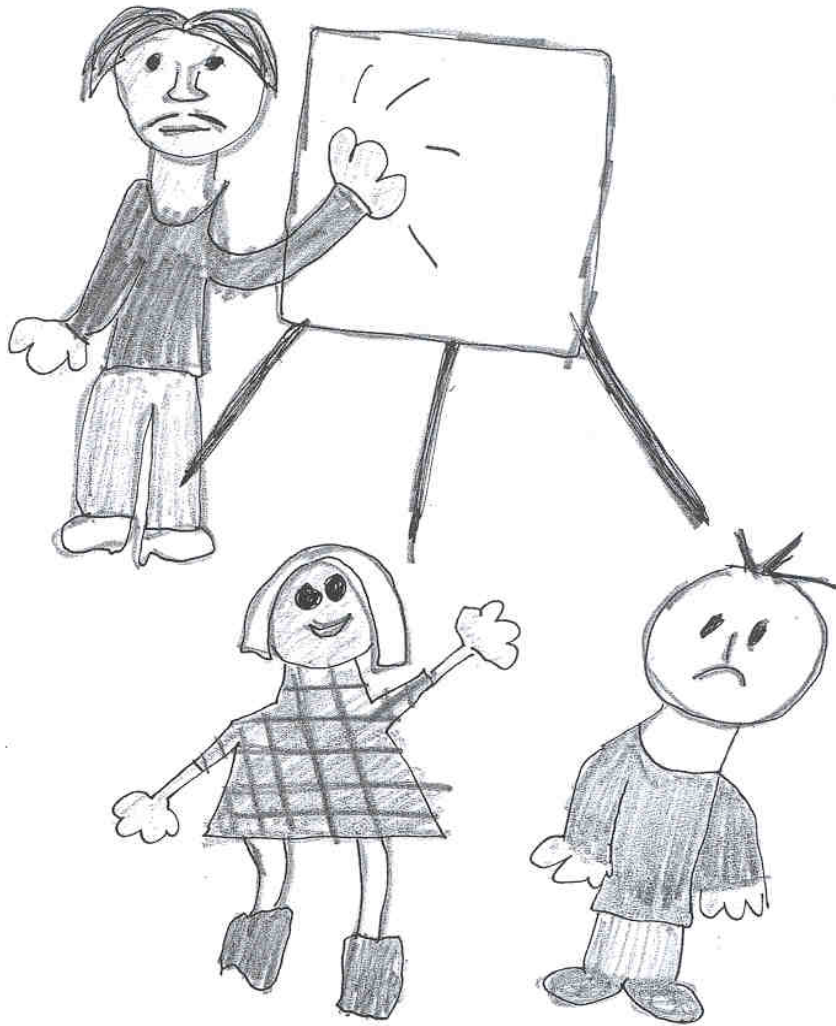


Getting Through

How to help children communicate



A booklet for SENCOs in primary schools

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Introduction

The aim of this booklet is to help you to:

- identify children with communication difficulties.
- investigate the specific nature of the problem.
- use specific strategies/activities to help children communicate in the classroom.

How this booklet can help children with specific communication difficulties

- you may know the area of difficulty the child is experiencing in which case refer to the strategies section (page 12 onwards).
- You may suspect a communication difficulty and wish to investigate further. Go to page 7 'How to investigate the child's communication problem.'

* * *

Communication may be reduced if the child has another difficulty such as:

- Sensory impairment (visual, hearing).
- Physical impairment (e.g. associated with Cerebral Palsy, Cleft Lip and Palate).
- Neurological condition (e.g. epilepsy).
- Emotional difficulty.
- Social difficulty.
- Behavioural difficulty.
- Learning difficulty.
- Lack of opportunity to communicate.
- Syndrome (e.g. Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder).

How this booklet can help children with other difficulties associated with communication difficulties

