

Schools

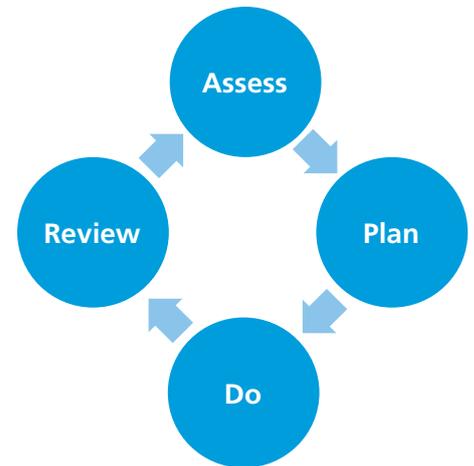
Good classroom organisation to maximise language development needs to be complemented by the fine tuning of oral language interactions by staff.¹

What does the Code say²?



The general principles contained within the code are that:

- When a child or young person is identified as having Special Educational Needs (SEN), schools should take action to remove barriers to learning and put effective special educational provision in place.
- This SEN support should take the form of a four-part cycle of: assess-plan-do-review. This is known as “the graduated approach” and replaces school action and school action plus, early years action and early years action plus categories. All settings should adopt this approach.
- Provision should be **needs-led**



Every maintained school must produce a **SEND Information Report** on their website in which it is outlined how the school will meet the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). (This is the way that schools input to the Local Offer.) This report must include:

- Information on the kind of SEND provided for.
- Policies for identifying children and young people with SEND and assessing their needs.
- Arrangements for consulting parents of children and young people with SEND and involving them in their child’s education.
- Arrangements for consulting children and young people with SEND and involving them in their education.
- Arrangements for assessing and reviewing children and young people’s progress towards outcomes. This should include the opportunities available to work with parents, children and young people as part of this assessment and review.
- Arrangements for supporting children and young people in moving between phases of education and in preparing for adulthood.
- Approaches to teaching children and young people with SEND.
- How adaptations are made to the curriculum and work is differentiated.

In addition, there are a number of other factors for schools included within the new Code of Practice:

- Teachers are responsible for their students' progress including when they receive additional interventions, and including where students access support from teaching assistants or specialist staff.
 - All schools have duties under the Equality Act 2010 towards individual disabled children and young people. They must make reasonable adjustments, including the provision of auxiliary aids and services for disabled children, to prevent them being put at a substantial disadvantage.
 - Parents need to be informed if special educational provision is being made for a child or young person.
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What are the Key Issues for SLCN?

There are substantial challenges for the children's workforce in terms of: being able to identify Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN); knowing how to provide optimal universal support for speech, language and communication; as well as being skilful in involving children and young people with SLCN and their parents within the graduated approach.

- There may be issues in accessing support from other agencies and services, in terms of identifying and supporting SLCN, as well as in accessing training and continuing professional development (CPD) support.
- Practitioners need to be aware of their own role in identifying and supporting SLCN, and build up confidence in doing this.
- Practitioners need to have skills in evaluating progress and know what good and expected progress looks like for children and young people with SLCN.
- Schools may not be fully aware of what constitutes a communication supportive environment, yet this forms the foundation on which to build additional support for children and young people with SLCN.
- There may be a lack of confidence in recognising, planning and delivering appropriate interventions for different SLCN.

More specifically for schools:

- In the new Code of Practice, the teacher is held responsible for the progress made or not made,³ for reviewing regularly what is happening for the child or young person, and putting any changes in place. However, teachers often report a lack of confidence in understanding communication development, and from this identifying need and supporting children and young people with SLCN. This can become even more difficult the older children become.
- Children and young people with SLCN continue to be under identified or misidentified in our schools.⁴
- Schools often feel they lack expertise in putting interventions for children and young people with SLCN into place.
- Young people with SLCN in secondary education are particularly vulnerable to peer teasing and issues around social acceptance at this time so social and emotional development are areas which should be monitored and may be particularly important in preparing outcomes for some pupils.
- The availability of services and specialist support such as Speech and Language Therapy varies geographically and also tends to decrease as children get older. The profile of children's language changes over time, but we know that 10% of children and young people have persistent SLCN, and for 1% this is severe.⁶ By profiling over time we can capture this need to inform commissioners, and improve provision across all areas and particularly for secondary-aged students with SLCN.

Research snapshot...

Research demonstrates that we would expect 5-7% of children and young people to have specific difficulties with speech, language and communication. However, PLASC data from schools identifies:

Of the 7.7 million children enrolled in state-funded primary, secondary, and special schools, only 138,900 are identified as having SLCN; this equals an overall proportion of 1.8%.⁵



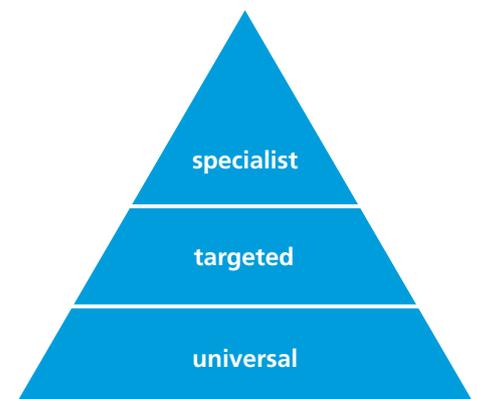
What are the Key Strategies for SLCN?

Describing support for SLCN using the terms 'universal', 'targeted' and 'specialist' has become common over recent years. These terms were used, for example, to identify different evidenced approaches to supporting SLCN as part of the Better Communication Research Programme. However, how these terms are used or represented in different areas may vary in practice.

