

Social communication difficulties

What are they?

Social communication refers to the use of language in social situations to develop relationships using social rules. The characteristics shown by children with difficulties in these areas may include:

- Appearing rude or naughty
- Poor use and understanding of non-verbal communication e.g. eye contact, facial expression
- Poor understanding of social situations e.g. turn-taking
- Unable to see other person's point of view
- Literal understanding of metaphor e.g. 'pull your socks up'
- Finds it hard to use language to problem-solve
- Particular difficulty coping with unstructured situations e.g. playtime in school
- Difficulties coping with changes in Routine
- May be obsessive about particular topic e.g. dinosaurs

How do these problems affect a child in school?

Social Communication difficulties may result in the following:

- Unable to follow expected social behaviours in class e.g. sit still at carpet time
- Appear to have 'own agenda' and dislike adult direction
- Difficulty interacting with peers appropriately - at risk of being bullied
- Difficulty understanding verbal Instructions
- Unwilling to change activities when asked
- May become stressed by any change in class routine

What can I do to help?

- Get down to the child's level
- Break down instructions into smaller parts
- Use visual support, eg. pictures, objects to aid understanding of verbal language
- Use short, simple sentences
- Allow child extra time to process language and Respond
- Identify what makes a child distressed and share with school staff and others who will be with your child
- You may need help them to understand that there are different ways of communicating in different social situations

If you have concerns about your child's social skills/interaction you can contact the Speech and Language Therapy Service for more information on 01744-646548/646556.