

# Strategies for every classroom

## Supporting and including pupils with speech, language and communication needs

**No Pens Day  
Wednesday**

Speech, language and communication needs are common (SLCN). Around 7% of pupils are likely to have specific language impairment and many more will have significantly delayed speech, language and communication development. Additionally, SLCN are part of many other areas of SEN and disability, including hearing impairment, autistic spectrum conditions and learning difficulties for example.

Here are some general strategies that you may find useful to consider when working with pupils with SLCN. These strategies are general so should be considered in conjunction with what you know about individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses and with any advice and targets based on specialist assessments and recommendations to include and support pupils with SLCN.

- Some pupils may not understand that whole class instructions relate specifically to them – use their name before an instruction to get their attention and to help them understand that it's an instruction for them
- Break down longer instructions in to chunks to allow pupils time to process the information they're hearing
- Think about the complexity of your language – can you simplify an instruction, or say the same thing but using fewer words or a less complex sentence structure? E.g. 'walk please' instead of 'could you please stop running?'
- Check back that pupils have understood – can they tell you what you've asked them to do or act on the information they've heard?
- Use visual supports to help make your classroom a more communication friendly place. Visual supports can be used:
  - to help pupils understand ideas that are out of the here and now or are a change in an expected routine.
  - to support pupils to understand about what's going to be happening and the routine for the week, day, or an individual lesson
  - as a way to support

understanding of both written text and spoken language used in the classroom, e.g. real objects to help with new vocabulary, picture instructions to help with getting ready for PE, photographs to depict classroom/school rules...

- Be careful with non-literal or ambiguous language; for example rather than 'I'll be with you in a second'; try 'I'm talking to Keisha now. After that I'll come to you'. Be aware that you may need to explain some common idioms and sayings to help pupils to understand
- Be careful with inferred language and be explicit with instructions; instead of 'it's a bit cold in here now', directly ask 'please can you close the window?'

➤ To help pupils with understanding and retaining new vocabulary, try to use and reinforce important vocabulary in different situations and contexts – repetition is the key

➤ Where possible, try describing activities as children are doing them, this will help pupils to attach meaning to the words they're hearing

➤ Allow opportunities for pupils to use their communication skills at their own level, this can be incredibly powerful for them

➤ For children and young people who find it difficult to structure longer sentences or narratives, try using visual aids to help, like a visual story planner or a visual prompt to help them use connectives

➤ Pupils with social communication difficulties may need guidance to help them manage and understand specific social situations and rules. Allow time to help with this, perhaps by giving them a specific role during a game or giving them playground targets to aim to achieve, for example 'I will try to be happy for the other team if they win'

If you are interested in finding out about further strategies to help you support pupils with SLCN, in addition to those listed here, The Communication Trust's 'Don't Get Me Wrong' publication has many more strategies for supporting pupils with SLCN and is available [www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/dontgetmewrong](http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/dontgetmewrong)