Here, when we talk about universal support, we mean the support that should be available to **all** children and young people to promote speech, language and communication development; and to enable effective early identification of children who may be struggling.

We use targeted support to describe additional or different support or intervention for children and young people who are struggling with elements of speech, language and/or communication; this may be individual or group support.

The specialist level includes individualised assessment, intervention and support from specialist practitioners such as Speech and Language Therapists in order for the child or young person to make progress.



- **Developing good universal practice for speech, language and communication is important.** There are a number of useful tools for doing this including the *Communication Supportive Classrooms tool for reception and KS1*.
- **It is very important to understand your roles and responsibilities** in relation to identifying and supporting SLCN.
- **Knowing where to go to find out information about typical speech, language and communication development is really useful.** This will help identify school aged children who are not developing as expected. There are a number of free resources to help you do this, for example: *Universally Speaking* and *www.talkingpoint.org.uk*. There may also be locally developed guidance available to you too, as well as commercially available resources.
- Remember, **language skills continue to develop throughout adolescence.** Secondary schools also need to consider how to support young people with SLCN reach their potential.

- **Find useful tools and resources to enable you to effectively identify SLCN.** There are a number of useful tools available to do this, for example *Universally Speaking 5-11 and 11-18*. *The Progression Tools (available across age ranges up to 18)* can help with identification but also provide a clear means of monitoring progress.
- Make sure you're clear on **the process of undertaking further assessment and gaining support** for pupils with SLCN, as this will vary across schools
- **Develop effective ways of working with other professionals** such as Speech and Language Therapists and **ensure you know when and how to refer to local Speech and Language Therapy services.** The *Talking Point* website also has a link to an advice line for individual telephone consultations, and can signpost to local services.
- **Develop ways of engaging with parents to support their child.** Parents may require additional support because of anxiety around the identification of needs, if there is a diagnosis and to support the child with transitions (from primary to secondary school for example).
- **Develop systems** to support transitions and to share information between practitioners.
- **Ensure you're confident and can effectively gain the views of pupils with SLCN** and their parents, see the sections on [engaging with parents and children](#) and [young people at the centre](#) for more tips on how to do this.
- **Be aware of different pressures on the student at different ages in terms of verbal skills required.** For example, pupils transitioning to year 7 may benefit from specific teaching of vocabulary likely to be used in class in secondary school. Focus on supporting access to learning.
- **Ensure you are able to put into place approaches to monitor and track progress** of pupils with SLCN. They may need progress to be broken down into much smaller steps, particularly in areas they find most difficult.
- **Be aware that SLCN can often change over time.** It's vital to regularly review a pupil's SLCN as part of the assess-plan-do-review cycle.

For example...

A student with social communication difficulties may not require targeted support at key stage 1. However, by key stage 2 as the language used within the classroom becomes more abstract, and difficulties navigating friendships becomes more apparent, then school targeted support becomes beneficial for good outcomes.

- **Use good practice in relation to child-centred outcomes** for children and young people with SLCN. There are some strategies to help with this in the [developing outcomes](#) section.
- **Find out what your professional development needs are** and look for ways to gain further professional development in this area. For settings, it's really useful for a **professional development plan that includes communication and SLCN to be in place**. *The Speech, Language and Communication Framework (SLCF)* can be used to gauge practitioner knowledge and plan training to meet any gaps.
- **Utilise evidence to select appropriate interventions** to support children and young people. The *What Works* database of evidenced interventions can help you do this.
- **Placing support for pupils with SLCN within a whole school strategy around communication** led by the senior leadership team of the school is best practice for providing universal good practices to inform teaching and support for all students. *The Communication Commitment* can help schools across all phases to review practice and set in place an action plan for the school.

Research snapshot...

The Better Communication Research Programme (BCRP) found that it was essential to monitor and profile children over time particularly at key transition points (entering school; year 3; year 7; year 10). This is because children's needs change over time, but also the linguistic challenge becomes even greater as a child moves through education.

The curriculum already by year 1 relies almost exclusively on verbal skills, and these demands increase exponentially further up the school. ⁸

What does success look like?



Within our setting:

- We know how to identify numbers of children with SLCN in our area.
- We have good systems in place to monitor progress, and clear intervention programmes linked to this.
- We use evidence well to inform interventions for SLCN.
- We have practitioners with a sound knowledge of speech, language and communication development.
- We've identified any workforce development needs and have good ongoing professional development plans in place around SLCN.
- We know how to access specialist support, and utilise this effectively.
- We engage with parents effectively to support language development in the home setting.
- We have good systems in place around transitions, to support children moving into nursery or into school well.



References



1. JE Dockrell, I Bakopoulou, J Law, S Spencer & G Lindsay (2012), *Developing a communication observation tool*, The Better Communication Research Programme, p24
2. Code of Practice 6.44, 6.19, 6.36-38, 6.79, 6.9
3. Code of Practice 6.36
4. *Children with special educational needs: an analysis* (2014). London: DfE.
5. *Children with special educational needs: an analysis* (2014). London: DfE
6. The Communication Trust, *A Generation Adrift*, (2013), p10
7. J Law, W Lee, S Roulstone, Y Wren, B Zeng & G Lindsay (2012), *“What works”; Interventions for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs*, Better Communication Research Programme, p21
8. G Lindsay, J Dockrell, J Law, S Roulstone, (2012), *Improving Provision for Children and Young People with speech, language and communication needs*, The Better Communication Research Programme, p7



There is a wide range of other guidance available to help practitioners deliver the Reforms which Communicating the Code seeks to add to rather than duplicate. Follow [this link](#) to find additional resources and support and [this link](#) to see examples of good practice and case studies relating to the Code of Practice.

This document can also be downloaded from our website at www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk
