



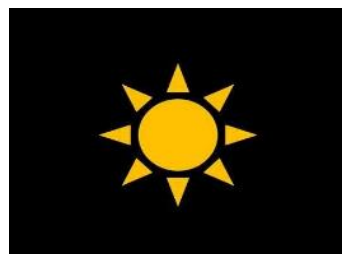
Children's Therapy Team

Speech and Language Therapy Advice Sheet

Communication Friendly Classrooms

Visual supports and changes to the environment

- **Keep routines clear and consistent** Try to use visual timetables or 'Now and Next' boards so children know what is happening and what is coming next.
- **Cut down background noise** to help children who find it hard to understand spoken language.
- **Use different ways to communicate, not just speech** Spoken words disappear quickly, so also use gestures, signs, pictures, objects, or writing to help children understand.
- **Think about where children sit** This is especially important for children who have trouble seeing or hearing. Make sure they can see the teacher and any important things in the classroom.
- **Consider children with visual impairments** Too many colours or objects can make it hard for them to focus. Use strong colour contrasts like white or yellow on a black background to make things clearer.



Language support

- **Give children extra time** To think and answer when you ask them to do something. Understanding language can be hard for some children.
- **Use short, simple sentences** Try not to use sayings or language that is hard to understand.
- **Use group and partner work** To help children practise talking and listening with others (but this might not work for every class).
- **Think about the questions you ask** Make sure they are not too hard. You can use tools like 'Blank levels of questioning' to help choose the right kind of questions.
- **Help children say when they don't understand** You could use prompt cards, or something simple like a red/green paddle to show if they're okay or need help.
- **Regulation comes first** Consider the sensory and emotional regulation needs of the children in the class. For example, you could start the session with a 'Zones of Regulation' check-in



If you have tried using these strategies and you are still concerned about the impact of your child's communication differences, you can:

- Look on our website for further information and advice: [York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust - Speech and language therapy \(yorkhospitals.nhs.uk\)](https://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk)
- Contact us via our 'Request for Help' line – see our website for further details