

## HELPING CHILDREN WITH UNCLEAR SPEECH

Children often do not have a fully developed sound system until they are 7 years old. Therefore many children entering school may have unclear speech.

Sounds develop at different ages and usually develop in the following order:

p b w m  
t d n  
k g  
f s y  
ch sh l z v j  
th r

Blends of sounds such as 'sp' (as spider), 'sm', 'pr', and 'cl' are harder to say than individual sounds

Remember that if your child is not using certain speech sounds, it is usually because they are not sure how or when to use them, rather than because they are being lazy.

### How you can help:

- Listen to the child and respond positively to their attempts even though they may not be clear

The more time you spend listening to a child with unclear speech the easier you will find it to understand

- Be a good model – children will attempt to match the models of speech they are hearing so keep your speech slow and relaxed
- If a word is not clear, let the child hear you say it without expecting them to repeat it. For example: "There's a tup", you say "That's right, it's a cup". Avoid correcting the child's speech. Getting them to say it properly has little long term effect but it can cause a loss in the child's fluency and confidence in their ability to communicate
- Concentrate on what the child is saying not how he is saying it
- Reduce the pressure on your child to speak i.e. do not ask too many questions or request the child to 'say' or 'tell'
- Encourage the child to look directly at you whilst s/he is talking.
- Facial expressions can provide a big clue. Also encourage the use of gesture, showing or drawing pictures, symbolic noises. For example the cows say 'moo.'

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