

## **TRANSCRIPT: Speech and language therapist**

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I work with children who have any kind of speech, language or communication disorder. Speech and language therapists also work with children who have any kind of feeding or swallowing disorder.

In a special school you've got children with significant and complex needs and that usually involves significant and complex language and communication needs. So we range from children whose cognitive development and physical development is so affected that their language development is, say, like that of a very young child or a baby. And then we've got children who have learnt to speak, who can form sentences, who can use grammar correctly, but they might have some difficulties with pronouncing a few sounds or with getting the words in the right order, or perhaps they might find it difficult to control how fast they speak. And we've also got children who may be able to speak quite well but don't have all the social skills that run alongside that - so needing to make eye contact when talking, to take it in turns to talk, to read other people's body language and understanding of how to convey their own feelings and emotions. And then we have children who are using pictures or symbols to communicate and we've got children who, for physical reasons, can't use their voices but are able to press buttons that will speak for them.

Working in a school like this there are other therapy services coming in, so we interact with each other, so that gives you a really rounded perspective on each child. So, for example, if a child is also seeing the physiotherapist, then I can have a quick chat about best seating positions because how a child is positioned can affect how easy it is for them to engage in communication. Some of our children here use switches to communicate so it's really helpful to communicate with the occupational therapist to get that switch in exactly the right place so that the child has the best opportunity to use a switch successfully.

We set the targets jointly with the class teachers, so then our speech and language targets are part of their overall targets. What we can do is assessment to help us measure progress towards those targets and to fine tune the activities that will help us to meet those targets.

There's quite a large element of training to our role, so we'll try to offer some more formal training to the staff but also, when we're working with children, often we try to have a class teacher or a teaching assistant come and observe what we're doing or to do it alongside us and then that's something they can carry over for the rest of the week or the rest of the month, however long the frequency is between visits.

