Strategies and resources to support speech, language and communication

This resource contains strategies and ideas for resources for promoting and developing all children’s speech, language and communication skills. Some of the strategies and suggested resources below are more suitable for children with additional needs requiring targeted support. Schools may introduce any or all of the strategies.

I CAN’s Talking Strategies 4-7 years and Talking Strategies KS2 explore 12 key strategies in more detail.

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Physical environment

Position of child

- Children should be seated so that they face the speaker (teacher/TA). Seating should be used flexibly depending on the activity.
- Children with a hearing impairment should be positioned so that their best ear is directed at the speaker. The speaker’s face should have the light source on their face and not behind their head.
- Some children will benefit from the creation of an “individual workstation” – a blinkered environment that will minimise distractions. This may support pupils with an autistic spectrum disorder or those with difficulties focusing and maintaining their attention.

Furnishings

- Wall displays, soft furnishings, curtains, blinds and carpets will help good listening. If there are no carpets, putting rubber stops on the bottom of chairs can help to absorb sound rather than allowing it to reverberate around the room.
- Keep background noise to a minimum, e.g. turning noisy computer fans off, considering heating systems.

Visual support

- Use name labels (with photos) to identify where children sit and/or put their things. A class poster with children’s names and photos will help getting to know each other.
- Posters on walls will have a very short lifetime in a child’s attention and need to be referred to frequently and/or taken down when not immediately relevant.
- Use symbols, photos, pictures and/or text to support understanding of location of objects within cupboards, areas for specific activities, permitted/not permitted behaviour, individual targets, and key words to be used in class.
- Visual timetables involving key words, symbols/photos/objects. These can be for the whole class or individualised for particular children. Key elements (dates, day of the week, parts of the school day, stages of a lesson, etc) can be laminated for durability and attached with Velcro. A reward symbol (computer time, pupil choice activity, etc) can be included to remind a child about what they can look forward to when a difficult task is completed. The timetable should be referred to throughout the day and updated frequently with bits removed when they have been completed.
- A task plan or organiser can be used as an alternative to visual timetables or alongside them, to show what a child needs to do within a lesson. A variation is to use small (A4 or A3 sized) whiteboards that can be hand prepared and placed on a desk for small groups or individual children. This allows staff to rub out bits of a task as they have been achieved.
- Colour-coding – there are various ways of doing this (e.g. Colourful Semantics) by which component parts of language are coded by colour in order to provide a visual representation.
of sentence structures to aid receptive and expressive language, reading and writing. It is important that this coding is consistent across the school.
Social environment

Supporting social communication

- Create regular opportunities for supported peer-to-peer interaction. This can be structured in a range of ways depending on the context and so that the activity does not become repetitive (see also Working with whole-class or small groups).
- When developing turn-taking skills, a symbol – e.g. a hat – can help a child to understand the system (when you have the hat, it’s your turn to speak).
- Use circle / carpet time activities to develop social skills and interaction.
- Prepare children for transition between phases of school. Supported visits to the new setting, photos of new staff and key rooms and other resources such as a plan of the school or the new timetable can all help to reduce anxieties. I CAN’s Moving On! resource is available to support the transition to secondary school.
- Support children who struggle in social situations to learn phrases that they can use when they want to be alone or not become involved in something that might cause trouble.
- Teach phrases that a child can use when they want to join in with a game or activity.
- Teach social awareness – when to leave others alone, turn-taking in conversation, how to recognise when someone is bored, etc. This may be taught in small groups, e.g. Social Use of Language Programme (SULP).
- Children with communication difficulties, particularly those with an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), have difficulty understanding others’ motivation and intentions (constructing a theory of other minds). Comic strip conversations is a technique whereby adults use quick drawings with thought and speech bubbles (colour coded to signify intentions) to explain to children with these difficulties what other pupils think and why they say things.
- Pupils with communication difficulties often use “bullying” as an umbrella term to cover everything from being interrupted in private thought by a peer, to persistent name calling. To overcome this confusion, help the child build up a vocabulary that makes clear what has happened. Use a vocabulary scale with, for example, number 1 associated with “Bothered”, linked with an example of what could make you feel like this: “Someone bumped me in a game”, to 4, “Teased”, associated with “Someone called me a strange name”, to 5, “Bullied”, linked to “Someone was nasty to me lots of times”.
- Consider a “buddy” system whereby other, more able peers support the child with difficulties, e.g. at breaktimes. Make sure to rotate this responsibility so that one child does not get over-burdened.
- Information for children should be in a form that is accessible to all, e.g. written with symbols, audiotape, concept map, displayed at children’s reading level, etc.
- For children with EHC Plans, encourage them to participate as appropriate in annual review meetings even if this is just for simple comments at the end of the meeting. Talking mats can be a useful strategy/resource.
Promoting independence

