

Speech Link

Your child's school is using a package called Speech Link to help identify and support children with speech difficulties. Here are some frequently asked questions about this approach.

What is Speech Link?

Speech Link is a tool that gives Teachers and Teaching Assistants the ability to test for speech delays and implement speech sound programmes where necessary. The Speech Link Speech Screen will also identify children with more complex difficulties who require input from a Speech and Language Therapist.

What is the Speech Screen?

The computer based speech screening test is suitable for children between 4 and 8 years of age and takes around 10 minutes to complete.

The screen consists of 40 easy pictures. Your child will be asked to name each one and their responses will be coded into the computer by the adult testing them. At the end of the screen the computer will recommend age appropriate speech programmes with a suggested order of work. If your child has a more complex difficulty then the screen will recommend discussion with your local Speech and language Therapy service.

What happens next?

Your child's school will download programmes and pictures from the web site. They are encouraged to provide you with a copy of the programme and some information sheets suggesting things that you can do at home to support your child's speech development.

If the screen has recommended discussion with the local Speech and Language Therapy service the school will contact them to receive more advice. This may result in a referral to the local clinic. You will be asked for your permission for this to take place.

How can I help?

Research has shown that parents can make a great difference to how quickly a child can learn new sounds. You could try to support your child and the school by working with your child at home when possible. The school will want to work in partnership with you so that practice at home and school gives the child a strong, consistent approach. They may supply you with a copy of the programme as well as a leaflet about supporting speech difficulties. You could suggest keeping a record of what you work on at home and this would be beneficial to you and the school. Sharing a log book would allow you and the school to explore new ideas and to reinforce the programmes to provide good quality, consistent support for your child.

Helping your child with speech sounds

Research has shown that parents are **not** responsible for delays in a child's speech development. However parents can make a big difference to the child's speech development by changing the way they talk and listen to their child.

- 1) Encourage your child to listen to different sounds around them e.g. police car, toilet flushing, vacuum cleaner, aeroplane, next door's dog etc.
- 2) Talk about the sounds you hear and describe them e.g. loud or quiet, long or short, high or low.
- 3) Encourage your child to play with sounds e.g. blowing raspberries, funny laughs, animal sounds.
- 4) Tell your child nursery rhymes and sing simple songs. The ones where you can do actions are the best.
- 5) Encourage all your child's attempts to communicate. Talking is only one way to communicate. Actions, pointing, pulling faces even crying are all ways a child can tell you something.
- 6) Watch your child carefully and listen to them. Wait for them to tell you something whatever way they can.
- 7) Copy your child's sounds, words or actions. This lets them know you have understood and encourages them to try again.
- 8) Slow down. If you slow your speech down your child will find it easier to keep up.
- 9) If your child makes a mistake, say what they said back the right way e.g. if they say 'pid', you say 'That's right it's a pig'.
- 10) Don't make your child say things back after you. If you give them time you will find they do this naturally.