An overview of Communication
Webinar for parents and carers

Lucie Cox Speech and Language Therapist

Content of webinar

Introduction to Lucie Cox

What are different parts of communication

How communication is supported at The Cavendish School

How can parents and carers support children with SLCN at home and out and about

Introduction to Lucie Cox

I qualified as a Speech and Language Therapist in 2004.

I qualified as a Makaton Tutor in 2010.

I have worked in London in Mainstream Primary schools with children with a broad range of SLCN, including many children with Autism.

I have worked in Cornwall as part of the NHS Autism/Neurodevelopmental Diagnosis service (working with children/young people between the ages of 6-16 years old)

I am from Cambridge originally, and now live back here with my family.

I am employed directly by the The Cavendish School, 2 days a week.

3 main areas of communication

Speech

Language

Communication

Speech

The speech sounds that go together to make words (e.g. 'c - a - t')

Each language has rules which dictate the sequence that sounds can occur in words. E.g. in English 'sr' cannot start a words but 'sp' can.

Generally, as children develop the amount of sounds they can say increases. This tends to have a particular pattern, however as all children are different their speech sounds can develop at different rates and in different ways.

Phonological awareness skills also come under Speech. E.g. awareness of rhyme, syllables.

Speech sounds - ages and stages

Speech

Fluency - stammering/stuttering

- Many children go through a phase of non-fluency/stammering where their ideas are developing ahead of their language ability.
- Non-fluency is very typical between the ages of 2-4 years, with the majority of children becoming fluent again over a few weeks or months.
- Some children continue to stammer.

Speech

Intonation or stress/emphasis

- Stress/emphasis on different words can subtly change the meaning of a sentence.
- Concepts such as irony and sarcasm make use of this part of speech.

Speech

Volume - Young children are not always able to control how loudly or quietly they speak

Pitch - the highness and lowness of tone. Young children tend not to have much control over their pitch, but it is a skill that develops.

Rate - how fast or slow you talk

Language - Understanding

- Words (vocabulary) and word meanings

- Grammar – (e.g. how word endings change meaning)

- Words joined into sentences – amount and complexity of language

- Questions

- Sentences joined into narratives/stories

- 'Higher level' language skills – (e.g. inference/'reading between the lines')

Language - Talking

- Words (vocabulary) – core and topic specific vocabulary
- Grammar – (e.g. using word endings to change meaning)
- Joining words into sentences
- Asking questions
- Joining sentences into narratives/stories
- 'Higher level' language skills – (e.g. using language to reason, discuss and negotiate)

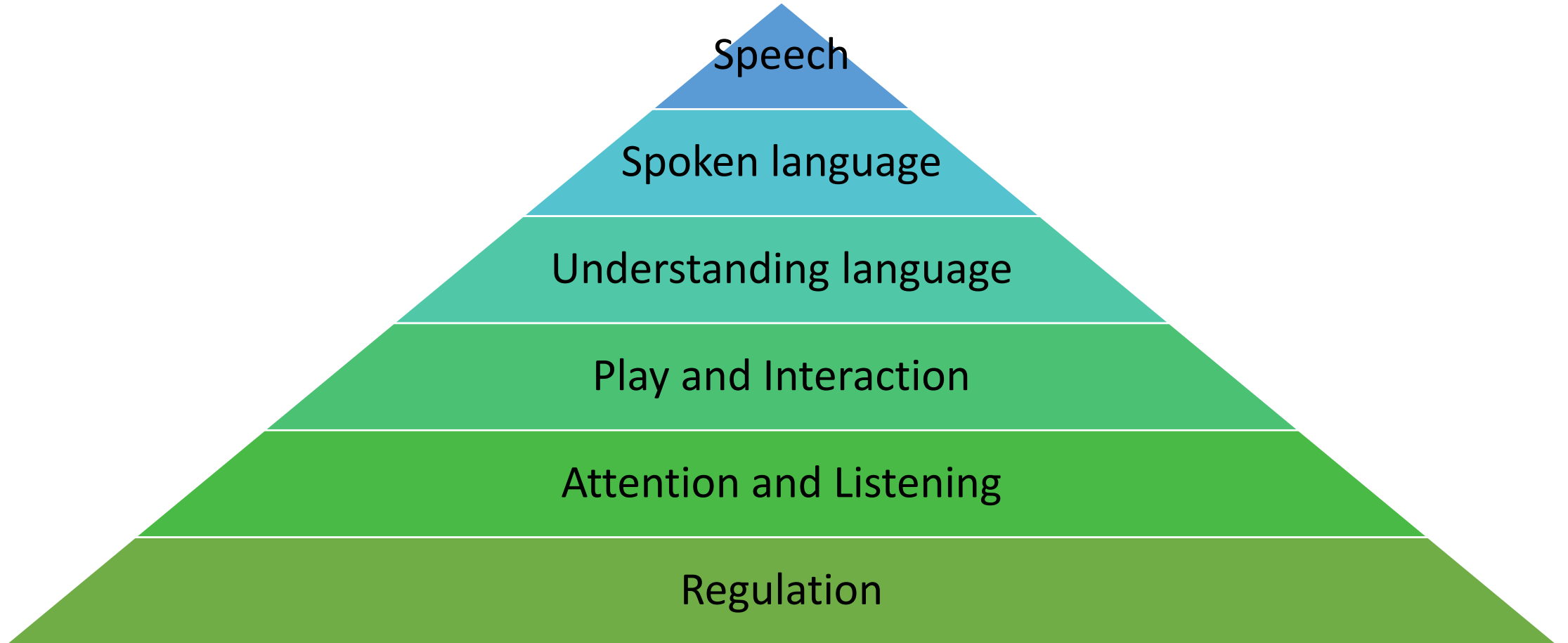Communication

Non-verbal communication

Social skills or competencies

Interacting with others

Communication – other areas

- Selective Mutism – anxiety disorder, a phobia of talking or communicating.

Communication Pyramid

Key communication skills

Shared attention

Shifting attention

Understanding function of language

Understanding function of social interaction

Desire to engage in interactions

Desire and/or need to communicate

How do we learn language

There are different theories about this, e.g.:

• Innate (Chomsky)

• Repetition and reinforcement (Skinner)

• Social interaction (Bruner)

• All theories account for the fact that we need **exposure** to learn language

• Children with communication needs are likely to need many, many, many more exposures to learn language

What do we need to provide
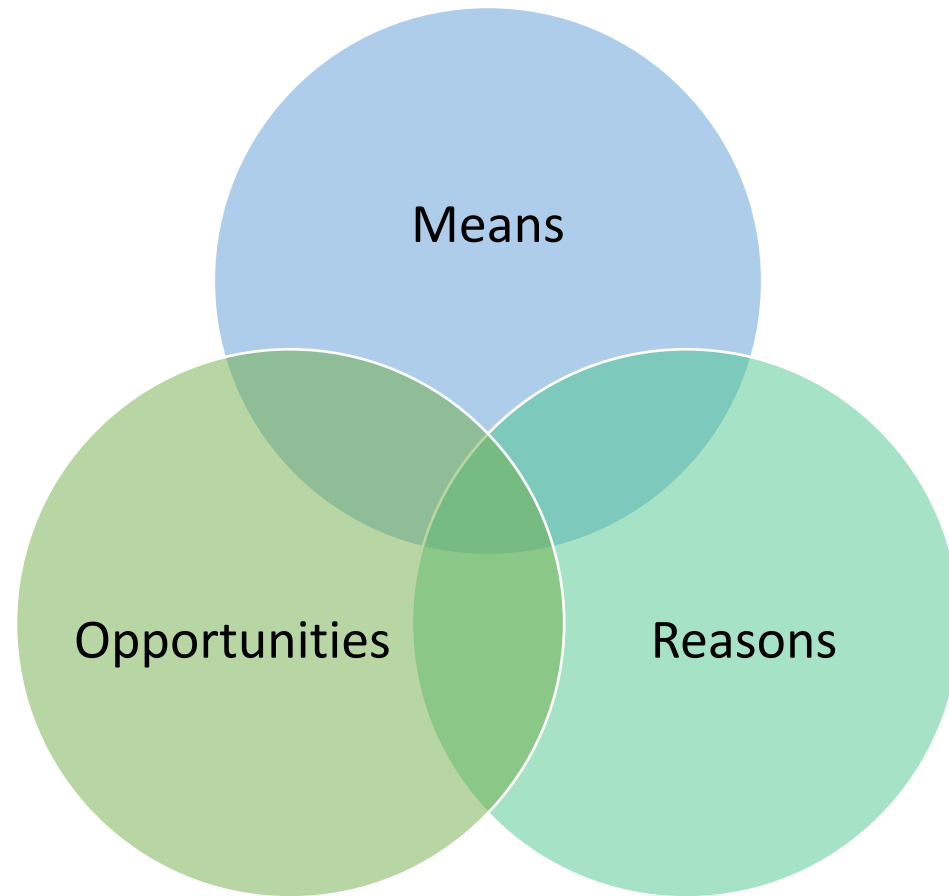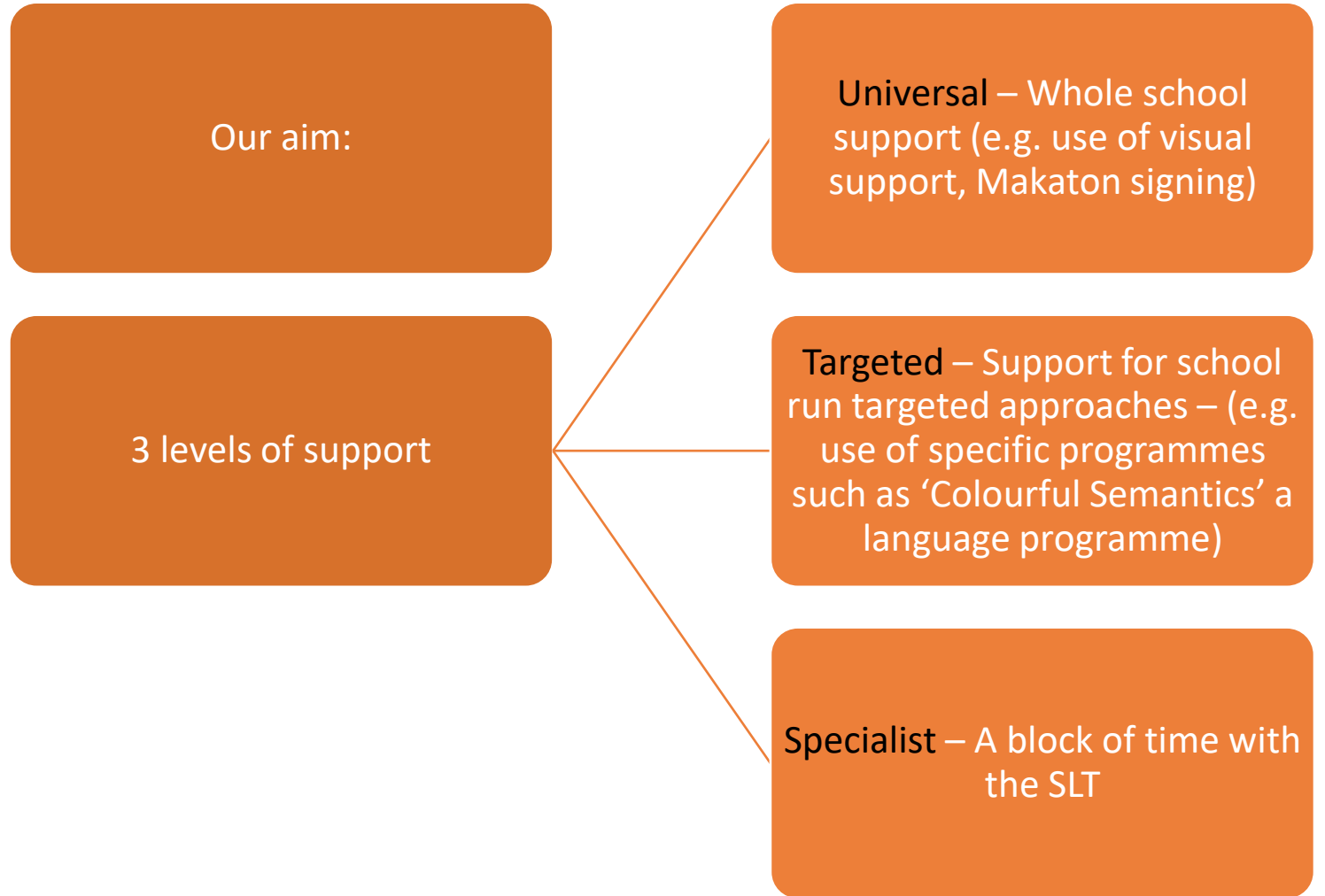
What do we need to provide