- Give children classroom / school jobs and responsibilities.
- Provide structured choosing time – at particular times of the day or on completion of an activity.
- Encourage children to choose an activity from a given range.
- Encourage tidying up, with equipment being stored in set places. This physical location of objects will support their storing and recall of new words.
- Involve children as much as possible when developing targets.
- Ensure that support is given in a graded way to promote independence. Adult help should help children accomplish a task rather than doing difficult tasks for them.
- Help the children to plan, do and review activities:
  - Before the activity, encourage children to communicate what they will do, what equipment they will need.
  - During the activity, communicate what they have done, what they are doing and what they will do next.
  - After the activity, communicate what they have done and what equipment they have used.
- Support organisational skills by teaching routines using visual timetables and organisers (with symbols and words representing stages and/or equipment needed for different activities). Instruction grids can be useful when children need to follow a sequence of instructions.

Supporting behaviour

- Introduce structure at playtimes and for some children, targeted adult supervision.
- Behaviour difficulties are more likely to occur when children with difficulties are unsure about what to do. A predictable structure for lessons where children know what to expect without relying on teacher’s instructions will reduce confusion and improve behaviour.
- Expected behaviour should be made explicit and explained using symbols and/or photos. These should be referred to as appropriate for reminders. For example, numbered scales can be used to explain the loudness of voice appropriate in different situations, with a 5 corresponding to a “Shout” which is “OK in the playground”, and 1 labelled a “Whisper”, which is used “When children are reading” (see also Volume rating scale).
- Concentrate on one or two targets at a time and make sure these are emphasised before children encounter a situation that often triggers the behaviour, e.g. going out to breaktime.
- Consider the use of Social Stories for some children. These are a communication strategy which enables the learner to understand a situation and to learn how to respond or behave in that situation. A social story is read to the child on repeated occasions prior to the child encountering a difficult situation.

Non-directed times
• Children with communication difficulties often find the sensory “chaos” in the corridor as children go out to and return from playtime unsettling. They can be helped by leaving and returning just before or after other children.

• Make sure that everyone who comes into contact with the child understands the child’s difficulties and knows the best ways to support.

• **Pupil passports** can be a useful way to involve older children in letting adults know about their difficulties. They are often used in secondary schools where children meet lots of different teachers during a day, but can be useful for aspects of primary where children can be expected to come into contact with a range of adults. A pupil passport contains simple, bullet pointed information listing the pupil’s “Strengths”, “Difficulties” and “What helps”. The passport is developed with the child, and can be produced A6 or even A7 size and laminated for durability. Older children can be encouraged to take responsibility for handing it to an adult – with younger children this would generally be done by a supporting teaching assistant. It could be included in the class register, or supplied in the teachers’ information pack.

• Support the development of interaction skills by sitting alongside children and waiting for them to involve you in their activity. You should sit with the child at eye level, watching and talking about what the child is doing (providing a running commentary). Wait for the child to involve you, smiling and showing interest.

• Try to follow the child’s lead and then extend it imaginatively.

• Use role play and puppets to encourage children with difficulties to extend their perception of others through play.

