



Harlington and Sundon Lower Schools
'A place to belong, grow and succeed'

A Parent/Carers' Guide to Speech and Language Difficulties



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This guide is designed to help you support your child if they find it difficult to talk, understand words, or use language socially. At Harlington and Sundon Lower Schools, we believe communication is the foundation for all learning and we are committed to helping every child find their voice.

What are speech and language difficulties?

Communication challenges generally fall into four areas. It is helpful to think of these as the 'building blocks' of communication:

- **Understanding (Receptive Language):** Difficulty making sense of what people say, following instructions, or understanding concepts like 'under' or 'before.'
- **Talking (Expressive Language):** Struggling to find the right words, put sentences together, or share ideas and feelings.
- **Speech Sounds:** Difficulty pronouncing certain sounds, which can make a child's speech hard for others to understand.
- **Social Communication:** Challenges with the 'rules' of conversation, such as staying on topic or taking turns.

What does the school do that supports children with speech and language difficulties?

Many of the things that we do in our schools as common practice for all children also benefit children with speech and language difficulties. We use 'Communication Friendly' strategies throughout the school to support all children:

- **Visual Supports:** We use symbols, signs (like Makaton), and visual timetables to help children understand instructions without relying solely on spoken words.

- **Wait Time:** We give children extra time (at least 10 seconds) to process what has been said and formulate a response.
- **Language Modelling:** Instead of correcting a child, we repeat what they said back to them correctly (e.g., if a child says “I goed home,” we say, “Yes, you went home!”).
- **Chunking:** We break long instructions into small, manageable parts.

What else can the school do?

If your child requires more tailored support, we can offer further specialised interventions:

- **Speech Sound Screeners:** To identify exactly which sounds a child is struggling with.
- **1:1 or Small Group Intervention:** Targeted sessions to practise specific language targets.
- **Pre-teaching Vocabulary:** We introduce new words to children in small groups before they are used in a whole-class lesson.

What can I do at home?

- **Face-to-Face:** Get down to your child’s level and make eye contact when talking to help them see how your mouth moves.
- **Follow Their Lead:** Talk about the things your child is interested in or looking at. This makes communication more meaningful.
- **Make Comments, Not Questions:** Instead of asking “What’s that?”, try making a comment like “Look, a big red bus!” This takes the pressure off them to ‘perform.’
- **Narrate Your Day:** Talk about what you are doing as you do it (e.g., ‘I am putting the blue socks in the drawer’). This builds their vocabulary naturally.
- **Add a Word:** If your child says one word, repeat it back and add one more (e.g., child says “Car,” you say “Blue car”).





What might the next steps be?

- If concerns persist despite the strategies put in place, please arrange a meeting with your child's class teacher. They may then refer the child to the school's SENDCo (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator).
- We may then complete a referral to the Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy Team to seek specialist assessment and advice.

Where else I can get support?

- **Speech and Language UK:** Features a Progress Checker to see how your child is doing against milestones for their age (www.speechandlanguage.org.uk). You can also book a free 30-minute call with a speech and language advisor.
- **BBC Tiny Happy People:** Excellent activities and play ideas to help develop communication skills. (www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people)

We are on your team!

Communication is a journey, and we are here to walk it with you. By sharing what you notice at home, we can ensure your child has the tools they need to succeed at school.

Please know that we are here to support you just as much as we are here to support your child. Our shared goal is to see your child thrive.