment if this is needed, for example if a child needed further assessment of their attention and listening skills. A report will be produced detailing the child's diagnosis, difficulties, the impact of these at home and within the classroom and strategies for supporting the child. This information has usually been discussed and explained to the child's

parents and school staff. The report will also detail next steps from the SaLT service which may include recommendations for training, a programme of support, direct therapy, or discharge.



*The illustration shows the sorts of activities carried out by a SaLT working within schools.*

## **Training**

Part of the role of a SaLT is to provide training and advice to school staff on supporting pupils with SLCN. This may be through organised training sessions that staff book to attend, or more specific training sessions arranged within schools. Training can also be provided to parents and carers to ensure that they understand how to support children's speech, language and communication development at home.

## **Programmes of support**

Following assessment, a SaLT may recommend a programme of support for a child, consisting of targets and resources for school staff to use to work with the child to develop their skills. This may be evaluated by the SaLT within school visits, including discussion with the member of staff completing the intervention programme.

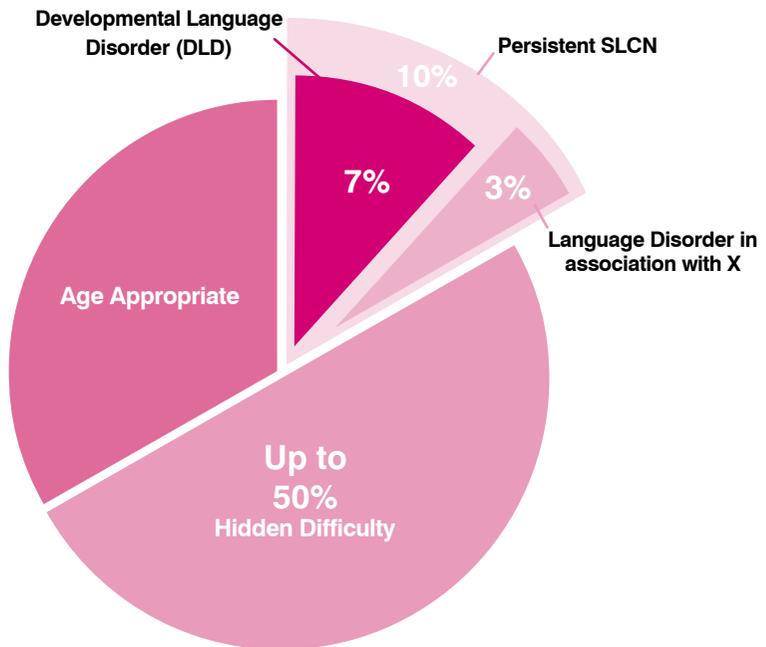
## **Therapy**

For some children with SLCN, direct therapy will be recommended following their assessment. Whether this can be provided will be dependent on the SaLT service in your area. If a child is receiving direct therapy sessions, it is important that a member of school staff working with the child is able to attend at least some of the sessions, for carry over of strategies and activities for working with the child. The child's parents will also be encouraged to attend therapy sessions, to support carry over of work at home. Children will make the most progress when strategies for supporting them are used consistently in all of their communication environments.

# WHY ARE SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS IMPORTANT?

Speech, language and communication skills are so fundamental to a child's development, success and well-being that the United Nations now regards the ability to communicate as a human right.

We might assume that children will arrive at school with fully developed language and communication skills, but this is not a realistic expectation, even for children with no SLCN. The truth is that speech, language and communication skills all continue to develop for years after children start school. Then there are the children who are not developing as expected... approximately 10% of children will have persistent SLCN, and as many as 50% of children in socially deprived areas start school with poor language skills. This means that in your class of 30 there are likely to be at least 2 children who will have persistent difficulties with language, and there might be another 13 with unidentified needs!



*This graph shows the national picture for the prevalence of language difficulties in children.*

Let's take a look at some of the potential consequences of SLCN...

### **For learning...**

Language skills underpin learning. We use language to be able to transmit information to one-another and to scaffold and extend children's understanding and thinking skills. In fact, spoken language is the means by which most teaching and learning takes place in primary school. Children who have difficulty with listening, understanding language and talking are at a clear disadvantage and are at significant risk for underachievement. Children may have difficulties:

- following instructions
- learning new words
- understanding concepts
- explaining their ideas and telling stories
- processing information
- making predictions and drawing inferences

These difficulties affect children's learning across the curriculum.

***“Just 15% of pupils with identified SLCN achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of their primary school years compared with 61% of all pupils.”***

(Bercow 10 years on, p7 – 10: Department for Education Key Stage 2 SATS results 2017)

### **For literacy skills...**

SLCN is linked to difficulties developing reading, writing and spelling. Children with speech sound difficulties might have trouble acquiring phonics and decoding skills. Children who have language difficulties may struggle with understanding words, recalling the right words for their purpose, understanding the grammar used to structure ideas, or constructing their own sentences. Difficulties with higher-level language and verbal reasoning skills can impair comprehension of texts. As children progress through their education, reading becomes a vehicle for learning and also supports ongoing language development, so children who have SLCN and literacy impairments are twice as disadvantaged.

***“Without the right help, between 50% and 90% of children with persistent communication needs go on to have reading difficulties.”***

(All Together Now – The Communication Trust)

### **For behaviour...**

Communication difficulties contribute to behaviour problems for some children. SLCN present a barrier to being effectively able to communicate thoughts, feelings and desires – and that's really frustrating! Remember that all behaviour is a means of communication.

*“Three-quarters of young people in the UK youth offending system have below average communication skills, and just under a third have diagnosed speech, language, and communication needs (SLCN).”*

(Language as a Child Wellbeing Indicator – Early Intervention Foundation, 2017)

### **For social success...**

We use language to build relationships, collaborate and resolve conflicts every day. On top of this, our pragmatic skills (such as using body language, facial expression, eye contact and intonation) can make-or-break a successful interaction. Children who are not skilled communicators find it more difficult to make and maintain friendships, which leads to poor self-esteem and is a risk factor for mental health difficulties as children grow up.

*“81% of children with emotional and behavioural disorders have unidentified language difficulties. Young people referred to mental health services are three times more likely to have SLCN than those who have not been referred.”*

(Bercow 10 years on, p7 – 12)

### **Throughout life?**

SLCN can have a lifelong impact, and without the right support these children are at risk of a range of poor life outcomes.

*“Children with language difficulties at age five were four times more likely to have reading difficulties in adulthood, three times as likely to have mental health problems, and twice as likely to be unemployed when they reached adulthood.”*

(Law, Charlton, & Asmussen, 2017)

Teachers and TAs play a crucial role in supporting the development of speech, language and communication skills so that all the children in their care can reach their best potential. With your help the impact of SLCN can be minimised, and you'll be rewarded by working with children who are at their best!

# MAKING YOUR SCHOOL MORE COMMUNICATION FRIENDLY

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Communication friendly schools provide a safe, inclusive environment for all children, but are especially beneficial for students with SLCN. There are a number of things a school needs to have in place before they can truly become a communication friendly school.

## **A designated member of staff for SLCN**

A designated member of staff to oversee the provision of support for SLCN in the school enables one member of staff to be trained to a higher level in SLCN. This person, often a HLTA, provides school staff and parents with someone to ask for advice and can liaise with SaLT, making the most of this support. This person can then disseminate and cascade information throughout the school.

## **Training for staff on SLCN**

It is beneficial for all staff to have an understanding and knowledge of SLCN so that they can apply this in their teaching and interaction to ensure all children are able to access learning. Regular professional development training could focus on raising awareness of SLCN and using classroom approaches to support children.

### **Can Language Link help?**

Part of the Language Link package includes training for staff. There are background videos to use at staff meetings for all staff and more detailed training for individual staff members in the use of each aspect of the package.

## **Universal screening for SLCN**

Many children with SLCN are slipping through the net because their difficulties are commonly disguised by challenging behaviour, literacy difficulties and/or poor academic progress. In addition, children with SLCN can be very adept at using context, visual cues and routines to mask difficulties understanding language. It is important to consider universal screening at several stages of a child's school career to ensure that everyone with SLCN is identified and the correct support can be put in place early. The information from universal screening can also be used to inform whole school planning.

