



Jane Mullen

To be able to speak clearly a child has to be able to:

- Hear the range of speech sounds – if you are concerned about your child’s hearing please ask your Health Visitor or GP to refer him/her for a hearing test
- Physically move the muscles that are used to make speech sounds and coordinate these movements
- Learn and use all the different speech sounds in the English sound system.

Learning to speak clearly is a complicated skill that begins when a baby is born and when they start to babble and continues developing throughout the pre-school years and into school.

Most children are using a range of speech sounds and can be easily understood by the age of 5 but they may still be making mistakes, for example saying “wing” instead of ‘ring’.

Children with speech sound problems may do any of the following:

- Speak unclearly
- Have trouble saying specific sounds
- Swap sounds around in words e.g. say “tat” for ‘cat’
- Sound like a much younger child e.g. miss out sounds and say “poon” for ‘spoon’ or “ca” for ‘cat’

What can you do to help?

- Get down to the child’s level and look at your child, face to face
- Do not ask a child to repeat a word if it’s spoken incorrectly, repeat back the correct word eg. child says: “Da car e-o” adult says: “yes daddy’s car is yellow”
- Play together so your child has a better chance to listen to you