Speech, Language and Communication Information for Secondary Schools
The Communication Trust has developed this short guide specifically for secondary school leaders. It sets out the importance of speech, language and communication within secondary schools and identifies a range of useful resources.

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1. Why you should read this booklet

All children and young people need good speech, language and communication skills to reach their full potential. Speech, language and communication underpin the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and are necessary for students to understand and achieve in all subjects.

Speech, language and communication are closely linked to behaviour, attainment, how young people interact with their peers and how they feel about themselves. Some young people may have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and require extra help from their secondary schools.

Many secondary school leaders and teachers recognise the importance of speech, language and communication, though they also report that they are not sure how to support these skills in young people. This guide gives school leaders information about SLCN and signposts resources.

2. What are speech, language and communication?

It is important to define what we mean by speech, language and communication. The table below gives examples in each area:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Communication</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speech sounds, tone of voice, speed and fluency</td>
<td>Having a range of appropriate vocabulary to support subject specific learning</td>
<td>Knowing how to adapt communication style to suit the situation and audience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speaking clearly and fluently without too many hesitations</td>
<td>Having organised sentences and narratives to demonstrate understanding and express views</td>
<td>Following non verbal rules of communication, listening, taking conversational turns</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speaking with a clear voice, using pitch, tone, volume and intonation to express meaning</td>
<td>Understanding instructions from teaching staff</td>
<td>Using language to persuade, negotiate, predict and account for consequences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Using speech to clearly convey an argument or message</td>
<td>Having emotional language to support emotional literacy</td>
<td>Using language to enable conflict resolution and collaboration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Using verbal reasoning to analyse information and learning</td>
<td>Using augmentative and alternative forms of communication where words are difficult</td>
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3. Why speech, language and communication are important to secondary schools

Language development is something that we generally associate with early years education. However, language and communication skills continue to develop throughout the teenage years.²

Students continue learning new vocabulary and complex language structures to enhance learning and interaction with others. It is therefore important for teachers to be able to encourage and extend this development.

Language and communication between teachers and students enables learning. In addition, students need the ability to use language for negotiation, compromise, resolving conflict, developing relationships and for managing and regulating their emotions.³

All students need the skills to become proficient communicators; for attainment, behaviour, emotional and social development and readiness for the workplace. There are many students who will struggle to develop these skills. For some students this may mean specialist support and/or alternative and augmentative means of communication such as signs, symbols and communication aids. For others, support from within school can make a considerable difference.

Without this support they will struggle to understand instructions, access the curriculum, manage their behaviour and reach attainment levels that could otherwise be within their grasp. Therefore it is vital that we support and guide their communication development.

“We need communication skills to get jobs, interviews, for later life” - student ⁴
4. How widespread are speech, language and communication needs?

Children and young people with SLCN have difficulties in communicating with others; it may be that they cannot express themselves effectively or they may have difficulties in understanding what is being said to them. Alternatively, those who work with them may not understand the young person’s way of communicating.

Some people have disabilities or difficulties, which makes communication a special challenge for them. Around 5-7% of children and young people have SLCN as their primary difficulty, and many more have these needs as part of another condition such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), hearing impairment or learning difficulties.

There is evidence identifying significant numbers of secondary school students with SLCN in areas of social deprivation. In a survey of around 200 pupils in one inner city secondary school, the number of students with SLCN was found to be 75%.

According to recent primary school Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) data, the most prevalent type of special educational need (SEN) in children with a statement is SLCN at around 25%, with behaviour needs being around 18%. In secondary schools, these numbers shift dramatically with a drop in SLCN and increase in social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD).

Some language specialists are concerned that this change in figures could be a result of students’ needs being misinterpreted as behavioural difficulties.

“We have got some glaringly obvious kids, then we’ve loads of them that have that kind of difficulty but they’re just compliant. And they just sit there and they smile, so everybody is perfectly happy except for the child”. Senior manager

5. What happens if we do not support children and young people with speech, language and communication needs?

Language and communication are fundamental for learning and developing social relationships; difficulties can lead to a range of impacts for students and schools.

Impact on targets
The links between language and literacy are well documented. Research shows many young people with SLCN are significantly at risk of literacy difficulties. As students become literate, language and literacy support each other. Without underlying language skills, students cannot effectively access the curriculum and attainment targets are at risk, as students with SLCN gain half as many GCSEs A*- C grades as their peers.

Impact on outcomes
Achieving Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes will be more difficult as language and communication skills are important in supporting all five areas. Many young people in vulnerable groups have difficulties with speech, language and communication, although they may not have been identified, and this is likely to impact on ECM outcomes. This has particular relevance as now schools’ self evaluation and Ofsted arrangements have a greater focus on ECM.

Impact on skills
Many employers place communication skills above qualifications and value young people with good communication, literacy and interaction skills, which is why we need to support those with SLCN. Schools have an increasing emphasis on the development of functional skills for life and work and on personal learning and thinking skills. None of these can be achieved without effective communication skills.
Impact on social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD)
For students with SEBD, there is strong evidence of unrecognised communication needs; affecting between 55% and 100% of this group. There is also evidence that those with undetected communication needs may be at greater risk of exclusion from school.

Support for social and emotional development, through initiatives such as the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme rely heavily on the ability to listen, understand and communicate effectively. These can be inaccessible to those with SLCN as there is a strong link between language and emotional development.

6. Other things to consider
Teacher knowledge
Many teachers express a lack of confidence in delivering a lesson through oral activities and in assessing a student’s ability to speak and listen effectively. This means that they are not always able to recognise or accommodate the needs of their students with SLCN.

“This is a huge learning curve for me. Nobody has ever explained it to me, I’m just picking it up from reading and just being aware.” Senior manager

There is also concern around where teaching of these skills can fit into a busy curriculum. However, the focus on personalised learning as the best means to address the needs of every learner does give teachers more flexibility.
Young people
Young people view communication and interpersonal skills as the most important and essential life-skills.26

“Probably better off learning about that than a lot of things you learn at school, ‘cos you’re guaranteed to use it, you know.” student 27

However, secondary aged students also put communication at the top of the list of problems they encounter at school.28

The Communication Trust recommends the following when developing ways to support all children’s communication development and support children with SLCN in particular.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Communication Trust Suggest</th>
<th>Aim</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole school audit</td>
<td>To identify good practice and areas for improvement; e.g. systems for identifying children and young people with SLCN, links with specialist services; continued professional development/resources/strategies for staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>A school environment that supports communication</td>
<td>For staff to be aware of the importance of language and communication, encourage development of these skills and be able to adapt their language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff able to recognise young people who are struggling</td>
<td>To enable targeted support and referral to specialists, including speech and language therapy services, where appropriate</td>
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The Trust has identified ways to support effective continuing professional development (CPD) for staff in secondary schools.

CPD and training should:
- be developed and delivered by appropriately qualified and experienced professionals
- have clear, defined learning outcomes
- be evaluated
- recognise a range of learning styles and preferences
- support learners to transfer knowledge and skills into practice
- where possible and suitable, be collaborative
- provide links to further information, resources or support to facilitate ongoing learning
- be evidence-informed
- link to The Communication Trust’s Speech, Language and Communication Framework which can be found at: www.communicationhelppoint.org.uk

The Trust commissioned Professor Sue Roulstone and Anne Ayre from the University of West England to talk to a number of schools to find out what mainstream teachers needed to support children with SLCN who were moving from primary school to secondary school. The report looks at existing resources and gives recommendations for the development of future resources, which the Trust is following up on. This report is available to order or download from our website.
7. Communication resources for secondary schools

The Communication Trust works with over 35 different organisations, many of whom provide materials to secondary schools to support communication development. This booklet provides information from some of these organisations who provide information in this area. Further support is available via www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

Some of the resources listed on the following pages are designed for students with identified or particular SLCN such as stammering. Others support the communication of all students. Many of the resources are useful as good practice to support speech, language and communication for a range of students in secondary schools.

All children

BT

BT aims to equip young people with the inter-personal communication and collaboration skills they need to achieve their goals and to succeed in all areas of life. Find free, easy-to-use educational resources that support the development of young people’s speaking and listening skills, at www.bt.com/learningskillsresources

All children and those with SLCN

Afasic - Including young people with speech, language and communication difficulties in secondary school

This publication is for those seeking theory and practice to support young people with SLCN within mainstream secondary schools. The content is based on the experience of speech and language therapists and teachers working collaboratively in classrooms. The information is presented in 2 parts:

Part A is provided both as a hard copy and is also available to print from an accompanying CD Rom. It includes 4 sections, which are:

1. Understanding the nature of speech, language and communication difficulties
2. Responding to general learning needs
3. Responding to specific learning needs
4. Improving our response

Section 3, addresses oral communication, reading, writing, vocabulary learning and social interaction and inclusion. Vocabulary teaching and learning is given considerable attention because this is an area that is
highly relevant for secondary school students. There are practical examples of how to apply this learning in the classroom.

