

I CAN Factsheet 3

SUPPORT FOR PROFESSIONALS: LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES: Classroom Strategies for Secondary Schools

This factsheet is primarily designed for mainstream teachers in secondary schools who may have young people with speech, language and communication difficulties within their classes.

It is aimed to provide simple and practical techniques which are beneficial for these students and relatively straightforward to incorporate into mainstream classroom practice.

Each individual with speech, language and communication difficulties will have slightly different needs, but here are some general ways which may help. Although some of these may be difficult to implement within a busy classroom, other students may also benefit from these strategies.

Eye contact:

Students may focus better if they are looking at you and may get extra clues to aid understanding.

Eye contact and cueing in:

Arrange the room and seating to make eye contact easy. If you're going to ask the child a question, use his name first. Then he knows he has to listen. Also look at lighting and seating.

Coping with change in the classroom:

Many children with language difficulties find both sequencing events and coping with change difficult. Give the child his own copy of a timetable of the days events. Use pictures or photos to illustrate activities, breaks and other events on this timetable. Give the child advance warning that change is coming, and tell him what new activity will take place. Use either a verbal countdown to the change of activity, or a sand timer or a specific time on the clock.



Make it visual:

Help with sequencing by using simple flow charts made up of pictures, photos and numbered boxes on a sheet to help describe activities or events e.g. a school trip or a Christmas concert. Create distinct areas in the classroom for resources for different subjects and label equipment and containers. Reference charts with pictures and key vocabulary can help children to make contributions in different subjects. Give the child alternative ways to make their contributions.

Let children use other methods of communication as well as speech to represent pieces of work, e.g. gestures, drawing and facial expressions.

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Routines:

Unwritten rules and day-to-day routines may need support. If you know in advance that something will be different, let the student know. Give them a chance to talk about changes if you can.

Time to plan:

Students may take time to understand and then take time to plan. It's great if you can build this time in.

Help them sequence:

Providing frames for written work can be useful to encourage good sequencing of ideas.



Concept mapping techniques can help with organisation skills so the child knows what they have to do, how and the equipment they need to do it.

Time to talk:

Students may take longer to say what they want to because:

- They need time to plan
- They find organising their ideas in sequence difficult - it may take a couple of attempts or be a little muddled
- They can only manage to say a basic answer, but have other ideas they can't express so well.

Give students plenty of time to respond when asking a question. Be prepared to support the student through an answer with scaffolding questions e.g. where? and why? Try to balance the amount of questions asked with comments on what the student is doing.

Finding words:

Many students find it difficult to access the vocabulary they want to use. See if they can talk around the word and give key features or say what it begins with. If not, it's okay to give a forced alternative, e.g. "is it a horse or a cow?" or gently supply the word. Praise the child whenever possible.

Be honest:

If you haven't understood what they have said, say so and try to work it out between you.

Groupwork:

Working in groups can be a small minefield! Students may find getting into groups difficult, not know the rules or not feel able to contribute. Perhaps engineer your groups initially and include some supportive students.

Literacy:

Many students with language difficulties have literacy difficulties too. Generally, if they don't say it, they don't write it. They may miss out words in writing that they miss out in their speech. Reading and spelling need consideration.

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Useful contacts:

Afasic

2nd Floor
50-52 Great Sutton Street
London
EC1V 0DJ
Helpline: 08453 55 55 77
(Local call rate 11am—2pm Monday - Friday)
For information, advice or if you just need to talk.
Tel: 020 7490 9410
www.afasic.org.uk

NAPLIC

National Association for Professionals concerned
with Language Impairment in Children)
Chicklade House
Hindon
Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP3

NNELI

(The National Network for Educators of the
Language Impaired)
Can be contacted via SENJIT

SENJIT

(Special Educational Needs Joint Initiative for
Training)
Institute of Education
University of London
20 Bedford Way
London
WC1H 0AL
Tel: 020 7612
www.ioe.ac.uk

NASEN

(National Association for Special Educational
Needs)
NASEN House
4/5 Amber Business Village
Amber Close
Armington
Tamworth
B77 4RP
Tel: 01827 311500
www.nasen.org.uk

National Literacy Trust

68 South Lambeth Rd
London
SW8 1RL
Tel: 020 7587 1842

Further reading:

I CAN Factsheets:

You may also find these I CAN Factsheets helpful:

For professionals:

- **Factsheet 4**
Pupils with Speech Dyspraxia
- **Factsheet 5**
Pupils with Asperger Syndrome

Further support:

- **Factsheet C**
Useful Contacts
- **Factsheet D**
Useful Reading

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I CAN:

I CAN is the children's communication charity. Communication is the essential 21st century life skill – the foundation on which children learn, achieve and make friends. I CAN works to develop speech, language and communication skills for all children. I CAN's particular focus is children who find communication hard.

I CAN works to ensure all people who have a responsibility to children, either directly or indirectly, from parents and teachers to policy makers, understand the importance of good communication skills.

I CAN supporting your work in the secondary years:

I CAN has a range resources and programmes to support early years practitioners to develop the communication skills of all children.

● **Talking Point**

The first stop for information on children's communication. Visit www.talkingpoint.org.uk to access essential information on supporting children at home and within the early years setting.

● **Short courses and work place training**

Innovative approaches, knowledge and best practice to support the skills development of all children. To book online go to www.ican.org.uk/training

Visit www.ican.org.uk for further information on I CAN's work and to register for I CAN's monthly newsletter.