

Speech

Children learn speech sounds by listening to the sounds they hear in the languages around them. Children start by using babbled sounds and progress to using sounds in words and sentences. Children develop the ability to use different speech sounds at different ages and they will not be able to say all sounds straight away.

It is very common for children under the age of 6 to experience times of repeating words or hesitating when they speak and this is known as stammering, stuttering or dysfluency. If this is something which persists in your child's speech for more than 4 weeks, please contact the SLT helpline to discuss this.

Age	Minimum Expectations for Child
2	Developing use of 'p' 'b' 't' 'd' 'n' 'm' 'w'. Speech can be difficult to understand as only a few sounds used. Often missing off the end of words.
3-4 years	Lots more sounds being used including 's' and 'f'. Understood by more people e.g. nursery, extended family. Might be some dysfluency at times.
4-5 years	Should be understood by most people most of the time. Still learning to use blends e.g. 'sp' 'bl' 'cr', and some more difficult sounds 'ch' 'j' 'l'.
6 years	'th' and 'r' still might not be used. Can make self understood easily.
9 years	All sounds in place except 'th'. All speech sounds now in place .

Here are 5 'top tips' to help

Note Children learn best from real experiences and interaction with others. Make sure you give your child lots of chances to play and talk without screens switched on e.g. TV, phones, and tablets

1	Listen to what your child says rather than how they are saying the sounds.
2	Let your child hear clear adult models of words with no pressure to copy these.
3	When you find out what your child was trying to say, repeating the word or sentence lets them hear the correct model. This also helps them see that you have listened and understood what they were trying to say.
4	If you have only understood part of what your child says, repeat that part back to them showing that you have understood part of their message. This may encourage them to have another go at the bit you missed the first time.
5	Try to figure out what is meant by asking your child to show you, or ask questions (where is it, what does it do?). If you cannot figure out your child's message find a way to end the conversation helpfully e.g. "maybe we'll work it out later".