

# The Link

PRIMARY



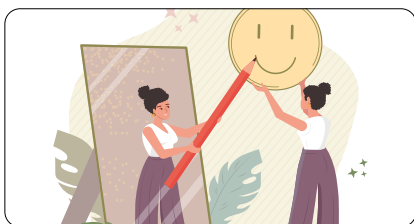
THE SPEECH & LANGUAGE MAGAZINE FOR SCHOOLS



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### ONE TA TO ANOTHER

Tips for reflecting on your practice.  
Page 3



### THINK 'HEARING'

How hearing loss impacts behaviour  
and language. Page 8



### IS STRESS IMPACTING BEHAVIOUR?

Find out how to help. Page 10



3

## One TA to another

By Claire Chambers, editor

4-5

## Learning a new word

By Alison Fowle, specialist speech and language therapist

6

## The Link Live Sessions BOOK NOW!



7

## How teachers can support SLCN in the classroom

By Natalie Strong, specialist speech and language therapist

8-9

## The importance of thinking about hearing

By Dr Sebastian Hendricks, specialist in paediatrics and audiovestibular medicine

10-11

## How stress is impacting behaviour in school and how to help

By Shahana Knight, founder and director of TPC Therapy

12-13

## DLD vision

By Kate Freeman, consultant - speech and language in education

14-15

## Ask a therapist

By Juliet Leonard, specialist speech and language therapist

16-17

## The Link Community News

18-19

## Adaptive teaching

By Yin Collighan, specialist speech and language therapist



## Editor's Letter

Reflect, reset, restart – a mantra I am endeavoring to embrace. There is nothing quite like this time of year to think about what you have achieved so far and what you need to do to build on your successes.

On page 3, our regular **One TA to another** article looks at reflection and provides some tips for support staff to hone on the fantastic work they already do.

We know that the number of children with challenging behaviour is on the increase. The fabulous **Shahana Knight, from TPC Therapy**, defines what happens to a child's body when they are feeling stressed and overwhelmed and how responding to a child with 'connection' can make all the difference. See page 10 for her practical ways to make a positive impact.

In our **Link Community News** feature, we offer three different approaches that might also help you to support pupils who are having difficulty regulating their emotions - see page 17.

You may be aware of the recent publication of **"A Vision for Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) for the UK"** which outlines a comprehensive plan for addressing the challenges faced by individuals with DLD. On page 12, **Kate Freeman**,

**consultant - speech and language in education** explains the 5 key ambitions of the document and how Speech & Language Link supports this work.

Finally, we are thrilled to have received an article from Great Ormond Street Hospital's esteemed audiovestibular specialist, **Dr. Sebastian Hendricks**, who has written a fascinating case study for us on the challenges children face with a hearing impairment and how schools can help. Page 8

Do get in touch to share your stories and your ideas about supporting SLCN. Please drop me an email at: [claire.chambers@speechlink.co.uk](mailto:claire.chambers@speechlink.co.uk)

Have a great term!

Best wishes,

Claire Chambers

*Editor, The Link  
Speech & Language Link,  
award-winning support for SLCN*



## GIVEAWAY!

We love our new Speech & Language Link travel mugs – perfect for keeping that cuppa hot (and safe) around the school while letting all who see it know that you are a communication champion! We have four mugs to giveaway – see page 16 for more details.

[www.speechandlanguage.info](http://www.speechandlanguage.info)

Contact our Speech and Language Help Desk  
at: [helpdesk@speechlink.co.uk](mailto:helpdesk@speechlink.co.uk)  
or phone 0333 577 0784



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# One TA to another

## Reflecting on Interventions

By **Claire Chambers**, editor – The Link & former HLTA and NHS speech and language therapy assistant

We want to be outstanding – we want to be dynamic and unlock the learning potential of every pupil we work with, we want to do it in a different way, a way that a child will remember forever and yes, remember us too.

Sometimes though, we must weigh up whether the learning objective really needed all that time and energy, resource-making and dynamism – did the outcome warrant the effort? Trying to be dynamic all the time can be exhausting and can also take you off task. We want our interventions to be exciting and imaginative but (and I say this from painful experience) it doesn't always mean the learning objectives are met. What can help us achieve both?

Reflection is thinking about what happened and working out what might need to change next time. It might just be to remind yourself of the **DISASTER** of using papier mâché to support the learning of body parts (eek!) or that finger puppets can lead to black eyes and on-mass crying! But it's also about determining whether objectives were met and what impact the intervention had. (Just to be clear – objectives were not met in those sessions!)

Reflection is also about finding the positives. Some days the positives (and there are always some) can be lost in the detritus of the school day. We need to be mindful of when things have gone well and the factors that contributed to that success. Perhaps the creativity of the session was exciting and motivating for the children?

If your group achieves their learning objective in a meaningful and memorable way, then your session was a success.



### Here are some ideas to try in your interventions

- 👍 **Prepare:**
  - Have a clear objective for the activity
  - Chunk information
  - Provide visual support
  - Scaffold answers
  - Give pupils time (10 second rule)
- 👍 **Record:** how many times have you thought, "That's a great idea?" or, "Next time I'll do this?" Leave yourself a voice note – loads quicker than trying to write down what you mean
- 👍 **Talk and share:** the staff room is a great place to discuss a tricky session with your colleagues. They will understand, will laugh (and cry) with you and will be able to call on their own experiences to help you move forward
- 👍 **Think ahead:** if it went well – do it again, if it didn't go so well, be kind to yourself, identify where it fell down and why, and think about a different approach for next time

Whether you're brand new to the TA game or are a seasoned pro, we all need to take the time to reflect and don't forget - we won't become great practitioners if we don't have a few papier mâché stories to tell!

A more formal reflection tool for teaching assistants has been produced by the EEF which you may find useful: <https://shorturl.at/hkNS9>

Get in touch and share how you reflect on your practice – we'd love to hear some of your stories (successful or not)!

Remember that for those of you who subscribe to **Speech Link** or **Language Link**, TAs are given access to a wealth of fully planned interventions including session plans, printable resources and tracking sheets which measure the impact of the sessions.



# Learning a NEW word



By **Alison Fowle**,  
specialist speech and language therapist

My daughter and I have been reading a book called 'The Snow Spider' at bedtime over the last few weeks. The book was given to her as a gift, and if I'm honest, I was a bit dubious about it. I hadn't heard of the author, Jenny Nimmo, and it's not a book I would have picked up in a bookshop. I quite literally judged the book by its rather dull cover. It turns out I was wrong to be sceptical. It's a magical little tale that we both thoroughly enjoyed.

The book is a step up from others we've read together, and it took a little while for my daughter to get used to the lack of pictures and the more complex language. The book is probably better suited to slightly older readers, and some of the vocabulary in it was beyond what I would have expected her to know at 6 years old. She stopped me now and again to check what words meant. One of the words we stopped to discuss was 'diffidently'. She seemed genuinely surprised when I said that I wasn't sure what this word meant either and appeared to have made the assumption that, as an adult, my word learning days are over: "Surely you know ALL THE WORDS by now??" I laughed at this and suggested that we look the word up and learn it together. We googled a definition and had a go putting the word in a sentence. We then moved on, eager to finish the chapter.

After saying goodnight, I went down to my husband, and we chuckled together about the assumption that adults knew all the words in the English language. He asked what the word was that had prompted the conversation...

I couldn't remember it! The word 'diffidently' and its definition hadn't made the transfer from my short-term memory into my long-term store. I hadn't even retained it for 10 minutes. My attempt to learn a new word had failed! I was so

annoyed with myself for forgetting it that I ended up sneaking back into my daughter's bedroom when she was asleep to get the book and find the word again.

Vocabulary knowledge is key to academic attainment, but word learning continues throughout our lifetime. For example, starting a new job or taking up a new hobby will likely result in you being exposed to a whole new set of words that you hadn't previously encountered. We all need to develop good strategies to support word learning and the earlier we introduce these strategies to children the better. Here are some ideas around how you can support your students to learn new words well:



Finally, if like me you didn't know the word *diffidently*, let's make that your new word of the day. Here's some information to help you learn this word.

Diff-i-dent-ly

The word is **Diffidently**

**Type of word:** adverb.

**Number of syllables:** 4

**Definition:** A way that shows lack of confidence in one's own ability, worth or fitness; timidly or shyly.

**Synonyms:** bashful, coy, modest, shy

**In a sentence:**

The context in which I came across this word in 'The Snow Spider':

*'I can always run her home if', his father hesitated and then added diffidently, 'if she wants to come.'*

**Alternative example sentence:**

*He saw her approach rather diffidently, trying to summon up her courage, smiling an uncertain smile.*

**What will you do to remember this word in 10 minutes... tomorrow... next week?**

**Be explicit** about what new words you are expecting children to learn during the topic and state the key words for the lesson as part of the learning objective. Target these key words specifically and in a structured way.

**Record information visually.** Word webs are a great way to map out key semantic (meaning) and phonic (sound) information about a word. They can also be kept as a record of the discussion enabling you to review and add new information each time the word is reviewed. E.g., you might add another example sentence where the word is used in a different context.

**Repeat and review.** As demonstrated with my attempt to learn 'diffidently', we need to hear new words in lots of different contexts and to link them to words we already know in order to shift them into our long-term memory. To support this, build in lots of opportunities to review and discuss key vocabulary. For example, you could have a word box into which you put key words you've learned so far this term, with a view to pulling one out to discuss if you ever have a spare 5 minutes (e.g., whilst waiting for the start of assembly or lunch break).

**Be honest.** I'm sure that, like my daughter, many children will assume that the significant adults in their lives (particularly their teachers) don't need to learn any new words as they know them all already! Be honest when you're not sure what a word means and learn the word together. Did you learn a new word at the weekend? Share this with your students. Did any of them know it already?

# LinkLive

## SESSIONS

**\*FREE**  
Speech Link and Language Link subscribing schools get free tickets – see your homepage for details.



### DATE

Thursday 14th March 2024

### TIME

15:30 – 17:30

### VENUE

Online

### FOCUS

Language for accessing the whole curriculum

### PRESENTERS

Kate Freeman, consultant - speech and language in education

Karen McGuigan, founder of The Maths for Life Programme

### WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

SENCOs, teachers, ECTs and support staff in primary settings

### COST

£25+VAT per ticket

**20%**  
DISCOUNT  
FOR THE LINK  
MAGAZINE  
READERS\*

In November we hosted the first, new format Link Live Sessions and were delighted that so many of you were able to attend the 90-minute online twilight session.

Join us in March for the next in The Link Live Session series.



**Kate Freeman**

Consultant speech and language in education

Kate Freeman is a highly experienced and driven Speech and Language Therapist, author and Consultant working with Speech & Language Link and other organisations. Her specialist work includes with the Ministry of Justice and Intermediary Co-operative.

Kate works to deliver training, enable joint working and develop staff confidence in supporting and identifying pupils with SEND and SLCN.

#### Key takeaways

Participants will have the opportunity to:

1. Consider how vocabulary learning supports knowledge and skills development across the whole curriculum.
2. Hear key research which demonstrates how new words are learnt and retrieved.
3. Consider strategies for you to use in the classroom to support this.



**Karen McGuigan**

Founder of The Maths for Life Programme



Karen McGuigan is an education consultant with a goal to improve the image and attainment levels in maths for everyone. She set up The Maths Mum® in 2018 with the aim of 'Helping parents help their children'. Inspired by her middle son Lance, who has Down syndrome, she began the development of the Maths for Life programme in 2019.

#### Key takeaways

1. An understanding of how language is the fundamental building block for mathematical reasoning.
2. Exploring the language development in the pre-number skills of maths.
3. Looking at the educators' language when supporting ALL children with maths learning.



**BOOK NOW:** [speechandlanguage.info/linklive](https://speechandlanguage.info/linklive)

\* Use code: TLLP0324TLM at checkout and pay just £20+VAT per ticket (normal price £25+VAT)

# Supporting teachers to develop speech, language and communication skills in the classroom

By **Natalie Strong**, specialist speech and language therapist



To build strong foundations for learning, teachers must consider how their pupils learn and develop knowledge and skills.

All pupils, not only those with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), benefit from the use of evidence-based SLCN strategies in the classroom. Evidence shows that high-quality teaching improves both pupil attainment and outcomes and this is why Speech & Language Link places so much importance on the universal implementation of their **High Quality Teaching Strategies**.

## How do Speech Link and Language Link support teachers?

Teachers at subscribing schools can log on to their school's homepage and view individual pupils' assessment results and difficulties, and an overview of the needs of the whole class. This can help facilitate how to focus and adapt their teaching - especially useful for ECTs. Additionally available are numerous printable resources, designed to support learners of all abilities and develop communication friendly classrooms and year-round access to our Speech & Language Link Help Desk.

Speech & Language Link offers the following additional support and resources for teachers at subscribing schools, each accompanied by bite-sized video guides and PDFs for using them effectively:

**FREE access** to The Link Live Sessions  
Termly presentations and Q&A with speech & language specialists.

(usually £25+VAT per ticket).



**INFANT LANGUAGE LINK (4-8 YEARS)**

**JUNIOR LANGUAGE LINK (7-11 YEARS)**

**High Quality Teaching Strategies** and resources to support them, for use with all pupils in the classroom.

**Printable, evidence-based resources** (by our team of speech and language therapists) include sentence and story planners, visual timetables, Help Me cards and Question Cue cards.

**Teacher Engagement Ratings** completed before and after interventions, provide a functional measure of the impact interventions have on a child's performance in the classroom.

**Teacher Guidance Notes** outline the skills and vocabulary covered in the interventions and offer fully resourced consolidation and 'next-steps' extension classroom activities.



**SPEECH LINK (4-8 YEARS)**



**Age-specific speech sound development charts** and printable resources such as Sound Cards, phonics and rhyme games.

**Listening Games** designed to develop listening skills in the classroom.

**The Phonological Awareness Group** is a fully resourced whole-class programme to help pupils recognise and develop speech sounds - an important foundation for phonics and literacy skills.

**Speech Intelligibility Ratings** completed by teachers before and after intervention to measure impact.

**Two video-based training modules** explaining speech sound development and how to support it.

**Teachers, is your school a Speech Link or Language Link subscriber? If so, speak to your SENCo and ask them to give you access to the packages.**

Don't have a Speech Link or Language Link subscription? Ask your SENCo to take a two-week FREE trial to see what they're missing: [speechandlanguage.info/trial](https://speechandlanguage.info/trial)

# The Importance of thinking about HEARING

“They heard the music and the laughter. They heard the world.”

By **Dr Sebastian Hendricks**, specialist in paediatrics and audiovestibular medicine



“Jordan was a happy and friendly child who loved to learn new things and play with their friends, but something changed when Jordan was four years old. They started to have trouble paying attention, sitting still, and following instructions. Jordan would often daydream, get frustrated easily, and shout at people; sometimes hitting or biting others. Their parents and teachers thought Jordan might have a problem, such as ADHD or autism, but they didn’t know what to do. They tried talking to Jordan, they tried using discipline, but Jordan didn’t seem to understand or care or want help.

The school entry hearing screening team showed up at school to check on all the children’s hearing and, following the test, suspected that Jordan might have a hearing problem. Jordan was referred to the local paediatric audiology team, who confirmed that they had a conductive hearing loss meaning that the sound waves could not reach Jordan’s inner ear. Due to fluid in their middle ear, everything sound muffled and distorted, and it had affected their speech and language development. The audiology team explained that Jordan needed to have ventilation tubes inserted in their ears, which would drain the fluid and restore their hearing, but the waiting time for this procedure was 4-6 months. Not to delay Jordan’s treatment, the audiologists offered Jordan a bone conduction hearing aid: a device that bypasses the middle ear and sends the sound vibrations directly to the inner ear through the skull.

They fitted Jordan with the hearing aid and turned it on. Immediately Jordan heard sounds they hadn’t heard for a very long time in that way. It was their own voice. Jordan was amazed and delighted as

they also heard the voices of their parents and the audiology team. It was too much, and Jordan took the device off again. Later, they tried again and outside they heard the sounds of the birds and the cars in the distance. They heard the music and the laughter. They heard the world.

Jordan wore the hearing aid every day and everyone noticed a big difference. Jordan could hear what people were saying and respond. Jordan could follow the instructions and do the tasks. Jordan could join the conversations and make jokes. Jordan was back to being the happy and friendly child they used to be. They were grateful to the school entry hearing screening team and the audiology team for finding out their problem and helping them.

Jordan’s parents had always wondered why Jordan’s 11-year-old sibling Auden was so shy and quiet. The teachers often commented that Auden would hardly participate in lessons and sometimes give very strange answers that were missing the point.

The parents decided to take Auden for a hearing test and discovered

that Auden must have developed a permanent hearing loss soon after birth that had slowly worsened over the next 10 years. After having been given hearing aids, the true journey for Auden began, as only then Auden noticed what they were unable to hear, what they missed all those years and why learning in class was so difficult.

