

# Signs of Speech, Language, Communication Needs

## Understanding

- Difficulty following instructions.
- Attention difficulties, especially in large groups.
- Difficulty answering questions.
- Behaviour difficulties.
- Difficulties understanding written language.
- Difficulties producing language.

Identification of comprehension difficulties can be hard because children will use visual and contextual cues to support their understanding. If you are unsure, try to take away any visual support when giving an instruction.



## Speech

- Consistent substitution of one sound for another – eg. 't' for 'k' ('cat' becomes 'tat').
- Problems producing consonant sounds together – eg. 'p' for 'sp' ('spoon' becomes 'poon').
- Problems with intelligibility.
- 'Jumbled' speech.
- Stammering or dysfluency.

## Production of Language

- Difficulty putting words together in a sentence.
- Difficulty using grammatical structures.
- Limited vocabulary development and difficulty learning and remembering new words.
- Omitting parts of sentences – especially function words (eg. 'the' and 'is') and grammatical markers on the end of words (eg. 'ing').
- Persistent errors with tense marking.
- Word-finding problems – getting 'stuck for words', mis-naming things or frequent use of non-specific labels (eg. 'thingy' and 'stuff').

## Social Use of Language

The social use of language refers to the way we interact with other people, together with our understanding of the verbal and non-verbal rules of interaction.

- Under-use or over-use of eye contact when having a conversation.
- Difficulty with turn-taking in conversation.
- Unusual tone of voice or volume.
- Over-use of 'learnt phrases' (language borrowed from films or TV programmes or rather adult language).
- Lack of flexibility in thinking and interaction.
- Difficulty understanding and using tones of voice, gesture and facial expression.
- Difficulty building and maintaining peer relationships.
- Difficulty managing in the playground.

