

HOW CAN WE HELP AT SCHOOL? KS1 & KS2



Supporting Dysfluency

What is dysfluency?

Dysfluent speech is when the flow and timing of speech is disrupted. If this disruption is significant and happens for a prolonged period of time it may be referred to as a stammer. Stammering (known as stuttering in USA) can present itself in many ways. If a child 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?

Children who stammer may need more time to express their ideas, so during question and answer activities it is helpful if the adult slows down his or her own rate of speech so that the child knows that there is no need to hurry

Children often lose eye contact when stammering. It's helpful if adults don't look away but give the same eye contact as they would if speaking to a child who is fluent

Reduce the number of questions that you ask. If you need information from a dysfluent child and are fairly sure of the content then try to give alternatives, e.g. "Did it happen in the playground?"

There are some speaking situations that help a stammering child 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 they have drawn, reciting nursery rhymes, speaking with actions

When asking the class questions try not to keep the dysfluent child waiting too long for their turn since this may increase anxiety

Discuss with the child what would make them feel more comfortable during group discussion times

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 child

Try not to give the child instructions as to what to do, e.g. slow down, take a breath, try again. 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

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://michaelpalincetreforstammering.org>

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

Walsall.slt@nhs.net

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