

Understanding Your Child's Needs: Communication and Interaction



What are communication and interaction needs?

Communication and interaction needs can look very different from child to child. Broadly, they include:

- Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN): This may affect how children understand what others say, how clearly they speak and how they use words and sentences.
- Social communication needs: These relate to how children interact with others – for example, starting or maintaining a conversation, taking turns or understanding social 'rules'.
- Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC): Many Autistic children have communication and interaction differences. They might prefer routines, find eye contact tricky or interpret language literally.

Twinkl Tip: It's important to remember that difficulties with communication and interaction are not a reflection of intelligence. Many children with these needs have wonderful imaginations, unique ways of thinking and strong problem-solving skills.



Strategies to Support Communication and Interaction



Here are some evidence-based approaches that parents often find useful.

Using Visual Supports

Children with communication needs often benefit from things they can see, not just hear.

- Visual timetables, checklists or simple picture cards make routines predictable and reduce anxiety.
- Objects of reference (e.g. holding a toothbrush to signal bedtime) can also help younger children.

Twinkl Tip: Try placing a 'first/then' board on the fridge: "First homework, then play." This helps children see what's coming and feel motivated by the reward at the end.



1

Keeping Language Clear and Consistent

Long or complicated instructions can be overwhelming.

- Use short, direct sentences: "Shoes on." → "Bag ready."
- Repeat instructions in the same way each time so children learn to recognise key words.
- Always start an instruction by using your child's name, so they know you are talking to them.
- Avoid figurative or confusing phrases (e.g. instead of "Hold your horses," say "Wait").

Twinkl Tip: Pause after speaking to give your child time to process. Silently count to five or ten before repeating yourself. This space can make all the difference.

2



Encouraging Interaction Through Play

Play is a powerful way to build language and social skills.

3

- Turn-taking games (board games, simple card games, rolling a ball back and forth) teach patience and communication.
- Role-play with toys or puppets can help children practise conversations in a safe, fun way.
- Praise effort as much as achievement: "I love how you waited for your turn."

Twinkl Tip: If your child finds group play daunting, start small. Invite one familiar friend for a short, structured activity before building up to larger groups.



Modelling, Not Correcting

When your child makes a mistake, model the right version naturally.

- If they say, "I goed park," respond with, "Yes, you went to the park."
- Over time, they'll absorb the correct pattern without feeling criticised.

Twinkl Tip: Turn storytime into a modelling opportunity. Emphasise key words or phrases when reading aloud to highlight how sentences are built.

4

Creating Calm, Communication-Friendly Spaces

Children often communicate best when they feel safe and relaxed.

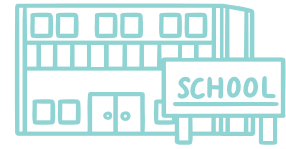
5

- Reduce background noise (TV, music) during conversations.
- Use a quiet, calm voice – this sets the tone.
- Establish familiar routines so children know what to expect.

Twinkl Tip: Have a 'communication corner' at home – a cosy space with favourite books, picture cards, or sensory toys where you can practise talking together without distractions.



Working with Schools and Services



Schools and local services play a key role in supporting children with communication and interaction needs. It can help to ask:

- How is information given to my child in class (visual timetables, simplified instructions)?
- What support is in place at playtime or lunchtime to help with social skills?
- How is progress measured and shared with parents?
- Are staff trained in strategies like social stories, Makaton or visual supports?

Twinkl Tip: Keep a small notebook or digital log of strategies that work at home. Sharing this with teachers can create a joined-up approach that benefits your child in every setting.



Where to Find Additional Support

Every Local Authority will have slightly different services, but you can expect to find:

- Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT) – support with speech, understanding and expression.
- Autism or Communication Support Teams – often linked to schools or advisory teachers.
- SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) – impartial advice for parents.
- Parent/Carer Forums – local groups where families share experiences and tips.

Twinkl Tip: Don't be afraid to chase referrals or ask for clarification. Services can be busy, but persistence helps ensure your child gets the support they deserve.



Final Thoughts



Supporting a child with communication and interaction needs can feel daunting at times, but remember:

- You know your child best. Your insight is invaluable to professionals.
- Small, steady steps make a big difference.
- Progress may not always be quick, but every attempt at communication – a look, a gesture, a sound – is worth celebrating.

Together, with the right support at home and school, children with communication and interaction needs can flourish, express themselves confidently and build meaningful relationships.



We hope you find the information on our website and resources useful. These resources are those which we have generally found to be of benefit to learners with SEND. However, every child's needs are different and so these resources may not be suitable for your child. It is for you to consider whether it is appropriate to use these resources with your child.