Universally Speaking

I CAN helps children communicate

The Communication Trust
Every child understood

The ages and stages of children's communication development

From 11 to 18 years

The Communication Trust

The Communication Trust is a coalition of 50 voluntary and community organisations with expertise in speech, language and communication. We harness our collective expertise to enable the children's workforce and commissioners to support all children and young people's communication skills, particularly those with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

We do this by raising awareness, providing information and workforce development opportunities, influencing policy, promoting best practice among the children's workforce and commissioning work from our members.

The Trust was founded in 2007 by Afasic, BT, Council for Disabled Children and I CAN.

www.ican.org.uk

PEARSON

Pearson Assessment

This booklet, along with the rest of the suite of the Universally Speaking booklets, was originally produced with the support of Pearson Assessment. They are publishers of standardised assessments for a range of speech, language and communication needs.

www.pearsonclinical.co.uk

Universally Speaking is a series of 3 booklets for anyone who works with children and young people. To order further copies of the Universally Speaking booklets please go to:
www.ican.org.uk/shop

Contents

Young people's communication skills

It's often assumed that by the time young people start secondary school their spoken language and communication skills are fully developed. However, these skills continue to develop throughout secondary school. It's also easy to assume that all young people will be on track with their spoken language and communication. However, this is often not the case and their difficulties can be hard to spot.

This guide will help practitioners to know whether young people are on the right track with their spoken language skills and help to identify those who are struggling. It includes suggestions for encouraging good spoken language and understanding, as we know that focusing on spoken language can mean better outcomes for young people.

Special Education Needs and Disability

Identifying needs and making effective provision for children and young people with SEND is an important part of the 2014 SEND Code of Practice[1] with recognised benefits. Universally Speaking sets out expected progress in speech, language and communication and so can help practitioners begin to identify where children and young people may be struggling. It can also help practitioners to gather useful information which would support further assessment of needs and inform initial planning for support.

1 Department of Education, Department for Health (2015). Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years - Statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities.

Why spoken language is important

1

Both research and Ofsted highlight that spoken language is key to learning and can support attainment. Where schools place a strong emphasis on explicit and structured speaking and listening approaches, they can see results improve. Ofsted says: *"Where inspectors saw links between oral language, reading and writing in lessons with secondary school students, standards at GCSE English language were higher."*[2] Across the curriculum: *"Dialogue and questioning across the class are both central to learning and a key indicator of effective teaching."*[3]

2

Poor spoken language puts young people at risk of poor literacy, poor behaviour, poor social and emotional development and poor attainment. Just under 14% of pupils with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) get 5 good GCSEs (including English and Maths) compared to nearly 61% of all young people.[4] 50-90% of pupils with persistent SLCN go on to have reading difficulties.[5] Studies have also shown that many pupils excluded from school have language difficulties that the adults around them are not aware of.[6]

3

More than 1 million children in the UK have long term, persistent difficulties. In areas of social deprivation, the numbers of pupils with SLCN is greater still. While we would expect around 10% of young people to have long term SLCN, at Key Stage 4, less than 1% of pupils have SLCN identified as their primary need. A detailed study showed 83% of young people assessed in one inner city secondary school had SLCN which hampered learning, behaviour and social relationships[8].

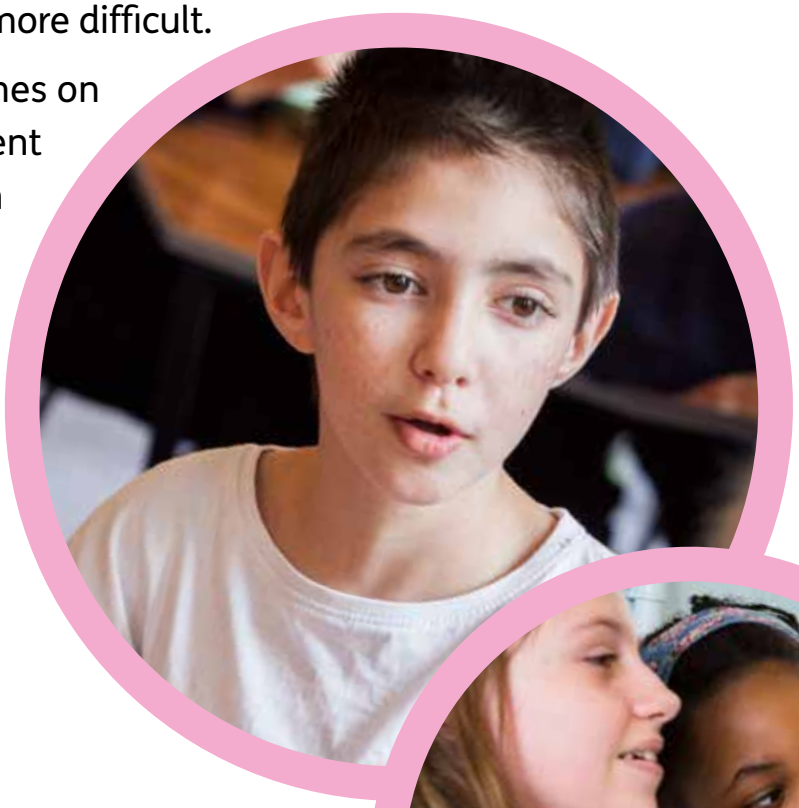
Language development continues throughout the secondary years, and though changes in spoken language can be subtle, they are important for overall development, progression and attainment, for building relationships and for working and communicating with others.

2 Excellence in English Ofsted (2011) www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/Excellence-in-English **3** Ofsted Annual Report 09/10, www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources **4** Children with special educational needs: an analysis (2012/13). London: DfE. **5** Children with special educational needs: an analysis (2012/13). London: DfE. **6** Ripley, K. and Yuill, N. (2005) Patterns of Language Impairment and Behaviour in Boys Excluded from School British Journal of Educational Psychology 75(1):37-50 **7** Department for Education (2014) *Statistical release on SEN pupils* **8** Spencer, S., Clegg, J. and Stackhouse, J. (2012) Language and disadvantage: a comparison of the language abilities of adolescents from two different socioeconomic areas International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders, Vol. 47, No. 3

By age 11...

Spoken language is important for all learning. However, in busy classrooms, it can be difficult to spot young people who may be struggling. Some young people may have good skills, but are reluctant to use them. Others don't have these skills to draw on. It's important to work out the different language and communication skills a young person has already developed, as well as understanding the things they find more difficult.

Opposite are guidelines on language development in young people with some quick and easy things to do to identify those who may be struggling.



Understanding of spoken language and verbal reasoning

Young people should be able to...

➔ Follow spoken directions which are quite complex. This might include longer sentences with more information, maybe new vocabulary and more complex grammar, E.g. *"Remember to accurately measure the liquid before you add the crystals"*

➔ Understand common, simple 'sayings' in context, E.g. *"Go on Jess, nothing ventured, nothing gained"*

➔ See someone else's point of view when they don't necessarily agree with it

➔ Understand factual information, but may still find it difficult to understand information that needs to be inferred, E.g. *"So, in year 6, I imagine you did some work on coasts, coastal erosion and sea defences?"* [Meaning – did you do work on this topic?] E.g. *"That's obviously a great joke Jason, would you like to share it with the class?"* [Meaning – pay attention and listen, and I really don't want you to share it]

➔ Start to understand sarcasm. Though it needs to have more exaggerated context, tone of voice and facial expression clues to help them fully understand sarcasm - that what's said isn't necessarily what's meant, E.g. *"That's right year 7, that's just what we want, enough noise so the head can hear from his office"*

How to check it out...