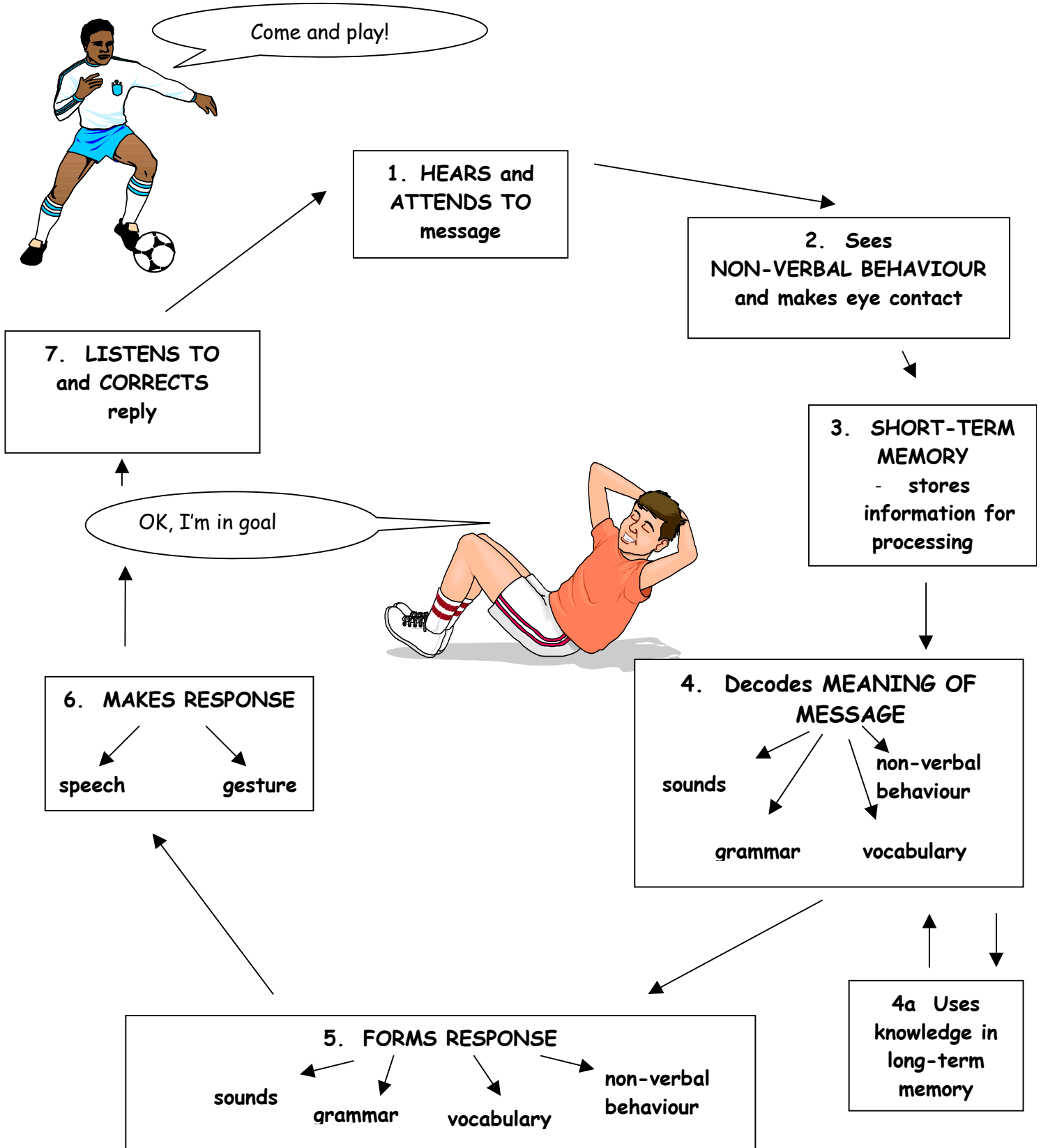
- you may know that your child has a particular syndrome or difficulty, in which case you will probably already have access to more detailed advice, however some of the strategies in this booklet will be relevant (page 12 onwards).
- you may suspect one of these difficulties and need to investigate/refer on to other agencies - use the how to investigate a problem section (page 7).

What is communication?

Communication is not just speech - it is expressing ideas and understanding information (through words, gesture, signs).

Children can experience difficulties with specific communication areas. Page 4 shows communication as a chain of events. Breakdown can occur at any point in the chain. Pages 5 and 6 explain the stages of the chain.

The Communication Chain



The Communication Chain explained

INPUT

(understanding a message)

STAGE

1. The listener notices that the speaker is talking and tunes into the message (using attention skills).
2. The listener looks at the body posture, facial expression and gestures (non-verbal behaviour) of the speaker and makes eye contact with him (using social skills).
3. The listener holds the spoken message in his short term memory for processing.
4. The listener works out the meaning of the message, in terms of:
 - the sounds
ie. he recognises 'come' as a word rather than 'tum'
(using phonological awareness).
 - the grammar
ie. 'come and play' is understood as a command rather than a comment ('he came and played').
 - the vocabulary
ie. he understands the words 'come and play' rather than 'come and paint'.
 - the non-verbal behaviour
ie. he interprets the tone of voice/volume/
facial expression to mean a friendly invitation rather than a threat
(using social skills).
- 4a. In doing 4, he is drawing on information stored in his long-term memory.

