



Primary SLCN indicators checklist

Pupils with SLCN may require support in different areas. Use this checklist as a starting point to observe and reflect on the pupil's communication needs.

Understanding	✓ if applicable
Benefits from instructions being repeated, clarified, or broken into smaller steps.	
Benefits from visual cues, gestures, or demonstrations.	
Shows delayed or unexpected responses to questions.	
Uses peers or trusted adults as visual/contextual cues for next steps	
Finds unexpected changes in routines or expectations difficult to process.	
Appears unsure, overwhelmed, or distressed.	
Follows some parts of instructions but misses others, especially when complex or verbal.	
Shows signs of frustration when communication demands are high.	
Communicates needs or distress through behaviour.	
Finds it harder to sustain attention.	
Finding social interactions more challenging.	

Vocabulary	✓ if applicable
Finds it harder to learn, retain, or retrieve new words	
Finds it harder to name items / objects / feelings.	
Experiences word-finding difficulties.	
Uses invented words, non-words (jargon) or descriptive phrases, e.g., "clothes-washer" for "washing machine".	
Uses a limited range of familiar words.	
Frequently uses general or placeholder words, e.g., "thingy", "that".	
Uses fillers or hesitations, e.g., "um", "er".	
Uses non-verbal communication to support expression.	
Finds certain social expectations or group dynamics more demanding.	

Using sentences and stories	✓ if applicable
Has reduced or emerging use of verbal language.	
Prefers to use non-verbal communication methods.	
Finds it harder to link words together.	
Uses developing or emerging grammatical forms, e.g., tenses, plurals.	
Preferers simple sentences or short phrases.	
Leaves out some words.	
Uses varied word order, which may make sentences harder to follow.	
Finds it challenging to retell and/or write a story/event.	
Provides limited context when describing a story/event.	
Has difficulty sequencing or organising ideas.	
Includes limited detail or leaves out some information.	
Chooses familiar or highly-preferred topics.	
Shows signs of frustration when not understood.	

Social communication	✓ if applicable
Finds it hard to interpret body language, e.g., gestures, facial expressions, stance.	
Shows differences in own use of body language	
May not show facial expressions that clearly express feelings	
Pre-verbal skills, e.g., pointing, eye contact, turn-taking, may develop differently.	
Finds it hard to start, maintain or end a conversation, or to provide context.	
Shifts topics or follows their own train of thought during conversations.	
Finds it difficult to recognise what information a listener might need.	
Finds it hard to understand non-literal language, e.g., sarcasm, idioms etc.	
Uses echolalia or scripting as a way to communicate.	
Language skills are developing unevenly or differently from peers and may be highly advanced in some areas.	
Shows differences in shared attention and listening skills.	
Interacts in ways that differ from peers, or benefits from support to join in.	
Engages in repetitive play or has highly-focused interests.	
Finds transitions, unstructured times, or changes in routine challenging or overwhelming.	

Speech, stammering and voice	✓ if applicable
Speech is difficult for others to understand.	
Uses different sounds in place of others.	
Leaves out some sounds when speaking.	
Shows variations in sound production across attempts.	
Finds longer or more complex words harder to produce.	
Experiences difficulties with phonological awareness.	
Speech is effortful, with repetitions, blocks, or tension,	
Voice sounds hoarse, croaky, strained, breathy, or quieter than usual.	

Additional information:

