

## **Specific Language Impairment**

Speech and language impairment can vary a great deal from mild difficulties to severe problems with the understanding and use of language. A specific language impairment is diagnosed when a child has difficulty with language but is developing normally in all other areas. Many children have speech and language difficulties associated with physical, sensory neurological and intellectual impairment.

### **Key Characteristics:**

Children with a specific language impairment may have difficulties with one or more of these areas:

- Phonology – some children have difficulty processing speech sounds and using them correctly, while others confuse or substitute sounds.
- Grammar – some children have difficulty organising words into sentences, using the correct grammatical structure (they often muddle verb tenses and have difficulty with conjunctions or prepositions, or they may have difficulty pronouncing word endings and sound like much younger children.
- Word finding – some children have difficulty in recalling the right word when they need to use it, having to describe the word rather than naming it.
- Semantics – the meanings of words and the way they relate to each other. This may be affected by poor auditory memory skills and can have serious implications for the child. If they cannot retain the meaning of new vocabulary, then they will have difficulty understanding new concepts and ideas.
- Attention and Listening – children with attention and listening problems will have one of two problems. Either they cannot screen out what is unimportant from what they hear and so listen to everything, or they lack skill at controlling attention and therefore miss large chunks of information.
- Pragmatics – (the way that language is used to convey thoughts and feelings) - some children have difficulty in understanding how to use language in different social situations and can make very inappropriate comments.
- Frustration and anxiety due to communication problems
- Difficulty following instructions

### **Strategies that we use in the Classroom**

We may need to:

- Use pictures, signs and symbols as teaching aids.
- Use visual and concrete materials to support the understanding of new conceptual vocabulary across the curriculum.
- Encourage word association activities to develop word finding skills.
- Play games to develop an understanding of categories e.g. fruit.
- Break instructions into chunks and check for understanding by asking the child to repeat each part.
- Give opportunities for revision of key concepts and vocabulary.
- Use alternative methods of recording.
- Use games to develop listening and attention skills.
- Use circle time to encourage social interaction and communication skills.

### **Specific Interventions that we may use at Claremont School**

- Offer a regular therapy programme to address specific speech and language needs.
- Run group speech interventions like Talking Partners.

Useful websites:

[www.afasic.org.uk](http://www.afasic.org.uk)

[www.talkingpoint.org.uk](http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk)