



**BARNSLEY**  
Metropolitan Borough Council

## **SEN Threshold Descriptors**

# **SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION NEEDS (including Autism)**

**(to be used with Nursery Education Funded Children only)**

**S2-7**

Description A = Use with children with specific speech and language needs  
 Description B = Use with children with social communication and interaction difficulties e.g. autism  
 NB. Some children may fit both A & B Descriptors

Range	SLCN (including autism) Nursery Descriptor	Assessment & Planning	Groupings for Learning	Curriculum & Teaching methods	Resources
1	<p><b>A: Speech and language needs. Evidence of <u>mild speech and language difficulties</u> i.e. somewhat below those of the majority of their peers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speech – mostly intelligible.</li> <li>Grammar likely to be immature.</li> <li>Understanding – may be slow to respond to instructions/questions.</li> <li>Understanding age appropriate (see I Can descriptors, (<a href="http://www.ican.org.uk">www.ican.org.uk</a>) relational or abstract concepts,</li> <li>Interaction – may be some reluctance to engage in conversations,</li> <li>difficulties with communication with peers and in using appropriate social strategies such as turn taking and reciprocal communication which impact on the social interactions of child</li> <li>Attention – easily distracted but can be re focused.</li> </ul> <p><b>B: Social communication needs. The child may have mild difficulties which may include,</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>participation in one or two aspects of the learning environment.</li> <li>Interaction - Limited peer group relationships.</li> <li>Some difficulty with the use and understanding of non verbal signals. Some literal responses to verbal communication. Immature social communication skills affecting ability to listen and take turns in a group.</li> <li>Play - A special interest may affect the ability to stay on task. Some concerns about levels of symbolic play.</li> <li>Following small group or whole group instructions.</li> <li>Following certain setting routines especially at times of change or transition.</li> <li>maintaining attention to non-preferred tasks</li> </ul>	<p>Part of settings and Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum assessments.</p> <p>SENCo may be involved in more specific observations and assessments.</p> <p>Use of screening tools e.g. Barnsley speech and language therapy Early Communication and Language Screening Tool, WellComm Speech and Language Screening Tool.</p> <p>Possible use of Early Support materials for advice and guidance on next steps.</p> <p>Personalised planning or individual education plan will be required only when the child's needs demand additional and different arrangements.</p>	<p>Mainstream group with targeted support for targets which involve communication and interaction.</p> <p>Opportunities for over-learning basic concepts within a small group e.g. through the use of WellComm.</p> <p>Grouping strategies are used flexibly within the setting to promote independent learning and peer interaction.</p> <p>setting management takes account of social relationships.</p>	<p>Can conform with some prompting and some adaptations to the curriculum environment.</p> <p>Speech and language: The focus will be on responding to child's immediate speech, language, social and/or learning difficulties and will not depend on specialist assessment or, necessarily, on any confirmation of suspected speech and language difficulties.</p> <p>Social communication needs: The focus will be on responding to child's immediate speech, language, social communication and/or learning difficulties and will not depend on specialist assessment or, necessarily, on any confirmation of suspected autistic spectrum disorder.</p> <p>Emphasis on differentiation for</p>	<p>Main provision by practitioners with advice from SENCo.</p> <p>Support to promote social skills and interactions with peers and over-learning of basic concepts.</p> <p>Use of Early Years Inclusion Development Programme Modules in SLCN and Autism.</p> <p>Possible involvement from the speech and language therapy service aimed at introducing more effective strategies or in providing one-off or occasional advice on strategies or equipment.</p> <p>Free SaLT training.</p> <p>Elklan.</p> <p>Every Child A Talker (<a href="http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/ECAT_child_monitoring_tool1.pdf">www.foundationyears.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/ECAT_child_monitoring_tool1.pdf</a>)</p> <p>Provide activities for parents and carers to carry out at home.</p>

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1				<p>curriculum access. It is expected that the practitioner/key person will adapt teaching methods and work to match the individual child's developmental needs and ability.</p> <p>may need some repetition and simplification of spoken language.</p> <p>Instructions supported visually.</p> <p>Preparation for any change and the need for clear routines.</p> <p>Staff to have completed The Early Years Autism and SLCN modules of the Inclusion Development Programme.</p> <p>The child may require additional time for explanation and clarification.</p>	
2	<p><b>A: Speech and language: The child will have moderate difficulties which may include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• easily distracted, frequent refocusing.</li> <li>• Noticeable delay in responding to spoken language, frequent repetition/simplification.</li> <li>• Slow acquisition of new concepts, limited basic</li> </ul>	<p>As range 1 SENCo will be involved in more specific observations and assessments.</p> <p>Common Assessment Framework.</p>	<p>Mainstream group based, but with some opportunity for smaller group and individual work.</p> <p>Main provision by</p>	<p>Learning will be facilitated by using a structured approach, which may involve: using visual support more specific to the child's needs e.g. 'first</p>	<p>Main provision by practitioner with support from SENCo and advice from specialist staff as appropriate.</p> <p>Additional support, under the direction of SENCO, provides</p>

