



## Information for parents – Speech and language therapy

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### Dear parents

**Acquiring a language successfully is key to children being able to actively take part in school programmes and activities. Here we aim to inform you about the benefits of speech and language therapy for children and young people with language difficulties. These benefits include support with developing a child/young person's oral and written language skills, developing their communication skills and boosting their self-confidence and personality development.**

### What is speech and language therapy?

Speech and language therapy focuses on language development and communication. Speech and language difficulties can cause problems with learning, performance and progress, and social relationships. Difficulties can particularly affect the child/young person's progress in areas of the curriculum where language skills are important.

The speech therapist can carry out diagnostic tests to identify the child/young person's difficulties and, where necessary, provides individual or group therapy. Providing advice to parents and teaching staff is an important part of a speech and language therapist's job.

As a preventive measure, the speech and language therapist offers classroom support through their knowledge of language, language development and communication.

### Who can benefit from speech and language therapy?

Speech and language therapy requires specialist assessment and can be advisable when a child/young person has difficulties with language acquisition and conceptualisation, communication as well as with reading and writing. A child/young person's difficulty – for a variety of reasons - can be noticeable at different levels:

- In their understanding of language
- In telling stories
- In grammar
- In their vocabulary

The following are examples of speech and language difficulties:

- Difficulties with fluency (eg stammering)
- Swallowing difficulties
- Dysphonia (speech disorder)
- Difficulties speaking (eg using the wrong sounds: /S/ instead of /Sch/, placing the tongue between the teeth when speaking)
- Reading and writing difficulties

### What can the school do?

Once a speech or language difficulty has been identified, the child/young person's parents and teacher sit together to request a specialist assessment. Following the assessment, and with the parents' consent, the school management organises either individual or group therapy outside the classroom or an integrated therapy within the classroom. If necessary and if further questions arise, an educational psychologist may also be involved.

Therapy provides the child/young person with encouragement and support in the form of practice, sensory exercises, enabling them to compensate for deficits, to improve their language skills as well as to find a way of dealing with difficulties that are permanent.

To complement the therapy, the speech and language therapist counsels the parents and teacher, is present during lessons and monitors the child/young person. The therapy is assessed at least once year in parent-teacher talks held to evaluate a child's current level.

For early years intervention and prevention of learning and psychological development difficulties in the areas of written language and mathematics, the speech and language therapist also works with the whole class at times (with a focus on kindergarten and primary years 1 - 3) and provides the teacher with advice.

If required, children or young people who attend private schools are also eligible for speech and language therapy. The school governing board decides on which unit carries out the assessment, what intervention is appropriate and where this takes place.

### What can parents do?

Parents contribute a great deal to their child's language development. Here is some advice on how you can support your child's language development:

- At home talk to your child a lot about different topics. Speak using your native language as far as possible.
- Make sure you make eye contact when speaking. This shows you are actively involved in the conversation and lets your child know whether you have understood them.
- Children learn from each other – encourage your child to get to know others of the same age.

- Rituals are a good way of exposing your child to language (Bedtime stories, songs, poems etc)
- Take a break when speaking with your child.
- Taking turns is part of speaking: once you've spoken, it's their turn and vice versa.
- Take your child seriously when they are talking to you. They should realise they can make a difference through speech.
- Encourage them to read books: read picture books to them, give them books as presents, visit the library regularly. Talk about what you have read.
- Make sure your child has a quiet place where they can do their homework.
- You are an important role model for your child – having a good conversational style, and for reading and listening.

It is really important that a child/young person with speech and language difficulties does not feel under pressure. Your child should be allowed to talk about something without being corrected all the time.

Keep in contact with your child's teacher and talk to them about any problems or questions you might have.

If you see the need for action or want support, ask your teacher to set up a parent-teacher talk to discuss your child's current level.

### Information / Advice

For any specific questions you may have about language development, speech and language disorders, please contact your local speech and language therapy unit.

Visit the following websites for further information:

- [www.vsa.zh.ch](http://www.vsa.zh.ch) (→ Schulbetrieb und Unterricht → Sonderpädagogisches),  
offizielle Informationen des Volksschulamts
- [www.sprachpraevention.ch](http://www.sprachpraevention.ch)  
Virtuelles Kompetenzzentrum Sprachprävention, Kontakt-, Informations- und Austauschstelle für Prävention in der Logopädie
- [www.logopaedie.ch](http://www.logopaedie.ch)  
Informationen und Hinweise für Eltern und andere Bezugspersonen des Deutschweizer Logopädinnen und Logopäden Verband (DLV)
- [www.lkg-zentrum.uzh.ch](http://www.lkg-zentrum.uzh.ch)  
Informationen zu Lippen-, Kiefer-, Gaumenspalten des Universitätsspitals Zürich
- [www.kindersprache.ch](http://www.kindersprache.ch)  
Informationen zum Spracherwerb von Kindern