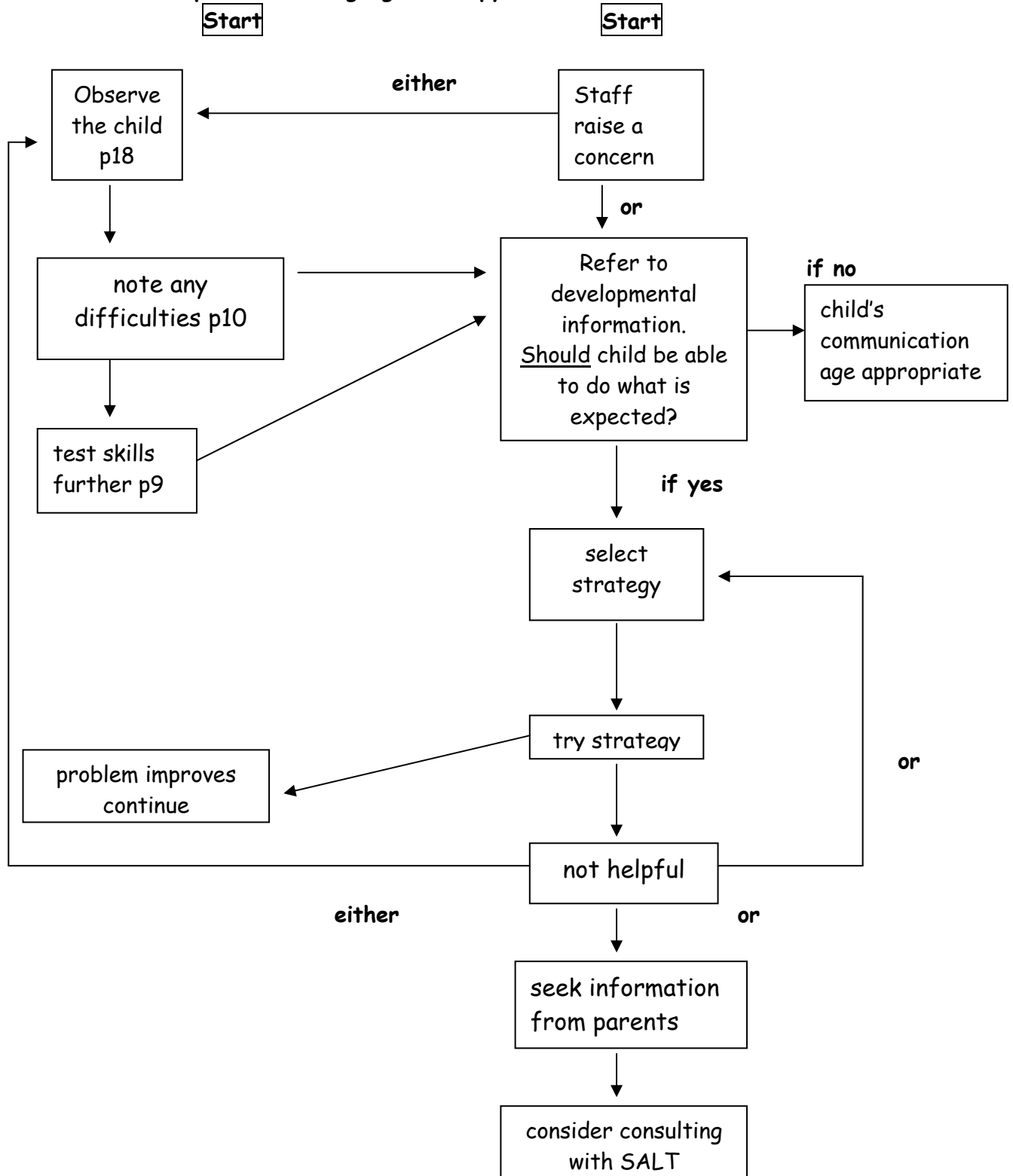
OUTPUT
(expressing a message)

STAGE

5. He prepares his response in a similar way (selecting the vocabulary, grammar, sounds and non-verbal behaviour required).
6. Now the muscles carry out the movements needed (sounds and gestures) to make the response (articulation).
7. As he says 'OK. I'm in goal' he listens to himself and corrects any mistakes (self-monitoring).

How to investigate the child's communication problem

PRE Referral to Speech and Language Therapy



Observation checklist

To help you find out more about a child's communication skills, use the headings to record your observations. It is useful to write down examples.

Child's name:

Place:

Date:

How many others involved?:

Time observed:

Activity:

Attention (how long does he/she stay with the activity?)

Understanding (does he/she follow instructions, respond to others, look when someone's talking?)

Expression

Grammar used (write a sentence the child says as accurately as you can)

Vocabulary and word finding (make a note of some of the words the child uses - any problems recalling words?)

Social communication and play

Play level (choice of toys/activities)

Conversation (did the child take turns, was their message easy to follow?)

Non-verbal communication (did you notice facial expression, gesture?)