➔ When giving instructions, ask young people to say back to you what it is they need to do or summarise the instructions in their own words

➔ Check out understanding of simple sayings by getting them to match sayings with definitions

Watch out for young people who:

➔ Are the last to follow an instruction

➔ Use ways to distract, E.g. asking you questions, talking to others, misbehaving, asking for pens, pencils, the toilet etc.

➔ Watch others carefully

➔ Repeat what you're saying under their breath or quietly to themselves

➔ Struggle to get going

➔ Look surprised when you ask them a question

They may be struggling with understanding, which is likely to impact on learning and attainment.

By age 11...

By age 11...

Vocabulary

Young people should be able to...	How to check it out...
➔ Pick up new vocabulary needed for learning specific to topic areas and more generally	➔ Choose a word from your subject or a current topic. Ask young people to tell you what it means. Can they give objective and accurate definitions?
➔ Use more objective and clearer definitions of words, as you might find in a dictionary, E.g. definitions such as 'excited' when it's Christmas or their birthday will develop into 'excited' meaning eager or thrilled	➔ Listen to what they tell you. Do they seldom use the correct subject-specific word, choosing a general word instead? E.g. 'that thing', 'wotsit', 'you know'
➔ Understand that words have more than one meaning and can explain this, E.g. 'lie down' and 'tell a lie'; 'sharp knife' and 'sharp thinker'	➔ Choose words with more than one meaning, E.g. pen, bright, spring, bank, arm, watch
	➔ Can young people explain what both meanings are?
➔ Use more interesting vocabulary when prompted E.g. 'immense' instead of 'huge'; 'stagger' instead of 'walk'	➔ Can they think of 5 [or more] words meaning 'small', 'talk' or 'angry'?

Sentence structure and narrative

Young people should be able to...

- Use sentences of around 7-11 words in their talking, though during conversation and discussion, shorter phrases are often used
- Use a range of higher level words for joining sentences in both speech and writing, E.g. before, also, then, so
- Tell interesting, entertaining and original stories with a clear plot and often sub-plots
- Explain the rules of a game or a sequence of events in a simple but accurate way, E.g. giving directions for how to get somewhere, or giving instructions about how to carry out a task

How to check it out...

- Listen to their explanations. Do they start and then give up?
- Encourage discussion during group work. Give them a particular 'role' to support their involvement in discussions, E.g. the person who records ideas (Recorder), or the person who summarises ideas (Summariser) etc. How clear are their accounts? How effectively do they join their ideas?
- Give opportunities to use spoken language, E.g. to explain experiments in Science or a sequence of events in History
- Does their spoken language include longer, more complex sentences? Are their verbal explanations clear?
- Listen to them describing an event or activity. Do you find that you have to concentrate much harder on what they're saying because their account is confused?

By age 11...

By age 11...

Social interaction

Young people should be able to...

➔ Enjoy jokes based on double meanings though they may not always be able to explain them, E.g. *"What do you get when you cross a snowman with a vampire?"* Answer: *"Frostbite"*

➔ Change the style of their language to suit the situation and the listener, E.g. *"Hey, how you doing?"; "Bye mum, see you tonight"; "Morning Sir"*

➔ Be aware when someone doesn't understand and try another way to get information across

➔ Negotiate with friends and others to resolve conflicts

How to check it out...

➔ Watch how they talk to different people around school. Can they change how they say things depending on who they're talking to?

➔ Ask them to tell you how they would say something, E.g. 'hello' to different people...

- The Headteacher
- Mr. [teacher's name]
- Their mum
- Their friend
- A young child

Is what they would say different – can they say how/why?

If they can't, they may be struggling with using social interaction skills appropriate to their age

Top 3 suggestions to support the development of speaking and listening with this age group

These ideas are not time-consuming and can quickly be included in lessons across the curriculum. They'll support all young people's spoken language and therefore their learning. They're particularly important for children who are struggling.

1

To support listening

We often take listening for granted, though all young people can benefit from being reminded how to listen. Encourage them to identify good listening skills in themselves and others. When working in groups, get one young person to observe what is going on in their group with a particular focus on how well group members listen to each other.

