

# Tips for a communication supportive Secondary School



Children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) are often helped by some small changes in the school environment – making their classrooms what we call ‘communication supportive’. This makes it easier for them to understand what they are learning and gives them the best opportunity to get the most out of their lessons.

The following features are thought to be good practice for supporting children with SLCN in Secondary School.

- Good use of visual supports such as gesture, drawings, prompt cards (for example a reminder to put up your hand before calling out), photos and, where appropriate, symbols/signs. These can all be used to make aspects of the day clearer including the timetable, what a pupil will be learning in that lesson, expected behaviour, key vocabulary and information, the sequence of steps within an activity, names of equipment and where it is stored, etc.
- The teaching assistant (TA) has necessary skills and knowledge to work with a pupil with SLCN, because they will have received some training about how to support pupils with this type of difficulty. The TA is able to support when needed while encouraging independent work for example they might remind a pupil about taking a turn, or giving an answer, or using a chart, but not do it for them.
- Pupils with SLCN are seated near the teacher. The teacher speaks facing the class and stops speaking when writing on the whiteboard. Information is left on the whiteboard long enough for pupils to read and understand.
- All pupils are encouraged to ask questions and seek clarification.
- The ways of supporting visually that a pupil finds useful are used consistently by different teachers in different classes – so expect to see similar approaches or strategies in different lessons. For example information on what will happen during the lesson is written in language which pupils understand, with visual support such as pictures used where needed. This visual plan for each lesson is referred to during teacher introduction and updated as the lesson progresses to help pupils with SLCN to understand e.g. ‘this is where we are now.’
- Information is presented in a variety of ways. Teaching that incorporates use of visual and tactile approaches including use of real objects, practical activities, pictures, video is used if needed to ensure pupils understand.

**I CAN Help enquiry service** [www.ican.org.uk/help](http://www.ican.org.uk/help)

Call 020 7843 2544 to arrange a free phone call from one of our speech and language therapists or email [enquiries@ican.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ican.org.uk)

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- Teachers do not talk for the whole lesson, and avoid using double meanings, idioms like 'pull your socks up' and long complicated sentences. If they use difficult words or sentences, these are explained.
- Specific words, relating to each subject, are planned in advance of the lesson. This means they can be taught before the lesson (pre-teaching) to pupils with SLCN if needed and there is repetition and lots of opportunities to hear new vocabulary.
- Support for study skills like taking notes, answering questions in exams, revising, organising your homework. This might include support for written work, e.g. a framework for writing a plan for longer pieces of writing (a narrative framework). If needed, there is time for specific teaching of study and organisational skills. IT support is evident in the classroom, and used by pupils to support their learning.
- Systems to ensure that information is shared efficiently about pupils with SLCN to ease transition to another class/school. For example use of a communication passport which is a way of recording important information about a pupil, their particular strengths and communication needs and ways of supporting these.
- Flexibility within the curriculum for pupils requiring individualised programmes, such as flexible timetabling, study time, homework club, small group work, individualised work.
- School 'rules' and 'charters' are written in simple, symbol or visual photos form so that pupils can understand them.
- Quiet space is available for time-out or individual study.
- Systems to help pupils to mix socially, e.g. lunchtime clubs, organised activities, buddying (where a pupil has a specific friend who helps them to mix with others if they want to), peer mentoring, social skills groups, use of a quiet area.
- The school celebrates the success of all pupils – both with academic achievement but also social or behavioural successes. This is evident from a tour of the school as the work of all pupils, including the less able ones, is included in wall displays etc. You might also hear teachers praising pupils for how they have managed working in a group, or ask a question – as well as for when they get an answer right.
- The school is laid out well so pupils with SLCN can find their way round easily, for example subject rooms are colour-coded.

This information was taken from [www.talkingpoint.org.uk](http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk)

### **Do you have questions for a qualified speech and language therapist?**

Call 020 7843 2544 to arrange a call back with an I CAN speech & language therapist, or email your questions to [help@ican.org.uk](mailto:help@ican.org.uk)

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