

Supporting unclear speech in older children

What you might hear

Students might have difficulty with:

- Using specific sounds in their speech.
- Saying complex, multisyllabic words.
- Saying new, topic specific words.
- Using clear speech in sentences and conversation.



Supporting conversation

- Avoid asking students to repeat words that are unclear. Repeat what you did understand and ask the student to clarify any parts that you're not sure about.
- Avoid completing sentences for students.
- Don't pretend that you understand what a student is trying to say.
- If you really can't understand what a student is saying, see if they can use another method such as talking around the topic, writing down a key word or showing you.
- Focus on **what** a student is telling you, not how they are saying it. Encourage the student to keep trying to communicate and let them know that you are interested in what they have to say.

Supporting unclear speech in the classroom

- Talk to the student about what helps them. Are they happy to speak in front of the class? Do they like a warning before being asked a question?
- Make sure that all staff in school are aware that the student has difficulties with their speech.
- Give students time to think and then answer a question.
- Allow the student to experience success in activities that do not require speaking, but don't assume that they won't want to speak out loud or in front of the class.
- Don't make speaking clearly the end goal, focus on the student being a confident speaker.
- Develop good communication skills in all learners, for example giving people time to talk and not talking over other people.
- Make a list of specific words that are difficult and try practising these words during a quiet 1:1 session between the student and an adult.
- Use a word map approach to learning words, including information about the sound of the word and the meaning. Are there words that have a similar meaning that the student finds easier to say?