2

To support vocabulary

Young people need to learn a lot of new vocabulary in secondary school – vocabulary increases at a rate of between 3,000 and 5,000 words per year. It's therefore important to teach and support understanding of new vocabulary. This can make a big difference to how effectively pupils understand and use new or technical words. You can do this by linking new words to what they know already. Ask the young people what information they know about the word, help them fill in gaps of understanding, play around with how the word looks and sounds, match definitions to words and display key vocabulary with clear definitions.

3

To support understanding

Young people may need time to think before responding to questions and instructions. Give them time without answering for them or finishing their sentences. In a busy classroom, tell them they can have some time to think and come back to them. Try out the 10 second rule – give them 10 seconds to think once you have asked a question... see how many more young people respond and whether their answers are more accurate.

What to do next...

Young people in secondary school see lots of different teachers, so it's easy for those with difficulties to slip through the net. However, it's really important that their communication needs are identified, as they can have a knock-on effect on their learning. If you're worried about the speaking and listening skills of young people you work with, it's useful to be aware of the systems in school; you could discuss with their tutor or SENCO, or talk to parents about your concerns.

For more information please visit **www.talkingpoint.org.uk**

By age 13-14...

Spoken language is important for all learning. However, in busy classrooms, it can be difficult to spot young people who may be struggling. Some young people may have good skills, but are reluctant to use them. Others don't have these skills. It's important to work out which it may be.

Opposite are guidelines on language development in young people with some quick and easy things to do to identify those who may be struggling.

Understanding of spoken language and verbal reasoning

Young people should be able to...

➜ Understand instructions that don't follow the same order as words in the sentence, E.g. *"Before you get your equipment, decide who you're working with and what positions you're playing in"*

➜ Think about how they might persuade other people, including what they'll say if other views are different from their own, E.g. *"I know you aren't into rugby, but there are a few of us going and after the match we're going for a pizza – it'll be a laugh"*

➜ Infer meaning, working out information that isn't given directly, E.g. *"She grabbed her coat and bag and dashed out of the door"* [she was in a hurry/late]

➜ Understand less obvious 'sayings', E.g. *"Rome wasn't built in a day, you know"*

➜ Understand and explain words and sayings with double meanings, E.g. *"Lemons can leave a bitter taste" / "It was a bitter experience" / "The cold was bitter"*

How to check it out...

➜ Try giving instructions which don't follow the word order of the sentence. Can the young people follow them, or do they do them in the wrong order? E.g. *"For this experiment, one person pours the liquid while the other adds in the crystals so, before you get the equipment shown on the worksheet, talk to your partner about who'll do which tasks in the experiment"*

➜ Can they work out meanings that aren't explicitly stated? Try a few examples in class and ask them what they think you mean:

- *"This is the end of a very long day, year 9"*
- *"This is the third time this week that you've left your homework at home"*
- *"The geography field trip will be on the wilds of the moors - and let me remind you, it's November"*

Do they take things literally?

By age 13-14...

By age 13-14...

Vocabulary

Young people should be able to...	How to check it out...
➔ Use words in more and different ways, E.g. *"bright kid" / "bright day" / "bright idea"*	➔ Choose words with more than one meaning, E.g. pen, bright, spring, bank, arm, watch Can they show their different meanings appropriately by using them in sentences?
➔ Define more difficult words and give examples, E.g. *"Justice is about fairness and honesty, where the right thing happens. The law is meant to make sure that justice happens"*	➔ Choose a word from your subject or a current topic. Ask young people to tell you what it means. Can they give clear, objective and accurate definitions?
➔ Use spelling rules and patterns in words to get clues to understand word meaning, E.g. *"Un... reliable – un means not, so this person isn't very reliable"*	➔ Listen to them talking. Do they sometimes use completely made-up words? E.g. 'float top' – life jacket 'fire stick' – Bunsen burner
➔ Use more difficult words when prompted in formal speaking and writing tasks, E.g. Formal situation: *"James is incredibly arrogant"* With friends: *"James is so full of himself – he's a pain"*	
➔ Confidently explain the meaning of words in different subjects, E.g. In Maths: quadratic equation, factorise, inequality In Science: respiratory, digestion, metamorphosis	

Sentence structure and narrative

Young people should be able to...

