

HOW CAN WE HELP IN SCHOOL? KS3 & KS4

Young People Who Stammer

What is stammering?

Stammering (known as stuttering in USA) can present itself in many ways. If a young person has a stammer you may notice that they:

- Repeat single sounds (e.g. h-h-hello)
- Prolong sounds (e.g. mmmmy name is....)
- Block sounds (their mouth is open but no sound comes out)
- Show tension in the muscles around their eyes, nose, lips or neck
- Have extra body movements such as tapping their fingers (known as secondary behaviours)
- Hold their breath when talking
- Take a deep breath before speaking
- Avoid using words that they find difficult to say
- Avoid certain social situations (e.g. talking to unfamiliar adults/peers)

How can you help?

- Young people who stammer may need more time to express their ideas, so during question and answer activities it is helpful if the teacher slows their own rate of speech in order to signal that there is no need to hurry
- Young people often lose eye contact when stammering and it's helpful if teachers don't look away but give the same eye contact as they would if speaking to a pupil who is fluent
- Reduce the number of questions that you ask. If you need information from a dysfluent pupil and are fairly sure of the content then try to give alternatives, (e.g. "Did it happen in class or at lunchtime?")

- There are some speaking situations that help a stammering young person to speak more fluently. For example: speaking or reading with another person; reciting familiar lists like the days of the week or counting; singing; describing a picture
- When asking the class questions try not to keep the young person who stammers waiting too long for their turn since this may increase anxiety and hence stammering. Discuss with the young person how to deal with question and discussion sessions
- Finishing off sentences is usually unhelpful as it reduces self-confidence and increases frustration, especially if the person chooses words different from those intended by the stammering young person
- Try not to give the young person instructions as to what to do (e.g. slow down, take a breath, try again etc.) This is not helpful in the long term and can increase frustration and anxiety. Instead, maintain easy eye contact and give them plenty of time to finish what they are trying to say on their own
- Where daily registration is causing problems alternative approaches can be discussed with the young person (e.g. putting their hand up instead of speaking.) It is usually easier for the dysfluent pupil if they can take their turn early on in the register.

Useful Websites

- <https://stamma.org> British Stammering Association with information and videos about how to support people who stammer. Phone line and web chat available
- <https://actionforstammeringchildren.org> Fun games and activities for children to get involved with as well as lots of information about stammering and personal stories from children about their experiences.
- <https://michaelpalincentreforstammering.org>

If you require any further support/advice please contact via the following email

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In the subject line please state **FAO Virtual School SLCN Support team** to ensure that your message is actioned by the relevant team