Children and young people can present in so many ways if they cannot hear. Some have only difficulties with some voices and not others. So, a very low threshold is helpful when suggesting a hearing assessment or hearing check for a child. Even if hearing was normal last week, a cold can still make it difficult tomorrow. Even permanent hearing losses can develop and progress over time.

## For the classroom:

- 1 A microphone for the teacher and speakers at the back of the classroom help pupils to understand better and enable a teacher’s voice to stay quieter. Shouting does not help anyone with hearing problems
- 2 Bare glass or concrete walls generate echoes (increase reverberation) and degrade the sound information
- 3 Most people can lip read to some extent, being able to clearly see a teacher’s face when they are talking helps
- 4 Avoid asking someone to listen and write at the same time - even if they wear hearing aids



Please be curious and think HEARING. Teachers can make such a positive difference to children with hearing difficulties.

If you have a school entry hearing screen team coming, please help them to find a quiet room for testing and support them in seeing all children.

#### More help and resources:

- The local sensory impairment team and Teachers of the Deaf (ToDs) from the local authority
- The Ewing Foundation:  
Ewing Foundation  
([ewing-foundation.org.uk](http://ewing-foundation.org.uk))  
offers help with classroom acoustics and education
- Connevans School Soundfield  
([www.connevans.co.uk/catalogue/12/School-Soundfield](http://www.connevans.co.uk/catalogue/12/School-Soundfield))
- The National Deaf Children Society:  
*Improving listening conditions*  
*Reducing background noise*  
([ndcs.org.uk](http://ndcs.org.uk))

**Dr Sebastian Hendricks** is a consultant in paediatric audiology at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children & Medical Director (Hearing) of Thomson Screening. Sebastian has a dual accreditation as a specialist in paediatrics and audiology.

Thomson Screening's **SchoolScreener** software is used in over 5,000 schools by NHS (non-clinical staff) screening KS1 children's hearing and vision. A variant is now available for schools' own use (from age 7) to assess whether an undetected hearing or vision deficit may be affecting progress or behaviour; **SchoolScreenerforSchools** includes automated reporting for SLT, parents and for Ofsted inspections:  
[info@schoolscreener.com](mailto:info@schoolscreener.com)

#### Our speech and language therapy team say:

Children with hearing loss are at risk for having difficulties with:

- language acquisition, with understanding of vocabulary and concepts a particular weakness
- speech sound development
- socialising with others
- attention and concentration.

If you are concerned about a child's speech, language or communication skills, arranging a hearing screen to rule out hearing loss needs to be high on your to-do list.

# HOW STRESS

is impacting behaviour in school and how to help



By **Shahana Knight**,  
founder and director of TPC Therapy

The number of children struggling with their behaviour has risen in primary schools in recent years, with more children shouting and arguing, destroying property and running away. Some children are struggling with lack of self-belief, confidence and social skills and we are seeing more children suffering with anxiety and anxiety-based absence. These behaviours have increased since Covid-19 and we can see that the impact of such a difficult time is likely to be a contributing factor.

Another factor might be the increasing number of children who are struggling with adversity and trauma. Things like abuse, neglect and loss, or living with financial pressures, depression and alcoholism, should also be considered when addressing behaviour.

Additionally, we must recognise the amount of stress our fast-paced lives place on children: going to breakfast club, followed by a full day of school and then on to after school clubs and, for many, additional clubs during the week too!

When they are not busy, children often opt to play on devices and although this is a common pastime today, prolonged use of technology can also increase stress levels. This is due to the impact of the screen itself, the constant fast-paced stimulus and the content they are playing. If you spend four hours killing zombies, trying to win races, or fighting baddies then you are

more likely to feel overwhelmed and anxious when you stop. In fact, children are having to use their survival part of the brain when playing on games like this, which means it is much more difficult for them to calm down and dispel the stress hormone afterwards.

When our bodies are stressed and overwhelmed, it has a direct impact on our brains' ability to think rationally, manage emotions, problem solve, have empathy for others, reflect on situations and remember and recall information properly - all skills we expect from children in school.

These skills are rooted in our rational thinking part of the brain. Yet our bodies respond to stress with survival responses such as fight, flight or freeze, and that rational part shuts off. This explains why many of our children are angry, aggressive and argumentative (fight mode), or running off and avoiding school and work (flight mode).

We must consider whether the increase in stress and pressure is having a direct impact on children's behaviour and recognise that many are not coming into school ready to learn. Instead, they are in a state of survival which often leaves them struggling to manage lower-level challenges, such as falling out with a friend or struggling to do their work.

When a child is responding with their survival part of the brain, they are often being led by their feelings. As many children do not know how

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We must ask ourselves here, does it make sense to tell them off for struggling? Or is it our job as adults to help?

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to make sense of them, or manage them, they respond with fight, flight or freeze as a way of coping.

It is important to recognise that this is a developmentally appropriate response and children need guidance from caring adults to begin to learn how to respond differently and shift towards the rational, thinking part of the brain. They need us to help them make sense of their feelings, understand how that feeling has impacted their behaviour and then be taught how to manage it.

When we are faced with a child who is displaying challenging behaviours, we must shift our thinking from "this child is choosing to misbehave" to "this child needs my help." Maybe a pupil is frustrated, overwhelmed, and feeling unheard, and is so consumed by their feelings that they have flipped into fight mode and are unable to control responses well. We must ask ourselves here, does it make sense to tell them off for struggling? Or is it our job as adults to help?

Responding to a child with connection, rather than disconnection, makes all the difference and that can often start with tweaking your initial response.





### 1 Focus on feelings

Rather than focusing on the behaviour, try focusing on the feeling first. Instead of, "Why are you sat outside the classroom?" try, "You are feeling overwhelmed, and it's hard to be in the classroom right now..." or "It is difficult when things are hard..." rather than, "Come on Jack, answer the next question." Step back, look at their behaviour and the situation and think about what that feeling might be, then tell them so they have insight and can develop their emotional intelligence. You can then follow this with a prompt or guidance, but connecting with feelings first will help the child feel validated and safe and will reduce their feelings of stress, helping them access their rational thinking skills.

### 2 Help them to regulate

If a child is angry and overwhelmed, they will not be able to calm down on their own. They will need help from an adult to model regulation and give them the tools they need to manage their emotions. Can they go for a walk, have a drink of water, have 5 minutes in a calm room, do some sketching or listen to music? These are not rewards but are tools to help them manage their emotional state and learn to calm down. Once calm, they are more likely to accept the consequence, make amends or re-engage because their brain is no longer feeling attacked.

These two small tweaks can help a child feel emotionally safe which improves behaviour and develops their emotional intelligence at the same time. Behaviour has always been, and will continue to be, a challenge in schools. It is hard work being a child and us adults need to be there to help guide and teach them.



TPC is a mental health service specialising in childhood trauma and behaviour. We help and support you in tangible, practical ways that make a significant impact.

[info@tpctherapy.co.uk](mailto:info@tpctherapy.co.uk) [www.tpctherapy.co.uk](http://www.tpctherapy.co.uk)

# “A Vision for Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) for the UK”



By **Kate Freeman**, consultant, speech and language – in education

October 2023 saw the publishing of an important document highlighting months of work involving a key partnership of organisations. The partnership worked with adults and young people with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD), their families and other professionals, to articulate what those with DLD would like their futures to look like and how to ensure this happens.

The document entitled “A Vision for Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) for the UK” outlines a comprehensive plan for addressing the challenges faced by individuals with DLD. The document emphasises five key ambitions:

## The ambitions

### 1 Raising Awareness of DLD:

The first ambition aims for widespread awareness of DLD. Despite international campaigns, such as DLD awareness day, and the work of RADLD (Raising

Awareness of DLD), awareness among education and health professionals remains low. This leads to individuals with DLD being misunderstood. Increased awareness is seen as crucial to improving services, policies, research, and support, ultimately enhancing the daily lives of those with DLD.

### 2 Accessible Support:

The second ambition focuses on ensuring individuals with DLD can access the right support at the right time. Many individuals and organisations report long waiting

lists and insufficient interim support from speech and language therapy services, often due to funding and capacity issues.

The vision calls for a fair and accessible system for all, regardless of geographical location or educational level. The absence of DLD-specific support services for adults by the NHS is highlighted, with easier access to support deemed essential for better life outcomes and reduced mental health impacts.



Massoud's behaviour remarkably improved as he was beginning to be understood.



Before, Aaliyah didn't know why she was finding it so hard compared to the others in the class - now she understands why.

Speech & Language Link success stories



### 3 Early Diagnosis:

The third ambition emphasises the importance of early diagnosis: Individuals with DLD often face challenges due to delayed diagnosis, with some receiving disciplinary action in the workplace or exclusion from school, instead of the support they deserve. The vision advocates for simplifying the diagnostic process, sharing good practice, and addressing the difficulties parents face in obtaining a timely NHS diagnosis.

Early diagnosis is viewed as transformative, providing self-awareness and facilitating understanding and adjustments by others.

### 4 Inclusive Schools and Workplaces:

The fourth ambition focuses on enabling schools and workplaces to become more inclusive for individuals with DLD. Many young people report feeling overwhelmed in classrooms due to complex language use, with adults with DLD struggling in workplaces where managers and colleagues are often unaware of DLD.

The vision suggests simple and low-cost changes, such as visual aids and inclusive job application processes, to create more supportive environments.

### 5 Independence:

The fifth ambition spotlights the importance of ensuring individuals with DLD go on to lead independent lives. This includes acquiring life skills for adulthood and eliminating the association between DLD and mental health issues in adulthood, through ensuring adequate support during education and childhood.

The vision acknowledges that DLD affects educational outcomes, employment rates, and mental health, emphasising the need for services to address DLD throughout an individual's lifespan.

## HOW SPEECH & LANGUAGE LINK SUPPORTS THIS WORK

Speech & Language Link has produced a press release highlighting how much our existing work ties into these 5 ambitions (<https://shorturl.at/gwALW>)

We certainly welcome the work that has taken place developing and articulating this vision and we will continue to contribute to achieving the five ambitions.

Each year, UK schools carry out 245,000 Speech & Language Link assessments. Using these screening tools, schools can identify pupils who they can support directly and those who would be best supported by a speech and language therapist. Many of the latter group have DLD.

Speech & Language Link offers

school-delivered tools and interventions to help ensure that pupils with DLD can access the right support at the right time. One of the mechanisms for achieving this is ensuring that speech and language therapy services are not overwhelmed by supporting children and young people whose needs can be managed in schools.

#### An action plan

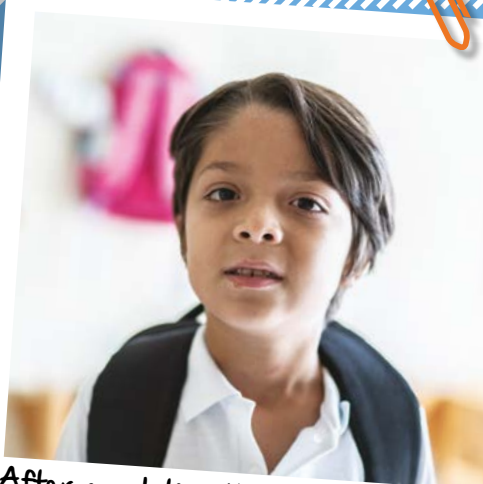
"A Vision for Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) for the UK" concludes by outlining the actions that organisations and

individuals can take to achieve the vision. This includes strategic awareness plans, support for speech and language therapists, early diagnosis initiatives, creating guides for schools and workplaces, and understanding the needs of individuals with DLD and their families.