### Can Language Link help?

Language Link provides standardised assessment which will identify any difficulty understanding language. The assessment will highlight the level of need, the particular area(s) of language that needs support and who would benefit from intervention.

### A system for monitoring progress for pupils with SLCN

The school needs a clear way of monitoring and evaluating progress for pupils with SLCN. This could include carrying out regular classroom observations or 'learning walks' to ensure high quality teaching strategies and differentiation are in place. There needs to be a structured system in place to measure the effectiveness of differentiated work and interventions for pupils with SLCN.

### Can Language Link help?

Collection of outcome data forms an integral part of the Language Link package. Pupil and parent views help staff establish targets, engagement ratings are completed by the teacher to monitor the impact of language work on classroom performance, and group outcomes show the impact of intervention.

### A communication audit

The use of staff training, an audit tool and a communication friendly school checklist can support schools to identify areas of strength and areas to develop, with clear action plans identified.

### A policy for SLCN

It is important to have a written policy outlining the systems in place to identify and support children with SLCN. This should be shared with all staff and updated in line with training and current practices.

### Transition planning

Have a clear way of passing information on students with SLCN on to staff members as the student moves up through the school. This should include details about interventions and targets, successful classroom strategies, current assessment results and the impact of any interventions.

### Can Language Link help?

The Language Link Pupil Report and Provision Map provide a record of all assessment results, interventions and outcomes for those interventions. They build up an ongoing profile across years enabling schools to support transition.

### Quality first teaching strategies implemented in every classroom

The strategies on pages 20-23 represent high quality teaching and should be used for all children as part of regular classroom practice. The strategies are particularly useful for children with SLCN and will support them to be included within the classroom. With these in place, additional targeted and specialist strategies, such as those set by a SaLT, will be more effective.

### Can Language Link help?

Following a Language Link assessment, children will be recommended for in class support. Four core strategies are suggested with a comprehensive range of classroom resources designed to help teachers implement them with minimum preparation.

LanguageLink

For more information,  
visit  
[www.speechandlanguage.info](http://www.speechandlanguage.info)



# CORE STRATEGIES

## BREAK IT DOWN

- Use short, simple sentences, for example when explaining tasks.
  - Break down instructions into small chunks and give actions in the order that they need to be completed.
  - Provide a breakdown of lesson activities and tasks, e.g. using a visual timetable.
  - Use writing/talking frames and sentence planners to structure activities.
- Provide alternative recording methods as needed, e.g. laptops, voice recorders.
  - Review curriculum content to plan appropriate differentiation for pupils.

- Explicitly teach/discuss new words and concepts for each lesson, using word learning strategies, e.g. mind mapping.
- Provide context by linking new ideas, words and concepts to previous learning and the children's personal experience.
- Try not to include new or unfamiliar vocabulary within task instructions.
- When using non-literal language, such as idioms or sarcasm, explicitly teach the true meaning.
- When starting a new topic, give an overview of everything that will be covered, to help provide a context and make it easier for children to retain information.
- Highlight key information when speaking by adding stress, visual support or telling the child what the important bits are.

## EXPLAIN CLEARLY

## CHECK AS YOU GO

- Use the 10 second rule: give children additional time to process spoken information, before they are required to respond. If the child does not respond after this time, repeat the question/instruction or re-phrase if you think it was too difficult.
- Encourage children to indicate when they don't understand what they have been asked to do and use visuals to support this, such as the Language Link Confidence Indicators.
- Support children to be able to request specific clarification when they haven't understood and support this with visuals, such as the Language Link Help Me Cards.
- Monitor understanding by asking children to tell you or show you what they have to do. If you ask them if they understand, they are likely to say "yes", even if this is not the case.
- Discuss strategies that can help you to remember spoken information, e.g. visualising things in your head, making lists, writing key points on a white board.