Means – language ability, social communication ability

Reasons – a variety of reasons/motivations to communicate

Opportunities – a variety of opportunities to communicate with others

Time for questions

How SLCN will be supported at The Cavendish School

Our aim:

3 levels of support

Universal – Whole school support (e.g. use of visual support, Makaton signing)

Targeted – Support for school run targeted approaches – (e.g. use of specific programmes such as 'Colourful Semantics' a language programme)

Specialist – A block of time with the SLT

Universal – whole school support

Visual support in the classroom and around the school

Makaton

Training for staff

Training for parents/carers

Whole school support – Multi modal communication

'Multi-modal communication' or 'Total communication' is where we use a variety of different modes to communicate:

- Spoken language

- Signs (Makaton)

- Visual resources (e.g. photos, pictures, symbols)

- Written words

- Technology (e.g. Ipads and laptops to visually record our work or type what we would like to say)

How can you support Communication at home and out and about – general strategies

- Get on the same level as your child e.g. sitting or standing.

- Sitting or standing/crouching down alongside them can be better than right in front as this lowers the social demand and children can focus on your language more easily.

- Say their name and wait for them to look up or towards you before communicating with them. This may not work for all children.

• Give children extra time to process information and formulate what they want to say. They may need a lot of extra time.

• Repeat information and questions if they need this. But use the same language, so that they don't have to process even more new language.

- Ask questions based in then 'here and now' before moving onto more abstract questions.

• Use visual support such as written words, pictures, and gesture or Makaton signs.

• Give children a choice of responses if they are not sure.

- Model language, give children the language, interpret their attempts to communicate and model it back.

How can you support Communication at home and out and about – general strategies

The following structure can support children in responding to questions from others:

• <u>Wait</u> – approx. 5 seconds, or more, you can count in your head – to give children time to think.

• <u>Repeat</u> the question yourself to your child (if they haven't responded).

• <u>Choice</u> – (if they haven't responded to the repeat) – give them a choice of responses.

• <u>Rephrase</u> – rephrase the question so that they only have to say 'yes' or 'no' or nod or shake their head.

• <u>Move on</u> - if they don't respond move the conversation on without answering for them, you can say to them 'We'll have a think about that, won't we?' or 'Tell me later'.

Thankyou.

One book I have read recently which I would recommend to all parents/care givers:

- 'The book you wish your parents had read (and your children will be glad you did)' by Phillipa Perry.

Time for questions