• School trips can be very difficult for children who rely on predictability. Support this by using a visual timetable of the day – with symbols and words representing the different stages of the day out.
Strategies relating to teaching and learning

Explaining the task or giving information

- Adults’ language should be adjusted to the level of children’s understanding. For example, don’t assume that basic concepts are understood.
- Information carrying words should be sequenced simply: “Before you begin the painting, finish the story” is more confusing than “Finish the story; then begin the painting”.
- Take time to explain non-literal language, e.g. “Pull your socks up”.
- Where possible, use demonstration to explain a new activity. When this is a complex task many children will benefit through a “laddered” method of teaching: demonstrate A, then children practise A; demonstrate B, then children practise AB; demonstrate C, then children practise ABC, etc.
- Complex tasks should be broken down into achievable steps, with symbol support to aid understanding of the sequence of activities. Be specific.
- Most children will understand more if you slow down your rate of speaking, especially for more difficult words. Slowing down may also help with children using new words. In addition, stressing key words has positive effects on both comprehension and expression in some children.
- Allow processing time for children following an instruction or question. Adults tend to leave the briefest of pauses before rephrasing the request. Some children will need several seconds to process the information before responding. You can best support this by waiting patiently.
- Be aware of how tone of voice and stress placed on particular words can change the meaning of sentences which contain the same words, e.g. “You could do that” means permission is given, whereas “You could do that” means that you won’t stop someone doing something but they’ll probably fail if they try. Children with language difficulties won’t necessarily understand the difference.
- When giving instructions, use repetition to model simple, short phrases and support the child’s understanding. Use a range of visual tools, e.g. objects, photos, gestures and symbols.
- You should make good use of non-verbal communication, e.g. emphasise natural gesture, facial expression and body language.
- Be aware that some children have difficulties understanding negatives. Think about the language you use and whenever possible put it in the positive form, e.g. instead of saying “Don’t run”, you could say “Walk”.
- High level concepts dealing with things that are not concrete, e.g. time, will be more difficult to understand than ones dealing with things that are observable, like size. Another important and difficult concept to understand is emotions, the feelings of others and the impact of actions on others. Finding a visual way of explaining these situations is helpful (see also Comic strip conversations).
Building attention and listening skills

- Make listening skills explicit so that children know what good listening looks like. Praise children when you see them using good listening skills.
- Break down verbal instructions into small steps. Children with language difficulties can often hold only one or two “chunks” of information in short term memory at a time.
- Encourage an “asking friendly” classroom by praising all children who have the confidence to say, “I don’t understand” and then suggest/model what they could ask, e.g. “Please can you say it again?” (see also Comprehension monitoring).
- Use visual clues to engage children, e.g. gestures, facial expressions, pictures, objects, puppets, story sacks, signing, etc.
- Provide objects for children to hold, feel, touch, taste and smell.
- If a child demonstrates poor listening and attention skills, investigate any physical barriers that may influence their ability to attend, e.g. hearing problems, eyesight, health or medication.
- Gain children’s attention before giving instructions. Explain why it is important to listen carefully. Children with an autistic spectrum disorder may not realise that instructions to a whole class are meant to include them. Use the child’s name prior to giving instructions to overcome this difficulty.
- Say and gesture “Stop and listen”. Keep re-focusing the child’s attention.
- When you give a set of instructions, get another child to repeat them. This will give the child with difficulties a second chance to listen.
- Check that children have understood by getting them to recap verbally, put symbols representing stages of the task into the correct order, or through observation of what they do (see also Comprehension monitoring).
- Use a visual timetable to ensure that children know how long an activity is going to last and when it will be finished, and build in learning breaks. Large egg timers are useful.

Building vocabulary

- Try to put new words into a familiar context for children by relating them to their experiences or lives. Provide the children with new real life experiences so that vocabulary is meaningful.
- Use pictures/symbols/objects to match words and support understanding.
- List key words and introduce them at the beginning of a topic or lesson before using them in the context of what is being taught.
- When teaching vocabulary, generalise the context so when children appear to understand the target word in one context, use the word in other contexts as well.
- For older children, use personal word books in which they record words (with diagrams and pictures as appropriate) as they are introduced to them. Younger children could use a word bank on a table top.
• Be aware of frequently used words that children might not understand. For example, some children may struggle with words often used in learning objectives such as compare, discuss or describe.

• Use a phonological (sound) or semantic (meaning) clue to prompt children if they get stuck on a word. All vocabulary activities will help the development of word finding skills. Give children time to think, offer help and, if accepted, offer choices for unknown words. Cue by repeating the sentence, providing the first sound of the word if it is known. Provide a picture or symbol cue, or provide additional semantic information.

