Stammering

Classroom strategies



- Pupils who stammer may feel ***under pressure when rushing to speak e.g. before someone interrupts.***
- They often benefit from ***taking time and pausing,*** but this can be hard when the pace of everyday communication is rapid.

Stammering

Classroom strategies



- An environment that ***encourages a slower pace of communication*** will support pupils who stammer.
- The aim is not necessarily to reduce the amount they stammer but rather to **ensure they are given adequate time to speak.**

Stammering

Classroom strategies



- To reduce time pressure, ***encourage pupils to take turns*** without interrupting each other.
- Make sure pupils put their hands down when someone is speaking and ***let others finish*** before taking a turn to speak.
- Do not reinforce/reward calling out.

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Stammering

Classroom strategies



- Try to ***avoid speaking with an above average rate.*** Pausing regularly helps slow speech and create a relaxed pace of communication.
- ***Highlight the value of pausing*** and allowing thinking time by saying thinks like, “I need to think about that.”
- ***Praise pupils who take their time.*** When reading, encourage pupils to pause between phrases and at full stops.

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Stammering

Classroom strategies



- Teach pupils about communication skills through class discussions and interactive games that highlight particular skills.
- Draw attention to the importance of non-verbal communication (e.g. gesture, eye contact, facial expression). Try to reinforce the view that ***effective communication is not dependent on speech being completely fluent.***
- A special focus could be given to different skills, supported by posters, practice games and rewards.

Stammering

Classroom strategies



- Find opportunities to ***praise the communication of pupils who stammer*** as well as their other achievements.
- Comment on the content of their message and ***what made their communication effective.***
- This may ***highlight their strengths*** to peers and increase their confidence.

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Stammering

Classroom strategies



- ***Facilitate discussions about teasing and bullying*** and how to respond as pupils who stammer are at higher risk of this.
- The class discussions do not have to mention stammering as long as they help children learn strategies for coping.
- However, ***some pupils will have experienced teasing and bullying*** and may want to discuss this one-to-one with staff.

Stammering

Classroom strategies



- ***Respond to teasing/bullying promptly*** as it can increase the severity of stammering and lead to pupils opting out to try and hide their stammering.

Stammering

Classroom strategies



- ***Making reference to stammering when discussing neurodiversity*** and developmental differences creates ***opportunities to give positive messages about stammering***.
- Many adults who stammer have commented that they wish stammering had been spoken about more openly at school. Before attempting this, it is always recommended to speak to a pupil's parents and to older pupils themselves.

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Classroom strategies



The following ideas could be explored depending on a pupil's age and what they need:

- Researching known facts versus myths about stammering.
- Challenging stereotypes and finding out about famous people who stammer.
- Informing pupils that: stammering is caused by differences in how the brain controls speaking; it can be thought of as a different way of speaking from fluency but is not something that needs to be fixed or controlled.
- Watching videos developed by charities for people who stammer.
- Asking pupils if they would like to give a class talk.
- Creating and displaying posters about stammering.

Stammering

For individual children



- Ask the pupils who stammers ***how they would like people to respond*** and whether they want adaptations within different situations.
- Develop a written plan to ***communicate this to all staff/adults***.

Stammering

For individual children



Let the pupil lead in making suggestions and consider options such as:

- **Reading aloud:** If they feel uncomfortable in class, arrange for them to read in a pair or one to one instead.
- **Asking or answering a question in class:** Will they volunteer when ready or is it ok to ask them directly?
- **Answering the register/saying their name:** Allow them to put their hand up instead or use a choice of responses.
- **Oral presentations:** Deliver the presentation in a small group and work up gradually to a whole-class presentation.
- **Oral exams:** Reasonable adaptations in the form of extra time should be arranged by the school for English, and with the exam board for modern foreign language exams, such as French.
- **Drama and assemblies:** Don't assume the pupil won't want to participate as this may be an aspiration or area of talent.

Stammering

For individual children



- Aim to ***support the pupil to participate as much possible*** while remaining within their comfort zone.
- ***Revisit the plan*** to see if their confidence has increased or they need different strategies.

Stammering

For individual children



- ***Avoid finishing words or sentences*** for the pupil.
- ***Avoid giving direct advice*** (such as to slow down or take a breath) or saying anything that might suggest the pupil should control or reduce stammering. Although well meant, this can lead to increased tension, concealment of stammering, and even opting out of speaking.