

the school years toolkit

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Speech sounds

You have been directed to this Advice Sheet for strategies to help children who have difficulties with speech.

If you have used this Advice Sheet and not seen improvement after three to four months, please contact CYPIT.

Development of speech sounds (phonological development)

Speech is a series of sounds or phonemes, usually known as vowels and consonants, that are used together to form words and sentences.

- Children's phonological development follows a normal pattern from simple sounds, eg b, m, d, progressing to more complex sounds eg "ch" and to blends (clusters), eg bl, sm.
- Please see the Primary and Secondary Inclusion Development Programmes for Teaching and Supporting Pupils with Speech, Language and Communication Needs for a developmental progression of speech sound development.
- Children with speech sound delay will be following this developmental progression more slowly.
- Those with disordered speech development will not be following this pattern.
- Phonological awareness is the ability to recognise individual sounds and patterns of sounds in words eg rhyming and segmentation skills. Some children have greater difficulty developing phonological awareness skills.
- Some children have difficulty with articulating specific speech sounds eg lisps.

What you may see

In class, the child may:

- Be reluctant to contribute
- Sound immature, using simple sounds to replace more difficult ones
- Have difficulty sequencing sounds
- Be difficult to understand without contextual clues
- Have difficulty with the phonological skills required for literacy
- Be unable to mark plurals or tense endings e.g. hats, walked.

Section 5 **advice** sheets

Strategies and advice

- Model and emphasise the correct versions of words rather than asking the child to repeat them after you.
- Let the child use non-verbal ways of communicating eg gestures, mime, pointing.
- Try to find individual time to listen and talk with the child in order to tune into their speech.
- Handle communication breakdowns sensitively and in as low-key a way as possible.
- Provide shared contexts eg pictures, books, home/school diary, play activities etc. to help predict the content of their conversation.
- Ask the child closed yes/no questions in whole class discussions.
- Encourage the development of phonological awareness skills eg rhyming, speech sound discrimination and sorting games.
- It may be helpful to include the child in a small group for listening and phonics activities.
- Monitor whether the child is becoming more intelligible over time.

Suggested Resources

- Primary and Secondary Inclusion Development Programmes for Teaching and Supporting Pupils with Speech, Language and Communication Needs.
- Teacher Net – an interactive resource to support head teachers, leadership teams, teachers and support staff. www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications.