**Catch-up funding for schools – supporting speech, language and communication**

Grant funding of £650 million will be paid to all state-funded primary, secondary and special schools in England in the 2020-21 academic year, to be spent on specific activities to support their pupils to catch up for lost teaching over the previous months. Headteachers can decide how the money is spent, and the Department for Education has sign-posted heads to guidance published by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) on effective interventions to support schools: [**COVID-19 Support Guide for Schools**](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Covid-19_Resources/Covid-19_support_guide_for_schools.pdf)

**How can speech and language therapy help?**

The word-gap between children living in disadvantage and their peers is now well researched and recognised. Oral language skills are crucial to educational attainment across the curriculum, for both primary and secondary pupils. Speech and language therapy can support the following approaches, as recommended in the EEF guidance:

* **Intervention programmes**

Speech and language therapists can provide, or support others to provide, structured interventions, either one-to-one or in small groups to develop children’s vocabulary, sentences and narrative skills, understanding, inference, listening and attention, oral language and phonological development. These skills underpin children’s attainment across the curriculum, including but not limited to literacy. Supporting communication skills can also improve outcomes in behaviour and social and emotional development.

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| *“Programmes are likely to have the greatest impact where they meet a specific need, such as oral language skills.” (Education Endowment Foundation, COVID-19 Support Guide for Schools)* |

* **Supporting great teaching**

Speech and language therapists can provide professional development for teachers or teaching assistants to support quality first teaching in relation to oracy. Professional development can support whole school approaches to close the word gap for disadvantaged pupils.

* **Pupil assessment**

Speech and language therapists can undertake assessments of pupils’ speech, language and communication skills and provide teachers with recommendations on how to most effectively support them in the classroom. This can include identifying areas where pupils are likely to require additional support upon transition.

* **Supporting parents and carers**

Speech and language therapists can provide advice, support and resources to families over the holidays - for example, offering advice about effective strategies and activities parents and carers can use to develop the home learning environment.

* **Supporting pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)**

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| *“Schools can choose to target the universal catch-up funding towards vulnerable groups including pupils with SEND, and can use the funding to pay for interventions they think are needed for them to catch-up (for example, additional speech and language therapy). For pupils with complex needs, we strongly encourage schools to spend this funding on catch-up support to address their individual needs.” Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP, Minister of State for School Standards* |

Many pupils with SEND may have speech language and communication needs that may have worsened during the pandemic. Speech and language therapists can help you address this.

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| **To discuss how your local speech and language therapist or service can support you, please contact:** |