



TOP TIPS

For supporting children who are anxious about talking

- Be patient. When children are anxious about speaking, any pressure or expectation to talk, can add to their anxiety.
- Encourage participation in non-verbal activities e.g. craft, physical tasks, music.
- Include opportunities to talk in unison in the classroom.
- Talk to them about what you are doing without expecting an answer: Use commenting and avoid asking direct questions e.g. "I'm going to the park this weekend, maybe you will too". Ensure you reduce any expectant eye contact.
- Explain to the child that you understand that their words get stuck when they're worried. Reassure them that this is ok and you know they will speak when they feel ready but in the meantime you will not ask them to read, answer questions or the register verbally.
- Ensure non-verbal means of talking are available for asking for things or if feel unwell. Be aware some children find this difficult as may be anxious about initiating any form of communication.
- Provide opportunities where they can speak but without any pressure to do so. Where possible, offer both verbal and non-verbal response opportunities to the whole class so not to single the child out.
- Ask the child questions via an adult or child that they are able to speak to until they are able to talk directly to you.
- Respond to any forms of communication with a warm, natural response as though they have spoken.
- Actively support friendship development but ensure the children do not expect or try to get them to speak. Explain that the child can talk and will talk in school when they are ready
- Increase communication with parents. Find out what helps; if any particular strategies have been advised by a Speech and Language Therapist, and use this communication to facilitate rapport building with the child.

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