

SBH SCHOOL TIPS

SPEECH SOUND DEVELOPMENT

When starting school children can often present with speech that sounds unclear, or is not easy to understand. How can teachers determine ‘what is a typical error pattern’ and ‘what is delayed disordered or atypical speech’ development. It is important to be aware that most children should begin school with speech that is able to be understood by the teacher 100% of the time. A key characteristic of children with speech sound disorders is that they are often significantly less intelligible than non-speech-impaired children of the same age. All children will make errors that are predictable, these errors are termed ‘phonological processes’ and can be seen in the table below. These processes, as children get older tend to resolve as children develop more mature speech. Included in the table is the age that children should have ‘mastered’ the sound by.

Phonological Process:	Example	Description	Age child should have mastered by:
Pre-vocalic voicing	car = gar	A voiceless sound preceding a vowel is replaced by a voiced sound.	3.5 years
Word final devoicing	red = ret	A final voiced consonant is replaced by a voiceless consonant	3 years
Final consonant deletion	boat = bo	A final consonant is omitted (deleted) from a word.	3 years
Velar fronting	car = tar	A back sound is replaced by a front sound.	3.5 years
Palatal fronting	ship = sip	sh or zh are replaced by s or z respectively	5 years
Assimilation	cup = pup	The pronunciation of a word is influenced by one of the sounds it 'should' contain.	3 years
Weak syllable deletion	telephone = teffone	Weak (unstressed) syllables are deleted from words of more than one syllable	4 years
Cluster reduction	try = ty	One or more cluster elements are deleted (try = ty) or replaced (try = pwy).	4-5 years
Gliding of liquids	ladder = wadder	Liquids are replaced by glides.	6-7 years
Stopping	ship = tip	A stop consonant replaces a fricative or affricate	4-5 years
Labialisation	Thumb = fum	‘th’ is produced as a labial sound	7 years

When to refer to the Speech Pathologist?

- You should be referring to the speech pathologist when you find a child's speech difficult to understand.
- If you notice a child's speech doesn't sound like the other children in the class.
- If you note a child is frustrated in the class expressing themselves.
- If you notice a child having difficulty with language or literacy.

What can teachers do to support speech sound development and unintelligible children ?

- Always give clear models of words
- Do not repeat a child's error, this reinforces in – instead repeat the target word correctly emphasising the incorrect sounds.
- Be a supportive communication partner.
- Encourage unintelligible children to supplement verbal communication with gesture or ‘show you what they are talking about’ to provide context.

