

Supporting children with Communication and interaction additional needs in the classroom

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) falling under the "Communication and interaction" category typically experience difficulties such as **autistic spectrum conditions** or **speech and language difficulties**. Supporting these children effectively in the classroom involves a combination of direct instructional adaptations, staff training, and fostering an inclusive environment.

Here are some examples of how to support children with Communication and interaction needs for classroom learning:

Adapt Teaching and Communication Methods

- **Scaffolding teaching** to accommodate Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN). This involves breaking down information and providing structured support to help children access learning.
- **Adapting worksheets and re-writing information** to make it more accessible. This can simplify complex texts or instructions.
- Using "**word buster cards**" to explain technical terms and concepts in simple language, which can also prompt staff to adjust their own language.
- Employing **simple, Clipart-style images** to convey information, which has been shown to improve communication for children with SEND.
- Utilising **WIDGIT symbols** and adapted stories, particularly for programs designed to improve emotional literacy and communication skills.

- Recognizing and accommodating different modes of communication, such as **single words, signing, or symbolic communication**, rather than solely relying on verbal expression.
- Developing **highly personalised and evidence-based reasonable adjustments** tailored to each child's unique needs and aspirations.

Prioritise Early Identification and Intervention

- **Investing in early intervention** for SLCN can significantly improve outcomes and prevent children from disengaging from education.
- Teachers should be trained to **better identify children with SLCN** and to adapt their teaching to those children's needs.
- Understanding that a child's **challenging behaviour can often be a communication about their state of mind**, which may include **frustration due to speech and communication difficulties**. Addressing these underlying communication needs can prevent such behaviours from escalating.

Enhance Staff Training and Professional Development

- Introduce new standards and support into teacher training, such as the Early Career Framework for secondary school teachers, to help them **better identify SLCN, adapt their teaching, and recognize how SLCN can lead to challenging behaviours**.
- Address the **poor awareness of SLCN** among secondary school teachers, which can lead to missed identification and inadequate accommodation in the classroom.

Foster an Inclusive Classroom and Develop Social-Emotional Skills

- Implement **social and emotional skills programs**, like "Zippy's Friends," which aim to improve emotional literacy, coping skills, and communication, including the ability to communicate feelings and general interaction with others. These programs are often delivered by teachers and teaching assistants using engaging activities like stories, games, drawing, and group discussions.

- Ensure that teachers **reinforce the content of these programs in all classroom interactions** to maximize their effectiveness.
- Support children with SEND to **feel accepted and to belong** within the school community.
- Develop children's **understanding and valuing of difference** in others

Promote Collaboration and Specialist Support

- Work effectively with **individuals and their families to optimize the child's voice and family involvement** in developing appropriate plans and interventions.
- Engage parents to **support and reinforce messages learned at school in the home environment**, which increases the effectiveness of mental health promotion and emotional literacy interventions.
- Utilise **co-located specialists, such as speech and language therapists (SALTs)**, to support schools in redesigning educational, extra-curricular, and pastoral offerings for children with SEND. These specialists can also facilitate rapid SEND assessments and provide tailored training to school staff.