

MY GUIDE TO...

SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN WITH SPEECH AND LANGUAGE NEEDS

Information for parents and carers

Q1 What are Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)?

Communication is all around us, and used by us every day. Communication skills are needed for daily activities, learning, social interaction, and independence.

Speech: includes speech sounds, tone of voice, volume and fluency.

Language: includes talking, understanding and verbal reasoning.

Communication: includes speech and language, and social interaction. If speaking is difficult, other ways of communication can help such as signs, symbols, communication aids.

Some children and young people need help to develop their communication skills, and may have speech, language or communication needs (SLCN). Speech and language are needed for progress in phonics, learning to spell, write and read.

Q2 Who provides the Speech and Language support in Bexley? How can I access advice?

Support for children and young people with speech and language needs is provided by Bexley Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service, together with the Bexley Joint Communication Team. The service is made up of Speech and Language Therapists, Specialist Teacher and Speech and Language Support Assistants.

We support:

- Pre-school children registered with a Bexley GP, or without a GP
- School aged children registered with a Bexley school, or educated at home
- Young people aged 16 -19 years in full-time education in Bexley

To make a referral parents and carers can speak with a health visitor, GP, doctor or school staff.

You can also contact the service directly for advice using the contact details below:

Tel: 0203 004 0092

Email: oxl-tr.bexleySCS-SPA@nhs.net

Post: Acorns, Children and Young People's Services, Frogna Avenue, Sidcup DA14 6LT

Q3 What happens when a child or young person is brought to the attention of the service?

Talk to your GP or teacher or contact us

We offer an appointment at a clinic or school or home visit

School staff fill out a referral form with you - this will include a parent questionnaire and teacher questionnaire
or
GP writes a referral

We then offer an appointment/school visit with the most appropriate team, for example:

Community Team

Difficulty with voice, stammering and speech disorders. These appointments are held at a health clinic.

Bexley Joint Communication Team (for mainstream schools)

The Joint Communication Team (JCT) are professionals from Education and Health working together to support children and families with speech, language and communication needs. The JCT are a Specialist Teacher, Speech and Language Therapists and Speech and Language Specialist Assistants (SALSA). The JCT are an integrated team, who work in partnership with school staff, specialist teachers, educational psychologists, parents and children to maximise communication for learning, socialisation and independence. The team are available for children and young people who attend mainstream schools; speech and language specialist provisions; the youth offending service; and social emotional and mental health special schools. The appointment is usually in school. The school lets the parent know when the visit is planned. Parents are welcome to attend, discuss on the phone or arrange a meeting.

Special School SLT Team at Marlborough, Shenstone, and Woodside Special Schools

The speech and language therapists and assistants work closely with school staff, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, nurses. The speech and language therapists together with school staff provide a Total Communication Approach in school. Parents are invited to attend events such as coffee mornings, workshops. Therapy staff attend parents evenings. Training by therapists is part of the annual school plan.

Specialist SLT for Autism

If a child or young person has been diagnosed with Autism. The team work closely with the Specialist Teacher Team for Autism. The team contribute to the Autism Assessment Service. With parental consent the SLT may offer an observation/assessment in school, to add information to the autism assessment.

Specialist SLT for Hearing Impairment

The team work closely with the Specialist teachers for hearing impairment, audiology and Pelham HI Unit. The team link with tertiary Audiology departments such as St George's Hospital. The therapy team also provide advice for hearing children of deaf parents and therapy for children with cochlear implants.

Q4 What training is provided for school staff and parents in Bexley?

Every year more than 300 school staff attend training with the service on how to support children and young people with speech, language and communication needs. Parents and foster carers may come to an advice session, coffee morning for information and networking with other parents, or a training workshop. Communication workshops are provided in the community and tailored for schools. Speech and Language Therapist and Specialist Teachers co-deliver training. Some workshops are delivered together with an Educational Psychologist, Occupational Therapist, SENCo or experienced parents.

Support for children with SLCN is most successful when planned and delivered within an integrated team approach. Participants learn strategies to help the child communicate and understand in the classroom or at home. School staff learn how to deliver programmes and activities to develop speech and language.

Workshops are arranged directly with schools and nurseries, advertised through Bexley BSSN website, Bexley Voice, SNAP and Children's Centres. You can also contact your therapist for information.

Q5 Will my child be seen by a Speech and Language Therapist?

Every child and young person referred is offered an initial assessment with a Speech and Language Therapist or a Specialist Teacher for Speech and Language.

Most children receive advice within a term of the referral being made. Most school-aged children are seen for an assessment in their school. Assessments also take place at a health clinic if the concern is around speech sounds

(without any other communication concerns) or if the child stammers or has a voice disorder. Parents and carers are welcome to attend the assessment in school, talk to the person carrying out the assessment on the phone or request a meeting.

Q6 What happens during an assessment?

Assessments are linked with the child's progress in learning and normally last for at least 1 hour. The assessment might include an observation for example in the playground, or classroom. The class teacher and parent/carer are invited to fill out a questionnaire about the child's communication and give their views. The child or young person is also asked for their views.

The therapist provides an assessment of:

- Skills needed to develop communication - such as listening, attention, play, social interaction.
- Speech
- Understanding Language
- Spoken Language

Information about learning and progress is provided by the school, nursery or educational psychologist.

Q7 What happens after the assessment?

Following assessment, if the need is mild, the parent and school staff will be reassured and given advice. Your child might be referred with your agreement for a hearing test. A recommendation may be made to see another professional such as an educational psychologist or occupational therapist.

A speech and language report and/or care plan, is written for any child who needs additional support to develop his or her skills. It is agreed how parents, school staff and therapy staff will support the child to make progress.

Q8 My child has difficulties with communication. What will help them?

Research shows that a child develops better communication skills if the school has a 'Communication Friendly' environment, and school staff and parents know how to support communication development. This means the child has daily opportunities to practice new skills, and has support to communicate when he or she needs to communicate.

The training available for Bexley school staff means that children start to receive support for their communication development in school, even before they see the speech and language therapist or specialist teacher. The therapists, specialist teacher or SALSA's visit school and advise on classroom strategies, speech and language groups, evidence based programmes and individual and paired interventions if needed.

A care plan, 'speech and language development plan' is agreed with goals and outcomes. A referral to another professional may be recommended, for example an Audiologist or Educational Psychologist.

Parents and carers can find useful information here :

The Communication Trust www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

Talking Point www.talkingpoint.org.uk

National Autism Society www.autism.org.uk

Down Syndrome International <https://www.dseinternational.org>

National Deaf Children's Society www.ndcs.org.uk

The Bexley Local Offer www.bexley.gov.uk/bexleylocaloffer

Q9 What is a Speech and Language Care Plan?

A care plan has goals and activities to develop communication. The specialist assessment together with the views of the child or young person and parents and school staff combine to develop the care plan.

The care plan sets out activities for school and /or home and who will help deliver the plan. This usually includes school staff, speech and language team staff, parents /carers and the young person themselves. Bexley school staff access training in providing speech and language groups, paired and 1:1 interventions.

Children and young people with a severe developmental language disorder - severe speech disorder, stammer, an acquired medical condition such as cancer or stroke, and children with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) may work more frequently with a Speech and Language Therapist or with an experienced speech and language assistant. The care plan or EHCP describes the provision for communication development.

Progress is evaluated by a Speech and Language Therapist or Specialist Teacher, the SENCO, updates from parents and class teachers, and the child/young person. The care plan is then updated. Advice can be requested for any 'transitions' – move into school, move to secondary school or move out of school at age 16, 18 or 19 years. (Please see My Guide to Support for Speech and Language Needs age 16 to 19 years in Bexley).

When your child no longer needs specialist advice from this service, communication can continue to be developed at school and home. A re-referral can be made if any needs arise.

CONTACT DETAILS

Bexley Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service / Joint Communication Team

**Children and Young People's Services
Acorns, Queen Mary's Hospital,
Frognal Avenue,
Sidcup Kent DA14 6LT**

Email: oxl-tr.bexleyscs-spa@nhs.net

Telephone: 0203 004 0092

Specialist Teacher for Speech and Language SALSA Coordinator

**Civic Offices
2 Watling Street
Bexleyheath
Kent
DA6 7AT**

Telephone: 020 8303 7777