The overall goal is to create a national strategy driven by the vision to improve outcomes for people with DLD and benefit society as a whole. You can read the vision by visiting <https://tinyurl.com/9nzz7eks>

We look forward to being part of this evolving work.

Speech &  
LanguageLink



After completing the interventions, Isaac started listening and wanting to know things.



Lucy can explain things more clearly and provide reasons - and her confidence has increased.

Speech &  
Language  
Link success  
stories

# ASK A Therapist



By **Juliet Leonard**,  
specialist speech and  
language therapist

**Q** No space, no time, no budget....so how can we support our children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)?

**A**

Balancing the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities against the ever-present demands on resourcing and finances is a conundrum which plagues most primary schools.

Unfortunately, there is no 'silver bullet'; no surefire way of making the books balance whilst meeting the needs of your children. There are, however, many low cost (or even no cost) ways that we can all use to support children with SLCN. Here are a few...

## 1 Embrace the whole school approach

Fostering an environment where communication is supported and embraced is the key to sharing good practice and providing children with the right conditions for talking, listening, and learning to flourish. This can take many forms, but a few examples are:

- Schools which embrace a 'pens down talking time' (e.g., no pens day every Wednesday)
- Schools which utilise resources that promote talking at less structured times of the day (break time, lunch time, in the playground)
- Schools that promote conversations between parents and their children
- Schools where everyone is on board with the communication vision – children, teachers, parents and carers, the office staff and the site team

New subscribers to our Infant and Junior Language Link packages receive a 'Spread the Word' pack, which is crammed with posters, activities and resources to do just this.



"If only I had a resource for this"



"Fostering an environment where communication is supported and embraced is the key"

## 2 Invest in your resource bank to save time later

There are many times, when working with a child, that I have thought "If only I had a resource for this". Resources are a vital thread for supporting children with SLCN. If you create something or source something that works, don't just save it in your own resource bank, share with your colleagues too.

Luckily for our Speech & Language Link subscribers, alongside our fully

resourced intervention groups, is an immense bank of 'Classroom Resources' which can be used throughout the school.

A universal set of resources, used throughout the school, provides a clear message to all: we care about communication, and we're all on board!

## 3 Build independence and multiply the result

'Onboarding' the wider school community significantly increases the impact of communication support in your school. As children move into key stage 2, they become more able to be part of the vision themselves. Every child with a communication need can build their own 'toolkit' of strategies and supports that will help them throughout their lives.

### These might be:

- A blank task management board, that a staff member helps a child to complete, to break down what they have been asked to do
- Cards, wording or strategies to help when they haven't understood
- A system to help them to remember the most important bits of information when listening to a story or instruction

### 4 Use what makes you unique

Town or country, large or small, your school and its community are unique. Perhaps you have fantastic outdoor spaces that can be enriched with communication strategies, or maybe you have access to amazing city buildings nearby. You may have wide range of different languages spoken, or perhaps a larger number of children with SEND. Your school community has the ingredients to be communication champions.

- Use the knowledge of children in a large, diverse school to learn vocabulary related to religion, culture, and diversity
- Large grounds lend themselves well to word walks whilst smaller playgrounds might have walls that can be used for words
- Small village schools often have great community links, to extend communication out into the community

We'd love to hear how your school supports SLCN. Please email the editor with your tips and ideas and we will feature them in the next issue.

[claire.chambers@speechlink.co.uk](mailto:claire.chambers@speechlink.co.uk)

Speech & Language Link

Speech Link and Language Link subscribers: Look no further! Our website is packed with classroom resources and fully resourced interventions.

Free trials are available for schools who don't currently subscribe – just contact our Speech & Language Link Help Desk for further information.



## TEACHERS AND TAs PRIZE DRAW!



We have FOUR limited edition Speech & Language Link travel mugs to give away, but we need your help!

We have some very exciting news for those who work with young learners (aged 3-5 years). Speech & Language Link are in the midst of creating Little Link - a new language package for EYFS.

We are pulling together innovative ideas and tested strategies and would like your expertise to make it truly special. We are particularly interested in your strategies for: **Sustaining Engagement** and **Introducing Visual Prompts** to help us shape this package.

If you would like to take part AND be entered into our prize draw to win one of our exclusive travel mugs, then please use the QR code to access the short form.



Thank you.

## OUT AND ABOUT

We have a busy event schedule this term and are particularly excited that our specialist SaLT, Yin Collighan – will be presenting at the SENSible SENCo event in February. Please do come and say hi if you can make it to any of the events.

We did it again...



WE are BETT Award Finalists in THREE categories!

- Speech & Language Link for Company of the Year
- Infant Language Link for Assessment, planning, and progress monitoring
- Secondary Language Link for SEND



We also received TWO highly commended Highly Commended badges in the Teach Primary Awards for:

- The Link Live 2023 for CPD
- Junior Language Link for SEN



And finally

- Secondary Language Link is a finalist in the Teach Secondary Awards

## Dates for your diary

February 9th **SENSIBLE24** conference from The SENSible SENCo: Nottingham (with our very own therapist Yin Collighan)

February 27th **Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead 2024 SEND Conference**

March 1st & 2nd **Childcare & Education Expo: London**

March 14th **Link Live Sessions Primary: online** (FREE for Speech & Language Link subscribing schools)

March 16th **National Pupil Premium Conference: Birmingham**

March 21st **Link Live Sessions Secondary: online** (FREE for schools subscribing to Secondary Language Link)

April 27th **NAPLIC conference 2024: Birmingham**







## ARE YOU INTERESTED IN JOINING A CONTENT AND KNOWLEDGE-SHARING HUB FOR SEND PRACTITIONERS?



The SEND Network provides a trusted space for like-minded professionals to connect, exchange ideas and access best practice content to support their day-to-day roles.

