

Speech, Language and Communication (SLCN) in Secondary schools

n) Functional use of Language: Conversational skills

Characteristics

Difficulties turn taking during a conversation including waiting one's turn
Problems initiating/maintaining a topic of conversation or "staying on topic"
Lack of awareness of the listener's needs or knowledge
Inability to repair a breakdown in a conversation
Miss understanding of what is said in a conversation
Inability to adjust one's use of language according to the person you are talking with and the situation
Problems understanding hidden meaning
Lack of understanding and use of social register
Poor negotiation skills
Problems sharing equipment, collaborating with others, understanding social rules and expectations, working part of a team
Lack of awareness and use of non-verbal communication skills, for example, eye contact, facial expression, posture, gesture and tone of voice
May speak too loudly or quietly
May take on the adult role and / or want to lead
Problems understanding and using vocabulary of emotions

Possible skills affected

Contributing to whole class and group discussions
Social relationships with peers and adults in formal and informal situations
Working with others in practical lessons for example, science experiments, PE, DT
Social and emotional well-being
Life skills, including independence
Coping with new and everyday situations
Expressing emotions
Some pupils may become disaffected, socially isolated

Strategies

General/Whole school

Whole school policies for personal and social skills development that includes awareness of possible difficulties and strategies to support these needs
Make policies clear to all staff, students and parents and ensure that these are applied consistently across the school
School/classroom displays of rules
Staff training - awareness of differences in needs and strategies for behaviour, social and emotional needs compared with ASC and ADHD associated communication difficulties
Use a social skills checklist for identified children/young people
Identified approaches and key workers
Consider and manage less structured times of the day, for example a "pass" for early lunch, designated quiet areas, time out cards and traffic light systems
Consider small group activities and /or programmes for the teaching of social skills

Teacher

As above plus

Check understanding regularly

Use positive role models and explain why these are models are “good”

Praise specific positive behaviours

Do not follow up inappropriate and or tangential responses or questions, but bring the student back to topic

Be sensitive towards children/young people who might find it difficult to express themselves and support the student to feel more calm rather than questioning or trying to provide immediate solutions - then apply simple questions, minimising the amount of language used

Avoid sarcasm or idiom to avoid being taken literally, but if used, explain

Encourage culture of asking for repetition or seeking clarification if they have not understood

Provide time to discuss why we do things in a certain way

Explicitly teach rules of games and sports

Provide social scripts and/or roles within group activities

Some children/young people may need to rehearse and discuss before being given a specific role within a group

Practice social skills through role play in drama and social skills

Support staff

Support above plus

May be leading or supporting social skills training, for example, “Talk About”, “Let’s Speak”, perhaps use of Social Stories, teaching vocabulary of emotions and relating to real life contexts. Support discussion of social behaviours for example use of TV programmes such as “soaps” and incidents in school and local community.

Forewarn of changes

Provide prompts possibly in the form of cue cards to manage: behaviour, feelings, adult and social interactions, for example turn-taking

Facilitate partner ,small group work, conversation and discussion - try to support interaction rather than always being the designated partner and/or leader - for example conversation starters, expressing opinion and understanding the views of others as well as a specific role within a group activity

Provide the students with useful phrases and the context of when these are used

Alert the child/young person to incidental but important information

Help the child/young person to self-evaluate their performance

Students

Practice what has been done in social skills groups at home

Use checklists to self-evaluate

Identify strengths and weaknesses

Plan and discuss targets/goals with parent/carer and key worker

Observe peers and discuss with parents/carer, key worker and buddy

Use “help” cards

Linked Resources

All Talk English 14-19 www.bt.com/alltalk (DVD, website and book)

Talkgym www.bt.com/alltalk

Kelly (2009) Talk About for Teenagers - Speechmark

Hayden. S and Jordan. E "Group rules poster", "Active listening" cue cards, "seeking clarification" cue cards from Language for Learning in the Secondary School

Comic Strip Conversations - www.thegreycenter.org

Social Stories - www.thegreycenter.org

Talking About Conversation - Black Sheep Press

Informal Assessment of Communication Skills - Black Sheep Press

Social Communication Profile - Black Sheep Press

Quality Circle Time in the Secondary School - David Fulton

J. Gross (2013) Supporting Speech, Language and Communication needs J. Gross 2013 - Sage Publications Limited

Don't take it so Literally - Winslow Press

Social Emotional Aspects of Learning - National Strategies(2007)

Communication Skills for Young Citizens-parents edition – DVD www.bt.com/education

Ripley K. and Barrett J (2008) Supporting Speech, language and Communication Needs Sage Publications

Gross. J. (2013) Time to Talk (See checklists, case studies and strategies) - Nasen

Locke. A (2006) One Step at a Time (see basic emotional vocabulary) network continuum