



# Universal and SEND Support Strategies and Resources

## Communication and Interaction

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## A Graduated Approach

In line with the Graduated Approach outlined in Section B - A Graduated Approach [www.bathnes.gov.uk/oap-graduated-approach](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/oap-graduated-approach) and in the SEND Code of Practice, 2015 (CoP), settings should begin with high-quality, inclusive teaching and progress through increasingly targeted support based on the assessed need.

### Universal Level (HQT/QFT):

- Classroom practice: Review structures, routines, and lesson delivery to ensure consistency, accessibility, and emotional safety.
- Expectations: Revisit Section A [www.bathnes.gov.uk/oap-setting-expectations](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/oap-setting-expectations) and the setting's expectations for universal, high-quality teaching and learning for all. Identify and address any staff training needs.
- Strategies: Universal strategies listed in Section C should be ordinarily available in all settings.

### Targeted Support (SEND Support):

- Assessment: Complete a thorough assessment across all four areas of need. Identify the primary area of need and set SMART targets.
- Provision: Agree on tailored strategies and support.
- Implementation: Deliver targeted interventions and monitor progress using the Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR) cycle.

This approach ensures that a CYP with SEND receives timely, appropriate, and coordinated support. It focuses on identifying and addressing underlying needs through a holistic and inclusive lens.

The following sections provide detailed guidance for schools on meeting needs through both universal and targeted SEND support.



## Communication and Interaction - Universal

### Definition

CYP with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), which includes autism, experience differences in expressing themselves, understanding language and how they interact with others and the world around them. Each CYP's profile is unique and can change over time, with differences potentially affecting one or multiple aspects of speech, language, or social communication at different stages of life (SEND Code of Practice 2015; 6.28 & 6.29).

In line with the outlined Graduated Approach (see section B [www.bathnes.gov.uk/oap-graduated-approach](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/oap-graduated-approach)), settings should begin with high-quality, inclusive teaching and progress through increasingly targeted support (if required), based on assessed and identified need.

These strategies are in addition to the whole-setting expectations in Section A [www.bathnes.gov.uk/oap-setting-expectations](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/oap-setting-expectations)

### SEND Code of Practice 2015 (CoP)

In addition to high-quality teaching, it is expected that settings will provide some of the strategies below to meet the needs of the CYP.

Some CYP may require more significant adaptations to be made. It is important to consider how a CYP might present in their community and their setting.

This section provides a comprehensive range of strategies across the key areas of using and understanding language and social communication.

Promoting positive communication environments is the responsibility of all members of staff in the setting, and should include strategies to support:

- Focus and Listening
- Understanding Language and Communication
- Expressive (spoken) Language and Communication
- Speech
- Vocabulary
- Social Development, Interaction and Play
- Flexibility of Thought

## Understanding, Speaking, Focus and Vocabulary

### Focus and Listening

- The environment is well organised and calm.
- Flexible seating arrangements are carefully considered to optimise focus.
- CYP's name first, and subtle, non-verbal prompts are used to gain attention.
- Visual supports/prompts are consistently used to gain and maintain class attention, e.g. a 'stop and look' symbol card.
- Clear expectations of lessons/activities/tasks, including the order they will be completed, are established with visual cues.
- Key behaviours for successful listening and focus are taught, explicitly reinforced, and modelled.
- Specific activities that encourage and practise attention and listening skills are implemented, e.g. CYP participate in 'listening pairs' where one CYP shares information, and the other must retell key points.
- Positive reinforcement, alongside visuals (e.g. Widgit symbols), is used to promote good listening behaviour.
- Prior knowledge and interests are incorporated to motivate CYP.
- Understanding is checked through asking CYP to explain tasks back, rather than just repeating instructions.
- Developmentally appropriate instructions are used, e.g. short, simple, direct sentences.
- Opportunities are provided for peer interactions, with scaffolding where appropriate, to maintain CYPs' interest, e.g. "I agree because..." "In my opinion it is...".
- Reward systems that are clear, visual, and consistent are in place to promote focus and attention.
- Quiet workstations, low arousal work areas, or individual desks are available as needed.



## Receptive (understanding) Language and Communication

- Context of learning is clearly established before moving into details.
- Processing time is given by staff, who pause long enough and avoid rephrasing.
- Speed and quantity of language used with CYP are carefully considered.
- CYP understanding is checked by asking them to describe 'what' they are learning.
- Information is given in clear, concise, and accessible language and abstract language is avoided.
- CYP are encouraged to indicate when they have not understood and given ways to do this, e.g. 'I need help' cards or agreed non-verbal signals.
- Multi-sensory approaches to teaching new vocabulary and concepts are used, with opportunities for repetition and reinforcement. Objects of reference are used when appropriate.
- Visuals are used alongside verbal instructions – 'words disappear, visuals don't.'
- Longer instructions are chunked and clearly sequenced.
- Teaching vocabulary is a core part of planning and delivering learning, e.g. using word webs, CYP dictionary etc.
- Command words are explicitly taught to support understanding and processing of instructions.
- Relevant examples support understanding and build on CYPs' differing experiences.
- Questions are adapted to different language levels, e.g. 'what/where' questions are more accessible than 'how/why'.
- Key words are emphasised using slight stress and/or appropriate non-verbal communication, e.g. showing, gestures, picture supports.
- Negative instructions are avoided, and staff positively reframe what they want to see, e.g. "Don't shout," is replaced with "Quiet voice, thank you,".
- Sarcasm, ambiguities, and idioms are avoided, or explicitly explained where necessary.



## Expressive (spoken) Language and Communication

- Specific praise for clear communication is used to build CYP confidence, e.g. "I really liked how clearly you explained your idea,".
- Stimuli, chosen for interest, are used to encourage engagement in oracy.
- Language is modelled back by staff using correct grammatical structure and content, rather than directly correcting CYP.
- Modelling and expansion of language occur frequently in social and learning contexts throughout the school day, e.g. CYP says, "ball gone," and adult says, "The ball has gone in the box,".
- Scaffolding is provided to help CYP respond and join in with discussions, e.g. prompting questions, encouragement to re-order ideas, visual support.
- Sentence starters, stems, and scripts are used to support spoken language.
- Opportunities for language rehearsal and development are provided before ideas are shared with others (verbally or in writing), e.g. talk partners.
- Word finding strategies are used to support CYP who find word retrieval difficult, such as talking around a word and description techniques.
- Approaches that help CYP structure thoughts and ideas are used consistently, e.g. story planners, narrative templates, concept maps.
- Alternatives to talking are available as communication, e.g. use of gestures, pointing, symbols, writing and technology.



### Speech

- Clear speech and pronunciation are modelled by all staff.
- Rate of conversation is considered to reduce pressure on CYP to respond quickly.
- Language and specific words are modelled back accurately, and the CYP's message responded to regardless of any mistakes with pronunciation, e.g. if a CYP asks, "Where's the dup (cup)?" responding, "The cup is here," rather than directly correcting speech.
- Alternative communication methods are modelled and made accessible by staff, e.g. gestures, showing, communication boards, visuals.

## Vocabulary

- New vocabulary is systematically taught, explained, and rehearsed.
- Whole class pre and post teaching of vocabulary is used to introduce new topic vocabulary.
- Multiple-meaning words are explicitly taught, e.g. words like 'bank' or 'light' are explored in context.
- Specific vocabulary is used and modelled in response to empty words such as 'thing' or 'nice.'
- Word finding strategies are taught to support with vocabulary difficulties, e.g. talking around a word and description techniques.
- A range of actions and visuals are used as part of teaching vocabulary and reinforced using retrieval.
- Opportunities are provided for ideas to be shared that relate to new vocabulary, providing context and making links to existing experiences.
- Vocabulary resources, e.g. word banks and word webs are available to support learning.
- Dictionaries and thesauruses are accessible to CYP, who are taught how to use them.



## Social Communication

### Social Development, Interaction and Play

- Social knowledge is explicitly taught, e.g. staff use structured activities (role-play, social stories, modelling) to teach skills such as turn-taking, personal space, greetings, and active listening.
- Rules of social interaction are modelled.
- Positive reinforcement and redirection are used to encourage social behaviour.
- Specific roles are given in group work to support peer interaction, with explicit teaching on how to work in groups, e.g. roles such as Instigator, Builder, Challenger, Clarifier, Prober, and Summariser.
- CYP voice around what they feel comfortable with is sought, understood and valued by staff.
- Opportunities to share experiences with others are provided, using prompts as appropriate.
- Confidence and self-esteem are developed by providing CYP with opportunities to share their strengths and achievements and take responsibility within tasks.
- Emotion words are taught using visuals, including pictures, photographs, and videos.
- Emotion Coaching is used to help to narrate CYP's experiences and notice what is happening.
- Relational approaches, such as PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy) and WINE (Wonder, Imagine, Notice Empathy) are embedded in daily practice.
- Recognition and reflection on emotions in different contexts are encouraged.
- Strategies for calming and self-regulation are explicitly taught.
- Understanding of physical sensations and emotional triggers is encouraged by exploring where emotions are felt in the body.
- Flexible grouping strategies are used, where the CYP can work with appropriate pairings / groups / or work individually if needed. Consider social demands being placed on the CYP, the task, how they are on that day, how they have been prepared for the task.
- Social communication conventions, e.g. impulse control, waiting to speak, turn taking, listening, are taught and reinforced.
- Social Stories/Situational Stories and Social Situation Mapping are used to support understanding and choices.
- A safe space or a trusted adult is accessible to CYP when they are feeling overwhelmed.
- Structured alternatives during unstructured times are available.
- Peer understanding and acceptance of everyone's uniqueness are actively supported, e.g. through whole-class activities, assemblies, and awareness weeks.

## Flexibility of Thought

- Structure of the day is made clear to CYP through an accessible timetable.
- Transition strategies are implemented to support CYP with changes and unexpected events, e.g. advance warning, preparation, change/surprise cards, first-next boards.
- Preparation is made for activities that take place outside of the normal setting context, e.g. homework and educational visits.
- Clear signage is used, and specific areas are labelled clearly and appropriately, e.g. 'Staff Only'.
- A consistent visual cue system supports instructions across the setting, e.g. set signals for 'Listen' or 'Quiet work'.
- Choices are reduced to provide 2-3 positive options.
- Overviews of new learning are shared in advance and opportunities provided for becoming familiar with content; knowledge organisers could be used to support this.
- Sequential language, supported by visuals, is used by staff, e.g. 'First, Next'.
- Time management strategies are implemented to help CYP manage time-limited tasks, e.g. visual timers, task planners, warnings before task completion / pre-warnings of time coming to an end.
- Additional processing time is given to support with planning, organising, and completing tasks.
- Backward chaining strategies are used where appropriate, giving CYP the opportunity to complete the final stages of a task, then gradually complete the earlier steps.



## Sensory

Please see the [Sensory Section in Sensory and Physical](#).

## Resources - Evidence-based advice and interventions

### Receptive and Expressive Language

#### Advice / Links

**Afasic** supports and provides information for families with children and young adults who have Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) with a focus on Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) <https://www.afasic.org.uk/>

**Black Sheep Press** provide resources for teachers and speech and language therapists working with CYP who have DLD and SLCN. [https://www.blacksheepress.co.uk/?srsrltid=AfmBOoqfY5VjEthtg3ScZSbAaovihzA-qZQL0F\\_Rbxv4KIm4iPwEzrbF](https://www.blacksheepress.co.uk/?srsrltid=AfmBOoqfY5VjEthtg3ScZSbAaovihzA-qZQL0F_Rbxv4KIm4iPwEzrbF)

**Elklan's Communication Friendly Settings (CFS) Programme** is a nationally accredited training pathway designed to empower educational settings to develop high-quality and inclusive practices to support CYP's SLCN. <https://www.elklan.co.uk/Training/Settings/CFSe/>

**The Better Research Programme reviews interventions for CYP with SLCN** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exploring-interventions-for-children-and-young-people-with-speech-language-and-communication-needs-a-study-of-practice>

**HCRG Children's Speech and Language Therapy** <https://bswcommunityservices.co.uk/services/childrens-speech-and-language-therapy/>

**I-CAN** Information on a range of issues affecting CYP's SLCN in education. <https://www.icancharity.org.uk/>

**SpeechBITE TM** [www.speechbite.com](http://www.speechbite.com) Database providing open access to a catalogue of Best Interventions and Treatment Efficacy across the scope of speech pathology practice.

**The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)** Compendium of EBP Guidelines and systematic reviews <https://www.asha.org/>

**The British Stammering Association** <https://stamma.org/>

**The Communication Trust** (Speech and Language UK)

<https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/talking-point/for-professionals/the-communication-trust/>  
Evidence based interventions for communication and interaction needs.

**The RALLI campaign** [www.youtube.com/rallicampaign](http://www.youtube.com/rallicampaign) Created to Raise Awareness of Language Learning Impairment (RALLI) and includes videos that explain what a language impairment is, the impact it can have and how to get help.

**Interventions****Backward Chaining**

<https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/media/249067/backward-chaining-information-sheet.pdf>

**Colourful Semantics** is a language-based intervention designed to support children in developing their spoken and written language skills. It focuses on helping CYP understand and construct sentence structure by using a colour-coded system.

<https://learningjournals.co.uk/colourful-semantics-children-can-develop-language-colour/>

**Concept Cat** is an evidence-based approach that supports Early Years children's vocabulary and language development. It is a whole class approach for children aged 3 to 5 years that teaches important early concepts such as 'next, equal and between.'

<https://thinkingtalking.co.uk/concept-cat/>

**Cued Articulation** is a set of hand cues for teaching the individual sounds in a word. The hand movements are logical – each hand movement represents one sound, and the cue gives clues as to how and where the sound is produced.

<https://www.soundsforliteracy.com.au/cued-articulation.html>

**Independent Word Learning Skills**

<https://alexquigley.co.uk/7-strategies-to-explore-unfamiliar-vocabulary/>

**Jolly Grammar** <https://shop.jollylearning.co.uk/pages/sgp?srsltid=AfmBOopKHIOFerlbyCwoPs-7L4MiQ5uDLimrxwyU7bc0RtqGSEZHDnA>

**Language Through Colour** - developed by Speech and Language Therapists, this approach uses a simple colour-coded system to categorise word types and is super-effective in helping CYP to process information; this in turn helps them to develop the skills and confidence needed to make sense of what they are reading – to become fluent readers. <https://www.lgs.kent.sch.uk/language-through-colour/>

**Pre-teaching/ over-learning**

<https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/content/best-practice/teaching-interventions-pre-and-over-learning>

**Word Aware** is a structured whole school approach to promote the vocabulary development of all CYP. Focused on whole class learning, the resource is of particular value for those who start at a disadvantage – including CYP with DLD, SEND and those who speak EAL, but it will extend the word learning of all CYP.

<https://thinkingtalking.co.uk/word-aware/>

**Social Communication****Advice / Links**

**Ambitious about Autism** [www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk](http://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk)

**Neuroinclusive Education Network** <https://www.nen.org.uk/>

Formerly Autism Education Trust, provides training, resources and standards, competency framework, and progression framework. The majority of materials are free to download and supported by DfE and Ofsted.

**HCRH Needs Led Approach**

<https://bswcommunityservices.co.uk/needs-led-approach/>

**HCRG Children's Neurodevelopmental Pathway**

<https://bswcommunityservices.co.uk/services/neurodevelopmental-pathway/>

**National Autistic Society** [www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)

**New SASS Guide for Education Settings** - <https://padlet.com/SASSBathnes/sass-updated-documents-4fxo0z0f9y5iv5sy/wish/MxrmZY9EizRdZGOq>

**SASS – The Specialist Autism Support Service for B&NES** -

<https://padlet.com/SASSBathnes>



## Interventions

**5-Point Scale** <https://www.5pointscale.com/>

**Circle of Friends** An intervention aimed primarily at improving the inclusion of CYP with SEND within schools and classes. It works by gathering the CYP's peers in a circle of friendly support to help the CYP with their problem solving.

<https://www.inclusive-solutions.com/circles/circle-of-friends>

**Comic Book Conversations** (developed by Carol Gray) are a visual way to help explore a CYP's thoughts and feelings about a situation.

<https://www.sirona-cic.org.uk/children-services/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2023/08/TK02-Comic-Strip-Conversations-Top-Tips.pdf>  
<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/about-autism/autism-and-communication>

**Eisenhower Matrix** is a time management tool that organises tasks into four quadrants based on their urgency and importance to help you decide what to do next.

<https://www.eisenhower.me/eisenhower-matrix/>

**Emotion Coaching** – <https://www.emotioncoachinguk.com/>

**PECS** - Picture Exchange Communication System. <https://pecs-unitedkingdom.com/pecs/>

**Situational Stories** are short narratives that depict a character within a specific scenario, often for the purpose of teaching, illustrating a point, or developing a character's understanding of the world. <https://tinyurl.com/34u6uz5v>

<https://literacytrust.org.uk/blog/library-lifeline-part-12-using-situation-books-to-support-pupils-and-strengthen-their-capacity-for-empathy/>

**Social Situation Mapping** (formerly Social Behaviour Mapping), is a core teaching framework within the Social Thinking® Methodology that uses visual templates to encourage learners to engage social observation for figuring out what to do and say (or not do and say) based on a particular situation.

<https://www.socialthinking.com/products/social-situation-mapping>

**Socially Speaking** will help you to introduce and practise skills your CYP need to develop and maintain relationships and to lead independent lives outside the school context. It is a unique social skills programme that lasts a whole school year.

<https://www.ldalearning.com/product/fe00000410>

**Social Stories** are a type of social script, a short, personalised narrative used to help CYP, particularly those with autism, understand social situations, new experiences, and expectations by providing clear, descriptive information about what to expect and why.

<https://carolgraysocialstories.com/social-stories/>

**TEACCH** or Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communications Handicapped Children, is an evidence-based, lifelong program designed to support individuals with autism spectrum disorders by understanding their culture and strengths.

<https://teacch.com/>

**Talkabout** is a structured, hierarchical approach to teaching social skills, self-esteem, and friendship skills. Later books include programmes to develop sex and relationship skills, theory of mind, and transition skills.

<https://routledgelearning.com/tass/the-talkabout-resources/>

**Time to Talk** has been developed to teach and develop oral language and social interaction skills to children aged 4 years + to make these aspects of school easier.

<https://www.ldalearning.com/product/fe00000514>

## General

### B&NES' EPS Provision Bank

<https://livewell.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-11/EPS%20Evidence%20Informed%20Assessment%20and%20Provision%20Bank%20November%202025%20V1.pdf>

### EDUCATION Endowment Foundation

Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/send>

Five a day: supporting high-quality teaching for pupils with SEND

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/supporting-high-quality-teaching-for-pupils-with-send?x-craft-live-preview=61bd011dbcab3de68fce89ff8b99b04e4bcf872be96b3d086e964c1d0aecd679ggtxqyqavq>

Selecting Interventions for pupils with SEND <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/selecting-interventions?x-craft-live-preview=61bd011dbcab3de68fce89ff8b99b04e4bcf872be96b3d086e964c1d0aecd679ggtxqyqavq>

### Whole School SEND Teacher Handbook

<https://www.wholeschoosend.org.uk/resources?title=teacher%20handbook>

### Whole School SEND Interactive Teacher Toolkits

<https://www.wholeschoosend.org.uk/toolkits>

### Whole School SEND CPD and events

<https://www.wholeschoosend.org.uk/events>

## Communication and Interaction - SEND Support

### Definition

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In line with the outlined Graduated Approach (see Section B [www.bathnes.gov.uk/oap-graduated-approach](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/oap-graduated-approach)), settings should begin with high-quality, inclusive teaching and progress through increasingly targeted support, based on assessed and identified need.

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### [SEND Code of Practice 2015 \(CoP\)](#)

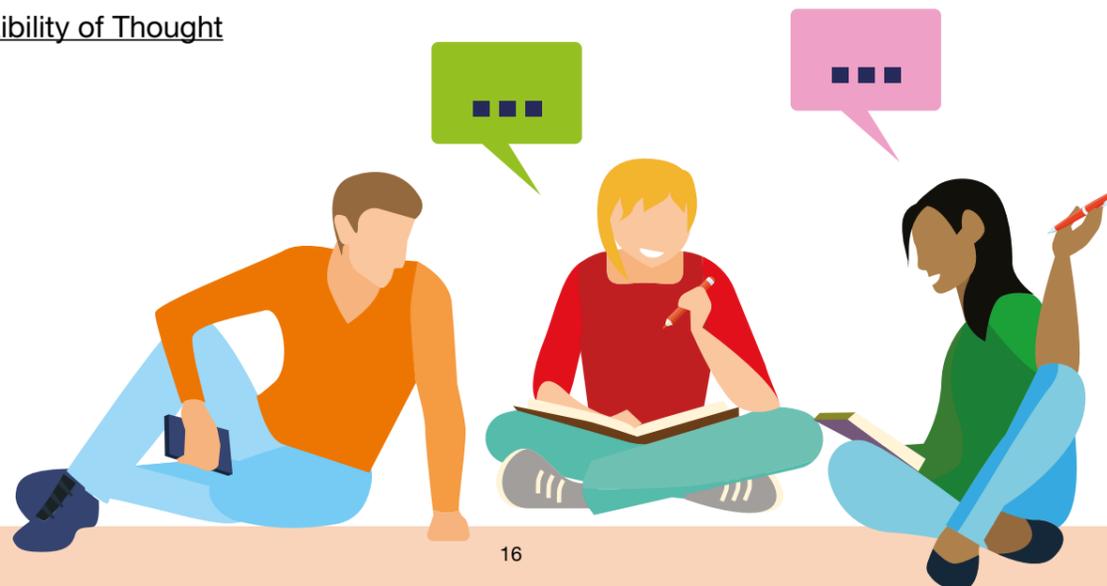
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- [Focus and Listening](#)
- [Understanding Language and Communication](#)
- [Expressive \(spoken\) Language and Communication](#)
- [Speech](#)
- [Vocabulary](#)
- [Social Development, Interaction and Play](#)
- [Flexibility of Thought](#)



## Understanding, Speaking, Focus and Vocabulary

### SEND Support

Some CYP will need targeted support which is different from and additional to the support provided to the majority of CYP in the setting.

The frequency, duration, context, and extent of universal, HQT strategies may be increased under SEND Support. The individual strategies needed for each CYP will be identified, formally recorded, and implemented on an individual or small group basis. This will be recorded through an APDR cycle.

See Section B for more information [www.bathnes.gov.uk/oap-graduated-approach](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/oap-graduated-approach)

### Focus and Listening

- Individualised reward systems are used for specific CYP to promote focus and attention.
- Tasks are broken down into sections based on individual CYP's level of focus.  
*Example: A CYP with limited focus might receive a task in single-step chunks, with each step only revealed once the previous one is completed.*
- Special interests, individualised to CYP, are incorporated into learning, where possible, to focus attention and increase motivation.
- Personalised visual prompts or objects are used to maintain focus, e.g. personalised 'Now and Next' boards, task strips, or object cues.
- Personalised teaching of active listening skills is used then reinforced in the whole class.  
*Example: Modelling and role-play activities are used in small groups where staff demonstrate active listening and CYP practise using sentence starters like, "I heard you say..." or "Can you say that again?"*
- Backward chaining is used to maintain interest and achievement.  
*Example: In a Science experiment, the teacher offers a bespoke model of the final result and then works back through the steps to get there.*
- Workstations/designated areas are provided for certain CYP to offer structure, aid concentration, and reduce anxiety.
- Individual workstations/designated areas contain personalised visual supports and reminders to help maintain focus.
- Systems that reinforce working from left to right, e.g. a work tray on the left and finished box on the right, are offered to some CYP to provide a clear, visual workflow.

## Understanding (receptive) Language and Communication

- Assessment of a CYP's receptive language needs is undertaken, particularly for CYP with challenges in verbal reasoning across curriculum areas.
- The number of information carrying words a CYP can access is considered when instructions are given, and they are broken down into clear steps with visual support where necessary.
- Strategies and resources are used to support individual CYP with instructions, e.g. simple choices, reduced complexity and sentence length, 'Now, Next, Then' boards, task lists.
- Interventions, focused on individual language targets, e.g. sentence length, complex instructions, language comprehension, are provided.
- Colours and shapes are used to show CYP how to build sentences and use grammar correctly, e.g. Colourful Semantics, Language Through Colour, Jolly Grammar.

## Expressive (spoken) Language and Communication

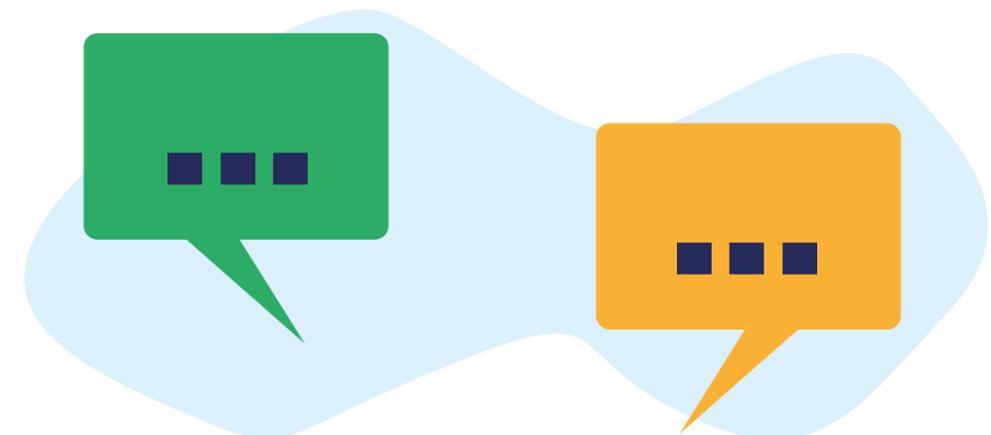
- Assessment of CYP's expressive language needs is undertaken where there are concerns.
- Incident narrative structures are used to support understanding and narrative around social situations, using pictures and diagrams to support with seeing others' perspectives and possible reactions.
- Opportunities to practise giving instructions or verbal descriptions are provided.  
*Example: Barrier Games, where one CYP describes a picture or how to build a structure, while the other follows instructions without seeing it.*
- Narrative skills are built on through additional opportunities and access to small group activities.  
*Example: Small group activities such as story circles, comic strip creation, or drama-based storytelling allow CYP to practise sequencing, character description, and cause-effect language in a supportive setting.*
- Visual schemes, which use colours and shapes, are used to help CYP build sentences and use grammar correctly, e.g. Colourful Semantics, Language Through Colour, Jolly Grammar.
- Explicit small-group teaching is in place for developing age-appropriate grammatical structures.
- Interventions are provided to work on expressive language targets, e.g. expanding sentence structure, using descriptive vocabulary, and improving clarity.

## Speech

- Speech sound and/or phonological awareness interventions are provided to CYP to work on speech targets, which may include adapted phonics sessions.
- Bespoke speech sound phonological awareness programmes are used, as directed by a Speech and Language Therapist (SALT).
- Gesture systems are used to support CYP's specific sound needs, e.g. Cued Articulation. These systems provide visual and kinaesthetic cues that help CYP understand how sounds are made and where they occur in the mouth, as advised by a SALT.

## Vocabulary

- Pre and post teaching of vocabulary is used, with semantic and phonological cues. This can be included in intervention time and sent home if possible.  
*Example: Semantic cues: linking the word to meaning, e.g. "photo" = light. Phonological cues: breaking the word into syllables and practising pronunciation. The same words are revisited through games, quizzes, or sentence-building tasks, whenever possible (spaced retrieval).*
- Prioritisation of selected, relevant words is used as part of personalised vocabulary support.  
*Example: Staff identify core vocabulary for each unit, e.g. 'evaporation,' 'condensation' and focus on teaching these words explicitly to certain CYP, ensuring they are revisited and used in multiple contexts.*
- Personalised dictionaries and word webs are used to record, learn and recap new vocabulary.  
*Example: CYP maintain their own vocabulary books or digital dictionaries with definitions, pictures, and example sentences. Word webs are used to explore connections, e.g. 'energy' linked to 'power,' movement,' 'heat'.*
- Targeted vocabulary support programmes are provided, e.g. Word Aware, Independent Word Learning Skills, Concept Cat, as well as CYP being given opportunities for additional exposure.



## Social Communication

### Social Development, Interaction and Play

- Important skills and rules of social interaction are taught, with modelling and use of key phrases practised with individual CYP, e.g. “Can I join in?”.
- Turn taking is taught in small groups and then reinforced in the whole class.  
*Example: In targeted intervention groups, e.g. social knowledge or speech and language sessions, staff explicitly teach turn-taking using structured activities like board games, role-play, or conversation circles.*
- A 5-point scale, or suitable alternative, to reinforce self-regulation is used.
- Awareness of potential triggers is recognised and shared with staff, and de-escalation strategies are taught when the CYP is regulated.
- Methods for CYP to communicate when they need help or feel unsafe are taught, e.g. teaching the CYP to use, “Please stop, I don’t like that!”.
- Interpersonal problem-solving is explicitly taught, e.g. the language needed for negotiation: “I understand your idea, but please can we try mine after?”.
- Access to a buddy/peer support system is provided.
- Visuals and scripts are used to support CYP in knowing what they can do when feeling anxious or overwhelmed in social situations.  
*Example: Provide a ‘What to do if I feel anxious’ flowchart in the CYP’s planner or on their desk.*
- Personalised Social Stories/Situational Stories and Social Situation Mapping are used to support a reflective conversation once the CYP is regulated.
- Bespoke opportunities to learn what different emotions look like, and appropriate responses are provided - this is reinforced throughout the day.
- Social knowledge is taught explicitly using structured programmes and interventions, e.g. Time to Talk, Socially Speaking, Talkabout.
- A safe space or trusted member of staff is always accessible to CYP, with clear individualised planning on how and when they are accessed. The safe space includes calming tools, e.g. weighted blanket, sensory items, and a visual schedule for returning to class.
- Opportunities to ‘check in’ regularly with a trusted member of staff are provided, supported by a staff team who understand a CYP’s needs (avoiding an over-reliance on one member of staff).
- Bespoke Comic Strip Conversations are used to support CYP to understand the views and actions of themselves and others.  
*Example: After a misunderstanding with a peer, the CYP is supported to draw a comic strip showing what they said, what the other person said, and what each was thinking/feeling (using different shaped bubbles). Staff guide the CYP to add alternative responses for next time, supporting perspective-taking.*
- Structured alternatives during unstructured times are available, e.g. following a bespoke schedule or menu of activities; giving some choice is supportive, too much choice can increase anxiety.

### Flexibility of Thought

- Strategies to manage potential stressful events are taught and a plan is in place for if a CYP needs to have some time and space e.g. a selection of activities to support with self-regulation.
- Calm, firm and consistent approaches to managing learning behaviour are used, related to rewards that are motivating for individual CYP where possible.
- Tasks are broken down into manageable steps with a clear start and finish by using individualised and adapted resources.  
*Example: For a piece of writing, provide:*
  - Step 1: Choose topic (visual choice board);
  - Step 2: Write 3 bullet points;
  - Step 3: Turn each bullet into a sentence.
- Preparation for transitions is provided and support for managing change is offered using objects of reference, sound cues, visual timetables, and individual schedules.
- Extra support is provided before and after transitions for CYP who experience heightened anxiety levels.
- ‘Change’ and ‘surprise’ symbols are specifically highlighted to individual CYP to further support understanding of change to routine.  
*Example: A brightly coloured ‘change’ icon is used on the CYP’s visual timetable for any altered activity. Before the change happens, staff show the symbol and explain: “This means something will be different today.”.*
- TEACCH approaches are used.
- Structured time is scheduled for CYP to explore and develop their special interests (sometimes shortened to ‘Spln’ - spins), or CYP have access to a space that they can use at break or lunchtimes for this. A visual schedule is used showing when Spln time will happen so the CYP can anticipate and prepare.
- The Pause Button strategy is used: ‘press pause’ if the CYP is not engaging and present them with an alternative activity, reducing the anxiety of not completing a task in one go.
- Task Prioritising Grids are used to reduce overwhelm and improve task initiation; these can be adapted depending on CYP level (based on the Eisenhower matrix).

### Sensory

Please see the [Sensory Section in Sensory and Physical](#)