- Support lesson content with visuals such as photos, pictures, diagrams, videos and natural gesture.
- Use visuals to support children's understanding of class rules and routines, e.g. using a visual timetable, so that they understand expected behaviours.
- Give practical demonstrations and show finished examples of tasks.
- Develop and use 'working walls' to build context of topics and provide reminders of key vocabulary and concepts.
- Use a colour coding approach, such as Colourful Semantics, to support understanding and organisation of types of words, e.g. nouns, verbs, adjectives. This can also support reading comprehension as the child can highlight key information within a text.
- Children may need support to understand and structure questions. Using visual cues such as symbols and signs can be very helpful, for example using the Language Link Question Cue Cards or Question Box.

## KEEP IT VISUAL

# ADAPTING TALKING

**The way teachers and TAs use their own talking and communication skills has a huge impact on children with SLCN and can support the development of their understanding and use of language.**

## VOCABULARY

- Complete pre-teaching of key curriculum vocabulary, using visuals such as word maps, to support children to understand and use words within classroom activities.
- Use repetition of key words within the classroom, as children need to hear new words lots of times within context to support their ability to understand and then use them.
- Ensure that vocabulary teaching includes high frequency words that are included throughout the curriculum, but are not topic specific, e.g. explain, describe.
- Support children to sort pictures/words into categories/topics and identify the links between words. Start with simple categories such as animals, food, transport and then extend to sub-categories; animals that live in the zoo vs farm.
- Complete tasks where children need to identify what is the same and what is different about two pictures/words, using visual support such as the Language Link Descriptor Cards.
- Provide vocabulary books for children to write new words in, which could include their own drawings or printed pictures. Use word banks including lists of key words for a topic or task to support children to use these within activities.

## LISTENING SKILLS

- Ensure that you have the child's full attention before giving an instruction or direction, by calling their name and waiting until they are looking at you before presenting information.
- Teach the rules of good listening. Once established, the child can be given reminders using prompts, for example using the Language Link Good Listening Cards.
- Use visual support, such as a 'noise meter' to monitor levels of background noise within the classroom. It can be difficult for children to filter out background noise and focus on an adult speaking, especially if they are having difficulty understanding.
- When speaking, ensure that the child can see your face clearly and that you are not standing in front of the light source.
- Support children to understand how long they need to maintain their attention before they will have a listening/movement break or get a reward, e.g. using a visual timetable, sand timers etc.

## MODELLING

- If children make errors when speaking, model the sentence back to them correcting the error, for example if the child says "Him falled down" you would say 'Yes, he fell down'.
- For children who are using very short, limited sentences, add on a word for them to support development of their sentence structures, e.g. if the child says, "car fast", you would say 'car driving fast'.
- Use commenting to describe what children are doing within a task, rather than questioning which puts the child under pressure to answer. Leave pauses to allow the child to join in, if they are able to, e.g. 'The bucket is full of sand... you've put two shells on top'.
- Include children within social skills groups to target specific skills, such as turn taking, asking questions or maintaining conversation topics. Adults can model use of skills in context to support children's understanding.
- Develop children's ability to predict and infer information using questioning, e.g. 'What do you think will happen next?'

## WHAT TO DO IF A CHILD IN YOUR CLASS HAS SLCN OR YOU'RE WORRIED THEY MIGHT

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- Talk to your SENCo about your concerns. Find out if the child is currently or has previously been known to your local SaLT service or any other professionals.
- Liaise with the child's parents to discuss the child's strengths and needs and appropriate support.
- If the child is/has been known to SaLT, read their latest report and implement the recommendations.
- Implement quality first teaching strategies (see pages 20-23 for guidance).
- If the child has a specific diagnosis, read the relevant section of this eBook and put in place the appropriate classroom strategies.
- Assess the child using a screening tool such as Speech Link or Language Link (see pages 140-143 for more information).
- If any speech or language difficulties have been identified, implement the appropriate intervention programmes recommended by the screener and continue to support in class using high quality teaching strategies. N.B. if the child has a current therapy programme provided by SaLT follow this guidance as a priority.
- Monitor the child's progress. If the child has not made progress after approximately 2 terms (12 weeks) of intervention, discuss the child with your SENCo and consider a referral to your local SaLT service.

