



## Secondary 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.

If you notice any of these behaviours, consider if there could be an underlying SLCN:

- Appears to ignore instructions
- Frequently asks “what are we doing” after instructions have been given
- Presents as oppositional when tasks are explained verbally
- Frequently says “I don't know”
- Presents as rude, blunt or overly literal
- Avoids group work
- Shows increased fatigue, withdrawal or emotional dysregulation later in the day
- Presents with disorganised behaviour such as late to class, forgetting equipment, missing deadlines

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	
Follows some parts of instructions or completes in wrong order	
Repeats what is said rather than responding appropriately	
Shows signs of frustration when communication demands are high	
Communicates needs or distress through behaviour	
Finds it harder to sustain attention, becomes restless, ‘tunes out’ at times	
Benefits from additional processing time	
Finds social interactions more challenging	
Finds it hard to understand non-literal language, e.g., sarcasm, idioms etc.	

Vocabulary	✓ if applicable
Finds it harder to learn, retain, or retrieve new words	
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	
Finds words with multiple meanings difficult to understand	
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	
Finds longer or similar-sounding words harder to pronounce or distinguish e.g. “instruction/introduction”	

<b>Using sentences and stories</b>	<b>✓ if applicable</b>
Prefers to use non-verbal communication methods	
Uses developing grammatical forms, e.g., tenses, plurals	
Uses language that is simpler or less complex than peers	
Has many ideas to share but may give fewer specific details	
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	
Appears less knowledgeable than peers despite understanding content	
Includes limited detail or leaves out some information	
Chooses familiar or highly preferred topics	
Shows signs of frustration when not understood	
Participates less in class discussions, debates and presentations	

<b>Social communication</b>	<b>✓ if applicable</b>
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	
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	
Language skills are developing unevenly or differently from peers and may be highly advanced in some areas	
Interacts in ways that differ from peers, or benefits from support to join in	
Finds transitions, unstructured times, or changes in routine challenging or overwhelming	
Uses regulating or protective strategies, or turns to preferred activities, when tasks feel overwhelming	

<b>Speech, stammering and voice</b>	<b>✓ if applicable</b>
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	
Speech sound variation is noted in writing	

**Additional Information:**