

Speech and Language Support Sheet 24

Speech Sound development.

Children learn to talk and use speech sounds by listening to those around them. They start to play with sounds and eventually make strings of noises which we call babble.

Speech sounds develop at different rates; there will be times when children can say some sounds but not others. Different children will also learn these sounds at different speeds; some children may have all their sounds earlier while others take a bit longer.

What to expect

18 -24 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few sounds are developing and the sounds you may hear are p b t d m and w. • The ends of words are often missing but you can generally understand what they are saying half the time.
2-3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More sounds are being used, but longer words will be shortened e.g. 'nana' for banana. • It will be hard to say words where lots of sounds blend together e.g. spoon may be boon.
3-5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trickier sounds such as r w l f th sh ch z and sometimes s can still be unclear
4-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most sounds are clear but longer words may still prove difficult some sounds like th may still be hard.

Some children take a bit longer to get to these sounds right but most will get there without too much help. We have included a chart of the range of normal development for each sound.

Access Criteria for SCHS SLT input

SCHS SLT department provide input for children with severe and significant speech difficulties. We will provide advice and input to children who present with 2 or more of the following criteria.

- Unintelligible to familiar adults or to most adults
- Unable to produce age appropriate sounds in isolation after practice
- Sound development delayed by 2 years or more
- Disordered pattern of speech sounds
- Difficulties with a range of sounds expected by their age
- High levels of frustration

The emphasis with all speech work is regular practice and this will need to be carried out regularly at home and school for maximum impact on a child's speech development.

The Speech and Language therapist will provide ideas and materials to help you practice at home and demonstrate activities that will help encourage practise but the main work will be done by you and your child at home. Little and often is key to making progress.

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This chart shows when speech sounds typically develop. The upper range indicates when 90% of children have learnt a sound e.g. 90% of children will be using 's' by the time they are 7

2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years	6 years	7 years	8 years
p						
m						
h						
w						
n						
	b					
	k					
	g					
	t					
	d					
	ng					
	f					
	r					
	l					
	s					
	ch					
	sh					
	z					
		j				
		v				
			th (thumb)			
			th (that)			
			zh (measure)			

Information based on Bowen, C. (1998). *Developmental phonological disorders. A practical guide for families and teachers*. Melbourne: ACER Press. Grunwell, P. (1997). Natural phonology. In M. Ball & R. Kent (Eds.), *The new phonologies: Developments in clinical linguistics*. San Deigo, CA: Singular Publishing Group, Inc.

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What can you do to help?

When your child is at the stage when they can sit and listen and take turns with you they may benefit from some specific activities to help develop their speech sounds.

Hints and tips....

Playing with sounds and rhymes will help your child learn how words are made up. These skills are linked to how children can tell the difference between sounds and can eventually help them to learn to say them too.

- Sing nursery rhymes
- Clap out the parts of words (Syllables) 'el-e -phant'
- Make up silly rhymes 'the rat sat on the cat!'

Don't over emphasise a word as that may make it sound strange. Help your child listen to the tricky sounds by saying the words they find hard more often. E.g. Look at the cat. He's a big cat.

Repeat back tricky words and don't put pressure on them to say it again. They can't say it the same way as you yet and it will be frustrating for you both to try before they are ready. e.g. they say "I saw a tow" , you say "yes it was a cow"

On the way to school or in the car play games with the sounds they find hard and the sound they mix it up with. So if they mix up /t/ with /s/ try to find words that start with those sounds. (use the sound not the letter) Using both sounds will help them understand the 2 sounds are different. You will also be able to tell if they can hear the difference between the 2 sounds.

Look for pictures in magazines and catalogues with the sounds and make a book together. Again don't make them try to say the words correctly but use it as a way to make them more aware of how the words sound when you say it.

Use a mirror to encourage your child to copy the lip shape for the sound they are practising. Make it fun and avoid putting pressure on them. This could become part of the bedtime routine when you clean your teeth.

If they are very hard to understand use context to help you have a better idea of what they are trying to say. It will be easier to predict what they are saying and to understand them, and will give them a positive experience of being understood. It also gives you the chance to model back the words they are using in a natural play setting.

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