• Use a multi-sensory approach to consolidate words/letters/learning. Rather than relying only on spoken language to build understanding, engage the child’s other senses too, e.g. when learning about letter shapes, use 3D letters involving texture and colour. Letters can be hidden in bags and guessed by touch alone, traced large in the air with sweeping hand movements, involved in pictures to make associations with things that begin with the letter, etc.

Semantic vocabulary learning strategies

• Link word definitions to a label and/or picture/objects. Support the learning of new vocabulary using a range of words on cards that need to be matched to definition cards and symbols (see also Concept map).

• Label to definition dominoes – domino cards with non-matching word and definition need to be matched to correct ones on other dominoes.

• Who wants to be a millionaire – children get a choice of four answers to a definition and the possibility of using “helplines”.

• Lucky dip – a child picks a word and explains what they know about it.

• Making sentences – children make sentences using the words in the box to show their meanings.

• Guess my word – a child picks a word and talks about it without saying the word. The rest of the group have to guess the word as quickly as possible (see also Semantic activities).

• Cloze passages with subject-specific words omitted. This is a simple text or questions with a list of targeted words in a separate group that can be selected to fill the gaps.

• Word bingo – you read out the definition and the children cross off the word on their cards.

• Draw my word – a version of the game Pictionary. Individuals pick a word out of the box and draw it for the rest of the group in 30 seconds.

Phonological clues and vocabulary

• Beat sheet – children quickly fill in the number of syllables for a series of target words, timed activity repeated often.

• Prompting using the initial sound, e.g. “It begins with…”

• Long or short word.

• Number of syllables.

• Rhymes with ...
- Key sounds, e.g. “It’s got a lot of ‘p’s in it”.
- The word sounds like... (similar sounding word)
Strategies combining semantic and phonological clues

- Mind map with the new word in the centre and “branches” leading to “definition”, “a kind of…”,”rhymes with”, “property” and “sounds like” (see also Concept map and Word Magic).
- Blockbuster game – thinking of target words given a clue and initial sound, e.g. “What W is a country beside England?” Teams of children make a winning line of correct questions from one side of a board to the other.
- Give us a clue – one child picks a word, another rolls a die to indicate how many clues they may have, choose semantic or phonological clues.
- Pass the word – the word is “passed” around the group with each child thinking of something to say about it until ideas run out. The child still left in with most ideas is the winner – encourage semantic and phonological links, e.g. Wales…rhymes with sails… has a big city called Cardiff… sounds like sea creatures… etc (small-group activity).
- Odd one out activity – Wales; Scotland; London; England… Whales; tails; emails; feels.

Building expressive language skills

- Targets for a lesson should be clearly displayed and explained at the start of a lesson. Revisit them afterwards. These will often be about both formal, curricular learning and also social/communication aspects. For example, in a PE lesson, children may be expected to develop skill in a game, but also to help each other learn the rules, encourage each other, etc. Children may need to have terms of encouragement scripted for them in advance, e.g. “Nice throw” or “Good try”. At the end of the activity, you can provide feedback about the successes you have observed.
- Encourage and praise all children’s answers.
- Accept both verbal and non-verbal communication from children. Always listen carefully to the child to show that you value what they say.
- Don’t pretend to understand – suggest that they slow down or use other ways to help you understand.
- Respond to a child’s incorrect or brief utterance by modelling what the child could have said, e.g. when a child points at a picture of a boy on a magic carpet and says: “Boy in carpet”, you could respond by saying, “That’s right, the boy is on the carpet”, and expand it by modelling the phrase with more information, e.g. “The boy is on the red carpet, in the sky”, etc.
- Use one-to-one situations such as reading together to input clear speech models and point out written words linked to them.
- Keywords or topic words should be reinforced and revisited using text accompanied by a symbol. Make reference to the visual display when the word is used and remove the display when no longer current.
- Give two choices (forced alternatives). This models the language they need to use to request something, e.g. “Would you like milk or juice?” or “Is it a parallelogram or a trapezium?”
- To support difficulties with sequencing, teach children the words “first”, “then”, “last” and consistently use them when explaining the order of things. Other words needing explicit teaching are “before”, “after”, “next” and “between.”
• Cut up sentences and reorder them so that they make sense, to build narrative skills.
• Use narrative frameworks to help with writing a description of events. For example, when writing a story about “A day out that went wrong”, the first box in the framework would be for “Who was there and where did they go?”, the next frame would be for “What were they doing?”, then “What went wrong?”, etc.
• Use approaches such as “Talk for Writing” to support literacy development.
• Children can be helped to participate more effectively in class discussions/topics if assisted to create PowerPoint presentations.
• Use digital photos, pictures and symbols of familiar activities, story books and comic frames to practise using sequencing vocabulary. These can be put into an un-natural sequence by staff and then reordered by the child using targeted words to describe what they have done.
• For children who are reluctant to use language, create situations that encourage them to speak, e.g. ask the child to set out equipment for a group but don’t provide enough of something so they have to ask.
• Encourage children with communication difficulties to use a sign to signal when they have not understood.

Working with whole-class or small groups

• Encourage the skill of waiting for a turn by making clear what the rules are. For example, teach the gestures that you’ll use to acknowledge a child who wants to speak (a nod with eye contact), when it is the child’s turn (pointing to child) and when to stop speaking so another child can have a turn.
• When working with a partner, give simple, direct instructions such as “Listen carefully to your partner and remember three things he/she says”.
• When using groups make sure every child is given a turn.
• Reward (with praise, attention, stickers, certificates, a message to parents, etc.) communication/interaction behaviours and skills that you want to develop.
• Consider grouping children differently for discussions, depending on the situation. There are lots of interesting ways to structure pupil-to-pupil interaction. These include:
  o Snowballing. Children discuss an issue in a pair, then two pairs get together and share their findings, then the four works with another four, etc. This process allows lots of opportunities for children to practise talking about their ideas.
  o Jigsawing. This works well when thinking about different aspects of a theme. Beginning in “home groups” each group discusses the theme, e.g. the Romans. Then number each child in the group 1–6. Then form six new “expert groups” by getting all the 1s together to discuss, e.g. how the Romans fought battles, all the 2s to talk about, e.g. Roman clothing, etc. After a set time, bring all the “experts” back to their “home groups” to report back what they have learned.
  o Concentric carousel. All of the children sit in two concentric circles with equal numbers in each circle. The children in the outside circle face a partner in the inside circle. Children have a set amount of time to talk about the subject and then one circle rotates a set number of places so that there are different talk partners.
Role cards can be useful to support group working. Before an activity requiring cooperation, give out small cards giving “job titles” and a simple description of what the job involves. Use symbols to support understanding. The cards can include “Leader”, with responsibility for making sure everyone helps and finishing on time, “Coach”, who gives encouragement (using scripted phrases), “Questioner” and “Stores Person”, who hands out equipment and looks after materials. The cards can be adapted for different activities and rotated among children so that everyone gets an opportunity to try out different roles.

Consider whether the child works best in pairs, small groups or alone. Does this vary according to the activity?

Consider whether peers with better language skills give the child with difficulties a useful model of appropriate interaction and encouragement – or whether a less able peer lets the child with difficulties experience more success.

Rules for good listening (sit still, look at speaker, be quiet, listen to spoken words) can be encouraged by having a poster with symbols clearly displayed during group talking. An adult or child can record with ticks, names or initials on the poster when children show good listening skills. The Social Use of Language Programme (SULP) has some useful examples of pictures to support active listening.

Working with parents/carers

- Share new topic vocabulary with parents so that they can reinforce new words at home. Schools may have access to suitable software producing symbols in readymade topic packs (e.g. InPrint 3), which can be shared with parents.
- Involve children with producing newsletters to keep parents informed of activities and successes at school.
- Include speaking and listening activities as part of homework tasks.
- Share with parents the reasons why the school is focusing on developing communication skills and simple activities they can try at home to support this.
- Provide parents with further information or support about communication as required.
- Explain to parents/carers what you do in school and why.
- Try to ensure consistency at home and school.
- Invite parents into the classroom to observe what you do.
- Involve parents with target setting for the child and keep fully informed of progress.
- Use a home/school diary, or email if this suits better, to aid communication and inform of progress.
- Anxieties about transition from, e.g. primary to secondary can be acknowledged and addressed using Talking mats. This is a cutting and sticking exercise where pupils are provided with “mats” listing all the things that will be new about the new environment. This could be words, photos or familiar symbols. These are cut out and stuck along a scale marked “Good” at one end, “OK” in the middle and “Bad” at the other end. This record of their concerns can be used to inform new staff and, if repeated in a year, as a record of
progress. Talking mats can be used for seeking a child’s opinion on a variety of issues and are also particularly useful for reviews.
Resources to support strategies

