Speech, Language and Communication: Universal and targeted approach

SOLIHULL ACADEMY

SPEECH, LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION NEEDS (SLCN) HANDBOOK

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WHAT IS SLCN?

SLCN stands for Speech, Language and Communication Needs. This means some students might struggle with talking, listening, or understanding social cues.

Why is this important?

Many students in our school might have SLCN that hasn't been noticed before. These difficulties can make learning and getting along with others frustrating.

The good news...

By understanding SLCN, we can help students build strong communication skills, feel more confident and succeed in school!

S SPEECH	This is about how we produce sounds and words. Someone with speech needs might have trouble with pronunciation, stuttering, or voice problems. Examples: A student might say "wat" instead of "what" or struggle to explain their ideas clearly. They might stutter or have trouble pronouncing certain sounds.
L LANGUAGE	This involves understanding and using words and sentences. Language needs can include problems with vocabulary, grammar, or following conversations. It can affect both speaking and understanding what others say.
C COMMUNICATION	This is the broader ability to convey and receive messages, not just through speech and language but also through gestures, facial expressions, and body language. Communication needs can arise when someone has trouble making themselves understood or understanding others, including using or interpreting non-verbal signals.

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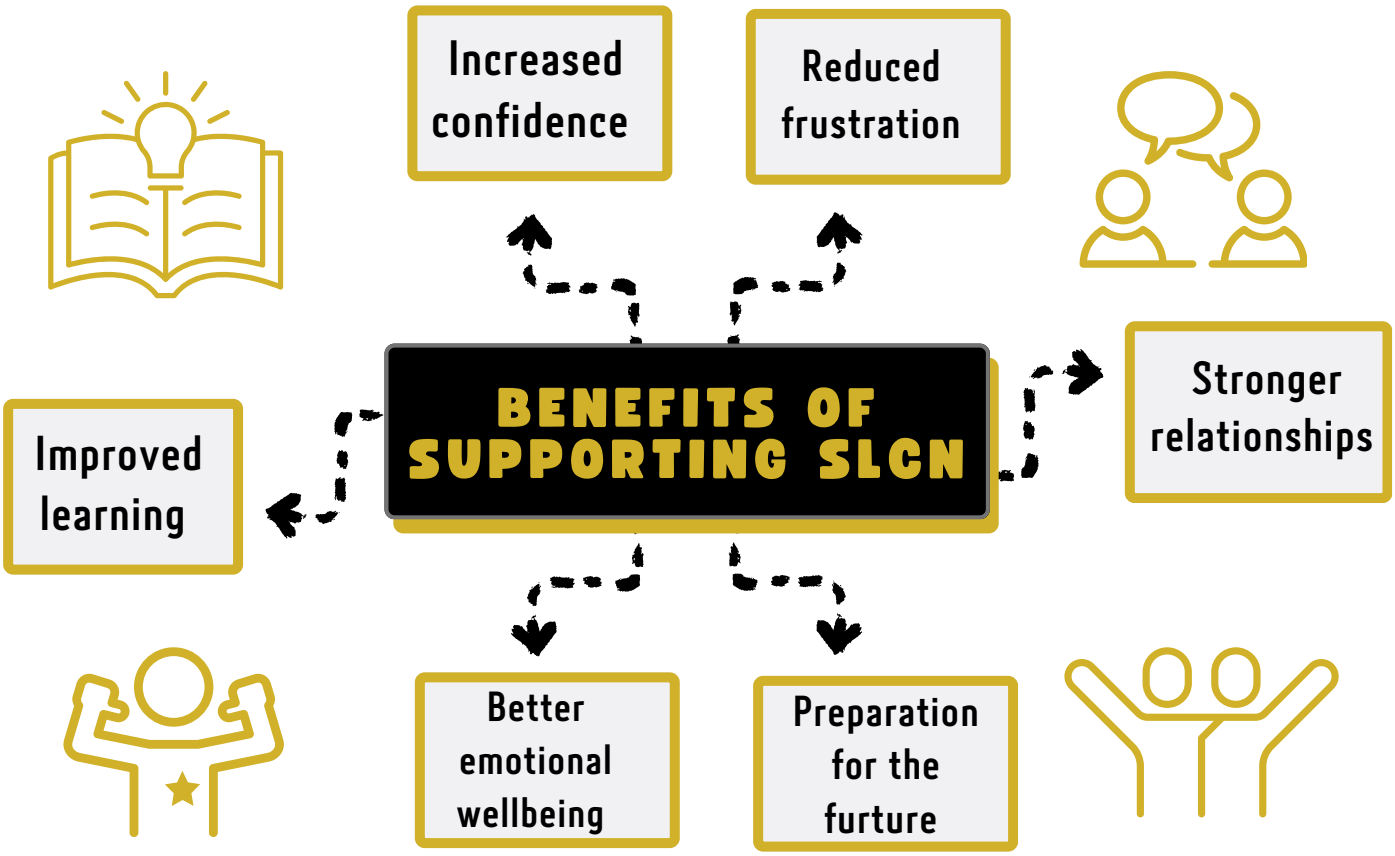
The importance of supporting SLCN in Alternative Provision

Research has demonstrated that many young people excluded from school or in alternative provision schools have SLCN. Supporting these additional needs provides these students with a higher chance of positive life outcomes such as academic achievement, long-term employment, successful relationships and improved life satisfaction. Here are some of the ways that supporting our students with SLCN can help them within school....



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SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF SLCN...

BEHAVIORAL SIGNS

- Frustrated or upset during communication tasks, may withdraw from social interactions or group activities.
- Avoids speaking in class or participating in group discussions.
- Reluctant to engage in activities that require a lot of verbal communication.

UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE

- Struggles to understand and follow multi-step instructions, detailed or complex verbal directions
- Difficulty understanding abstract ideas (eg raining cats and dogs)
- Hard to comprehend reading materials.

USING LANGUAGE

- limited vocabulary, difficulty finding the right words when writing.
- Simple sentence structures and frequent grammar mistakes.
- Trouble organising thoughts in spoken and written language.
- Difficulty explaining srories in a logical order.

Social communication

- Difficulty understanding social cues (tone of voice, facial expressions etc) and recognising when someone is joking.
- Trouble starting or maintaining conversations.
- Hard to make or keep friends due to communication difficulties, often feels isolated & misunderstood..

Speech sounds :

- Trouble saying words clearly
- Has difficulty pronouncing certain sounds correctly
- Speech might be unclear or hard to understand.

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Steps to take if you are concerned about a students SLCN...

1. Observe the student in different settings and note any specific behaviours, difficulties and examples of speech and communication challenges.

2. Talk to our SENCO (Lee Nolan) about your concerns. Find out if the child is currently or has previously been known to your local SaLT service or other professionals.

3. If the child has been known to SaLT, read their latest report and implement any recommendations.

4. If the student is not known to have SLCN, the SENCO may refer the student to external services. During this time, implement SLCN strategies in the classroom and monitor any progress the student makes.

5. If you find any strategies which work specifically well for this student, document your findings on the students IPP and communicate these strategies with other staff members.

6. Regularly monitor and review the students progress and adjust support as necessary, maintain communication with the student, their parents/guardians, the school SENCO and other staff supporting the student.

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CLASSROOM STRATEGIES FOR SLCN...

VISUAL AIDS

WHAT

Visual aids are tools that use images, symbols, or text to help convey information and support understanding. They can include a variety of formats such as pictures, diagrams, charts, written instructions, flashcards, and digital presentations. Visual aids are particularly helpful for students with Speech, Language, and Communication Needs (SLCN) as they provide alternative ways to process and understand information.

EXAMPLES...

WRITTEN LANGUAGE : writing frames, visual checklists

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT : picture cards and word walls

INSTRUCTIONS: step by step charts, visual schedules

COMPREHENSION: storyboards, mind maps & graphic organisers

Example : Create activities where students match words to pictures or sequence images to tell a story.

TIPS:

- Be consistent
- Simplicity, avoid cluttered visual aids
- Intergrate visual aids into lessons

DUAL CODING

Dual coding theory and its application for SLCN

WHAT IS DUAL CODING THEORY?

Dual Coding means using both pictures and words together to help students learn better. This can be especially helpful for students with SLCN because it gives them more ways to understand and remember information.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

Teaching New Concepts:

- **Science Lessons**: When teaching about the human body, use diagrams of the body with labels and descriptions. Show a video explaining the function of each organ while simultaneously displaying the text.

Mathematics:

- **Problem-Solving Steps**: Use flowcharts that show each step in solving a math problem, with both visual representations (like pictures of manipulatives) and written instructions.

History and Social Studies:

- **Timelines**: Create timelines with images and text to explain historical events. For example, a timeline of the American Revolution with pictures of key figures and battles alongside descriptions.

HOW CAN DUAL CODING BE USED FOR SLCN?

Enhancing understanding

- combining visual and verbal information helps reinforce understanding
- Use diagrams, pictures, illustrations alongside text to explain new concepts

Supporting vocabulary development

- Visual representations of words help students make connections between the word and its meaning
- Picture flashcards or word maps

Improving memory and recall

- Helps storing information in both visual and verbal forms
- Makes recall easier

Aiding comprehension

- help break down complex information
- infographics or graphic organisers

Facilitating communication

- communication boards
- visual schedules

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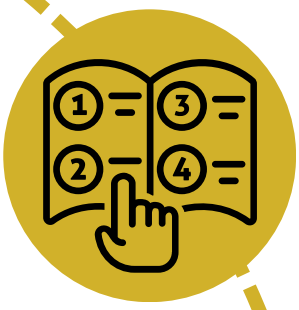
BREAK IT DOWN...

Breaking down tasks and information into smaller, more manageable parts is a highly effective strategy for supporting students with Speech, Language, and Communication Needs (SLCN). This approach helps these students process, understand, and complete tasks more effectively by reducing cognitive load and providing clear, sequential steps.

Break down key words and vocabulary



Break down instructions

- Simplifying helps students with SLCN understand and remember what to do.
- Step-by-step instructions & visual aids
- Use simple language and sentences when explaining instructions

Break down academic tasks

- Tasks can be overwhelming, and difficult to know where to start
- Chunk information (eg brainstorm ideas and create an outline, write the opening paragraph etc...)
- Use a daily schedule to break the lesson into smaller more manageable segments with clear expectations for each part of the lesson.

Break down communication tasks

- Provide sentence starters to help students begin their sentences
- eg 'I feel...' 'i need help with...'

Breaking down learning content

- Concept mapping: break concepts into smaller, related ideas. Helps students see connections between different pieces of information.
- Incremental learning : introduce new concepts gradually, building on prior knowledge and ensuring understanding at each step before moving on.

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VOCABULARY & SLCN

Understanding Vocabulary's importance

Vocabulary as Building Blocks: Vocabulary is like the bricks we use to build our spoken and written communication. Each word helps us express ourselves and understand others better.

Preparing students for new words

- **Avoiding Assumptions**: We shouldn't assume that students know every word we use. Instead, we should talk about new words and show how to use them.
- **Starter Activities**: Before diving into lessons, we can introduce important words using visuals like word maps. This helps students understand and use these words during class activities.

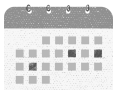
Reinforcing & supporting vocabulary development

1 Repetition in context (repeat key words during lessons)

2 Word maps : show how words sound and their meaning.

3 High frequency words (teach words such as describe, explain)

4 Games & quizzes for new words



Planned vocabulary teaching

- **Specific Vocabulary Sessions**: It's helpful to plan times to teach vocabulary directly, maybe through speaking activities or games.
- **Word Banks**: Having lists of important words or "key words" helps students remember and use them.

Creating a vocabulary-friendly environment

- **Language Link and Working Walls**: We can use resources and games that connect to vocabulary needed for exams. Displaying important words on the classroom walls helps students remember them.
- **Scaffolds for Learning**: Tools like word walls or prompt sheets can help students use new words in their spoken language. It's like having a map to guide them.

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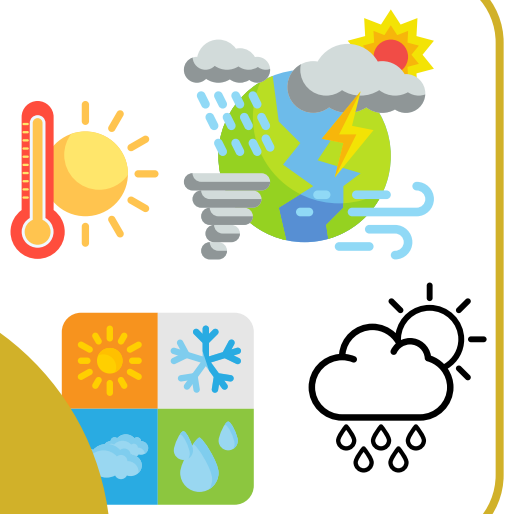
EXAMPLE OF A WORD MAP...

WEATHER

Definition

The state of the atmosphere at a particular place and time, such as temperature, humidity, wind, and precipitation.



Related words

Temperature: How hot or cold it is.
Humidity: The amount of moisture in the air.
Wind: Moving air, which can be gentle or strong.
Precipitation: Any form of water, like rain, snow, or hail, falling from the sky.

Use in a sentence

- "Can you describe the weather outside?"
- "What type of weather do you prefer?"
- "Today's weather is sunny and warm."
- "The weather forecast predicts rain tomorrow."

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Comprehension monitoring

1. Introduction

Comprehension monitoring is a strategy where students keep track of their understanding while reading or listening. For students with Speech, Language, and Communication Needs (SLCN), this means being aware of whether they are understanding what they hear or read, and taking steps to clarify or seek help if they don't.

2. Key components of comprehension monitoring

- The ability to check that incoming information (written or heard) makes sense
- Recognising your own gaps in understanding
- Being able to ask for clarification, either when needed or when someone says ‘does anyone need help’
- Having a range of different ways to ask for clarification on something

3. Model these points to young people

- No one understands everything all of the time
- There is no shame in saying ‘I don’t know’
- Comprehension monitoring is a skill, and needs practice over time

> ***"Comprehension monitoring is needed throughout life and spans conversations, verbal instructions and reading, its essential for education, work and social interactions."***

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Comprehension monitoring strategies

Changing our students language...

It's important to teach students how to communicate effectively what it is they may be struggling with. By encouraging students to be more detailed in what they say it helps us to know what they need from us.

Instead Of 	Try This 
'I dont understand'	'I don't get the bit about...'
'I don't get it'	'I understand the bit about...but not the rest'
'I'm confused'	'What do you mean by...'
'Tell me that again'	'You said too much. Please say it one bit at a time'

Other strategies...

- Teach students questions they can ask themselves to monitor their own understanding
  - Did I understand what I just read?
  - Did I understand all the words in what I just read? Was there any big confusing words I didn't understand?
- Encourage students to pause when reading to process what they might have read
- Use visual aids or organisers to track key points in the text

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OTHER CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

01. SCAFFOLDING

Scaffolding for students SLCN involves providing structured support to help them learn and communicate effectively.

Example : Science less on water cycle

1. visual aids - diagram or poster illustrating stages of water cycle
2. Simplified language - instead of technical terms (evaporation, condensation).
3. Chunk information - break down the information on the cyle into smaller more manageable concepts
4. Repetition & reinforcement - key vocabulary and concepts

Over time the student will gain confidence and we can gradually reduce the level of scaffolding,

02. CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS

In classroom talks, everyone can share ideas. For students who find talking harder, teachers can help by using pictures and easy words. They can also give simple questions to guide the talk. By making everyone feel included and giving chances to join in, students with speech difficulties can practice talking, understand better, and feel more confident.

03. CHECK AS YOU GO

- 10 second rule: if the student does not respond after this time, repeat the question or rephrase it if you think it may have been too difficult
- Encourage students to indicate if they don't understand what they have been asked to do and use visuals to support this.
- Monitor understanding by asking students to tell you or show you what they have to do.

06. MODELLING

- This means showing students how to communicate effectively by demonstrating clear and simple language, gestures and communication strategies.
- Teachers can model communication during lessons by speaking slowly and clearly, using visual aids and providing examples of expressing ideas or asking questions.
- If a student makes an error when speaking, model the sentence back to them, correcting the error.

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A STUDENT IS STRUGGLING IN THE CLASSROOM...

Students may struggle to understand tasks for many reasons, such as speech, language communication difficulties (SLCD), processing information or a lack of prior knowledge or context.

Identify the students needs

Does the student understand the key words of the task?

- Vocabulary knowledge
- Language difficulties
- The meaning of key concepts within the context of the task
- Attentional issues

Can the student understand the instructions for the task?

- Complex language
- Lengthy instructions
- Processing difficulties
- Attentional & organisational difficulties.

Could the student be overwhelmed by the task given to them?

- Complexity of the task & language used
- Length of the task
- Sensory overload
- Uncertainty with approaching a task.

Is the student struggling to voice or write down their ideas?

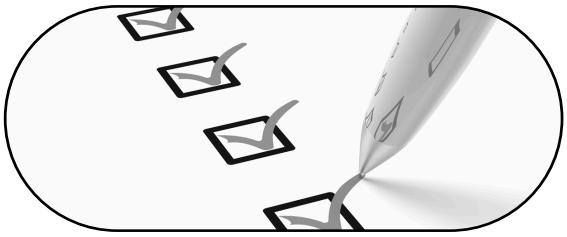
- SLCD
- Writing difficulties
- Cognitive processing
- Limited vocabulary
- Communication anxiety

REASONS

STRATEGIES

- Simplify language: use clear and concise language.
- Break down key terms and instructions into smaller steps.
- Visual supports (diagrams, charts, pictures)
- Provide visual/written reminders of what the key terms are/what the instructions are.
- Provide examples of how the task could be done and what the key terms mean.
- Break down tasks to reduce complexity and provide clear, achievable goals.
- Work together with the student through the task to provide support and model how to approach the task.
- Consider the environment - is it noisy? Are there lots of distractions? Is there anywhere quieter you could go?
- Break the task into timed segments, with frequent breaks (eg 15 minutes focus, 5 minutes break)
- Can you scribe for the student?
- Can the student draw their ideas as an alternative?
- Encourage oral expression, allowing students to verbally express their ideas (eg group discussion)
- Model & Scaffold - Model language and writing skills, scaffold to help students organise their thoughts.

SLCN CHECKLIST



PREPARING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT:

- ◯ Ensure the classroom is visually organised and free from distractions
- ◯ Provide visual schedules of the lesson and clear instructions for activities and tasks
- ◯ Display visual aids, such as key words, word walls and picture cards, to support understanding and communication
- ◯ Plan on opportunities to repeat key words and information throughout

PLANNING INSTRUCTION:

- ◯ Identify and pre-teach key vocabulary using visual supports and simplified language
- ◯ Break down tasks into smaller, manageable steps, and provide clear instructions with visual cues.
- ◯ Scaffold learning by providing structured support, such as models, prompts, and guided practice.
- ◯ Write key words on the board

FACILITATING COMMUNICATION:

- ◯ Speak slowly and clearly, using simple language and visual aids to support understanding
- ◯ Model appropriate communication strategies, such as turn taking and active listening
- ◯ Encourage students to use alternative communication methods, such as gestures or picture symbols
- ◯ Provide opportunities for students to practice communication skills in structured and supportive settings

MONITORING PROGRESS & PROVIDING FEEDBACK:

- ◯ Specific and constructive feedback on communication efforts, focusing on strengths and areas for growth
- ◯ Adjust instruction and support based on students needs and progress
- ◯ Celebrate successes and efforts

COLLABORATING WITH SUPPORT STAFF & FAMILIES :

- ◯ Collaborate with other staff members to develop and implement individualised communication goals
- ◯ Communicate regularly with families to share progress, and strategies for support and reinforce learning at home.

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