

Speech Sound Difficulties

Children learn to say speech sounds over the first six years of their life and follow a 'typical' developmental pattern. It may be helpful to look at a 'speech sound development chart' so that you are aware of the order of sound development and expectations for children of different ages.

Sometimes children's speech sound errors are not normal when considering their age:

- A **speech sound delay** is when children learn to say sounds following the 'typical' pattern but they develop them at a slower rate than their peers. For example, they may say 'tat' for 'cat' at 4/5 years old or miss sounds off the ends of words.
- A **speech sound disorder** is when a child uses sounds that do not follow a 'typical' pattern of development. They may miss off sounds at the beginning and ends of words, add extra sounds e.g. 'bulue' for 'blue'. A child with a speech sound disorder may also produce sounds that are not used in the English language e.g. they may make a hissy noise in their nose instead of their mouth for the 's' sound.

If you think a child has a **speech sound delay** or **disorder** a Speech and Language Therapist might be able to help them with their sound development. Speech sound errors can also impact on literacy development so it may be worth discussing this with a Speech and Language Therapist.

In the meantime, here are some things you can do to support the child:

- Repeat, repeat, repeat – children need to hear words lots of times before they learn them.
- Encourage the child to look at your mouth when you are modelling words or sounds.
- Praise all of the child's attempts at speaking - listen to what they are saying and not how they are saying it.
- Don't pretend to understand what the child has said - explain that it was difficult to hear and ask the child to tell you again or show you.
- Don't ask children to correct themselves.
- Don't copy the child's errors - repeat the word the correct way for them to listen