Some of the suggested resources below are more suitable for children with additional needs requiring targeted support.

Visual timetable

![Visual timetable example]

Task plan / Instruction grids

This example shows the task plan for a literacy lesson.
An instruction grid might have more detail:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apron on</td>
<td>Cover the tables with newspaper</td>
<td>Paints and brushes out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Apron" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Table with newspaper" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Paints and brushes" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw storyboard ideas</td>
<td>Discuss with partner</td>
<td>Write draft sentences for each box</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Comprehension monitoring

A whole-school approach to develop children’s self-awareness of:

- WHEN they are having difficulty understanding language
- WHY they are having difficulty
- WHAT they and staff can do to be proactive about the problem.

It is divided into four stages:

1. Recognising good listening behaviours
2. Message not heard
3. Message too difficult
4. Message not clear

Stage 1 involves getting children to recognise good listening behaviours, why it’s important to do good listening and what these behaviours may be like:

- Looking in the same direction as everyone else (some children do not want to make direct eye contact with the speaker).
- Thinking about the same topic as the others or the speaker.
- An emphasis on sitting still as a prerequisite for good listening (though this may not always be appropriate with those children who have some sensory difficulties. Wriggling may help them to listen!)

Stage 2 involves children developing their awareness of when they have not heard the message:

- It may have been said too softly.
- It may have been obscured by other background sounds.
- Children are encouraged to use a learnt phrase such as “I didn’t hear. Can you say it again/louder?” This can be reinforced through a visual prompt or symbol such as a mouth with a speech bubble.

Stage 3 focuses on messages that are too difficult to understand or carry out because of:

- Unfamiliar vocabulary.
- Long and complex sentences.
- Children are encouraged to identify why they cannot understand and to use phrases such as “I don’t know that word”, “There are too many words. I can’t remember them”. This could be reinforced through a visual prompt or symbol such as puzzled face, speech bubble with lots of words inside it.
Stage 4 concerns messages that do not have enough relevant content or are ambiguous, such as “Get the red one”. Children are encouraged to question a message, e.g. “A red what?” If insufficient content is given in a message, children could say “Can you tell me some more about...?”

You should be aware of working memory capacities and comprehension levels of children (including those with SLCN) in your class. It is important to develop a culture in the class of “It’s OK to ask for help” and also to model the strategies that could help.

In order to help children move on you could:

- demonstrate using the strategies
- provide practice in carefully set-up situations
- provide prompts to remind children what to say in “real” situations in and out of the classroom
- display key phrases and/or symbols in the class and refer to them.

Volume rating scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whisper</th>
<th>Mumble</th>
<th>Chat</th>
<th>Talk</th>
<th>Loud voice</th>
<th>Shout</th>
<th>Yell</th>
<th>Loud</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test</td>
<td>Partner work</td>
<td>Conversation</td>
<td>Answer in class</td>
<td>Assembly</td>
<td>Playground</td>
<td>Football game</td>
<td>Emergency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vocabulary scale

This example shows the word “angry”.