**Part B**, available on the CD Rom, provides a set of related materials for use by specialist staff providing CPD to groups of teachers in secondary schools. Presentation materials, workshop activities and evaluation are included.

To order a free copy from The Communication Trust please visit www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk, go to Publications and fill in the online order form. Further copies can be purchased from www.afasic.org.uk

**DialogueLab**

DialogueLab develops innovative solutions to communication difficulties. It is currently piloting a programme for educators of students at risk of exclusion, nearly all of whom have SLCN.

Staff are trained in a method of ‘para-counselling’ so they can help students have productive conversations leading to behavioural change. Staff then teach the students the same counselling model and the communication skills that underpin it.

To see how your school can take part contact anne@dialoguelab.org or visit www.dialoguelab.org

**Elklan - Secondary Language Builders**

The Secondary Language Builders book provides clear, practical advice and activities to promote the communication skills of 11-16 year olds. It has been written to be accessible to speech and language therapists, learning support assistants, teachers and parents.

Areas covered in the book include:
- Improving attention and listening skills
- Developing strategies to help students understand spoken language and improve their verbal reasoning skills
- Facilitating vocabulary learning
- Encouraging expressive language skills for talking and writing
- Promoting social skills

The book is available from www.elklan.co.uk

**I CAN**

**Secondary Talk** helps secondary schools support all young people’s language and communication, including those with SLCN. Arranged under the categories described in schools’ Self Evaluation Form (SEF), the programme offers practical help to classroom staff and students, and shows clearly how speech, language and communication impacts across the work of the school.

Secondary Talk is being piloted in 15 schools, with a full launch in 2011. For information and news about Secondary Talk, contact secondarytalk@ican.org.uk

I CAN runs a number of specialist training courses looking at supporting SLCN in secondary school settings, and offers bespoke consultancy from a team of expert consultants based across the country. I CAN’s specialist school for secondary aged young people with SLCN provides education, specialist assessment and outreach services. For more information please email info@ican.org.uk
Inclusion Development Programme (IDP) - Supporting Pupils with Speech, Language and Communication Needs

This interactive DVD and website, contains information about how schools can develop supportive environments for SLCN so that this group of pupils can access the curriculum and make good progress. It also signposts to useful resources, websites and further training.

For further details please visit http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/

Language for Learning

Language for Learning is a Worcestershire joint health and education non-profit making project. It provides courses and resources for staff from early years to secondary level and training and materials for trainers to deliver these courses within their own Local Authority.

Courses include:
- An Introduction to Speech, Language and Communication
- Processing Instructions and Information
- Understanding the Meanings of Words

Resources include:
- Active listening
- Taking responsibility for not understanding
- Vocabulary development

For more information please e-mail enquiries@languageforlearning.co.uk or go to www.languageforlearning.co.uk

Symbol UK

Symbol UK is a specialist speech and language therapy service providing tailor-made training packages and consultative services to primary, secondary mainstream and special schools. Core training packages, which can be adapted to meet individual needs, include:
- Social Communication ASD 1&2
- Conversation & Listening
- Looking After Yourself
- Emotions
- Relationships – getting along with others

For further details please go to www.symboluk.co.uk

The Learning Partnership

The Learning Partnership leads the field in the practical applications for schools of personalised learning and development. The impact of programmes such as Baby Matterz on improved communication, speech and language development, listening skills and behaviour in secondary settings is now well documented.

Visit www.thelearningpartnership.com for more information.
Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)

ACE Centre - Making and using a Communication Book

For children with little or no speech, a communication book can open the door to being heard. But working out what to include in the book can be difficult.

This bestselling guide describes what is required to construct and use a communication book. It offers clarity for parents and professionals in developing books that progressively help a young person to communicate and an increasing number of messages through letters, words and symbols.

Available to purchase online at www.ace-centre.org.uk, and find out about the other ways in which the ACE Centre can help children who struggle to speak, including assessments, training and communication aid loan services.

CandLE

Communication and Learning Enterprises (CandLE) staff have been working in mainstream schools with students who have complex communication needs for many years. They have particular experience in the use of assistive technology across a broad range of needs and have supported successful transition to mainstream secondary schools for a number of young people.

CandLE also works with special schools offering advice on literacy and the use of assistive technology. They offer a training course for transition which is developed around the needs of the individual student. You can find out more about this at: www.contactcandle.co.uk/training_for_transition.htm

CandLE also offer a six day course called “Communication and Learning for All” which you can learn more about at: www.contactcandle.co.uk/communication_for_all_course.htm

There is advice and free downloads available on the website: www.contactcandle.co.uk

The Makaton Charity

The Makaton Charity provides training and a wide range of symbol and sign resources suitable for use in secondary schools. National Curriculum, Personal, Social, Health Education (PSHE), Sex Education and Performing Arts resources enable teachers to provide students with access to relevant vocabulary for English, Maths, Science, Geography, History and Technology.

