Speech

Classroom strategies



- Develop children's understanding of vocabulary for comparing and categorising sounds. For example:
  - Sounds that can be prolonged (fricatives), such as 'f' or 's', can be referred to as long sounds; and shorter sounds (plosives), such as 'b' and 't', as short sounds.
  - Sounds produced with voicing (loud sounds), such as 'b' and 'g', can be compared with unvoiced (quiet sounds) sounds, such as 'p' and 'k'.

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Speech

Classroom strategies

- ***Reduce background noise,*** particularly when children need to discriminate between sounds (such as in phonics).
- ***Use a consistent system*** for representing speech sounds (phonemes). These are often taught using pictures (e.g. ball for ‘b’, snake for ‘s’), which can be presented with or without the corresponding letters (graphemes).
- Physical cues (such as hand signs) can draw attention to how sounds are produced (e.g. placing thumb and finger together by the lips and separating them as you say ‘p’). When familiar with cues, children may respond to them as reminders to use specific sounds.

Speech

Classroom strategies

- Some children with speech difficulties may hold back from speaking due to sensitivity about pronunciation errors. To counteract this, ***praise children's attempts to communicate*** whether or not they used expected pronunciation. Comment positively about the content of their message and what made their communication effective. This will highlight their strengths alongside their peers and increase their confidence.
- ***Aim to reduce time pressure and competition to speak*** so children do not feel rushed as fast rates of speech impact on speech clarity. Remind children about rules of turn taking, giving each other time to finish and not calling out.

Speech

Classroom strategies



- When discussing neurodiversity and developmental differences, include reference to having difficulty speaking clearly. Ask children without speech needs how they would feel if they could not make themselves understood and what they might do about it.
- ***Facilitate discussions about teasing and bullying***, and ways children can respond.

Speech

Classroom strategies



- ***Set up activities to help children practise repairing communication breakdown***. Strategies to explore are:
  - repeating more slowly;
  - adding more info;
  - describing a word/object;
  - gesturing/miming;
  - using context, such as pointing to objects; drawing or writing the message;
  - using Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).
- ***Use these strategies during interactive games*** (such as miming/barrier/drawing games) so children develop confidence to use them spontaneously.

Speech

Classroom strategies



- Convey the message that ***all methods/modes of communication are valued equally*** and can be combined in different ways.
- ***Include reference to specialist strategies*** that some children need such as communication books, iPads and assistive technology. This can be tailored to what is relevant for individual children.

Speech

Classroom strategies



- ***Give all children access to supports such as word and picture mats*** with key vocabulary so this becomes routine within the classroom. These can be used for communication purposes as well as to support written work, and can be tailored to individual need.
- ***Find out about typical speech sound development*** so you can decide whether a child you are concerned about is showing typical, delayed or unusual patterns.

Speech

Classroom strategies



- Norms for languages other than English may be difficult to access so if a child is bilingual it is recommended to speak to parents about their speech patterns in the home language(s).
- Speech sound screeners are available from a variety of sources to help adults identify difficulties. These usually involve asking the child to copy individual sounds and naming objects or actions in pictures.

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Speech

For individual children



- ***Consider sitting children with speech needs near the front of the class***. This will help adults understand them more easily and draw their attention to visual supports/cues.
- ***Ask the child's family to create an 'Important Vocabulary' list*** (e.g. with names of family, pets, places) and write down how the child pronounces these words. This could be incorporated into a Home–school Book used to share pictures and messages between staff and parents. Encourage use of the book when the child is not understood

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Speech

For individual children



- ***Spend time 'tuning in'*** to a child's particular speech patterns on a one-to-one basis.
- It's usually best to be honest when you don't understand even if this causes upset. Acknowledge feelings if a child gets frustrated when communication breaks down. ***Encourage them to persevere using strategies*** that have been practised. Younger children may benefit from visual prompt cards to remind them of strategies that help most.

Speech

For individual children



- Younger children enjoy bringing in objects/photos for a ‘show and tell’ approach, which provides the listener with context. Older children can be supported by adaptations such as using slides for a class presentation so their words are displayed as they speak.
- ***Do not insist children correct errors by repeating sounds/words back after you***, particularly during conversation. Some children cannot correct errors, so asking them could reduce confidence or cause frustration.

Speech

For individual children



- Instead of requesting repetition, ***repeat back what the child has said using the correct pronunciation***. Place slightly more emphasis on the corrected sound but avoid over-exaggerating and making it sound unnatural.
- With younger children, ***encourage symbolic sound play*** e.g. making animal noises and fun sounds to stimulate specific speech sounds that a child is not using (e.g. ‘mmm’ for food, ‘sss’ goes the snake, ‘ch-ch’ for train)

Speech

For individual children



- ***Use play activities and books*** that will help you model the same target sounds many times during a 5-to-10-minute period so they stand out to the child.
- Children with speech sound disorder may have phonological processing difficulties that impact on phonological awareness, literacy, word learning and retrieval. Developing phonological awareness skills will support some children to change their speech patterns.

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Speech

For individual children



- ***Provide regular opportunities for children to practise sound discrimination***, syllable segmentation and phoneme segmentation (e.g. clapping/tapping out syllable structure, identifying the first, middle and last sound of words).
- Speech sound difficulties can impact on expressive language. Children may not be able to use English grammar accurately until they have developed the sounds to support this e.g. marking plurals and possessives requires ability to produce ‘s’ and ‘z’.