

SPOTLIGHT ON SEND

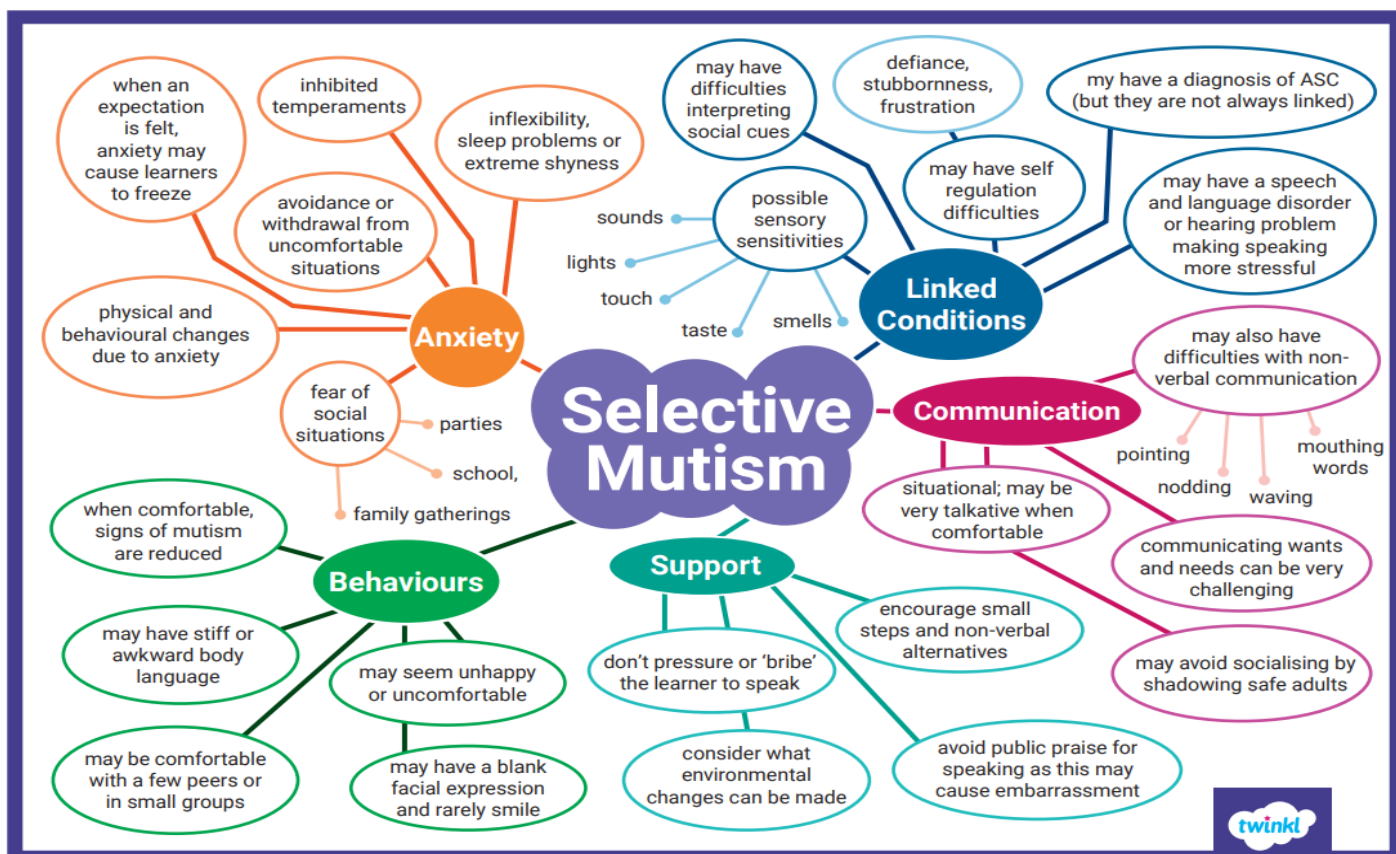
Selective Mutism

If you have any questions please contact Mrs Downs, our Inclusion Leader.

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Selective or situational mutism is an anxiety disorder which makes it difficult for a person to speak in certain situations. Children with selective or situational mutism want to speak, but their anxiety leads them to become 'frozen' when expected to speak. The condition can start early in a child's life and will usually improve with age, although some people continue to need support throughout childhood and into adulthood.

Selective or situational mutism (SM) is often recognised when a child begins to socialise outside their own family circle and begin to meet new people, such as when starting nursery, attending a young children's group or starting school.



HERE ARE SOME SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR:

- Your child appears uneasy, nervous, shy or withdrawn in social situations.
- Your child appears disinterested or sulky around new people or in new situations.
- They become frozen and expressionless when expected to talk in some situations or environments.
- Your child might use gestures for words such as 'yes' or 'no'; for example, nodding or shaking the head.
- Some children may be able to utter a few words; others will not
- Their voice may be altered; for example, they may whisper in some situations but not in others

TIPS AND TRICKS

- Do not pressurise or bribe your child to encourage them to speak.
- Let your child know you understand they are scared to speak and have difficulty speaking at times. Tell them they can take small steps when they feel ready and reassure them that talking will get easier.
- Do not praise your child publicly for speaking because this can cause embarrassment. Wait until you're alone with them and consider a special treat for their achievement.
- Reassure your child that non-verbal communication, such as smiling and waving, is fine until they feel better about talking.
- Do not avoid parties or family visits, but consider what environmental changes are necessary to make the situation more comfortable for your child.
- Ask friends and relatives to give your child time to warm up at his or her own pace and focus on fun activities rather than getting them to talk.
- As well as verbal reassurance, give them love, support and patience.