➔ Talk using sentences with an average length of 7-12 words, though during conversation and discussion shorter phrases are usually used

➔ Join spoken and written sentences using more difficult words, E.g. even though, so that, furthermore, nevertheless

➔ Produce well-planned, complex spoken stories with different elements and plenty of detail

➔ Give detailed explanations of rules or break down steps in more complex sequences

How to check it out...

➔ Ask them to explain something, E.g.

- *In Science* - an experiment they've just carried out
- *In Maths* – the rules for quadratic equations

Can they give clear and detailed verbal explanations – do they include good vocabulary, is it in the right order, does it make sense?

➔ Ask them to join the sentences below using the words 'even though', 'so that' and 'nevertheless':

- *On Saturday Elliott went to watch the rugby...*
  ...he prefers football
- *On Saturday Elliott got a train to Leeds...*
  ...he could watch the rugby
- *On Saturday Elliott missed his train...*
  ...he still managed to watch the rugby

Does it take them a long time? Do they choose the right words? Are they aware if they haven't made sense?

By age 13-14...

By age 13-14...

Social interaction

Young people should be able to...	How to check it out...
➔ Understand and use slang with peers. Keep up with rapidly changing 'street talk', E.g. *"That was sick"*	➔ Can they give alternative meanings that young people have for specific words? E.g. sweet, tidy, chill
➔ Use sarcasm as a way to interact with peers and familiar adults, E.g. *"Cool dance dad!"*	➔ Set up groups of 2 or 3 students. Aim to see whether the group can maintain the conversation. Give them a specific task or conversational topic, E.g. Talk about a TV programme, YouTube clip or somewhere they like to visit
➔ Keep a topic of conversation going even though the person they're speaking to finds this skill harder	➔ Watch them with their peers. Do they opt out of conversations with lots of slang? Do they look confused?
➔ Fully understand the difference between the words and style of talk used with friends and the different style of talk needed in the classroom	
➔ Engage in humorous 'banter' with friends	

Top 3 suggestions to support the development of speaking and listening with this age group

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1

To get the most out of group work

Young people benefit from guidance on how to work in groups. They benefit from teachers showing them how to work and talk together. In addition, giving young people specific roles for group work can support their learning, E.g. encourager, questioner, timekeeper, leader, observer.

E.g. The questioner can challenge with questions, *"What are the main organs called?"* or the encourager can support – *"That's a great answer, can you give me more detail?"*

2

Create an 'asking friendly' classroom

This will encourage young people to ask for clarification. You can give them different ways to do this. Ask them to explain what specifically they don't understand,

E.g. *"I don't know what estuary means"*
"Is the estuary where the river meets the sea?"

Make deliberate mistakes – do they pick up on your error and question you?

3

To encourage clear spoken language

Give a structure to present information verbally.

A structure can be given in a similar way to a writing frame[9] to talk about a sequence of events, rules of a game, descriptions of people, objects or places etc.

Give a clear structure for them to support their thinking and organisation of language, such as who, where, when, what, how, why.

What to do next...

Young people in secondary school see lots of different teachers, so it's easy for those with difficulties to slip through the net. However, it's really important that their communication needs are identified, as they can have a knock-on effect on their learning. If you're worried about the speaking and listening skills of young people you work with, it's useful to be aware of the systems in school; you could discuss with their tutor or SENCO, or talk to parents about your concerns.

For more information please visit **www.talkingpoint.org.uk**

9 www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/writing/planningyourwriting/worksheet9.shtml

By age 18...

Spoken language is important for all learning. However, in busy classrooms, it can be difficult to spot young people who may be struggling. Some young people may have good skills, but are reluctant to use them. Others don't have these skills. It's important to work out which it may be.

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Understanding of spoken language and verbal reasoning

Young people should be able to...

- Confidently follow complex directions
- Know when and why they don't understand and ask for help with what they're struggling with, E.g. *"I understand you mix the ingredients together, just not sure what they mean by 'fold'"*
- Be more skilful in discussions and use a range of arguments to persuade others
- Pick out themes in discussions and understand when meaning is inferred and not obvious, E.g. *"I thought he was quite arrogant as he always talks about all these things he can do, but I think he's just busy and trying to impress Laura, you can tell he really likes her"*

How to check it out...

- Check out their understanding of words and phrases needed for learning – ask them to define what specific vocabulary means and the differences between similar words, E.g. define, compile, create, evaluate
- Talk about a recent episode of a favourite TV programme. Can they show they've understood key themes?
- Observe how they tackle long and complex instructions. Do they only ever do part of them? Do they just do the last things they've heard?

By age 18...

By age 18...

Vocabulary

Young people should be able to...

➜ Understand well the words that are used in questions in exams and the classroom. They'll know what these words are asking them to do, E.g. evaluate, compile, find themes

➜ Use a good range of more difficult words and phrases to describe, E.g. exhausted, meandered, noxious, incessant

➜ Understand more subtle differences between similar words, E.g. severe, considerable

How to check it out...

➜ Give a range of descriptive words. How many alternatives can they come up with? Look out for young people who get stuck or go on the wrong track

➜ Suggest a character – put young people in groups, have a competition to see how detailed their descriptions can be of the same character using more difficult words and phrases - how would they describe his walk, his look, his attitude, etc.

➜ Look at the quality and range of the words they use. Do they focus on things they would see instead of also considering less tangible things like character?

Sentence structure and narrative

Young people should be able to...

- Talk using sentences with an average length of 9-13 words, though during conversation and discussion shorter phrases are usually used
- Use more advanced 'connecting' words to make complex sentences, E.g. provided that, similarly, conversely, moreover
- Tell long and complex spoken stories ensuring the 'thread' of the story is understood throughout

How to check it out...

- Ask groups of 3 young people to have a conversation about a class topic. One should be the observer and note how the discussion is going as well as writing down a couple of sentences being spoken. They can look at length of sentences when one person is giving an explanation (longer) compared to group discussions (shorter)
- Can they report back to the class, ensuring the 'thread' of the discussion is understood and the main points are made?

By age 18...

By age 18...

Social interaction

Young people should be able to...

➜ Use their language imaginatively for social interaction, E.g. *"That's so many colours of wrong"*

➜ Stay on one conversational topic for long periods and move sensibly from one topic to another

➜ Switch easily between informal and formal styles of talking, E.g. *"Yeah, whatever, you numpty...Oh evening Mr Johnson, how are you?"*

To friend: *"That's our neighbour, what's he doing here?"*

➜ Understand sarcasm by the situation and without the need for a sarcastic tone of voice. Can use sarcasm in humour, E.g. a sarcastic comment for someone who can't sing might be *"What a great singing voice you have, you should enrol on X factor"*

➜ Take part in group social interactions, knowing appropriate times to join in conversations

How to check it out...

➜ Give a couple of examples of sarcasm within a sentence. Are they able to pick out the sarcasm and / or see the humour in it when you ask them?

➜ Can they give examples where they've used sarcasm as a way of being funny?

➜ How easy do they find it to talk in a group situation and to introduce new topics, maintain themes etc?

Top 3 suggestions to support the development of language and communication with this age group

These ideas are not time-consuming and can quickly be included in lessons across the curriculum. They'll support all young people's spoken language and therefore their learning. They're particularly important for children who are struggling.