Speech (easy to understand?, any sound errors? Compare single words and longer phrases)

Other things you noticed (child's mood, behaviour, physical skills etc)

Photocopy for the child's records

Activities to investigate specific areas of communication

- speech:** ask the child to name some pictures which contain a variety of speech sounds (sun two cup girl) see page 28 for suggestions. Write down accurately what the child says.
- expression:** ask the child to talk about a story book or pictures and write down accurately what the child says (or use a tape recorder).
e.g.
him go to the park
that one not got book
- vocabulary:** first ask the child to name some pictures or objects (variety of topics). This tests expression. Then ask them to find or show you any they were unable to name. This tests understanding. (Remember that they will be able to understand more words than they can use). Make a note of their expression and understanding of vocabulary
e.g.
computer (named)
keyboard (understood)
- understanding:** Ask the child questions appropriate to their age (see p 13) (e.g. what/where/why).

Give instructions using increasing number of key words (see p 13 and glossary).

For older children you could use a reading comprehension (orally) or a composite picture.
- social skills:** Observe child interacting with peers and adults in free play/playing a game/play time/group structured activity.

'Developing Pupil's Social Communication Skills'
P. Barratt et al has a useful assessment checklist.

Checklist of behaviours which may be due to a communication difficulty

Child's name

Date

Behaviours	Observed/ Reported	Action
Doesn't look at speaker	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Has difficulty concentrating or listening	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Interrupts	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Appears naughty or rude	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Has difficulty making friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Has difficulty carrying out instructions	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Carries out part of instructions	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Has difficulty answering questions appropriately	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Appears slow to respond	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Doesn't talk as much as peers	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Appears shy	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Makes mistakes with grammar	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Doesn't appear to know many words	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Has difficulty telling information in the right order	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Can be difficult to understand	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Appears immature	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Doesn't appear to notice own mistakes	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

Photocopy for the child's records

Where to find information and strategies

Behaviours	Read pages
Doesn't look at speaker	11-12 & 21-23
Has difficulty concentrating or listening	11-12, 13-15 & 21-23
Interrupts	11-12 & 21-23
Appears naughty or rude	13-15 & 21-23
Has difficulty making friends	16-18 & 21-23
Has difficulty carrying out instructions	11-12 & 13-15
Carries out part of instructions	11-12 & 13-15
Has difficulty answering questions appropriately	11-12, 13-15, 16-18 & 21-23
Appears slow to respond	11-26
Doesn't talk as much as peers	16-18, 19-20, 24-26 & 21-2
Appears shy	16-18, 24-26 & 21-23
Makes mistakes with grammar	16-18 & 24-26
Doesn't appear to know many words	16-18 & 19-20
Has difficulty telling information in the right order	16-18
Can be difficult to understand	16-18, 24-26 & 21-23
Appears immature	11-26
Doesn't appear to notice own mistakes	11-12, 16-18, 24-26 & 21-23

Attention control development

Stage 1 Distractible: 0 - 12 months

The child's attention is held momentarily by the dominant stimulus in the environment. Any new stimulus attracts his/her attention. Auditory/visual stimuli are the most noticeable sources of distraction.

Stage 2 Single channelled attention: 1 - 2 years

The child will attend to an activity of his/her choice for short periods. Any adult intervention is seen as intrusive.

Stage 3 Single channelled with flexibility: 2 - 3 years

The child's attention remains single channelled but becomes more flexible so that it is possible to switch from the activity to verbal directions which relate to the task and back again. The adult needs to gain the child's visual and auditory attention before giving directions.

Stage 4 Attention focus under voluntary control: 3 - 4 years

The child is able to exercise more control over his/her focus of attention but auditory stimuli in particular may be distracting. A visual focus on the speaker is still important for more complex instructions.

Stage 5 Integrated attention for short periods: 4 - 5 years

The child is able to understand verbal instructions related to an activity without needing to stop his/her activity and look at the speaker. This "2 channel attention" integrates auditory and visual stimuli.

Stage 6 Sustained integrated attention: 5 - 6 years

Integrated attention is well established.

Attention and Listening

Children who fidget, are off task, distract others or interrupt may be having difficulties with attention and listening.

Strategies which may help:

- keeping the task no longer than the child can attend for (increase the length of task gradually to develop attention span).
- using fun activities to encourage attention - reward good listening/attention.
- removing distractions and seating the child near the speaker or on a chair/cushion/carpet tile.
- teaching good listening:
 - use your ears/listen
 - stop what you're doing
 - keep hands, feet, body still
 - look at the person who's talking
 - think about the words
 - keep quiet/lips together
- before giving instructions, prompt the child to listen/say their name/touch their arm.

Development of understanding 0-4 years

There is great variation in the rate of children's development of speech and language so the ages below should be used as a guide only.

Approximate Age	Understanding
0-6 months	Recognises mother's voice
6-12 months	Understands phrase in context e.g. 'say bye-bye' some single words e.g. 'no' 20-60 words
1 year	1 key word
18 months	250 words
2 years	2 key words, 15 verbs in context, points to body parts
2½ years	3 key words Prepositions e.g. in, on, out of Follows instructions including him, you, me
3 years	3 key words can't your, mine past tense big, little what?, where?, who?
4 years	4 key words don't future tense behind, in front some colours Why?

