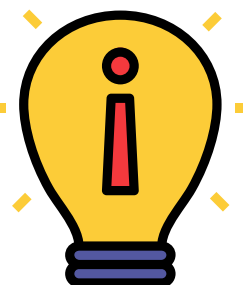


The Inclusive Classroom:

Supporting Students with Speech Sound Disorders (SSDs)





Why It Matters

Speech Sound Disorders (SSDs) are among the most common communication challenges faced by school-aged children.



Research suggests that approximately **5–10%** of primary school students experience difficulties with producing certain speech sounds (McLeod & McKinnon, 2007). While these difficulties may seem subtle, their impact can be significant and long-lasting.



Students with SSDs may face challenges in:

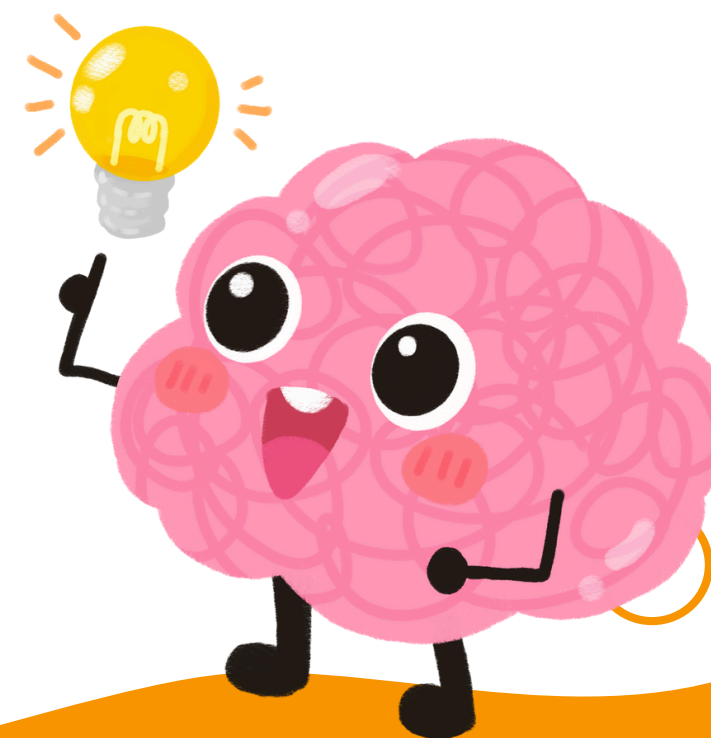
- Being clearly understood by peers and teachers
- Participating confidently in classroom discussions and activities
- Developing foundational literacy skills such as phonics, reading, and spelling
- Forming and maintaining positive peer relationships due to communication barriers





When students are frequently asked to repeat themselves, misunderstood, or unintentionally excluded from group interactions, it can affect their **confidence, emotional well-being, and engagement** in learning.

By recognising and addressing these challenges early, educators can help create a **more inclusive, supportive, and communicative** classroom environment for all learners.



Your Role as a Teacher: Supporting All Learners

You don't need to be a speech therapist to make a meaningful impact.

In small group settings—such as Learning Support Programmes (LSP), School-Based Dyslexia Remediation (SDR), transition classes, or breakout groups—teachers can use simple, inclusive strategies to support students with a range of communication needs, including those with speech sound difficulties.





By embedding these strategies into your small-group instruction, you can:



Reinforce clear and accurate speech in a natural, supportive environment

Strengthen literacy by linking sounds to letters and words

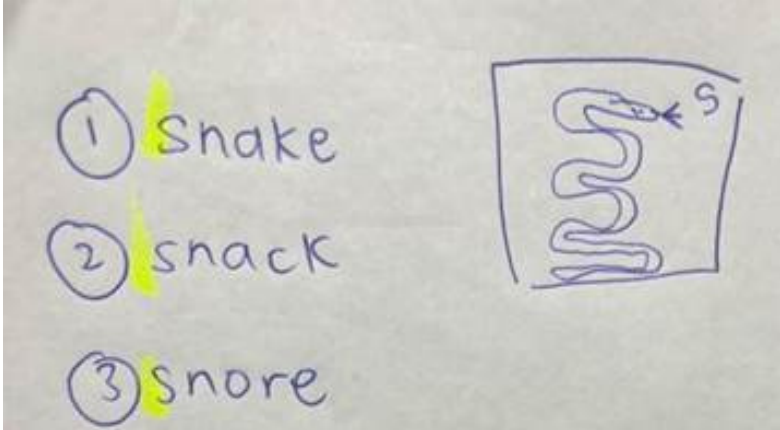
Enhance overall classroom communication and reduce barriers to learning

Every small step you take creates a more inclusive learning space where all students can thrive.



5 Whole-Class Strategies You Can Start Using Today

These strategies are effective for all learners and particularly beneficial for students with SSDs. They can be used during reading, spelling, oral presentations, or even informal conversations.

Strategy	What It Looks Like	Why It Helps
Specific Praise	“That was a very clear /s/!”	Builds awareness and confidence in using correct sounds
Model Without Correction	Student: “tar” Teacher: “Yes, a star in the sky!”	Reinforces accurate speech without embarrassment
Face-to-Face Interaction	Show how your lips, mouth and tongue moves when saying tricky sounds like /s/ or /p/	Helps students see how to form sounds with lips, teeth, and tongue
Visual Prompts	<p>Use bold letters, underlines, or printed word cards during lessons</p>  <p>Examples of visual prompts.</p>	Supports phonics awareness and sound-letter links
Multi-Modal Communication	Ask students to point, act, or write if speech is unclear	Keeps communication flowing and reduces frustration

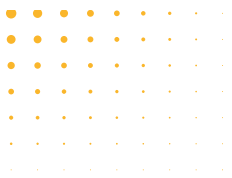


It's About Creating a Safe Space for Communication

Supporting students with speech sound disorders in your classroom doesn't mean overhauling your teaching. It simply means **noticing, responding, and creating a space where every student feels heard.**

When we integrate these strategies into our classroom, we aren't just helping students "talk better." We're helping them be **better learners, better readers, and more confident individuals.**





References

McLeod, S., & McKinnon, D. H. (2007). Prevalence of communication disorders compared with other learning needs in 14,500 primary and secondary school students. *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders*, 42(1), 37–59.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13682820600710111>