1

To support wider vocabulary

Young people and adults will continue to learn new words into later life. This is really important for learning and development as vocabulary has been shown to be key in how well young people do beyond school or college and into the workplace. Continue to teach new words and revise the meanings of those you have taught. Encourage young people to match definitions to new words, play around with descriptive words adding more to discussions in conversations, introduce new phrases and expressions, continue to teach new conjunctions, etc. Highlight your top 10 words for a topic and teach these explicitly.

2

To support improved language skills

Encourage students to reflect on their own use of language – how could they make their argument stronger, what other words and phrases could be used, how could they clarify their point?

3

To support group discussions

Give tasks for different students in groups and encourage reflection – make sure you've heard all views before summarising, think about your feedback - is it clear and concise? Ask them to think about their conversations socially too – think of a really good conversation and a not so good one – what was the difference. What made the good one work? What happened in the not so good one? Is there anything you might do differently next time?

What to do next...

Young people in secondary school see lots of different teachers, so it's easy for those with difficulties to slip through the net. However, it's really important that their communication needs are identified, as they can have a knock-on effect on their learning. If you're worried about the speaking and listening skills of young people you work with, it's useful to be aware of the systems in school or college; you could discuss with their tutor or SENCO, or talk to parents about your concerns.

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Useful things to do

Across all ages and subject areas

Spoken language

1. Teach and define vocabulary and give opportunities for reinforcing core vocabulary and central concepts
2. Have visual displays of topics or current activities, including key vocabulary and definitions, with some graphics, diagrams or photographs to reinforce meaning
3. Use writing frames / narrative frameworks for spoken language, E.g. who, where, when, what happened?
4. Give opportunities for group discussion, modeling strategies for collaborative discussions and giving guidance of how to work together
5. Encourage verbal summaries, explanations, persuasive arguments around topic work

Listening and understanding

1. Teach the skills that make up active listening: look at the speaker, think about what they're saying, engage by responding and asking questions
2. Identify the structure of text (beginning, middle, end) and emphasise key words, phrases and sentences. Encourage this awareness when listening to spoken language
3. Build in ways to check understanding / application of what's been taught – ask students to summarise. Do this regularly and not only at the end of the lesson
4. Limit the amount of teacher talk
5. Use the 10 second rule - allow plenty of thinking time so that the pupil can process what's been said

Communication skills

1. Teach pupils how to recognise what they understand and what they don't understand and give strategies for seeking help or clarification

2. Give them good models for talk, interaction, group work – provide good and bad models. Can they say which works best and why?

3. Develop opportunities for use of spoken language and communication within the classroom to support and develop understanding and learning

4. Use tutorials / buddying / peer mentoring to support social skills / friendships

5. Make explicit the component parts of spoken language and communication; discuss with young people the importance of these skills for learning, friendships and work

Other important information

Young people might have difficulties with spoken language and communication for a range of reasons including:

- General learning difficulties that affect their spoken language and communication
- Fewer opportunities for conversation and support during childhood and having delayed language development
- A specific difficulty with language, although other skills may be good

If there is a young person who you are working with who you think may have a speech, language or communication need you may wish to use the checklist in the publication *Don't Get Me Wrong* by The Communication Trust, to see if there is a cause for a concern.

For more information about this booklet please go to **www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/publications**

English as an additional language

Some estimates suggest that as much as two-thirds of the world's population speak more than one language.

Speaking more than one language is a positive and beneficial skill and should be celebrated.

There is no evidence to suggest that learning more than one language will delay the development of speech and language skills. In fact, learning more than one language at once can have many positive benefits for children.

For children learning English as an additional language:

- It is important to recognise and value all languages
- Accept and praise words and phrases used in home languages and give English equivalents where appropriate
- Encourage parents of children learning English as an additional language to continue to talk to their children in their home language.

Different languages have different sound and grammatical systems; the ages and stages used in this booklet refer to English.

There is more guidance available at **www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0000/0804/FAQsonbilingualism.pdf**

Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)

Around 10% of all children and young people have long term, persistent SLCN and many more have less severe needs. Children with SLCN may have difficulties with:

➜ **Speech sounds** – children and young people have may have speech that is difficult to understand. They may not say the right sounds for their age or may mix up and miss out sounds in words, making their speech unclear, E.g. "A tup of tea."

