

The Speech, Language, and Communication Alliance warmly welcomes the Curriculum and Assessment Review, recognising it as an important step toward achieving genuinely inclusive education for the two million children and young people across the UK (that's 1 in 5) who struggle with talking and understanding words.

We welcome, in particular, the Review's elevated status given to speech, language and communication, exemplified by its recommendation for a non-statutory Oracy Framework: 'The Review considers oracy to incorporate speaking, listening, and communication, including verbal as well as other forms of non-written communication, such as sign language, non-verbal and Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC)'. This inclusive vision, encompassing all forms of communication, is a monumental victory for children and young people with speech, language and communication challenges. It is further strengthened by the explicit acknowledgment that "Adaptive teaching plays an important role in supporting inclusion," alongside the recommendation that the government "Develops a programme of work to provide evidence-led guidance on curriculum and pedagogical adaptation". This guidance is vital, especially for supporting those with persistent challenges, such as Developmental Language Disorder (DLN).

Within the core academic curriculum, the Alliance celebrates the move to clarify the English curriculum by "more clearly drawing out curriculum requirements for speaking and listening". This coherence is essential for reinforcing literacy foundations.

The Review correctly identifies that persistent problems stem from the fundamental issues around "the transition between primary and secondary school and insecure core knowledge and skills at this critical juncture". Furthermore, we appreciate the focus on removing existing barriers in the assessment framework, recommending the DfE explores how "access arrangements can be refined for pupils with certain SEND that make the Multiplication Tables Check inaccessible". It is equally important that this equity mandate extends to higher levels, ensuring that all pupils can fairly demonstrate their learning through the commitment to "build accessibility into the design of new specifications for GCSEs, AS and A Levels".

Finally, we endorse the Review's foundational principle that inclusivity relies on many factors, acknowledging that "Adaptive teaching practices, teachers' expertise, the engagement of parents and carers, the role of support staff and the classroom environment are examples of factors that also contribute to truly inclusive education". To deliver this ambitious blueprint for all, particularly the one in five children struggling with talking and understanding words, the Government must now urgently pair these excellent curriculum ambitions with the necessary tools to identify children struggling with speech, language and communication, and the comprehensive teacher training required to turn policy into equitable classroom reality.

About the Speech, Language and Communication Alliance:

The Speech, Language and Communication Alliance has been formed to ensure that the UK Governments, and national and local policymakers are focused on the issue of speech, language and communication, and the potential impact of these on all babies, children and young people when developing or reviewing policy, legislation and services.

Working as an Alliance, we aim to have significant impact on important policy issues for children and young people with speech, language and communication challenges. We work with all stakeholders and decision makers, speaking with one sector voice, to ensure the best outcomes for children and young people.

As an Alliance we are committed to sharing good practice in supporting children's speech, language and communication skills and in working with children with speech and language challenges and their families.