Development of understanding 5 years and upwards

Approximate Age	Understanding
5 years	More complex stories Near, between Short set of instructions How, what if
6 years	
7 years	
upwards	Reasoning and inference Idioms/non-literal language More abstract concepts Complex grammar e.g. passives

Understanding

Children who appear off task, misinterpret instructions or complete them partially may have comprehension problems. They may look to peers before following an instruction and may give odd answers to questions. Children with problems understanding can be difficult to spot e.g. they often answer questions with 'yes' (did you understand that? - yes).

Strategies:

- keeping your language simple - keep instructions short and clear, e.g.
instead of: "you know the cards we made this morning - we're going to get them finished this afternoon and write a message to your mums and dads",
say: "finish the picture on the card" (show card)
"now write inside" (would need further small group/1:1 explanation as they're about to begin).
- emphasising key words and pause between sentences (e.g. write in here (point) finish picture).
- using visual aids - pictures, gesture, objects and demonstrate what you want the child to do.
- checking the child understands (e.g. 'Show me a 'cuboid' or 'tell me what you have to do to', rather than 'do you understand?').
- linking new information/vocabulary to known information and providing frequent repetition.

Development of expressive language 0-4 years

There is great variation in the rate of children's development of speech and language so the ages below should be used as a guide only.

Approximate Age	Expression
0-6 months	Crying, laughing, smiling, Moving
6-12 months	Babbling: bababa, dadada pointing
1 year	Single words Question intonation e.g. gone?
18 months	50 words
2 years	2 word phrases e.g. 'no drink', 'mummy car' 100-300 words Sounds: m,n,w,p,b,t,d,
2½ years	3 word phrases e.g. 'me want drink' Grammar: jump- <i>ing</i> , cat- <i>s</i>
3 years	4-5 word phrases Sounds: ng,k,g,h,f,s,y What?, where?
4 years	Sentences with 'and', 'but' Who? Speech intelligible

Development of expressive language 5 years and upwards

Approximate Age	Expression
5 years	<p>More sophisticated but still errors</p> <p>e.g. "Is that one your favourite best?"</p> <p>"He shouldn't have lost it could he?"</p> <p>Why?</p> <p>5000 words</p> <p>Can explain simple word meanings</p>
6 years	<p>Orders up to 5 pictures and talks through sequence</p>
7 years	<p>Tells a story with beginning, middle and end, uses adverbs</p>
upwards	<p>Greater ability to organise language - referring back etc</p> <p>Written language forms</p> <p>Styles and registers</p>

Expressive language

Children who talk less than peers, make grammatical errors, take longer to respond or are difficult to understand because their ideas are expressed in a disorganised way, may have expressive language difficulties.

Strategies:

- accepting the child's attempts to communicate rather than correcting them.
- modelling back the corrected version e.g. "oh, you went to the zoo" or repeating back the child's phrase with one or two words added (expanding) e.g. "you went to the zoo with your mum".
- giving opportunities for children to talk - free play with the adult joining in, small group activities, role play.
- asking fewer questions and using 'tell me more' or 'oh, lovely' etc to encourage further talk from the child.
- practising talking with pictures (to develop specific vocabulary, grammar or to develop organisation of ideas "oral narrative").
- commenting on/describing what a child is doing so they hear lots of models of appropriate language.

Development of vocabulary

- Early development - by 18 months the young child is using around 50 words, by 2 years this has increased to 100 - 300 and from then on the increase is rapid.
- Concrete/familiar - technical/abstract - the first words relate to day to day experiences eg. milk, gone, daddy, but more abstract concepts are acquired such as empty, transparent, justice, as the child's experience and knowledge expand.
- Literacy - reading brings in vocabulary not heard in everyday language (such as 'amid' or 'tranquil').

Problems developing vocabulary

- Processing/storing - some children find it difficult to remember words (especially abstract or long words).
- Lack of experience - this often adds to a difficulty learning new words.
- Quantity of words needed - the demands of the curriculum mean that many words are introduced without time to teach them or repeat them.
- Long words - more than 2 syllables are harder to remember.
- Abstract/technical words - these often involve understanding of a concept which may itself be difficult to understand eg. condensation. The child who doesn't understand the concept has nothing to 'hang' the word onto.

Vocabulary

Children whose expressive language appears immature compared to peers, who use 'that and 'it' or gestures/sound effects a great deal, may have limited vocabulary and/or difficulty remembering words.

Some may have a good understanding of words but have difficulty recalling them when they need to. This is a word finding difficulty.

Strategies;

- selecting key vocabulary for topics (including verbs and adjectives - not just nouns) and teaching these (ideally before the topic begins).
- teaching vocabulary through practical experiences, using pictures and objects.
- saying the words frequently and revising them often.
- developing the child's knowledge of phonological aspects of the vocabulary (initial sound, number of syllables, rhymes) and meaning aspects (it's a kind of, it's for _ , you find it in _ , it goes with _ etc).
- prompting children with word finding problems by cueing (it's a p_) or sentence completion (I ate the p_).

How does social communication develop?

Social communication develops very early on through the relationship between baby and carer. Eye contact develops as the baby is interested in the parent's face. Facial expression develops as the baby learns to smile. Baby and parents take turns to smile or make noises at each other - turn taking exists before conversation but is an important conversation skill. Another important skill is the ability to share interest in something - the baby looks at something and then at the parent. This is a precursor to topic maintenance and listener awareness.

The home environment supplies the motivation for the child to develop specific functions of language such as commenting, making requests, asking questions.

As the child mixes with others outside the home his/her social skills develop further - the child learns to interact appropriately with peers, older people, friends, strangers - all of whom require slightly different skills.

Approximate age:	Skills
0 - 1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Able to share joint attention.• Develops the ability to engage in vocal exchanges and turn-taking games.
1 - 2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Able to take turns in a conversation and maintain a topic.
3 - 5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child begins to develop strategies that help sustain interaction, eg. comments on what has been said <u>and</u> adds a request to get partner to respond again.• Develops ability to adjust speech according to social expectations.• Understands what the speaker intends to say, eg. understands "I need a pencil" as "Get me a pencil".
6 - 10 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More advanced conversational strategies appear, eg. child is able to gradually change the topic.• Child is able to produce easily understood messages.• When they don't understand, they request more information.

Social use of language/social skills

Children who appear rude, find it difficult to make friends, talk about one topic all the time or who show inappropriate behaviour, may be experiencing difficulties with social use of language/social skills.

Strategies:

- including good social behaviours in class/golden rules
e.g. everyone has a turn to talk.
- modelling appropriate behaviours and giving explicit feedback.
e.g. when you want to talk to me, put your hand up, lips together.
- being consistent will help the child understand the rules.
- prompting and rewards will help the child develop a target skill.
- new skills can be taught through role play.
- using published programmes or techniques, e.g. Social Use of Language Programme, Circle of Friends, Social Stories, Talkabout, Developing Pupils' Social Communication Skills (practical resources).

Development of speech sounds

Sounds present in speech	Age by which 50% of children can say these sounds	Age by which 90% of children can say these sounds
Most vowels	1½ - 2 years	3 years
p b t d m n w	1½ - 2 years	3 years
k g f h y	2½ - 3 years	4 years
s ng	2½ - 3 years	4 years
l	3 - 3½ years	6 years
sh ch dg z v	3½ - 4½ years	6 years
r th the zh	4½ - 5 years	7 years

Clusters/blends		
bl cl fl br cr dr (beginning)	4 - 4½ years	
ks ls ms ps (end of word)		
sp sm st sl sw	5 years	
str skr spl thr shr	After 5 years	

Normal speech sound simplification processes

Speech simplification process	Age it stops being heard
'voicing' - saying a voiced sound instead of a voiceless one e.g. ten → den	2½ - 3 years
'consonant harmony' - making 2 sounds the same e.g. Katy → gaygi	2½ - 3 years
'fronting' - saying a sound at the front of the mouth instead of the back cat → tat	2½ - 3½ years
'final consonant deletion' - missing off final sound e.g. bun → bu	3-3½ years
'stopping' - replacing fricatives (hissy sounds) e.g. four → tour see → tee van → dan zoo → do shoe → too/soo chip → tip/sip thing → ting/fing	2½ - 3 years 2½ - 3 years 2½ - 3½ years 3 - 3½ years 3½ - 4½ years 3 - 4½ years 4 - 8 years
'weak syllable deletion' - missing off part of word e.g. potato → tato	3½ - 4 years
'cluster reduction' - missing sound off in a cluster e.g. green → geen spoon → poon	3- 4 years 3½ - 4½ years

Note:

→ indicates 'is pronounced'

Speech

Children who are difficult to understand and who mispronounce words may have speech problems. Some have difficulty articulating particular sounds (e.g. doesn't know how to say 'k') or co-ordinating the movements needed to say sequences of sounds (e.g. can say 'key', can't say 'sticker'). Some sound substitutions are normal in young children (see page 26).

Strategies:

- providing opportunities for the child to talk where you will understand (where you know the context, there is a picture/photo to talk about).
- asking another child to interpret.
- using 1:1, quiet settings if possible.
- modelling back the correct pronunciation without asking the child to repeat it.
- developing listening/auditory discrimination skills (saying 2 sounds and asking child to point to corresponding pictures e.g. if you hear t point to tap, if you hear c point to camera).

Word list for testing child's use of speech sounds

You will need to find pictures/objects to go with the words. Ask the child to name each picture/object and write down how they pronounced it.

<u>p</u> ig/ <u>p</u> en	happ <u>y</u> / <u>k</u> ipper	cup/ <u>l</u> ip
<u>b</u> all/ <u>b</u> oy	rub <u>b</u> er	job/ <u>b</u> ib
<u>t</u> oy/ <u>t</u> eddy	but <u>t</u> on/sitting	cat
<u>d</u> og/ <u>d</u> oor	mud <u>d</u> y	card/ <u>h</u> ead
<u>m</u> an/ <u>m</u> um	du <u>m</u> my/ <u>m</u> um <u>m</u> y	arm/ <u>m</u> um
<u>n</u> ose	din <u>n</u> er	pen/ <u>t</u> en
<u>w</u> indow/ <u>w</u> ater	fl <u>o</u> wer	
* <u>c</u> at/ <u>c</u> ard	kick <u>i</u> ng/ <u>s</u> ticky	back/ <u>s</u> ick
* <u>g</u> irl/ <u>g</u> arage	dog <u>g</u> y/ <u>d</u> igging	dog/ <u>p</u> ig
* <u>f</u> our/ <u>f</u> ish	to <u>f</u> f <u>e</u> e	Biff/ <u>l</u> ea <u>f</u>
<u>h</u> ead/ <u>h</u> at		
<u>y</u> es		
* <u>s</u> un	pu <u>s</u> sy	kiss/ <u>m</u> ou <u>s</u> e
	fin <u>g</u> er	kin <u>g</u> / <u>r</u> ing
* <u>l</u> eg/ <u>l</u> ea <u>f</u>	jel <u>l</u> y/ <u>l</u> ol <u>l</u> y	ball/ <u>f</u> all
* <u>s</u> hoe	pu <u>s</u> hing/ <u>b</u> r <u>u</u> shing	bru <u>s</u> h/ <u>f</u> ish
* <u>c</u> hair/ <u>c</u> hip	cat <u>ch</u> ing	watch/ <u>w</u> it <u>ch</u>
* <u>j</u> ump	bad <u>g</u> er/ <u>m</u> ag <u>i</u> c	bad <u>g</u> e
* <u>z</u> oo/ <u>z</u> ebra	fiz <u>z</u> y	buzz/ <u>n</u> o <u>s</u> e
* <u>v</u> an/ <u>v</u> et	ri <u>v</u> er/ <u>g</u> iv <u>i</u> ng	wav <u>e</u>
* <u>r</u> ed/ <u>r</u> oad	car <u>r</u> ying	
* thin/ <u>t</u> humb		clo <u>th</u> / <u>m</u> ou <u>th</u>

* they/that

mother/brother
measure/treasure

black/blue

table

clock

ankle

flower/fly

waffle

crayon

drink/dry

kicks/bricks

spot/space

hospital

crisp

slip/slop

stand/star

school/disc

* errors with these sounds are more common – you may wish to listen to these words first if you have limited time.

Glossary

These are terms you may come across when considering communication.

Adjective describes the noun e.g. red...

Adverb describes the verb e.g. slowly.

Alternative and Augmentative Communication/AAC

Use of any equipment to help communication or to replace spoken language. Includes signing (e.g. Makaton), symbols, communication aids (electronic devices), pictures etc.

Articulation The **pronunciation** of words in terms of the parts of the mouth or '**articulators**' involved. E.g. 's' is produced by the tongue tip making a small gap on the ridge behind the top front teeth. A child who produces 's' with the tongue tip on the teeth could be said to have difficulty articulating 's'. A structural abnormality such as cleft palate will result in articulation difficulties.

Bilingual Someone who speaks/understands more than one language. Definitions vary in terms of the amount of language used and understood so the term is used broadly.

Communication The broadest term including verbal (spoken) and non-verbal means of expressing meaning (such as facial expression, gesture, intonation), understanding of language meaning and use of language.

Comprehension Understanding of language in terms of the vocabulary and the grammar. Also called **receptive language** and **understanding of language**.

Concept Used to refer to ideas of size, shape, physical appearance often expressed by adjectives (big, small, heavy, smooth). These words are more difficult to learn than nouns as they refer to more than one object and are relative (e.g. a boy can be tall and a block of flats can be tall even though there is a big difference in their relative size).

Conjunction joins 2 sentences e.g. 'and', 'but'.

Decode to make sense of an utterance.

Delay	Where skills are at a level lower than expected for the child's age but are developing in a normal sequence.
Disorder	Where skills are not developing in a normal sequence or are extremely delayed.
Dysarthria	Unclear speech due to lack of muscle control (may affect articulation, voice, intonation, breathing) e.g. in children with cerebral palsy.
Dysfluency	When speech does not flow or is disjointed - used to refer to stammering/stuttering .
Dysphagia	Difficulty swallowing with neurological or structural cause.
Dyspraxia	Verbal or articulatory dyspraxia is a difficulty articulating and co-ordinating speech sounds. Dyspraxia (also called Developmental Co-ordination Disorder) refers to 'fine' and 'gross' motor co-ordination difficulties or clumsiness.
Echolalia	Repeating back what has been said without understanding it. This can be immediate (e.g. responding to a question by repeating all or part of the question) or delayed (e.g. repeating phrases from TV adverts during a conversation).
Elective mutism	An emotional disorder in which the child speaks in one setting (e.g. at home) but not others (e.g. at school).
Expression	Spoken language including vocabulary and grammatical structures.
Grammar	The structure of language including syntax (word order) and morphology (changes within words). Children with grammatical difficulties may make mistakes with verb tenses, pronouns and sometimes word order.
Idiomatic/ambiguous language	Some phrases (e.g. including idioms/phrasal verbs) need to be learned/understood as a whole. Sometimes world knowledge or context is required to understand the phrase e.g. 'get your skates on.'

Inference	Making sense of an utterance which is idiomatic or ambiguous - using more information than is contained in the spoken message (reading between the lines). Older children with language difficulties often have difficulty inferring meaning e.g. they will respond to 'can you read the next page?' by saying 'yes'.
Information carrying words/key words	The words which we need to understand to make sense of an instruction. Some words are redundant e.g. 'cut the picture out with your scissors' - it is only necessary to understand one information carrying word ('cut') if the child is familiar with scissors and the picture has been referred to already. The term comes from the Derbyshire Language Scheme Detailed Test of Comprehension.
Intonation	Pattern of up and down changes in pitch used to convey meaning e.g. 'coffee' said with a rising pitch is a question.
Minimal pair	Two words with one sound different e.g. pin and bin (if the different sounds were swapped the meaning would be changed). Minimal pairs are used to help children with speech sound problems to hear the error in their speech (auditory discrimination) or to pronounce the target sound correctly.
Morphology	See grammar.
Narrative	Language used to tell a story or describe an event. Also refers to the skill of organising language beyond sentence level which includes skills such as linking and developing ideas and referring back.
Noun	Name of an object, e.g. chair, person, place or thing. More abstract nouns e.g. happiness, justice.
Phonology	The system of speech sounds in a language. A child with a phonological difficulty is able to produce a sound but does not use it in the correct place in speech e.g. the child pronounces 'house' as 'hous', showing he/she can say 's' but pronounces 'sun' as 'tun', i.e. does not use 's' at the beginning of words.

Pragmatics	The way we use language and non-verbal behaviour to communicate. Pragmatics includes the 'rules' of communication such as how to be polite, how to complain, how to instruct etc. For example, it is understood that 'can you close the window?' is not a question but a request. A child with pragmatic difficulties may behave oddly or give an unexpected response because he/she is not able to follow the (unspoken) rules of communication. Also referred to as 'use of language', 'functional use of language' 'social use of language', 'social skills'.
Process	To make sense of an utterance or organise ideas ready to express them, usually in terms of the time involved. Children with language difficulties often have difficulty processing language at the speed of normal conversation.
Pronoun	A word which replaces the noun: he/she/it etc. Possessive pronouns: my, your etc. Children sometimes confuse pronouns e.g. use 'her' instead of 'she'. Older children with language difficulties may overuse pronouns so that the listener becomes confused.
Receptive	See comprehension.
Semantics	The area of language which includes word meanings and meaning relationships . A child who has difficulty with semantics will have limited vocabulary knowledge e.g. does not know that an animal's 'hand' is call a 'paw. He/she is also likely to have difficulty with word relationships e.g. will not know that 'chair' and 'table' are kinds of furniture, or that 'bat' has two meanings.
Speech	Specifically refers to speech sounds rather than spoken language.
Syntax	The system of rules to do with how words can be combined. For example, we can say 'the boy ran away' or 'away the boy ran' but not 'the boy away ran'. Some children with language difficulties make mistakes with word order.
Utterance	Used to refer to a spoken 'chunk' of language - avoids use of the word 'sentence' as this implies correct/complete grammar. E.g. 'what?', 'hey!' and 'mummy go' are utterances.
Verb	Doing words, e.g. 'run', 'play'. Also 'be', 'have' which are used as main verbs or as auxiliaries e.g. 'I am running'.

If you need further information

- We provide training on communication, its development and strategies to help children with speech and language difficulties on our Foundation Speech and Language Course (4 sessions). We can provide training on assessment of children for SENCOs. For further information please contact Katrina Coley or Liz Jackson 0116 2954670.
- If you would like to refer a child to Speech and Language Therapy, please refer to the referral guidelines Jan 2009. If more than one health service is required please use the Single Point of Access form which is available from the Local Authority or Speech and Language Therapy, 0116 2954670.
- Speak to your Link Educational Psychologist, School Doctor, School nurse, SALT service (Remember to gain parents' permission if you wish to discuss individual children).

