

## Language and/or speech assessment with the Students with Disability Assessment Service

### Information for parents/carers

#### Who is the Students with Disability Assessment Service?

The Students with Disability Assessment Service (SwD-AS) is delivered by AKG Health. We conduct assessments for students to help schools and families to understand the educational support needs of students with disability. We are an independent organisation contracted by the Department of Education (the department). Our service is provided at no cost to the school or family.

#### Why has my child been referred for assessment?

Your child has been referred for an assessment because there are concerns about their learning which may be due to a developmental language disorder. Some children have difficulty with speaking and/or understanding instructions, words and sentences, which may make it difficult to learn and interact with others at school. If the developmental language disorder is severe your child may need extra support for their learning.

For the language assessment we will:

- look at receptive language or your child's ability to understand the meaning of what other people say
- look at expressive language or your child's ability to use words and sentences to say what they want to say
- ask about your child's history, such as their speech and language development, how long they have been speaking English, any hearing difficulties and any previous assessments and/or early intervention
- talk to you and other people who know your child well.

A small number of children have a severe speech sound disorder due to childhood apraxia of speech (CAS), a complex speech disorder affecting the child's ability to organise the movements of the muscles used in speech. If a speech assessment is needed, we will look at your child's ability to make speech sounds and put sounds together to make words. We will also look at how your child's speech muscles move and work. CAS is different from the developmental speech problems many children have, and is quite rare.

#### The referral process

Your child's school has contacted us to make this referral. We need to get some information from you and the school to see if a speech pathologist from our service is the best person to do the assessment. The school can help you fill out the forms if needed. If we think it will be better for someone else to assess your child, we will let the school know.

## The assessment

Speech pathologists have special training and are the most qualified professionals to assess your child's language and speech skills. One of our speech pathologists will phone the school and make a time to see your child. The school will let you know when the assessment will be and invite you to come to the school to speak to the speech pathologist after the assessment. Parents/carers are not usually present for the assessment. If an interpreter is needed, the school will organise this. The speech pathologist may also phone you to check some information before the assessment. The assessment will usually take place within four weeks of us receiving the completed forms from the school.

It is usually best for children to be told about the assessment in a relaxed way without using the word "test". These are not assessments your child can practice or prepare for. On the day of the assessment it is important that your child is well and has taken any regular medication.

There are different tools and ways that our speech pathologists assess children. Sometimes the assessment will be on an iPad, sometimes it will be on paper and sometimes it will involve toys and games. All the tools measure similar things, and all are accepted by the department.

## After the assessment

The speech pathologist will give you information about the assessment and things you and the school can do to help your child. The speech pathologist will usually be able to tell you if your child has a developmental language disorder or childhood apraxia of speech or not but may sometimes need more time to make this decision. In some cases, another assessment session may be needed. The speech pathologist might also recommend another assessment, such as a cognitive assessment, to better understand your child's needs. If you cannot come to the school after the assessment to talk to the speech pathologist, they will phone you. The school will organise an interpreter if needed.

We will send the speech pathologist's report to the school within three weeks of the assessment. The school will give you a copy of the report, which will include some ideas to help your child. When you receive the report, you can call us on 9678 5100 if you have any questions. The school can also help answer any questions you have.

## What happens if my child has a developmental language disorder or childhood apraxia of speech?

If your child has a developmental language disorder or childhood apraxia of speech, the school will continue to teach them and help them learn. They will make changes to their learning program where needed and will start an Individual Education Plan. A Student Support Group will be set up to talk about your child's needs and progress. Information from our assessments can be used for planning for adjustments and resources. Other services might also be able to help your child, such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

## What happens if my child does not have a developmental language disorder or childhood apraxia of speech?

If your child does not have a developmental language disorder or childhood apraxia of speech, the school will continue to teach them and help them learn. There are a range of programs available to schools to help them meet the needs of all students, not just those with a developmental language disorder or childhood apraxia of speech. The speech pathologist's report will give information that will help you and the school plan for adjustments and resources to support your child's learning. You can talk to the school about how they will support your child.

### Key terms

Developmental language disorder: Significant and persistent language difficulties that affects everyday functioning and with no known reason for these difficulties. This may involve difficulty understanding what another person says and/or difficulty putting thoughts into words and sentences to communicate.

Receptive language: The ability to understand the words, sentences and meaning of what other people say.

Expressive language: The ability to put thoughts into words and sentences to communicate.

Speech sound disorder: Difficulty saying the sounds that make up spoken words.

Childhood apraxia of speech (CAS): A rare and complex type of speech sound disorder which affects the ability to organise the movements of the muscles used in speech.

Speech pathologist: A professional with special training in language and communication skills, including testing and identifying language strengths and challenges.

Psychologist: A professional with special training in testing of strengths and challenges in thinking skills.

Cognitive assessment: An assessment conducted by a psychologist that looks at a person's thinking and problem solving skills needed in order to learn.

Individual Education Plan (IEP): An IEP helps the teacher plan for and support a child's learning needs.

Student Support Group (SSG): A group, including teachers and family, that works together to identify a student's needs, develop an IEP and monitor a student's progress.

Adjustments: Changes that help students with disability take part in their education on the same basis as their peers.