For more information please visit www.makaton.org

Signalong

Signalong provides resources and training for sign-supported communication for all ages. Resources are available to secondary schools, in addition to general vocabulary, related to bullying, life skills, health, sex education and work experience. Signalong worked with Scottish songwriter Alison Burns to publish the “Respect” songbook, signed songs for secondary school assemblies.

Please visit www.signalong.org.uk for more information.
Autism

The National Autistic Society
Around 1 in 100 people in the UK has an autism spectrum disorder. The National Autistic Society provides a range of information resources for professionals working with people with autism. Please visit www.autism.org.uk/edprofs for practical strategies in the classroom, coping with break times as well as how to deal with a bullying incident and much more.

TreeHouse
TreeHouse is the national charity for autism education and believe that the best education provision for children with autism is developed through partnership between parents and professionals. TreeHouse run national projects that support these partnerships and host www.talkaboutautism.org.uk - a hub of expert information with an online community for parents, carers and professionals to share experiences and support.

Disabled young people

The Children’s Society
The Children’s Society have resources and training programmes to help disabled young people participate in decisions affecting their lives:

- **Disability Toolkit website** (www.disabilitytoolkit.org.uk) is a free resource for professionals to share their experiences and knowledge of working with children.
- **Askability website** (www.askability.org.uk) is a unique symbol supported website designed to give disabled children access to news, sport, films, music etc.
- **I’ll Go First Planning and Review Toolkit** enables children to communicate their views about the education/care they receive.
- Accredited courses in communicating with disabled children - for professionals/carers who want to learn new ways to communicate more effectively.

For further information contact The Children’s Society Training & Consultancy Unit on 07786 375654 or e-mail training&consultancy@childsoc.org.uk
Hearing impairment

The National Deaf Children’s Society
The National Deaf Children’s Society produce a range of educational materials for its members. Membership is free for teachers and teaching assistants. To join up and download free resources please go to www.ndcs.org.uk/professional_support/index.html

The publications catalogue can be found at www.ndcs.org.uk/document.rm?id=4342

School staff who want an introduction to teaching children with a hearing impairment are advised to read “Deaf friendly schools” and “Deaf friendly teaching”.

Profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD)

Mencap
Mencap has a useful guide about communicating with people with PMLD. Many people with PMLD do not communicate using formal communication like speech, symbols or signs. But this does not mean that they cannot communicate. It is important that everyone who supports young people with PMLD find out the best way to communicate with each individual.

Download the communication guide at: www.mencap.org.uk/guides.asp?id=459

Find out more about the needs of people with PMLD at www.pmldnetwork.org

Stammering

Michael Palin Centre for Stammering Children
“Wait, wait, I’m not finished yet” - an inspiring DVD to support schools in helping pupils who stammer.

The DVD contains a film featuring young people who stammer telling their teachers about stammering and what support they would like in school. Various printable resources can also be found on the DVD.

Designed for use in awareness-raising sessions run by speech and language therapists or special educational needs coordinators, the DVD is appropriate to anyone working in a secondary school setting.

Contact stammering.information@islingtonpct.nhs.uk for a free copy and further details.

The British Stammering Association
The British Stammering Association education website www.stammeringineducation.net is an online training resource for secondary school staff. This provides strategies for the support of students who stammer, and may be used for staff training as part of a whole school policy on meeting the needs of pupils with SLCN. This site includes a training resource for primary school staff, and one for pupils preparing for the oral work of GCSE English.
8. The Communication Trust

The Communication Trust is a coalition of over 35 voluntary and community organisations. We work together to raise awareness of speech, language and communication and to ensure that the speech, language and communication needs of all children and young people are met. We do this through signposting training, support and guidance to people working with children and young people.

The Communication Trust was founded by Afasic, BT, I CAN and the Council for Disabled Children. It is funded by the Department for Education and other funders. We work with an advisory panel which includes, Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT), National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) and Aspect. For a full membership list please go to the Trust website.

The Trust bases all continuing professional development work around speech, language and communication on the Speech, Language and Communication Framework.

This framework lists all the skills and knowledge that anyone working with children need to have in order to support the communication development of all children and those with SLCN.

For more information about the Trust please visit our website www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk