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THE SPEECH & LANGUAGE MAGAZINE FOR SCHOOLS

DON'T MISS OUT

— we're changing the way you receive our magazine — page 18

Supporting phonological awareness

— how Speech Link can help see page 11

ISSUE
34
2026

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SPEECH AND LANGUAGE - THE SECRET TO LITERACY SUCCESS



PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING PDA LEARNERS



WHAT DOES 'UNIVERSAL SUPPORT' REALLY MEAN FOR SLCN?

CONTENTS

3

The Link Live 2026

BACK
FOR 2026

4-5

Ask a therapist

By Emma Higgins, specialist speech and language therapist

6-7

Practical strategies for supporting PDA learners

By Clare Truman, director of Spectrum Space Education



8-10

The secret to literacy success

By Yin Collighan, specialist speech and language therapist

12-13

What does 'universal support' really mean for SLCN?

By Alison Fowle, specialist speech and language therapist

14

The effectiveness of Little Link



15

One TA to another

By Claire Chambers, The Link editor

16-17

Letterbox Club: instilling a love of reading

By Arwenna Davis, head of research and impact, BookTrust



18-19

The Link Community

Editor's Letter



Dear SENCo,

The recent Curriculum and Assessment Review brought some encouraging proposals, including a new framework for oracy and a renewed focus on critical thinking skills.

In this issue, specialist speech and language therapist **Yin Collighan** explores why speech and language skills are crucial for literacy success (pages 8-10). On page 15, our **One TA to another** feature shares practical tips to help pupils evaluate the information they encounter online and in print.

With behaviour once again in the national spotlight, Clare Truman's article (pages 6-7) offers a compassionate and practical guide to supporting pupils with PDA, providing thoughtful adjustments that make a real difference.

As a SENCo, you sit at the heart of the school community: connecting teams, shaping provision, and ensuring that every learner is given the opportunity to thrive. **The Link Community (TLC)** knowledge hub is here to support you in that work, offering practical tools and evidence-informed guidance to help children with SLCN reach their potential (See pages 18-19).

Don't miss out on some TLC – sign up to **The Link Community for your Link Live ticket** and to ensure you keep receiving The Link Primary magazine.

Have a good term.

Claire Chambers

Editor, The Link, Speech & Language Link, award-winning support for SLCN.



Keep your free **Link magazine** coming!

Join **The Link Community (TLC)** today to continue receiving your printed copy each term.

It's simple, delivered straight to you and entirely free.



Social media: @Speech & Language Link
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speechandlanguage.link

Contact our Speech & Language Link Help Desk at:
E: helpdesk@speechlink.co.uk
T: 0333 577 0784

LinkLive

THE LINK LIVE Speech & Language Event

BACK
FOR 2026

Join us at our SLCN conference for practical insights, fresh ideas and inspiring perspectives delivered by the experts for you to take back to your setting.

Free for Link Community members!

EVENT DETAILS

Date: Thursday 30th April 2026

Location: Online

Cost: Free for Link Community members

GRAB YOUR
FREE
TICKETS HERE!



Meet our speakers



ABIGAIL HAWKINS

SEN consultant, author and advocate.
Founder of SENSible SENCO.



SHELBI ANNISON

Shelbi is an adult with dyslexia and developmental language disorder (DLD) and a published author.



ANN MARIE CHRISTIAN

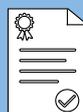
Ann Marie Christian is an International Safeguarding Consultant, trainer, author, and speaker with 30 years of experience as a qualified social worker.



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**FREE FOR THE
LINK COMMUNITY**

ASK A Therapist



By **Emma Higgins**, specialist speech and language therapist at Speech & Language Link

Q: Why did the child pass their Speech Link assessment if I still can't understand them?

A:

This is one of the most common questions we get asked through our Help Desk, as many of you have been busy completing your Speech Link assessments with children who are finding it difficult to make themselves understood, or who still have speech sound errors as they move up through the school.

First, a quick reminder: what do we mean by "speech"?

When we talk about speech, speaking, or talking in this context, we're referring to the **physical ability to make sounds** (e.g., using the mouth, tongue and voice). This is different from language, which is about the words we use and how we put them together.

So why might a child pass the assessment but still be really hard to understand?

There are two main reasons this might happen:

1 Age at the time the assessment is completed.

Some speech sounds don't typically develop until later in childhood. That means a child might not be expected to say certain sounds at the age they currently are, or if they are saying them, they might not be expected to say them correctly yet.

Typical development of English speech sounds:

- Babies start with gurgles and vowel sounds like "ooh" and "aah" (called cooing) at a very early age
- As they grow they begin using simple sounds made with the lips

or front of the tongue, like p, b, t, d, w, m. These sounds combine with vowel sounds to make the babies first approximations of words like "mama," "dada" and "bubu"

- Over the next few years, children gradually learn to say more complex sounds, with most English speech sounds usually in place by ages 6 to 7

It's also common for younger school-aged children to use phonological processes, as their speech develops

These include:

- Replacing certain sounds with ones that are more vowel-like: "wed" instead of red, "yeaf" instead of leaf
- Simplifying sound clusters: "poon" for spoon, "bue" for blue, and "staw" for straw

Depending on the child's age at the time of assessment, these errors might be still age-appropriate, meaning that the child will pass the assessment.

Example: If a child aged 4 years and 6 months says "wabbit" instead of rabbit, they would not be recommended for the *r speech programme* at this stage, as substituting "w" for "r" is still typical for their age.

2 They can say the sound in single words, but not in conversation.

The **Speech Link** assessment checks how well a child can say sounds at the beginning and end of single words (like **cat**, **mouse** or **bridge**). A child might be able to say a sound correctly in a single word, but struggle to use it in their everyday conversational talking.

There are a number of reasons for this:

- The sound is newly learned and hasn't become automatic yet
- The child is focusing on what they want to say, not how to say it. Speaking in full sentences is so much harder than saying single words, due to the demands of increased language skills, which can make it harder for children to use their new sounds correctly

It's important to understand that English speech sound development not only occurs in a typical sound order, but also in a hierarchical process, beginning with the ability to hear the difference between sounds, production of single sounds and culminating in accurate use in spontaneous conversation.

Each **Speech Link** sound programme is designed to support this journey, with seven steps to help children move from single sounds to fluent speech.



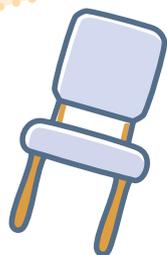
Spoon

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ A child might pass the Speech Link assessment but still have speech difficulties that are age-appropriate or not yet generalised to their everyday conversation
- ✓ Speech sound development is a gradual process and every child progresses at their own pace
- ✓ If a sound error is typical for a child's age, a programme will not be recommended - yet!
- ✓ Keep an eye on how children use sounds in everyday talking, not just in single words

If you're ever unsure about a child's speech development, don't hesitate to get in touch with our Speech & Language Link Help Desk - we're always here to support you!

For more information about our Speech Link support package scan below.




straw




chair




rabbit



Practical strategies for supporting PDA LEARNERS



By **Clare Truman**, director of Spectrum Space Education, Training and Consultancy



Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) is considered by many to be a profile of autism. It is characterised by high levels of anxiety surrounding demands, leading PDA people to resist and avoid the ordinary demands of life. This is not just avoiding direct demands (what other people tell you to do) but also avoiding unwritten expectations (subtle or silent demands) and self-imposed demands (things you want to do). PDA is often described as a drive for autonomy and maximising autonomy is key to supporting PDA learners to thrive.

The first step when supporting a PDA learner, is to reduce the number of demands they are presented with in the first place. I find that demands can usually be divided into three categories:

1. NOT NEEDED

2. NEGOTIABLE

3. NON-NEGOTIABLE

Not needed demands



Some of the demands of a school day can be removed altogether. It may not matter what colour pen a learner uses, they may not need to be reminded that the football club is meeting at lunchtime or asked whether they have brought their football boots. If, when you look at the learner's day, any of the demands they are being presented with seem unimportant, then there could be a great benefit and reduction in anxiety if those demands are simply removed.

Negotiable demands



Most demands in the school day are negotiable demands. How much classwork gets completed, where in the building learning takes place, how new learning is recorded. All these things can be negotiated and presented in a more PDA-friendly way:

Invite instead of instruct: A phrase such as, *"I wonder how many 3D shapes we can make out of these materials"* is an invitation. The sentence, *"Make a cube out of these straws and this plasticine"* is an instruction. Invitations are less demanding than instructions.

Offer choices: Anything that increases the learner's autonomy is valuable. If a lesson includes a cut and stick activity and a colouring activity, young PDA learners may want to choose which order they do those things in. Older learners may be offered a choice between presenting their learning as a written report, visual presentation or mind-map.

Welcome the child's ideas: If we focus on learning targets rather than learning tasks we often find there are opportunities for all learners (including the PDA learner) to bring in their own ideas. If the learning target is to use punctuation effectively, you could offer learners the option to write on any topic of their choice to demonstrate that skill. I often put a line at the bottom of worksheets and instruction sheets that says: *"You may have your own idea"* and invite students to share in that space their own ideas for activities that would meet the learning target.

Say 'Yes' where we can: Often we say, *"No"* when what we mean is, *"Yes, but..."*. When a child asks if they can leave the classroom we may say, *"No, you can't walk around school alone"* when we could instead say, *"Yes, but when Ms Smith comes back because having an adult with you is a safety rule"* or *"Yes, your choices are the library or the study hub"*. By saying yes where we can, we are again maximising the learner's autonomy.

Respect 'No' if we can: Often distress (and sometimes distressed behaviour) is seen when a PDA learner has already told us that they are not able to cope with a demand, but the demand has been restated. They have said, *"No, I'm not doing multiplication today"* and we have insisted that completing the multiplication is



essential. If we can respond instead with curiosity; finding out why multiplication doesn't feel doable today and what we could do to either remove those barriers or find a replacement learning/regulating activity, then we avoid increasing the anxiety and distress the PDA learner is experiencing.

Non-negotiable demands



Some demands are non-negotiable. These will generally be demands related to safety such as

not climbing on high things and not hurting themselves or other people. Non-negotiable demands need to be kept to an absolute minimum. If learners are struggling to follow even these minimal non-negotiable rules, it is important that we offer support to follow them rather than punishments for breaking them. Having a problem-solving conversation about this would be a good approach. An effective way to open these conversations is to say something along the lines of: *"This is a legal rule. What can you do and what can I do to make it easier to follow?"* and then work together to

find strategies that would reduce the learner's anxiety to a level where they have the capacity to meet those non-negotiable demands.

In summary

PDA learners often have a difficult educational journey, but by being thoughtful about which demands we prioritise and remaining focused on maximising the learner's autonomy, we can enable PDA learners to thrive in school and beyond.

READ
MORE
ABOUT
PDA

Clare's book, 'The Teacher's Introduction to Pathological Demand Avoidance: Essential Strategies for the Classroom' is available in bookshops. Clare is director of Spectrum Space (www.spectrumspace.co.uk) which provides distance learning programmes for PDA young people who cannot attend school and training and consultancy for schools and education professionals.



SPEECH AND

The secret to literacy success



By **Yin Collighan**, specialist speech and language therapist at Speech & Language Link

One topic sparks instant curiosity whenever I deliver training. It's a subject that matters deeply to schools, to teaching staff and, most importantly, to the children sitting in our classrooms.

It's the powerful link between speech and language and literacy.

Whether pupils are reading a science question, writing a story, explaining a maths problem or answering a comprehension question, literacy is everywhere.

Strong literacy skills open the door to the whole curriculum. But literacy doesn't develop in a vacuum – it's built on the foundations of spoken language.

Research has shown this time and time again:

- Children with well-developed oral language skills tend to achieve higher levels of reading comprehension later on (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998)
- Studies using computer models of reading show that oral language proficiency is a vital foundation for learning to read (Chang et al., 2020)

Where language skills are weaker, literacy takes a hit. One in four children who struggled with language at age five didn't reach the expected standard in English at the end of primary school, and they were four times more likely to have reading difficulties in adulthood (Law et al., 2017).

That's a huge impact and a strong reminder that supporting children's

language early on is one of the best ways we can help them succeed in literacy later.

How speech and language build literacy

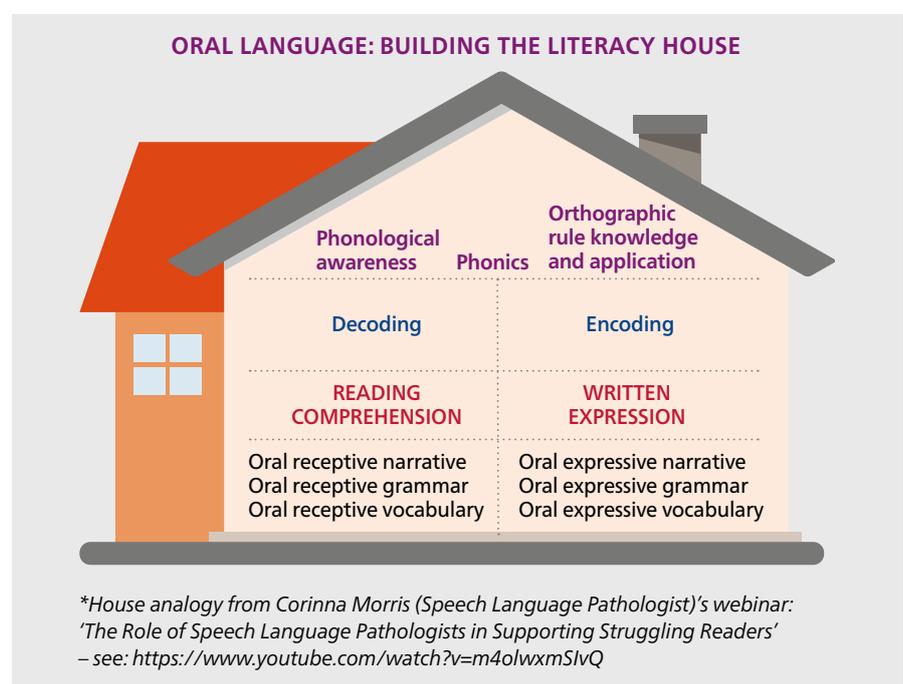
Both talking and writing are ways of communicating thoughts and ideas. Written words are just a visual version of spoken ones. That means the skills we use to talk and understand others are the same skills we draw on to read and write.