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2	<p>concepts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not use questions.</li> <li>• Limited sentence length - may omit small words, possible word order errors. Intelligible most of the time in context.</li> <li>• Poor understanding of verbal &amp; non-verbal turn taking.</li> <li>• With adult support able to share &amp; interact with peers.</li> <li>• speech which may limit the child's ability to participate in group activities, question-and-answer sessions and other activities involving speech</li> <li>• frustration on the part of child at their inability to communicate their needs and feelings appropriately.</li> <li>• Unintelligible levels of language that may require Makaton.</li> <li>• Adults having to modify language used with a child.</li> </ul> <p><b>B: Social communication needs. The child may have moderate difficulties which may include,</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social interaction - Poor understanding of social conventions and expectations leading to social isolation. May prefer interaction with adults. Difficulties responding to adult direction. Requires small group and individual instructions. Requires more explicit modelling of skills for imitation.</li> <li>• Social communication - Difficulty with the social use of language requiring some direct teaching (e.g. eye contact, initiating conversations, attention, taking the listener's perspective) Literal interpretation of language e.g. may not respond to humour and idioms. May have some stereotyped language. Adaptations of communication by adults essential.</li> <li>• Play – In the context of the child's developmental pattern, an inability to show empathy, or to predict the emotional response of others. May have some obsessional interests, stereotyped behaviours or</li> </ul>	<p>Planned approaches needed to enable the child to remain within the whole group.</p> <p>Specific IEPs developed.</p> <p>Use of early support developmental journals to identify targets and measure small step progress.</p> <p>Where appropriate other agencies will offer support as appropriate.</p> <p>Learning will be facilitated by using a structured approach, which may involve: using visual representation/ structure.</p> <p>Adults need to ensure that skills are generalised over other areas</p> <p>progress within the curriculum, may be greater in some areas than in others because of difficulties in particular aspects of learning such as imaginative role play, personal, emotional and social development, language or practical activities this needs to be taken into account.</p>	<p>practitioner with support from SENCo and advice from possible outside agencies where appropriate.</p> <p>Planned/structured access for the development of social communication skills.</p> <p>A quiet area within the setting may be useful for individual work and to offer opportunities for over-learning and working on areas of difficulty e.g. abstract concepts and 'de-stressing'.</p>	<p>and then' to transition to activities.</p> <p>The need for additional visual strategies in order to access the learning environment.</p> <p>Adults need to ensure that skills are generalised over other areas.</p> <p>Teaching approaches should take account of difficulties experienced by children in the understanding of the rules and expectations within the setting.</p> <p>Consider staff accessing SaLT Early Years ELKLAN training.</p> <p>May rely on visual information.</p> <p>Help in acquiring comprehending and using language.</p>	<p>sustained targeted intervention on an individual or group basis.</p> <p>Speech and language therapy programme may be in place.</p> <p>Involvement from Integrated Inclusion Services (e.g. Communication and Interaction Team).</p> <p>Provide opportunities for alternative and/or augmentative communication e.g. Makaton/PECS,</p> <p>Enhancing links with parents and carers about the way they can support language development at home.</p>

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2	language, which can be redirected by an adult. Rigid and inflexible adherence to rules, may become upset by changes e.g. supply staff. Needs warnings/ reassurance when there are changes to routines. Some difficulties generalising skills learnt to other areas.				
3	<p><b>A: Speech and language. The child will have significant difficulties which may include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child may have a diagnosis of a specific speech &amp; language difficulty from a Speech and Language therapist.</li> <li>Unintelligible levels of expressive language that may require alternative or augmented forms of communication.</li> <li>Attention – Single channelled attention. Very distractible.</li> <li>Understanding - May respond to only one part of an instruction. May repeat instead of responding. Very slow to acquire the meaning of new words.</li> <li>Expressive language Very limited. Very restricted sentence structure; 2-3- word combinations, uses only most meaningful words – ‘me go toilet’.</li> <li>Very difficult to understand – even for familiar adults.</li> <li>Frustration on the part of child at their inability to communicate their needs and feelings appropriately.</li> <li>Social interaction - Reluctant to interact with other children. Isolated play; poor imaginative play. Difficulties communicating with peers which may lead to social isolation and apparent emotional and or behavioural difficulties.</li> </ul> <p><b>B: Social communication needs: The child will have significant difficulties which may include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social interaction - Clear difficulty responding in social situations and to adult instruction. May be aloof or show markedly inappropriate interactions</li> </ul>	<p>As Range 2 plus more additional assessment tools/approaches as needed.</p> <p>Involvement from Integrated Inclusion Services.</p> <p>Setting-wide understanding of child's needs.</p>	<p>Mainstream group with targeted support.</p> <p>The need for small group work and one to one to develop individual targets and introduce any new concepts.</p> <p>Assistance needed several times throughout the day.</p> <p>Access to a quiet area within the setting when needed.</p>	<p>Requires a high level of consistency and routine in order to reduce anxiety and access the curriculum.</p> <p>Impaired social communication skills requiring either intensive programme of social communication training and generalisation.</p> <p>Adaptation of communication by adults essential, with cues such as visual prompts and signalled routines.</p> <p>Structured opportunities for learning specific skills.</p> <p>The need for additional visual strategies in order to access the learning environment and activities meaningfully.</p>	<p>Some opportunities for 1:1 teaching.</p> <p>Possible high level of involvement from Integrated Inclusion Services.</p> <p>Exceptional difficulties occurring in accessing the curriculum without a highly structured programme to promote speech and/or language development in association with a speech and language therapist.</p>

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3	<p>with other children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social communication – Significantly impaired social communication skills. May have some superficially ‘perfect’ language but unable to use it in other than in a rote manner.</li> <li>• Play - In the context of the child’s developmental pattern, a profound impairment of ability to show empathy, or to predict the emotional response of others.</li> <li>• Obsessional adherence to some routines.</li> <li>• Clear difficulty generalising skills learnt to other situations.</li> <li>• Limited progress in the curriculum except maybe in very specific areas of strength.</li> <li>• Possibly diagnosis of ASD.</li> <li>• Evidence of emerging personal agendas.</li> </ul>				
4	<p><b>A: Speech and language: the child will have high needs which may include,</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receptive/expressive language difficulties both in terms of content and context.</li> </ul> <p><b>B: Social communication. The child will have high needs which may include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ongoing communication or interaction difficulties that impede the development of social relationships and cause substantial barriers to learning;</li> <li>• evidence of personal agendas which are increasingly not amenable to adult direction;</li> <li>• Consistently limited use and understanding of social communication and interaction skills which significantly impact on relationships with others.</li> <li>• Engagement in repetitive behaviours and/or special interests which create barriers to learning.</li> <li>• inability to engage effectively in most aspects of learning.</li> <li>• A tendency to withdraw from social situations and an increasing passivity.</li> </ul>	<p>As Range 3 plus more additional assessment tools/approaches as needed.</p> <p>Is likely to need specific indepth autism or speech and language assessments and planning to inform teaching and learning.</p> <p>All aspects of the curriculum are highly differentiated.</p>	<p>Setting-wide understanding of child’s needs.</p> <p>Opportunities for learning new skills in a quiet distraction-free environment on a one to one basis to ensure learning.</p> <p>Inclusion in a mainstream group for specific activities where appropriate using targeted support to enable learning.</p>	<p>The child has difficulty participating within whole group situations.</p> <p>Curriculum access restricted.</p> <p>Greater curriculum emphasis required to address social and communication needs.</p> <p>Access to a quiet area within the setting when the child needs to de-stress.</p> <p>Availability of staff trained and experienced in working with children with</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional training of staff to support curriculum modifications and social interaction, social communication and social understanding.</li> <li>• Use of specific materials, approaches and resources as appropriate e.g. adapted TEACCH, Time to talk.</li> </ul>

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4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reduced or inappropriate social interactions extending to highly ego-centric behaviour with an absence of awareness of the needs or emotions of others.</li> <li>most social contexts present challenges.</li> </ul>			<p>communication and interaction needs.</p> <p>Realistic expectations of child's ability in a group situation.</p>	
5	<p><b>A &amp; B: The child will have complex and/or severe difficulties that make it difficult to participate in all or most aspects of the setting's activities without a high level of adult support and guidance.</b></p> <p>May require access to a specialist learning environment.</p>	High levels of involvement required from other specialist agencies.	<p>Small group work frequently supported by more than one adult.</p> <p>Likely to require one to one support for many activities.</p> <p>Child may work predominately on an individualised approach to work within the mainstream setting.</p>	<p>Differentiation and personalisation are a priority to deliver an appropriate curriculum.</p> <p>Possible access to weekly speech and language therapy.</p> <p>Staff require high levels of specialist training.</p>	<p>Total communication environment.</p> <p>Communication aids.</p> <p>Multi agency involvement.</p> <p>Specialised approach, adaptations to materials and equipment to enable curriculum access.</p>