The community, run by the team behind the Tes SEND Show, launched last October and has grown to over 2,500 members. The SEND Network team is delighted with the growth and encourages other SEND practitioners to join and benefit from the expertise on offer.

Discussion rooms allow for conversations between members, so you share experiences, ask questions and offer support to peers.

The content on the network spans from early years to young adults, covering the four broad areas of need. You can dive into a variety of resources, including short videos, CPD-accredited seminars, downloadable PDFs, or articles on topical issues.

The SEND Network Podcast launched earlier this year and has seen brilliant episodes from subject matter experts including Dr. Susie Nyman, Kate Browning and Gary Aubin. Watch this space for more to come in the new year.

Signing up for the SEND Network is completely free, so don't miss out on this opportunity to interact with your peers and access expert resources to support your work.

To join, visit: [send-network.co.uk/](https://send-network.co.uk/) to get started.

## HOW DO YOU MANAGE MELTDOWNS IN YOUR SCHOOL?

We'd love to hear your suggestions. Here are three different styles of support that might be helpful.

### ON SOCIAL MEDIA



Dr Samantha Weld-Blundell, founder of **The Little Psychology Company** and Link Live presenter, has some fantastic quick tips for supporting anxiety and stress on her TikTok – topics include:

- The stress response system
- Behaviour is Communication
- Helping to Soothe anxiety

Check out these and over 100 short how-to videos at:

[www.tiktok.com/@drsamanthaweldblundell](https://www.tiktok.com/@drsamanthaweldblundell)

### AT AN EXHIBITION



We met Liam Murphy; co-founder of Stix Mindfulness at the TES SEND show in October. Liam introduced us to his Mindfulness Remotes and App.

“Teachers can identify which of their pupils are struggling with their emotions currently, and then deploy the Stix in a calm corner or sensory room. This intervention offers children a respite, aiming to aid relaxation and potentially enhance their well-being.

The Stix Remotes use audio and sensory feedback to guide kids through activities that teach mental health coping strategies that children enjoy playing.”

Find out more at: [www.stixmindfulness.co.uk](https://www.stixmindfulness.co.uk)

### ONLINE



Regular Link magazine contributor, **occupational therapist, Kim Griffin** has a wealth of ideas for using sensory supports along with strategies, blogs and case studies.

Kim also provides **Sensory Training** – with level 1 (1 hour) completely free.

Find out more here: <https://rb.gy/u22tts>

# Adaptive Teaching & SLCN

By **Yin Collighan**,  
specialist speech and language therapist



There is a change in approach with how we support children in the classroom. Gone are the days when differentiation was considered best practice, and here heralds a new dawn of adaptive teaching. As said within a recent conference I went to: "Differentiation started with the best intentions – it was never meant to be what it became. It seems we created a monster." And what a monster it was, a 30-headed one, with a plethora of various worksheets, multiple sets of resources within the same class, so much work and preparation that even the most organised teacher felt like they were running around frantically, pacifying the mayhem by turning the whole shebang into a box-ticking exercise.

Adaptive teaching is the idea that all pupils, no matter their ability, should be involved and engaged in the same learning, helping to build a community where expectations are high, pupils feel included and they learn together. Evidence supports the benefits of inclusive education to academic achievement and social skill development.

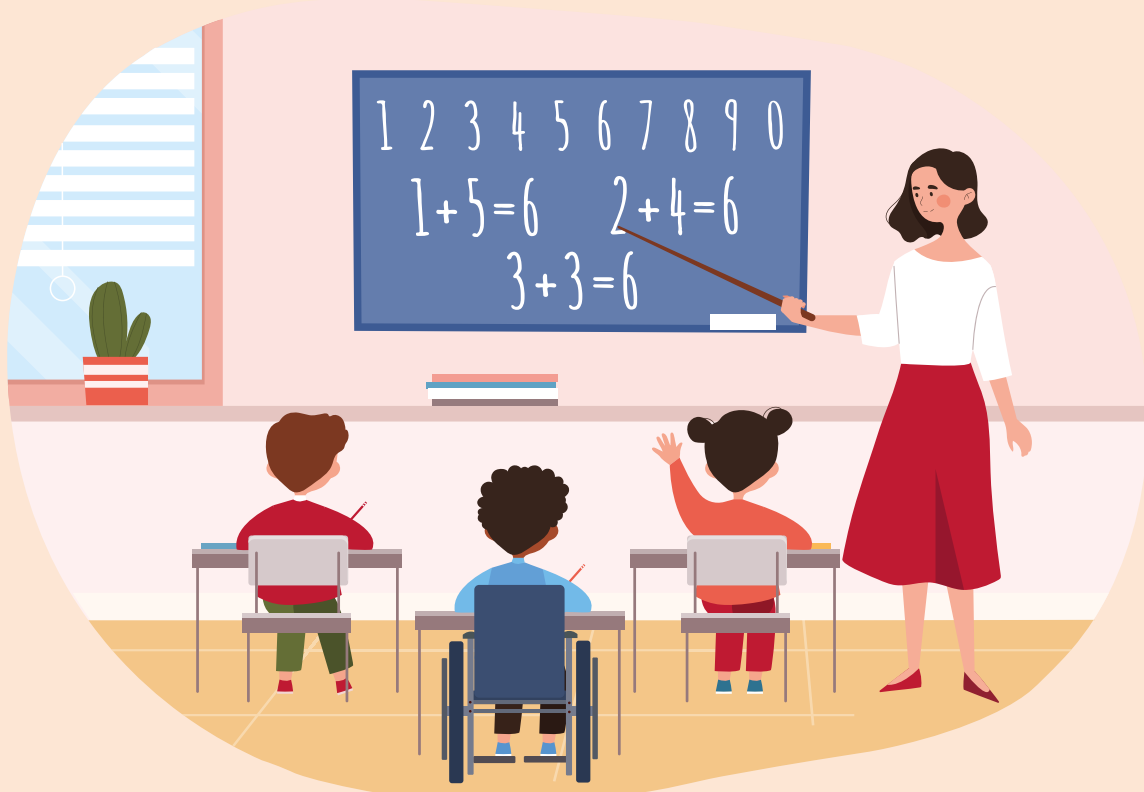
Thus, the focus is on accommodation rather than differences. Certainly this

is vital for our vast population of students with SLCN, of which there has been a whopping 42% increase since the 2015/16 school year.\* The ambitious 90% literacy and numeracy targets, as outlined in the Opportunity for All White Paper, won't be reached without the correct support for a child to speak and understand verbal language at an age-appropriate level.

So in line with the 'Teachers' Standards', adaptive teaching is

fluid, tailored and responsive to all. It should accommodate, not exclude, and should "meet individual needs without creating unnecessary workload". Taking this into account, alongside the overwhelming prevalence of SLCN, it is therefore apt that we should focus on transient, flexible communication that can be easily adapted to support our pupils to access the curriculum. What I mean here is by using spoken language.

And where better to start than to look at language strategies. We can adapt and shape our language to scaffold learning, to promote understanding of topic matters. The four core strategies are the backbone of communication-related high quality teaching strategies. And they are easy to remember with the acronym: BECK (remember the 90's singer?)





# 4 core strategies

## **B** = Break it Down

Sometimes we find ourselves talking in long sentences, which even as an adult listener is hard to take in, in one go. These can certainly be overwhelming for many children, especially those whose minds wander, have difficulties moving from one activity to the next or struggle to hold and process information. Children benefit from verbal information being broken down, so explain tasks using short simple sentences and give instructions in manageable bite-sized chunks. For those who struggle to provide a clear narrative when talking, provide prompt questions to support them to break down what they want to say and provide a coherent structure to what they are saying.

## **E** = Explain it Clearly

Rushing through an explanation, because – blimey, there isn't much time left before lunch and the pupils look like they're flagging – can be counterproductive. Believe me, the feeling you get when looking back at those 30 blank faces is really not worth it. It's quality first teaching for a reason! When charting less familiar territory, we shouldn't teach to memorise, rather reach for deeper, ingrained understanding. Be explicit with those tricky to understand terms (new vocabulary, idioms and metaphors). If you say it, explain it. Link the information with children's past experiences, without forgetting to consider some students may have limited experiences outside of school. This is where your knowledge of those you teach becomes a useful inroad.

## **C** = Check As You Go

"Class, do you understand?" Class: "Yes!" Cue - group of children all doing different tasks. This is not the best kind of check. A classroom should be a safe space to ask for support, so praise those that do! If pupils can request specific clarification e.g., "What is a probiscus?" or support e.g., "I couldn't hear what you said with Mrs Watson singing in the corridor! Please say that again." They are demonstrating great initiative and these skills should be celebrated and supported. Why not ask children to put up their hands if they can tell you/show what needs to be done, keeping an eye out for the ones that might look confused.

## **K** = Keep it Visual

OK – not verbal language, but a support for verbal language – so we'll allow this one. We all love a visual and the fact that they can support the spoken word, longer than the spoken word is around for. A picture is worth a thousand words for a reason, as a simple image or diagram can convey hard to explain vocabulary and concepts and can give rise to that "ohhh" moment of understanding. But we shouldn't need to spend all day standing by the printer churning out images for one lesson – this will create "unnecessary workload". A quick gesture, sign or drawing will suffice. And don't forget that objects, videos and demonstrations can also provide that visual support to foster understanding.

Indeed, it falls on us, as educators and therapists alike, to relentlessly seek, implement and refine strategies to support adaptive teaching, thus leading to better educational achievement and supporting all students to reach their fullest potential. With great hopes

that this approach will not slide down the same slippery slopes as differentiation, let's wave our "best inclusive teacher of all time" mugs aloft and get in the habit of using these four core strategies to create communication-friendly classrooms.

"There has been a whopping 42% increase of students with SLCN, since the 2015/16 school year."

# The Link Speech and Language CPD

Flexible speech and language training from  
Speech & Language Link

“I loved learning so intensely. I have learned so much about my role in this course and the fact that I feel more confident in my role and to be able to talk to others about speech and language too is amazing. No more imposter syndrome.”

Claire Waters, TA Speech and Language Interventions at The Canterbury Academy on completing the **Language Intervention** Course

## NEXT COURSE DATES

### Introduction to Speech and Language

- 18th April

### Language Intervention

- 7th February (FULLY BOOKED)
- 16th April
- 19th September

We know how busy you are in school. It's not always possible to get time to attend training or cover the costs of supply staff. That is why our specialist speech and language therapists have developed a **flexible online course** that you can work through at a time that suits you.

### The course consists of 2 modules:

- Introduction to Speech and Language
- Language Intervention

Each module costs £225+VAT and offers approximately 15 hours of learning spread over 8-10 weeks

- 👍 Each course is led by a speech and language therapist tutor who will offer tailored support and individualised feedback so that you can meet your learning goal
- 👍 Our online learning platform enables you to access the course materials at your convenience, working through each lesson and activity at your own pace
- 👍 Lessons feature video content with real-life examples of high-quality practice and explanations of key concepts, alongside interactive activities and practical assignments to help you to consolidate your learning

Places are limited so book now to avoid disappointment:

[www.speechandlanguage.link/whole-school-approach/the-link-cpd/](http://www.speechandlanguage.link/whole-school-approach/the-link-cpd/)