These may be used at a whole-class level (i.e. Universal level strategy) as a visual means of representing and developing vocabulary. For children with SLCN, such scales may be developed over some time, perhaps in focused, small-group or individual work where sorting scenarios on the scale may help to deepen understanding. Also, they need to be explicitly referred to when helping a child to understand real situations, e.g. when they have reacted inappropriately to a specific situation at school. Develop their understanding of words such as “angry” by placing words signifying degrees of anger along a visual scale, together with examples of when they might experience that feeling, e.g. “You have lost your pencil, but you’re not ‘furious’, just a bit ‘bothered’”. Scales will be particularly useful to support the understanding and expression of children who have autistic spectrum disorders. The scale in the diagram can be extended to include strategies the child should use when they experience one of the emotions along the scale. Another commonly misunderstood concept is “bullying”, which could also be worked on using this strategy.
Concept maps such as the one above can be used as a poster during a project but can be developed for other uses. The component parts of the diagram can be put on cards so that children can recreate it. Or the cards can be used for a “happy families” type game, in which children start with cards mixed up and face down on the desk. Then they take turns to turn up a card hoping to find one which fits into a particular “family”. If the card doesn’t fit, it stays face down and children try to remember its position when needed. There are lots of other games which can be generated as variations to ensure children have sufficient practice to understand and remember the targeted vocabulary. The children could attempt drawing diagrams to visually support complex concepts and vocabulary when they are shown symbols that have been drawn to support other concepts, etc.
Word magic

- Describe it
- What sounds do you notice? Starts with...? Rhymes with...? How many syllables...?
- What do we do with it?
- Where might we keep it/see it/use it?
- Who has seen/likes/would use/knows this thing?
Vocabulary – semantic activities

Target words

1. Written word to picture matching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>bounce</th>
<th>heat</th>
<th>thermometer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>results</td>
<td>beaker</td>
<td>centimetres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>centimetres</td>
<td>experiment</td>
<td>test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Which two words go together? Why do they go together? Think of two more items in the category.

| heat       | thermometer | centimetre |

3. Which is the odd one out? Why?

| bounce | thermometer | beaker |

4. Quiz game: Put the cards on the table. Give a semantic clue, e.g. “The one I’m thinking of is made of glass and you put things in it…”

5. Lotto link: Select a word and answer the following questions:
   - What do you do with it?
   - Where or when do you find it?
   - What does it look like?
   - What family/group/category does it belong to?
   - What else does it make you think of?

Place the card, if answered correctly, on the lotto board.

6. Semantic links

Put words in the outer circles that are associated with the target word.
7. Semantic chain

Make a line of the word cards from one side of the table to the other. You can only put words next to each other if you can think of a reason they go together.
Beat sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of syllables</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oxygen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photosynthesis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biomass</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mineral</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First, make sure the children understand “syllable”. Use a simple table such as this as a quick “drill” activity with words from your chosen topic. How quickly can children complete the table (working in pairs or individually)?

**Colour coding**

Making explicit the grammatical function of words.

*Charlotte* [*is not sitting*] **comfortably** on the *small chair* **because it** [*is*] **too wobbly**.

Proper nouns and pronouns – *pink*

Nouns – *orange*

Verbs – *yellow*

Adjectives – *green*

Conjunctions – *purple*

Intensifiers – *red*

Determiners – *black*

Adverbs – *brown*

Prepositions – *blue*
Narrative framework

Narrative frameworks (e.g. Black Sheep Press: [www.blacksheeppress.co.uk](http://www.blacksheeppress.co.uk)) are ways of giving structure to oral and written narrative. There is a range available from basic (who, when, where, what happened?), expanded (how do characters feel? what was the problem?) and more complex (several episodes, high point, resolution, reactions). They could be shown as a path or “story mountain”:
The beginning. Where did this happen? When did it happen? Who was there? Why were they there? To begin with...

What I was thinking. I felt...

The event or problem. What happened? Then...

Then I thought...

What happened next? How did the problem work out? After that...

I was feeling...

Conclusion. In the end...

When it finished I thought...
Pupil passport – example

My name is:

I’m good at:
- Maths, IT, writing
- Reading
- I like Pokemon and pop music
- I like chatting with Mrs X

I find these things difficult:
- Noisy, busy places and people
- Large groups
- Changes to routine
- Asking for help

These things might help:
- Meeting at the beginning, lunchtime and end of the day with Mrs X
- Checklists in lessons
- Visual timetable in my bag
- Reminder card: how to ask for help
- Lunch in classroom
- Library is a “safe place” for me to go for time out
- Buddied with X at break times

Watch out:
- If I’m not eating at lunch time
- If I’m muttering to myself

Please let Mrs X know if you notice this behaviour

Include a photo of the child – for supply teachers