## SUPPORTING EAL PUPILS

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English as an additional language (EAL) is the term used in education in the UK to refer to the teaching of children whose home or first language is not English. SaLTs will generally use the term 'bilingual' to refer to the same group of children, and the use of this term does not imply that children are equally fluent in all of the languages they speak – it simply means that the child speaks and/or understands more than one language to some extent. Although teaching a group of children who have widely differing experience of English can present challenges for a teacher, it's important to remember that being able to speak more than one language is an advantage. Bilingual students are likely to learn other languages more easily, giving them not only an academic advantage, but also an advantage socially and in their future employment prospects too!

The term EAL is used very broadly to describe many different groups of children – these children will vary in a number of different ways including their ethnicity, the languages spoken at home and the amount of exposure that they have had to English. As with all learners, children with EAL will demonstrate a range of ability levels and they may also vary in terms of the level of education that they have had before entering the education system in the UK. Some EAL learners may have additional or special needs such as hearing impairment or dyslexia, or they may be gifted and talented. A bilingual child is equally as likely as any monolingual child to present with SLCN, but it is important to note that bilingualism is not a type of SLCN and there is no evidence that bilingualism causes or contributes to any SLCN.

***“A student does not have a learning difficulty or disability solely because the language they are taught in is different from a language which is or has been spoken at home.”***

SEN Code of Practice

Most EAL learners acquire a good level of fluency for everyday conversation within two years of exposure to English. However, it can take between 5 and 7 years for these children to catch up with first language speakers on measures of cognitive and academic language proficiency. This means that although some children who have EAL may be able to understand language in conversation and chat informally, they may need additional support in learning the language necessary for thinking, learning and educational attainment because these are different kinds of language skills to those which we typically use for everyday conversational tasks.

## MYTH BUSTING

### Should parents of EAL children use English at home to help their child learn English?

There is substantial evidence to suggest that home language development does not in any way hinder learning English, but in fact supports the acquisition of English. Having a well-developed first language can speed up the acquisition of additional languages. It's therefore crucial that parents are encouraged to speak to their child in their home language, as this is the language in which they are best able to provide a good model. In cases where the home language is not maintained (i.e. when parents have chosen to encourage their child to speak only English) the child can lose proficiency in their first language very rapidly, sometimes within just a few months, and this process of language-loss is irreversible. As you can imagine, this can have significant ramifications for the child's language development and their social integration. Parents should always be encouraged to maintain use of their home language.

### TOP TIP

**Bilingualism should be celebrated as a positive thing. Allow children time to 'teach' the class some words from their language.**

### TOP TIP

**Finding out what EAL learners know and are able to do can be difficult and schools should focus on a child's strengths to identify what the child can do rather than what they find hard. Children who have EAL should be supported to take part in activities that provide an appropriate cognitive challenge and should be allowed to use their own language to scaffold their learning.**

## Developing English As an Additional Language

The following table describes the stages of development when acquiring a new language. Children in your class are likely to be at different stages along a continuum of experience of learning English.

STAGE	DESCRIPTION	STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES
<p><b>PRE-PRODUCTION</b></p>	<p>This is often referred to as the silent stage. The child may have up to 500 words in their receptive (understanding) vocabulary but may not be speaking the new language yet.</p> <p>The child may be silent in class or may copy everything they hear. They may use their first language, or they may not speak at all.</p> <p><b><i>A silent period of approximately 1 month is normal, and this can sometimes be longer.</i></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not put the child under pressure to speak</li> <li>• Provide lots of visual support, e.g. pictures, gestures</li> <li>• Focus on building vocabulary and listening comprehension</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for lots of repetition</li> <li>• Pair up with other children who speak the same language if possible</li> <li>• Remember they will be tired from concentrating so hard all day</li> </ul>
<p><b>EARLY PRODUCTION</b></p>	<p>Children in this stage begin to increase their receptive (understanding) vocabulary to about 1,000 words. They will usually begin to produce some single words and two-word phrases.</p> <p>Children may also use some short, learnt phrases. It is usual for children to use code switching, mixing and lexical borrowing:</p> <p>Code switching: where a speaker switches between languages part way through an utterance - so a whole sentence/clause may be in Punjabi and the next in English.</p> <p>Code mixing: where a speaker mixes the two languages up in an utterance.</p> <p>Lexical borrowing: where a speaker borrows one word or phrase from a different language.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept one-word answers</li> <li>• Use closed questions that require just yes or no answers</li> <li>• Give the child choices where vocabulary is modelled, e.g. 'Do you need the ruler or the rubber to measure the line?'</li> <li>• Continue to build vocabulary using visual support and pre-teaching before tasks</li> <li>• Use sentence planners for oral and written work</li> <li>• Modify your language to match the child's level of understanding in English</li> <li>• Continue to provide lots of opportunities for listening</li> </ul>

STAGE	DESCRIPTION	STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES
<p><b>SPEECH EMERGENCE</b></p>	<p>Children at this stage will be communicating using simple phrases and sentences. They will have a receptive (understanding) vocabulary of 3000+ words. They will be able to ask simple questions and initiate short conversations. They may still be making a lot of grammatical errors.</p> <p>Children will now be understanding simple stories and some class-based tasks; however, they may still have difficulty expressing ideas and feelings. Children may still be using lexical borrowing, code switching and mixing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work on vocabulary building by using visual support and pre-teaching before tasks</li> <li>• Use sentence and story planners for oral and written work</li> <li>• Modify your language to match the child's level of understanding in English</li> <li>• Provide good models of speech and grammar</li> </ul>
<p><b>INTERMEDIATE FLUENCY</b> (usually this is within 2 years of learning English at school)</p>	<p>Children at this stage are using more complex sentences both orally and in written language. They are beginning to express feelings and ideas and will have a vocabulary of 6000+ words. They will be able to ask questions to seek clarification.</p> <p>Children will now be able to tackle most classroom tasks but may continue to need support especially during tasks that require reading comprehension.</p> <p>Children will be able to use learning strategies from their first language to support learning through English. They may make lots of grammatical errors because they are trying to produce more complex sentence structures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to provide clear models of language</li> <li>• Use more open questions that require longer responses</li> <li>• Encourage the child to develop learning strategies</li> <li>• May need continued support for written work</li> <li>• Check understanding as you go by asking the child to explain or show you what they have to do</li> </ul>
<p><b>ADVANCED FLUENCY</b></p>	<p>Children at this stage will be using and understanding English nearly to the level of native English speakers.</p> <p>It can take between 5 - 7 years to reach this level.</p> <p>Academic English can take much longer to develop than conversational fluency and therefore needs to be planned for and explicitly taught.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to provide clear models of language</li> <li>• Encourage the child to develop learning strategies</li> <li>• May need continued support for written work</li> <li>• Check understanding as you go by asking the child to explain or show you what they have to do</li> <li>• Acknowledge that more advanced EAL learners need continuing support</li> </ul>

## **Bilingualism and SLCN**

A child with EAL is just as likely as any monolingual child to present with any SLCN, however, these children can be more difficult to identify. If a child has Language and Communication Needs (LCN) or Developmental Language Disorder (DLD), this would be apparent in all of the languages spoken by the child. Because of this, it is essential to speak with parents to find out whether there is any concern about the child's home language skills before any SLCN diagnosis can be considered.

Being bilingual is not a disadvantage for individuals with SLCN. There is a commonly held, but mistaken, belief that learning more than one language can be 'too much' for children with additional needs such as DLD, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or Learning Disability etc. Extensive research has found no evidence to support this view – indeed, there is some evidence that bilingualism has a positive impact on the communication skills of children with ASD.

Stammering is equally prevalent in monolingual and bilingual children and speaking more than one language should not be considered an additional 'load'. People who stammer do often report that they have different levels of fluency in different languages, but they should not be encouraged to give up speaking home languages.

There is a higher prevalence of Selective Mutism (SM) in the bilingual population. Should a child with EAL present with a 'silent period' for longer than one month they should be assessed for SM risk factors and actively monitored with this in mind so that appropriate support can be implemented in a timely manner.

## **Role of SaLT**

It is not the role of SaLTs to teach an additional language to a child. Children with EAL should only be seen by a SaLT if they present with a speech, language or communication disorder which is apparent in all of their languages. If the child acquires their home language in the expected way, this demonstrates that they have developed the appropriate language learning mechanisms, and with sufficient exposure to a new language they will be able to acquire the additional language without any specialist intervention. The responsibility for teaching EAL lies with education.

If the child presents with SLCN in addition to learning EAL, then support from a SaLT may be appropriate. A SaLT will carry out a thorough case history to understand the developmental history of all of the child's languages and can carry out assessment of the child's language skills in their home language as well as in English if appropriate. Most formal language assessments are not designed for use with bilingual children, and as such a SaLT assessment of a child with EAL can look quite different.

### **TOP TIP**

**Use a simple questionnaire to find out about the child's home language proficiency.**

# SUPPORTING EAL CHILDREN IN THE CLASSROOM

**The strategies outlined below can be used with any child who has EAL to support the development of their understanding of English. Parents should be reassured that they do not have to speak English at home. It is much more important for the child to have good models of the home language, which will enhance the child's learning of English.**

## INTRODUCTIONS

Early on, make sure the children know your name. Introduce yourself simply ("I'm..." pointing to yourself at the same time) and encourage them to repeat your name.

Do practical activities such as collecting birthdays (although be aware that some cultures do not mark birthdays), favourite colours/foods, measuring finger span, etc. This is good for new arrivals to get to know names and use simple language over and over.

Check the pronunciation of children's names with a parent, if possible, before they join the class or ask the child to teach you how to say their name. Don't trust the written form!

Convey the message that being bilingual is an advantage and a positive thing. Encourage the child to share some of their language and culture with the rest of the class.

Think about how children can access their first language (taped stories, books, bilingual assistants, parents). Support for the first language will enhance, not hinder, the learning of English.

## FIRST/HOME LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

## RICH ENVIRONMENT

Immerse the child in a language rich environment from the start and minimise long periods of time out in special EAL classes/groups. It is easier for the child to learn from their peers.

Give children extra time to respond. EAL children may need a lot of extra time to process new vocabulary and grammar.

## EXTRA TIME

## SEATING

Seat children near you so that they can hear everything you say. Make sure they can see your face clearly when you are speaking, e.g. try not to stand in front of the window as this puts your face in shadow.

Think about who the child sits next to. Ideally choose a child who speaks the same first language but is more advanced in English, or a supportive English speaker. Avoid seating the child with children who are not able to provide good models of English.

Send symbols/pictures home to learn vocabulary in the child's home language alongside English.

Provide visual support for oral language (natural gesture, pointing, facial expression, tone of voice, photographs, pictures, keywords on display).

## BE VISUAL

## INVOLVE PARENTS

Involve parents and siblings to translate key words and discuss key concepts.

Ensure that parents know that they should continue to speak their home language with their child.

Make your language clear, concise and consistent, using natural gesture, to establish and maintain classroom routines.

Monitor your use of idiomatic language to avoid misunderstandings, e.g. avoid expressions such as 'pull your finger out,' 'wash your hands in the toilets,' 'he was beside himself,' etc.

## YOUR TALKING

## TAKE THE PRESSURE OFF!

Whole class talking can be difficult. It may be easier to give EAL learners the opportunity to practise spoken responses in pairs or a small group before talking to the whole class.

Don't worry if the beginner says very little at first. Many EAL children go through a silent period. Plenty of listening time is important when starting to learn a new language. There should be emphasis on communication rather than correction until the child is more confident in English.