Imagine literacy as a house*: the **foundation** is spoken language, while the **roof** represents the speech-sound and phonics skills that connect speech to print. If either the base or the roof is weak, the house is unstable.

Let's look at our house in more detail.

The foundation: spoken language gives everything meaning

Spoken language is where it all begins. It's our ability to understand what others say, and to put our own thoughts into words.



LANGUAGE



Through talking, listening and playing, children build a bank of knowledge:

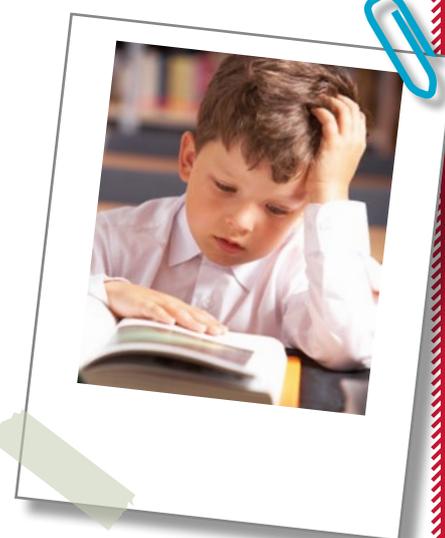
- They learn words and what they mean (vocabulary)
- They figure out how to piece them together into sentences (grammar)
- They discover how stories and conversations flow (narrative)

Children don't learn from scratch when starting to read. They attach new written words to the spoken ones they already know. And when they begin to write, they draw on the same building blocks – vocabulary, grammar, storytelling – to give their writing shape and meaning.

Let's meet Jack

Even before he was born, Jack could hear his mum's voice. As a baby, his brain started making sense of sounds and by the age of three he could put together short sentences like "Where ball gone?" He understood familiar instructions, such as "Put your toys away," to which he often answered with a definitive and defiant "No!"

In typical development, spoken language builds naturally through everyday interaction. When Jack later learns to read, he will connect the squiggles on the page to the words and meanings he already knows. Without those foundations, written language has nothing to hook onto.



Under the roof: using speech sounds to decipher the squiggles

If spoken language forms the base of the literacy house, then the roof holds the skills that link speech to reading and writing.

These include:

- **Phonological awareness** – the ability to recognise and manipulate the sounds in spoken language – examples include noticing and producing rhyme, counting syllables, recognising the beginnings and ends of words
- **Phonics** – matching speech sounds to written letters or groups of letters
- **Orthographic knowledge** – our understanding of how written words look and the rules that govern spelling. This is the mental store of word patterns we build up over time – knowing, for example, that night ends with -ight or that y at the end of mummy sounds like “ee”

These skills allow children to **decode** (translate print into sound) and **encode** (translate sound into print).

Fast forward to Jack at five years old. He's in Reception and full of enthusiasm for phonics lessons. Because his speech is clear, he can tell his sounds apart easily, and he loves joining in with rhymes, syllable clapping and his favourite 'robot arms' activity to blend and segment words.

He's learning that certain letters represent certain sounds, and that some patterns just must be remembered. In doing so, he's learning phonics AND strengthening the phonological awareness and sound-symbol knowledge that will help him become a confident reader and writer.



Bringing it all together: reading and writing with understanding

When strong spoken language meets strong sound awareness, something fantastic happens: children can read with understanding and write with meaning.

Spoken language gives context and depth to what they read; sound awareness and phonics skills help them to crack the code. Together, they make up the heart of literacy.

By seven, Jack can write sentences like, "The man flies the kite" and "The dog has a bone". He reads everything he can get his hands on; comics, storybooks, even cereal boxes! His love of reading comes from the fact that it makes sense to him; he understands the words, can picture what's happening and can

use language confidently to express his own ideas.

That combination of speech, language and literacy is what allows children to thrive across every subject.

Building stronger literacy from the ground up

By supporting children's speech and language, we give them essential tools for literacy. Spoken language lays the foundation, speech-sound skills form the roof. Together, they create a strong, stable structure for reading and writing.

Let's focus on speech and language to give our pupils the best possible start – one where they can read with confidence, write with purpose, and find joy in every form that language takes.

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Boost early speech with Speech Link – featuring the Phonological Awareness Group

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognise and manipulate sounds within words and is a crucial foundation for young children. It supports clear speech development and early literacy, helping children segment syllables, identify sounds in words and recognise and create rhymes.

Many children, especially those with unclear speech, benefit from targeted support in phonological awareness. Developing strong listening and sound awareness skills lays the groundwork for clearer speech and greater success with the phonics curriculum.

Included in our Speech Link package is the **12-session Phonological Awareness Group**. Designed by our specialist speech and language therapy team to strengthen these essential skills. Ideal for small groups or even whole classes.

These sessions are perfect for pupils starting a speech programme, particularly those with multiple speech programme recommendations, helping them build confidence and readiness for further speech and literacy work.



“

I THINK IT'S FANTASTIC. IT TAKES A LOT OF THAT PRESSURE AWAY, BECAUSE IT'S ALL THERE. IT'S A FULL AND EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION. IT MAKES LIFE EASIER.”

HLTA, COVENTRY



What does 'universal support' really mean for SLCN?



By **Alison Fowle**, specialist speech and language therapist

If you work in schools, you'll likely be familiar with the model of universal, targeted and specialist support used by many NHS services and speech and language therapy providers. The exact offer varies, but the overarching structure is consistent:

UNIVERSAL support focuses on what's available across the setting and accessed by ALL pupils. This relates to everyday practices, routines and communication-friendly approaches used across the whole school. This includes the way teachers explain concepts, scaffold talk, use visuals, set

up discussions and build an inclusive communication culture in every classroom. When these approaches are shared and consistent, pupils are better able to understand the learning, participate in lessons and explain their thinking.

TARGETED support is accessed by a smaller number of identified pupils, who need more than the universal level alone. It is usually time-limited support to help that pupil during a particular transition or to learn a new skill. It might be working with pupils in a group, or introducing a personalised resource that's used within the classroom.

SPECIALIST support builds on the resources and strategies that have

been put in place at a universal and targeted level and is accessed by identified pupils who require tailored recommendations and personalised goals, with guidance from services such as Speech and Language Therapy or Educational Psychology.

There is often a good understanding of what targeted and specialist provision looks like in practice, perhaps because provision is visible and timetabled. Universal provision can feel less clear, but the power of universal provision should not be underestimated. It forms the foundation from which any additional support is built and ultimately makes those higher levels of intervention more effective.

Universal support matters

High quality teacher-pupil interactions are one of the strongest predictors of progress in both academic and language skills. They also support social understanding, self-regulation, engagement and readiness for future learning. Crucially, these interactions act as a social leveller: when classroom communication is strong, pupils from a wide range of backgrounds make significant gains.

Universal strategies build a communication-supportive environment, which allows young people to gain independence in their classroom and school setting. This is important for pupils to 'learn how to learn'. Universal support reduces barriers to participation in the classroom – it's the most cost and time effective way to make the biggest difference.

Here are 5 ways in which you can strengthen the universal provision in your school!

1 Invest in whole-school training

Effective universal provision depends on everyone recognising the importance of language and communication. When all staff (class teachers, TAs, pastoral teams, lunchtime supervisors, cover supervisors and leaders) share a consistent approach, pupils experience clarity and predictability across the school day.

Speech & Language Link

Here at Speech & Language Link we're creating new professional development materials for the whole school community – watch this space!

2 Audit what you already do

Auditing your school's communication environment can highlight strengths, gaps and opportunities to develop staff expertise. It also helps leaders direct training and resources where they are most needed while identifying colleagues who can support others.

Check out our audit tool on **The Link Community!**



3 Use classroom interventions that benefit all learners

Universal interventions enrich whole class teaching rather than removing pupils from lessons. Reflect on your current use of visuals, sentence scaffolds, modelled vocabulary or structured discussion prompts and how these could be strengthened.

Infant and Junior Language Link subscribers will find a bank of resources in the 'Classroom Resources' tab.

4 Keep approaches consistent across classrooms and year groups

Consistency matters. Shared strategies, such as pre-teaching vocabulary, modelling sentence structures, using clear visuals and supporting turn-taking reduce cognitive load and help pupils to predict what's required of them and know how they can access support as they move through school.

5 Champion and share good practice

There aren't always frequent opportunities to observe colleagues, so great communication practice can go unnoticed. Positive peer feedback helps ideas spread and builds staff confidence.

Simple comments such as:

"The scaffold you used helped everyone take part."

or

"I hadn't seen that visual used that way – could I try it too?"

can make a significant difference.

- ✓ **Universal support is essential.** It underpins all other levels of provision and helps students meet the increasing language demands as they move through school
- ✓ **Consistency matters.** Shared strategies across classrooms reduce barriers and build independence
- ✓ **Positive feedback builds momentum.** Celebrating good practice strengthens confidence and spreads expertise throughout the school
- ✓ **Change starts with a conversation.** Changing an environment to make it truly communication-supportive takes a community, and it starts with a conversation.

So, in summary ...



The effectiveness of Little Link

“

From speaking to the children and working with the adults delivering the intervention, the children really engaged with it. We really enjoyed the intervention and found it very clear and could see their progression. ”

Allison, SENCo, London

91% OF STAFF SURVEYED REPORTED AN IMPROVEMENT IN LANGUAGE.

76% SURVEYED HAD SEEN IMPROVEMENT IN ATTENTION, LISTENING AND ENGAGEMENT.

Read the impact report here:



Little Link, our early years training, assessment and intervention solution for SLCN was piloted across 24 nurseries in Kent, London, Essex, Hampshire and Surrey. None were using SLCN assessments or interventions before the project. A cluster randomised controlled trial compared children in Little Link settings with those in settings receiving usual SLCN support to measure the impact of the programme.

Results

There was a significant improvement for children who received the intervention when comparing their performance before the intervention to afterwards, with many children who were initially found to have 'Not Met' the skills overall to have moved to 'Emerging' or even 'Consistent' after the intervention.

-  The Little Link intervention enabled children to make more progress with their language skills, particularly vocabulary and the grammar of their spoken sentences.
-  There were highly significant differences in measures of school readiness for the children who had received the intervention compared to those who hadn't.

-  Children learning EAL who received the intervention made significantly more progress with their expressive vocabulary skills than EAL children in the control settings.
-  Improvements were seen for children learning EAL and children with identified language difficulties, indicating Little Link is an effective intervention to help settings narrow the attainment gap.
-  Staff reported that they enjoyed using the package and a significant majority saw improvements in the language skills and engagement of the children they supported.



LittleLink

SPOTTING MISINFORMATION and fake news



By **Claire Chambers**, editor, The Link magazine

You're running a small intervention group when, as often happens, the children start chatting about something slightly off topic. And sometimes they come out with the funniest things, but at other times it goes beyond that; sometimes what they say is factually incorrect, but they genuinely believe it to be true.

That's fine when you're there to set the record straight, but ultimately we want our learners to become critical thinkers who can question what they've heard, particularly when it's fake news that can spread like wildfire on social media, often supported by convincing videos, images and headlines.

Children with SLCN may be more vulnerable than their peers, which is why it's especially important for them to learn how to recognise misinformation and fake news.

What's the difference?

Misinformation is something that isn't true, but the person sharing it doesn't realise it. For example, many people say, "You can see the Great Wall of China from space," but this isn't actually true. Most people genuinely believe it to be, but it's become a kind of modern myth.

Fake news is a story that's been made up, heavily exaggerated or embellished to trick people. Sometimes it's done for money or to make people believe something that isn't real. Fake news can be serious and cause lots of harm.

Encourage your pupils to become detectives. Teach them to:

1 Ask questions

Who wrote this? Why did they share it? Is there any proof? If something sounds too good (or too bad) to be true, it might well be!

2 Check the source

Real news usually comes from trusted places like the BBC or First News*

3 Look for evidence

True stories often include facts, quotes, or pictures that can be checked. If there's no real evidence, it might be false.

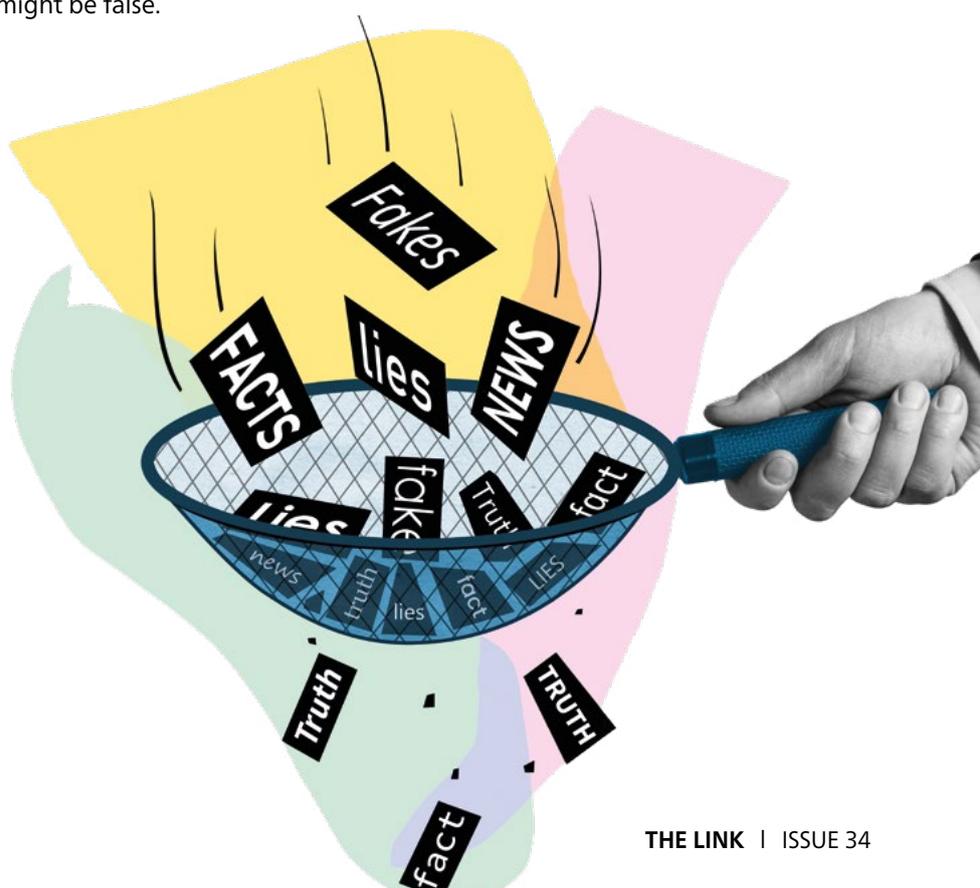
4 Be careful with pictures and videos

Photos can be edited, and videos can be taken out of context. You can do a 'reverse image search' online to see where a picture really came from.

5 Ask a trusted adult

If you're unsure, talk to a teacher, parent or carer. Checking with someone else helps you see the full story.

Let your pupils know that being curious and asking questions is a strength. Thinking before believing or sharing helps stop misinformation and fake news from spreading.



* <https://www.firstnews.co.uk/about-first-news/>

LETTERBOX CLUB:

instilling a love of reading



By **Arwenna Davis**, head of research and impact, BookTrust



Reading has a unique and transformative impact on attainment. It's consistently linked to stronger academic performance, and research points to reading as a powerful lever for narrowing the disadvantage gap.¹

- ✓ Children from 'disadvantaged' backgrounds who achieve highly at the end of primary school are twice as likely to have been read to at home in their early years, compared to their peers.¹
- ✓ Regular shared reading is linked to a wide range of spoken language outcomes, including expressive and receptive vocabulary and oral language development.¹
- ✓ By age 16, reading for pleasure is a much stronger predictor of progress in vocabulary, mathematics, and spelling than parental education.¹

Instilling a love of reading is a pathway to unlocking a whole range of benefits for children.

"We recognise that schools are under pressure to meet academic targets, and we like the Letterbox Club because it's an opportunity for those children who might be struggling with the reading process, to read for pleasure. It also supports carers with the idea that it's still ok, if not essential, to read to their child while they are in the process of learning to read independently."

Katie Tilley, Early Years and Primary Consultant, Lambeth Virtual School, Lambeth Council.

Teachers play a vital role, but parental engagement is another key enabler. BookTrust's research, including a survey of 8,000 teachers, outlines the struggle many parents face in sustaining children's reading at home. Encouraging families to share stories together outside of school hours has become the number one challenge teachers face in supporting pupils to read for pleasure.²

Letterbox Club parcels are designed to be taken home by children to encourage and support the home-school link, with books, stories and numeracy games to share and enjoy with their trusted adults, along with

guidance on how to make the most of the resources.

The parcels give families structure to make the most of the resources at home and get children reading wherever they are. The parcels provide a point of connection to invite parents into school, start conversations about reading, share skills parents can take home to build their confidence and inspire them to play an active role in their children's reading.

Joanna Curry, Acting Head at Windy Arbor Primary School says:

"We really wanted to support our parents at home, and we want to support our children with their reading ... Letterbox Club is amazing... We have six parcels and six different workshops across the year. The children really benefit from their parents being there because we know then that learning can continue and be sustained at home."

"Reading boosts wellbeing, learning, creativity and relationships, helping overcome disadvantage."



MORE
INFO

BookTrust
Getting children reading

BookTrust is the UK's largest children's reading charity.

We help millions of children read each year, focusing on those from low-income families and in care. Reading boosts wellbeing, learning, creativity and relationships, helping overcome disadvantage.

We support families to share books from early childhood through trusted programmes and partners, reaching communities across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Watch the video to find out more about how Windy Arbor engage parents in Letterbox Club:
booktrust.org.uk/windyarborstory

There are six different coloured Letterbox Club parcel sets to choose from – ranging from Early Years Foundation Stage up to Years 7 and 8. Everything in the Letterbox Club parcels has been carefully curated by our BookTrust panel experts with an understanding of the needs of children from vulnerable family backgrounds, so teachers can be confident that all the books and numeracy resources are age-appropriate and have been sensitively chosen to engage children and their families.

At just £157 per child (including VAT), schools will receive six sets of Letterbox Club parcels to be gifted to individual children to be used at school and given to children to take home. Letterbox Club can be purchased through the Pupil Premium Grant, or other funding used to support pupils from vulnerable family backgrounds or low-income households.

Children taking part in Letterbox Club report enjoying reading more and feeling more confident about it: 96% say they like or love Letterbox Club and 72% say they now read more on their own.

Find out more...



References:

1. BookTrust (2024) *"The benefits of reading"*. Leeds: BookTrust.
2. BookTrust and Teacher Tapp (2024) *Online survey of teachers in England conducted in August 2024*. Unpublished data. Figures based on 2,942 primary school teachers.

welcome to TheLink PRIMARY Community News

**DON'T
MISS OUT**

Important update



Since 2013, we have posted *The Link Primary* magazine to every UK SENCo. As mentioned in recent issues, we'll be updating how printed copies are distributed, with the new process beginning this summer.

From then on, printed editions of *The Link Primary* will be sent to schools that:

- Have a subscription to **Little Link, Speech Link or Language Link**, or
- Have at least one member of staff who belongs to **The Link Community**

To ensure your school continues to receive this valued speech and language resource, **sign up to The Link Community today and stay connected.** We don't want you to miss an issue that could support your pupils and your practice.

If your school is already part of The Link Community, there's nothing you need to do for now. We'll be in touch soon to confirm your school address.

We're proud to share *The Link* with you, and we'd love to make sure it keeps reaching your school.

**SIGN UP
HERE**





Partnership Schools Project

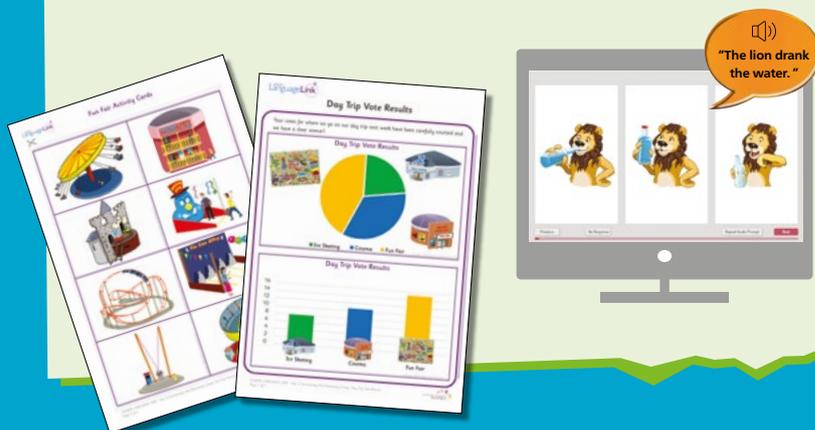
Speech & Language **Link**

To better support schools in using Language Link effectively, Speech & Language Link has partnered with six primary schools who subscribe to our Infant and/or Junior Language Link packages.

We are working closely with school staff to find out how and when schools are accessing our training, as well as looking at how our universal strategies and resources are being used within the settings.

Our first visits provided valuable insights into assessment use, including the new school entry assessment, and how they planned to run intervention groups. These conversations gave us a clear understanding of what is working well, as well as some of the challenges schools are facing.

We're excited to continue this collaboration and help our schools get the most from their Infant and Junior Language Link packages.



Dates for your diary

We're kicking off 2026 with a burst of energy and a calendar full of fantastic events! If you're attending any of them, be sure to come and say hello as we'd love to meet you. And if travelling isn't an option, you can still join the fun at The Link Live Speech & Language Event.

13-14TH MARCH

Tes SEN Show North, Old Trafford Cricket Club, Manchester

19TH MARCH

Nursery World Exchange, Cambridge

30TH APRIL

The Link Live SLCN Conference, online

15TH MAY

Nursery World's Big Day Out, Business Design Centre, London

Speech & Language Link is **The Gold Sponsor** – come and find us on stand E10

Get in touch

Have you got something speech and language focussed that you would like to share with our community?

Send over your ideas to:
claire.chambers@speechlink.co.uk



OUR FACEBOOK GROUP: SPEECH AND LANGUAGE SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

Join the conversation with 4k members and receive weekly videos and posts from our speech and language team, take part in fun, short polls and surveys and share good practice.





A new standard in assessing the understanding of language for school entry



SCREEN LANGUAGE
IN JUST 10
MINUTES?
THAT'S CHILD'S
PLAY.

You spoke. We listened. Then made assessing faster.

Developed over two years, we have radically evolved our standardised assessment of the understanding of language at school entry.

NEW!

Our school entry Infant Language Link assessment is fun, quick and easily accessible. It is audio supported and looks at understanding of language across key areas including concept vocabulary, instructions and sentence structures.

- 👍 Quick to complete - 2 out of 3 children in an average class complete the screen in only 10 minutes
- 👍 More accurate - Two assessments at different time points in the year provide more accuracy in measuring children's language ability for their age at that point in the year
- 👍 Instant results - Enabling you to provide support at the right level; recommended class and small group interventions, plus children flagged who need more specialist support
- 👍 Robust progress measure - Track children's language progress across the year

Find out more &
start your **FREE
TRIAL** today:

