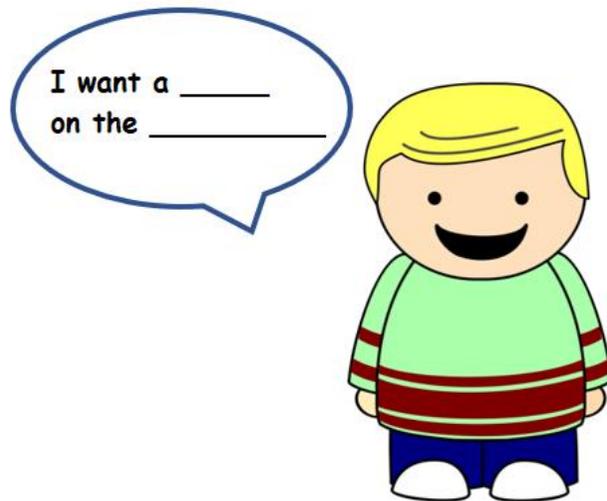


CLASSROOMS

SUPPORTING UNCLEAR SPEECH



Children whose speech is unclear may...

- ❖ Find it difficult to articulate a range of speech sounds.
- ❖ Produce words or phrases which are unintelligible outside of a defined context.
- ❖ Show frustration when others do not understand what they are saying.
- ❖ Rely on gesture to indicate their needs or become reluctant to communicate verbally.

If you have concerns about the persistence of unclear speech, **seek a referral to a Speech and Language Therapist**. Remember that every child's speech develops at a different pace. Only a professional assessment can determine if the child's progress with speech sounds is unusual and whether more individualised targets and activities are required.

Show that you want to understand

- Use your eyes and mouth to convey enthusiastic and animated responses.
- Slow down your pace of speech and model a slow and steady rhythm of speaking.
- Be honest if you don't understand. Repeat back what you have heard with the correct speech sounds as a model.
- Ensure that your face is clearly visible - get down to the child's level if this is comfortable for them.

Adapt and look for contextual clues

- Encourage the child to show what they mean, by pointing or leading us by the hand.
- Make regular references to photographs, symbols and other visual labels in the room.
- Link key words to signs and gestures - start with what motivates the child.
- Spend time observing their play and noticing what their sounds relate to.
- Use a home-school book to learn from parents about the child's interests.

Promote a calm & accepting atmosphere

- More commenting and less questioning!
- Give them time to practise a response to a question with a friend or member of staff.
- Make light of times when you find it difficult to make yourself understood.
- Use humour about repetitions - "I need to switch my ears on. Can you tell me again?"
- Play games such as copying faces and sounds in the mirror, listening for sounds in the playground and nursery rhymes.