## Further Information

Naldic - [www.naldic.org.uk/the-eal-learner/eal-learners-uk](http://www.naldic.org.uk/the-eal-learner/eal-learners-uk)

DfE - [www.gov.uk/government/publications/developing-quality-tuition-effective-practice-in-schools-english-as-an-additional-language](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/developing-quality-tuition-effective-practice-in-schools-english-as-an-additional-language)

The Bell Foundation - [www.bell-foundation.org.uk/eal-programme/teaching-resources](http://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/eal-programme/teaching-resources)

Read more about supporting children with EAL in The Link magazine, issues 1, 3 & 8.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

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We really hope you found Part 1 of **The Ultimate Guide to SLCN** a useful resource for your classroom or setting. If you have concerns about any of your children, we hope Part 1 has helped to make the next steps clear.

Read on and Part 3 will give you more details about our Speech Link and Language Link packages.

### What are Speech Link and Language Link?

Our SaLT team have developed these packages to give you the tools you need to identify and support children in your class who have SLCN. The programmes are user friendly, have full training included and our terrific Help Desk and SaLT team to call upon for advice and support. Children love the interventions and resources and their parents/carers are able to continue support at home using the parents' sheets provided.

**In the 100 pages of Part 2 you can find out about the specific diagnoses that children with SLCN may have, get top tips for supporting them and set the record straight about some common misconceptions.**

### How do you access Part 2?

Once you have completed your **FREE TRIAL** of Speech Link and Language Link completed the feedback form we will send you and in return we will send you the complete version of The Ultimate Guide to SLCN (including Part 2) absolutely free.

The complete eBook really is The Ultimate Guide to SLCN, and we like to think it's the best free speech and language resource available!

*"It's great for early identification of speech and language needs. It takes the guess work away and selects the appropriate intervention for you to support the children with. It's a **super weapon** to add to your wave 1 assessments, it helps you to identify speech and language needs early and rapidly."*

K. Bennet, SENCo, St Dunstan's Primary School





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**PART 3**  
**OUR PACKAGES**

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# INFANT & JUNIOR LanguageLink

Written by speech and language therapists, our award winning online packages combine standardised assessments, targeted evidence based interventions with measured outcomes and over 500 resources for teachers and parents. This specialist knowledge provides clear advice for teachers when deciding whether a child needs to be seen by a SaLT or supported with a programme in class and helps ensure no-one is missed or misdiagnosed.

Speech Link and Language Link are established in 4,000 primary schools throughout the UK. 150,000 assessments have been completed this year. That's a lot of data for inspection reports. And that's not all! Our dedicated help desk of SaLTs, teachers and teaching assistants are there to support schools every step of the way.

## What results can schools expect?

93% of staff surveyed (sample 962) reported using Language Link had made a positive difference to their children with 71% reporting they had changed the way they worked with the children.

For more information, videos and impact studies visit [speechandlanguage.info](http://speechandlanguage.info)

*"This initiative has had a very positive impact on the language and communication of Braeburn children... Early years GLD outcomes improved by 50% from 2016 to 2018."*

V Logan, Exec HT,  
Braeburn Primary, Scarborough



### 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."

**Behaviour,  
literacy or  
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Find out with  
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*"It's a super weapon  
to add to your Wave 1  
assessments, it helps  
you to identify language  
needs early and rapidly."*

K. Bennet, SENCo,  
St Dunstan's Primary School

*"We love Language  
Link and don't think  
we could do without  
it. [It] makes our lives  
easier"*

Teacher, Kindergarten,  
Australia

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This innovative, easy to use package takes the stress out of identifying and working with children who have developmental speech difficulties. Children with speech problems are at greater risk of developing literacy difficulties making early identification essential. Traditionally seen as 'specialist' intervention, Speech Link demystifies speech helping support staff work effectively with a child's common speech errors.

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Help support early phonics with Speech Link's five interactive online graded listening activities.

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The Ultimate Guide to SLCN is brought to you by Speech Link Multimedia Ltd. Our mission is to help you to identify children with SLCN, unpick their needs, and put effective support in place so that all of the children in your classroom will meet their potential.

This handy reference book has been written by qualified Speech and Language Therapists to explain key terminology, diagnoses and misconceptions – and it's packed full of tried and tested strategies for your classroom!

Find out more about  
Speech Link Multimedia Ltd.  
[www.speechandlanguage.info](http://www.speechandlanguage.info)



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