



Schools

Supporting **STAMMERING** in secondary school



STAMMERING CAN BE...

The below features will be unique to that student and can vary in their frequency according to the speaking situation.

Repeating

Repeating parts of words, sounds or syllables several times
"ccccccan I have dinner?"

Stretching

Stretching sounds "I want a sssssmoothie"

Blocking

Getting stuck on the first sound of a word so no sound comes out for a few seconds.

Effortful

A student may put extra effort into saying specific sounds or words. You may notice facial tension around the eyes, lips and jaw. They may hold their breath or take a big breath before speaking, so that their breathing seems uneven

Body Movements

Using body movements to help get a word out - stamps their foot or moves their head or losing eye contact when stuck on a word

Fillers

Uses a lot of fillers (um, eh, you know etc).

Hiding (Covert behaviours)

A student tries to hide their stammer: pretend they've forgotten what they want to say, change a word they have started to say or give an incorrect answer. Go unusually quiet, Or avoid certain situations..

Behaviour Changes

They may become disruptive, the class joker, or talk over others to conceal the problem. They may fidget or close their eyes. They may become withdrawn or have associated mental health concerns (e.g. anxiety, depression)

Stammering is primarily a neurological, not psychological, condition. It is often hereditary – about 60% of people who stammer have another family member who stammers.

WHAT IS STAMMERING?

Stammering, also known as stuttering, is common in young people. Stammering, affects up to 8%, or about one in every 12 children. Children often start stammering between the ages of 2 and 5. Some children will start stammering after this.

Stammering is very individual and each student will have their own behaviours.

As a young person gets older they may become more self-conscious about their stammer.

Teachers, like the student's family, can play a big part in helping children manage stammering – by working alongside the Speech and Language Therapist they can help create a positive narrative of stammering for the child.

THE SPECIALIST STAMMERING SERVICE, SPEECH & LANGUAGE THERAPY
THE SALT WAY CENTRE, PEARL ROAD, SWINDON, SN5 5TD
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TRANSITION TO SECONDARY SCHOOL

A student who stammers may hide their stammer so their struggle is not recognised.

Moving to a larger school and meeting new people may be very challenging for a young person who stammers.

All teachers concerned with the student need knowledge and understanding to help the young person to build confidence and manage their stammering in a positive way.

Please see other resources section for more information.

WHEN TO GET HELP?

The student may have stammered for some time and have entrenched difficulties.

There may be negative emotions, self-consciousness, frustration, embarrassment or anger.

Self-confidence may be affected.

The student may remain quiet and restrict their opportunities.

The student may fear being identified as having a stammer and may have already experienced bullying and teasing.

A pattern of negative thinking may be contributing to the struggle with stammering.



If students who stammer can be supported to build confidence, self-esteem & resilience, this will be of great advantage to them in education, in seeking employment and in their social lives.

THE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE FREELY AND EASILY IS VITAL FOR PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING IN SOCIETY TODAY.

BE AWARE, THIS DIFFICULTY MAY BE HIDDEN

HOW CAN A TEACHER HELP?

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT ALL TEACHERS WHO HAVE CONTACT WITH THE STUDENT HAVE INFORMATION ABOUT STAMMERING AND HOW BEST TO SUPPORT THE INDIVIDUAL.

Recognise the student's strengths and build their own self-worth

Notice when the student manages well. Give appropriate praise for achievements. Encourage students to notice their own achievements. Encourage a range of interests and build on strengths.

Consider our own reactions

So much depends on the listener's reaction. If you feel anxious, worried or uncomfortable yourself, this will transfer to the student. It is important to look at your own reactions.

Wait. Give them time

Try to look at and listen to the student when they need to speak to you. maintain 'natural' and relaxed eye-contact.

Observe and Ask

Observe the student throughout the school day (in the classroom, break time, assembly) When is their communication at it's best? When is it harder? Do they seem aware of stammering ? (e.g., do they blush/ look anxious? Are there signs of struggle/ tension? Do they try to hide it, switch words or avoid situations?) It maybe helpful to talk to the student, parent and/ or their Speech Therapist to help you understand how they are feeling about their talking and what helps.

Try not to exclude the stammering child from speaking activities, but do try to arrange things so he or she can succeed and feel part of things.

Reduce time pressure

Pause for one second before responding to the student

This will slow things down and give them time for thought. Speak in a calm manner.

