



SLT Top Tips for supporting Social Skills

Social communication or pragmatic language skills involve the use of:

- Communication functions such as greeting, requesting, commenting, refusing,
- Non-verbal skills such as eye contact and body language,
- Conversation skills such as taking turns, asking for clarification and staying on topic,
- Problem solving skills such as reasoning, using inference, understanding feelings and taking the perspective of others.

Here are some ideas for strategies that can help support social communication skills:

- Practise **taking turns** in activities and conversations one to one or in small groups.
- Create opportunities for your child to practise social skills in **small group** settings with peers (e.g. after school clubs or play dates).
- Use **visual supports** (e.g. pictures, objects) to help your child stay on topic during conversation and activities.
- Use **role play** to practise different conversational skills and model appropriate ways of interacting in different social scenarios.
- Give **specific feedback** to help reinforce positive social communication skills (e.g. 'I like how you looked at me when you asked that question,' 'well done for listening and waiting your turn to talk'.)

- Use **guided questions** and make suggestions to help your child identify ideas for what they could do/say in specific social situations (e.g. 'what would happen if..?')
- When you are looking at picture books or watching TV together **talk about the non-verbal cues** people are demonstrating and what it might mean (e.g. facial expression, body language, tone of voice etc.)
- Talk about feelings and emotions in context as they are being experienced providing **labels** for the **feelings** (e.g. 'he's sad because...' 'I can see you are excited...')
- Support your child to try and read between the lines and come up with ideas for problem solving in social situations (e.g. 'what do you think he should do next?' 'how do you think he might be feeling?')
- After a challenging situation has occurred talk to your child about what happened and what they could try doing differently next time.
- Using tools such as **Social Stories** and **Comic Strip Conversations** can be useful supports for helping children understand specific social situations that they find challenging.
- Try helping your child to set themselves **communication challenges** to practise specific skills (e.g. 'this week I will try starting a conversation with a friend', 'today I will try to put my hand up to answer a question in class')
- If your child has sensory needs which are impacting on their social skills speak to your Occupational Therapist for advice.
- If your child is experiencing emotional or behavioural difficulties which are impacting on their social skills talk to your Psychologist.
- Speak to your Speech and Language Therapist for further specific advice about supporting your child's social communication skills.