

HOW TO HELP

- Keep natural eye-contact and allow each child to finish what they're saying.
- Stay focused on the message.
- Teach wait time.
- Build their confidence, praise them for what they do well.
- Encourage the child who stammers to contribute in class or in small groups.
- Encourage the class to develop listening skills.
- Give them a help buddy, a fellow pupil who can support them in and out of the classroom.
- Don't tell them to 'take a deep breath' or 'take their time'. Although well-meant, it rarely helps and can lead to the child feeling frustrated.
- Avoid putting them on the spot by asking direct questions. Allow them to answer when they want to and give them as much time as they need.
- Don't exclude a child from speaking in class as this can undermine their confidence.
- Even if you feel anxious when the child is stammering, try not to show it. Remain calm, kind and approachable.
- Acknowledge the stammering in a matter-of-fact way. This helps the child feel it's OK to stammer. You might say something like, "That was a hard word to say".
- Make it clear you're there for them and that they can talk to you whenever they like. Take their lead and encourage them to tell you how to support them.

SHARE

Ensure everyone (teaching, admin and catering staff) who comes into contact with the pupil knows how to help:

- Share this leaflet and put it up in the staffroom.
- Invite the child to create a card with key information about their stammer, to share with others.
- Suggest that the child gives a talk, with you or their speech therapist, to the class about their stammer and what others can do to help.

HERE TO HELP

Contact us to talk through any concerns you may have about a pupil who stammers. We're here to listen and support you.

Helpline 0808 802 0002
Webchat stamma.org/help
Email help@stamma.org

Mon-Thurs 10am-2pm; 4pm-8pm
Free. Confidential. Anonymous.

Other sources of support

stamma.org

Take a look at our resources for teachers who stammer: stamma.org/teachers

Michael Palin Centre for Stammering

Their website has a useful section for teachers, including a great video introduced by Sir Michael Palin.

Stammering Tap

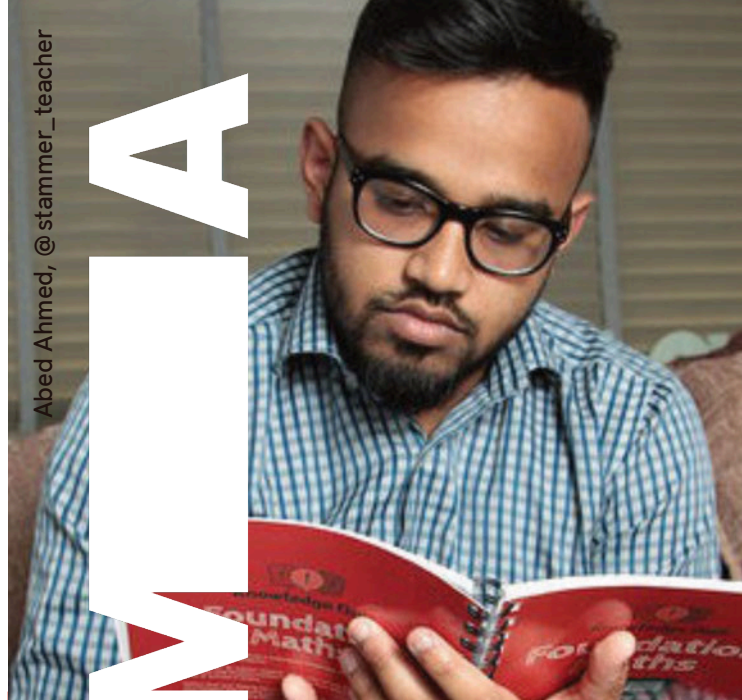
Search online for this short animation made by children who stammer and speech and language therapists to explain what stammering is all about.

Become a member for free and help us to continue supporting teachers and parents of stammering children.
Go to stamma.org/join

STAMMA

The British Stammering Association
Box 140, 43 Bedford St, London WC2E 9HA
Office tel: 0208 983 1003

Reg. charity nos: 1089967/SC038866



Abled Ahmed, @stammer_teacher

STAMMA

Up to 8% of children start stammering, so it's likely that several pupils in each year group stammer. You might not even know it.

Answering the register or being asked to read aloud can be a source of dread for these children. How they are supported in class can have a major effect on the way they feel about themselves.

As a teacher or teaching assistant, you can play a transformative role for the child who stammers.



Stammering, also known as stuttering, is common in children. About one in every 12 children will start to stammer, often between the ages of two and five. Other children will start stammering after the age of five.

Negative responses to a child's stammer can have a profound effect, impacting their self-confidence, sociability and career choices.

CAUSES

Research indicates that stammering is neurological, relating to the part of the brain where speech develops. Stammering also often runs in families – around 60% of people who stammer have a relative who stammers or used to stammer.

Much of this leaflet is about reinforcing what you already know and practise in school.

A child's negative thoughts about stammering can often be all-encompassing. Fed by other peoples' responses, they can take on iceberg-like proportions in the child's mind, with the fear of stammering dominating their lives. On top of this they face the confusion of why they stammer.

By accepting their stammer you can instil confidence in a child, and how you treat their stammer will set an example for all the class to follow.

STAMMERING IN CHILDREN

Stammering is very individual. Examples include:

- Repetition of sounds or words, eg “Y-y-yes” or “When, when, when is playtime?”.
- Stretching sounds, eg “I like that ssstory”.
- Blocking of sounds, when the child appears ready to speak but no sound comes out for several seconds, eg “----I got a book”.
- Stopping speaking mid-sentence.
- Signs of facial tension, eg around the mouth.

Many children will stop stammering naturally or with speech therapy, and some will continue to stammer, we can't predict who. Stammering is also variable. Sometimes a child will stammer a lot and the next day very little.

Situations where a child may stammer more include when saying their name, explaining complex ideas, using new vocabulary and when under time pressure. Praise the child for getting through these times. But don't praise them for fluent speech.

Less stressful situations can help build a child's confidence, such as:

- Speaking in unison
- Reciting familiar lists, eg days of the week
- Singing
- Speaking in a strong rhythm, eg poems
- Feeling relaxed and unpressured
- Speaking in smaller groups.

TAKE ACTION

If you think a pupil in your class has a stammer, talk to the parents first. Take the lead from them before speaking to the child privately to find out how you can help. Talk to other staff as they may know about a child's stammer. If a speech and language therapist is involved, they will have sent a report to the school – ask if you can see any recommendations.

If the child is not having speech and language therapy, ask the child's parents if they think it would be a good idea. You can help them make the referral via your SENCo, their GP or directly. Tell them they can find contact details of their local NHS service online, by searching for 'children NHS speech and language therapy + your town/city'.

Speech and language therapy can be helpful whatever the child's age. Therapy is likely to be a long-term process and isn't always about getting the child to be more fluent. Often it's about building up their confidence and maximising their enthusiasm to talk, stammering or not. Speech therapy often includes working with parents and teachers.

A HIDDEN STAMMER

Some children will go to huge lengths to hide their stammer out of embarrassment. This is known as covert or interiorised stammering. They might appear withdrawn in class, isolated from their peers. Talk to the parents and follow the 'how to help' suggestions here. Perhaps have a session with the class talking about disabilities, covering covert stammering and how hard this can be, and the 'social model' perspective on disabilities.

TEASING

Children who stammer can be more at risk of being teased or bullied than other children. Keep an eye out for any unacceptable behaviour and follow your school's anti-bullying policy.