➜ **Fluency** – children and young people might have hesitations in their speech and may prolong or repeat sounds and parts of words or sentences. They may struggle to get their words out at all. Getting 'stuck' on words in this way is sometimes referred to as stammering or stuttering.

➜ **Understanding of language** – children and young people may struggle to understand words or sentences that are being used or to follow instructions they hear.

➜ **Spoken language** – children and young people may use a limited number of words in their talking or be unable to put words together to form sentences. What they say may be very muddled and disorganised and difficult for someone to follow and understand. Some children might struggle to find the word that they know they want to say.

➜ **Social use of language** – children and young people may have a good vocabulary and can put sentences together, but they may struggle to know how to use their language to have conversations, play and socially interact well with others.

➜ **Listening and attention** – children and young people may have difficulties listening to what has been said to them and may struggle to concentrate on a game or activity for even a short period of time, flitting from one task to another without completing anything.

Children and young people with SLCN can also have any combination of the above. You may have children in your school or college who have identified SLCN. You may have a speech and language therapist or other specialist you are involved with working together with these children and young people.

For more information on SLCN please go to **www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/resources/resources/resources-for-practitioners/** and view the booklet *Misunderstood*.

If you are worried about a child or young person who you are working with there is more information on **www.talkingpoint.org.uk**

Find out more

Talking Point

www.talkingpoint.org.uk

A website all about children's speech, language and communication, designed for parents, people that work with children, and children and young people themselves. It contains information about supporting children's speech and language development, and helps you to identify if a child is having difficulties or falling behind. If they're struggling, then it tells you what you could do to help, or who you could get help from.

Progression Tools from The Communication Trust

If you still have concerns about a young person's speech, language and communication (SLC) skills you could use a Progression Tool to help identify where they are at in relation to their age and how they are progressing with developing these vital skills.

Progression Tools are available for the following key ages of development in secondary school: 11-12, 13-14, 16-18 years old. Each tool covers different aspects of SLC where two types of information are gathered: through direct questions with the young person; and by capturing your own observations or knowledge of the young person.

The Tools give information to help you decide whether a young person would benefit from a targeted intervention or whether they may need more specialist assessment and support and need referring to a speech and language therapist.

For further information please go to: **www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/resources/resources/resources-for-practitioners/progression-tools-secondary**

Your local offer

For children and young people who have, or may have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), including speech, language and communication needs, you can find out more about services available in your area by looking up your local authority's 'local offer' which is published on their website. The local offer clearly sets out what services are available in your area for children with SEND from birth until they are 25 years old. It might be useful to talk through some of the services with parents and support them to find out more about the services available to them.

Talk Gym

www.bt.com/talkgym

Talk Gym has been developed by BT, to help young people 14-19 to learn about how they communicate, why it matters and how they can get better.

Go to **www.bt.com/talkgym** to find out more.

The Communication Consortium

To find out more about the organisations involved in The Communication Trust please go to: **www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/partners**

If your organisation would like to become a member of The Communication Trust's consortium please go to: **www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/partners/consortium**

for more information or e-mail **enquiries@thecommunicationtrust.org.uk**

Frequently asked questions

What should I do if I am concerned about a child or young person who has not been identified with speech, language and communication needs?

Talk to parents to gain further information and if appropriate refer to your local speech and language therapy department, as long as you have parental permission. Anyone can refer to a speech and language therapist, including the parents. You don't have to go through a health visitor, school nurse or SENco.

How can I find out if I need to improve my knowledge and skills in children's communication and where can I find out about further training?

You could complete the Speech, Language and Communication Framework (SLCF). The SLCF outlines what people who work with children and young people need to know and be able to do in order to support children's communication. For more information about the SLCF go to **www.talkingpoint.org.uk/slcf**

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