

# 5 Core Strategies for Adaptive Teaching for SLCN

- Every learner communicates differently. Adaptive teaching helps pupils with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) access learning, express themselves and succeed alongside their peers. By adjusting teaching approaches, environments and communication strategies, teachers remove barriers while maintaining high expectations.
- In Torbay, supporting SLCN is part of our ordinarily available provision and is seen as everyone's responsibility—not just that of Speech and Language Therapists—ensuring children receive consistent, high-quality communication support across all settings.
- These strategies are based on guidance from *Speech and Language UK*.

Here are five key strategies to help you effectively support the children in your classroom:

## 1 Create a communication-friendly environment.

- A communication-friendly environment helps pupils focus, process information, and participate with confidence.
- Predictable routines, reduced noise, and clearly structured spaces lower cognitive load and support children who may have language-processing difficulties, sensory needs, or difficulties with attention.

### Remember:

- Keep background noise to a minimum (e.g., closing doors, using quieter equipment).
- Make routines consistent so children know what to expect.
- Ensure classroom areas are organised, labelled, and visually clear.



## 2 Use clear, simple language and check understanding

- Many children with SLCN need extra time to process spoken information.
- Pausing after giving instructions or asking questions allows pupils to understand what has been said, organise their thoughts and respond with confidence.
- Slowing down speech, reducing verbal overload, and resisting the urge to repeat or rephrase too quickly supports with comprehension and participation for all learners.

### Remember:

- Use short, simple sentences and avoid unnecessary wording.
- Repeat key vocabulary to make meaning stick.
- Give processing time before expecting a response—slow down consciously.
- Check understanding using open prompts (e.g., “Tell me what you need to do first”).
- Example: “First, get your book... (pause)... then open it at page 5.”



## 3 Support language with visuals and modelling

- Visuals make spoken language more concrete and easier to understand. Modelling shows pupils what a successful response looks like.
- Pairing spoken language with “something to see” greatly improves recall and independence.

### Remember to use:

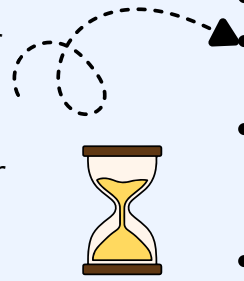
- Visual timetables.
- Symbols, photos, key words.
- Gestures and modelling.
- Model sentence structures or steps before pupils try.



# 4

## Give extra time and structured opportunities to respond

- Allowing extra thinking time before expecting a response helps pupils process information and organise their ideas.
- Breaking instructions into small steps and giving opportunities to rehearse or plan what they want to say further supports their confidence and clarity when speaking.



### **Remember:**

- Allow extra thinking time.
- Break instructions into smaller, manageable steps.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to rehearse or plan what they want to say.
- Provide sentence starters or speaking frames.

# 5

## Teach and scaffold vocabulary explicitly

- Teaching and scaffolding vocabulary explicitly involves introducing key words in advance and revisiting them regularly so pupils can build secure understanding over time.
- Using visuals, actions and real examples helps children connect new vocabulary to what they already know, making it easier to remember and use confidently in different contexts.



### **Remember:**

- Pre-teach and revisit key vocabulary regularly.
- Connect new words to prior knowledge using visuals, actions, and examples.
- Reinforce vocabulary over time so pupils can store and use it confidently.

## Summary

- These core strategies work together to create classrooms where communication and learning are accessible for all.
- By adapting the environment, using clear language, embedding visuals and modelling, allowing processing time, and teaching vocabulary explicitly, we remove barriers and support every child to participate and succeed.
- Consistency across staff is key and ensures pupils experience predictable, high-quality communication support throughout the school day.



## Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Shouldn't children just "pick it up" through exposure?

A: Some children need explicit teaching and adaptation.

Q: Isn't this just good teaching for all children?

A: Yes – adaptive strategies benefit everyone, especially those with SLCN.

Q: When should I be concerned?

A: If difficulties persist, impact learning, or don't respond to quality classroom strategies. Raise concerns through SENCo