Create a calm environment

Use visual timetables, reduce background noise, create safe/ quiet spaces for a student to retreat to. If a student is having a difficult day, try calming activities e.g. reading, craft or singing, that shift the focus away from speech.

Offer Flexibility

Vary the register, so students have a choice of responses. Allow students to read in pairs. Give choice about responding to questions. Give planning time (if this helps).

Allow a student to write or draw their thoughts and ideas.



CHALLENGING SITUATIONS

BULLYING AND TEASING

A survey of adults who stammer revealed that 82% were teased or bullied in school.

Students who stammer may find it hard to verbally report what is occurring, a system that allows written reports of bullying can be helpful.

Everyone should be aware of the anti-bullying procedures in place.

OFFER REASSURANCE

If a student is struggling and/or becomes distressed, reassure them that you have noticed talking is hard right now, it's ok and you are listening. Perhaps offer an activity that doesn't involve lots of speech if they need a break.

ANSWERING THE REGISTER

This can be difficult for a stammering student. Waiting to talk aloud can cause an increase in tension, anxiety and embarrassment, which in turn can increase stammering behaviours. Be flexible.

READING ALOUD, SPEAKING IN FRONT OF A GROUP

Some students who stammer enjoy reading and are quite fluent when reading, but others find it a difficult situation and become anxious. Reading aloud in front of the class can be a very frightening situation. The situation can be helped by:

Letting students read aloud in pairs, as a student who stammers is often fluent when shadow reading.

Letting the student read on a one-to-one basis or in small groups rather than in front of the whole class and by making sure there is no time pressure.

MANAGING EXAMINATIONS

Oral exams may be challenging for students who stammer.

Discuss in advance with the student what will make the task easier.

Early planning and practice generally helps.

Special consideration / extra time can be given, this needs to be applied for in advance and a Speech and Language Therapy report may be needed.

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY

If you have a student in your school who stammers, check if there is already a Speech and Language Therapist involved. Your SENCo may already have a report on file.

IMPORTANT

If you or parents are at all concerned about a student stammering please fill in a referral form with parent's consent or contact us

Stammering Therapy Information

A student who attends Speech and Language Therapy will have a programme tailored to their needs. Recognising a young person's strengths and building solutions forms an important part of therapy.

A young person will be seen in clinic, home or at school. Following assessment, support and advice will be given to the family and details sent to school. If ongoing support is required, therapy can include;

Communication Skills

Exploring how we use our whole bodies to communicate. Understanding that you can be a successful communicator and stammer.

Speech – How We Talk

Analysing how we talk, exploring what stammering is and what it looks like for each individual.

What helps?

The family will explore what helps and try out a range of tools that people who stammer have found useful. From stammering modification, building resilience, flexible thinking skills, modifying adult interaction and adapting the environment.

If you have any questions, worries or observations, please contact us.



THE FLUENCY TRUST

helping people who stammer communicate confidently

The Fluency Trust Charity in partnership with SBC run residential courses for young people who stammer aged 10-17 years old. Get in touch for more information.

WORK EXPERIENCE

A positive placement can greatly increase confidence. It is helpful to consider the placement carefully. If the employer understands about stammering this can decrease the student's sensitivity about their speech and encourage a positive open attitude.

CHOICES AND CAREERS

It is important that students consider all choices of courses and careers and do not feel limited by stammering. People who stammer can achieve in all careers.

OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES



- [Swindon Speech and Language Therapy Website](#)
Access our free online Stammering Awareness session for professionals
- [STAMMA](#)- Great information and access to online groups and helpline
- [Education reasonable adjustments](#) for stammering children
- [Wait Wait](#) Action for Stammering Children teacher information video
- [How To Be More Hedgehog by Anne-Marie Conway](#), for reading ages 9-12, tells the story of Lily, who has a stammer and is in the last year of primary school.
- ['The Boy Who Made Everyone Laugh'](#), by Helen Rutter aimed at children aged 8-12, about an 11-year-old boy who stammers and dreams of being a stand-up comedian
- Maddie, a young person who stammers, gives information about stammering and how to support secondary pupils who stammer in school ([12 mins video](#)):
- Maddie, a young person who stammers, gives top tips for supporting primary and secondary pupils who stammer in school ([2 min video](#)):

We'd like to know when things go well, suggestions or concerns
Please discuss these with your Speech & Language Therapist
or contact us

You can also fill in our electronic survey [here](#)

