



In Kent, we have adopted the Balanced System® Framework to make sure that the right provisions are available for parents, carers and professionals to help children and young people develop their speech, language and communication skills. We work together as a whole system which includes health visitors, early years settings, schools, specialist teaching services as well as speech and language therapy services.

The Balanced System® Framework is organised into five strands (below) and across three levels:

**Universal** – support for all pupils across the school

**Targeted** – support and resources for pupils who have been raised by their class teacher as a “cause for concern” with regards to their speech, language and communication development. Targeted provision can be delivered by school staff who have received specific training.

**Specialist** – support and resources are required to support more complex needs,

Our ambition in school is to have a range of provisions that can ensure that outcomes are met in each of the five strand areas at universal, targeted and specialist levels.

## Five Strands



Family Support



Environment



Workforce



Identification



Intervention

**Family Support:** Parents have the confidence, knowledge and skills to support their role as a key communicative partner for their child.

**Environment:** Environments are enhanced to support children to understand and express themselves effectively.

**Workforce:** The workforce is confident and competent to support children with speech, language and communication needs.

**Identification:** Speech, language and communication needs are identified early and effectively.

**Intervention:** Children receive support to help them make progress in their speech, language and communication.

## What is a link therapist?

A link therapist is a named speech and language therapist who builds a relationship with a school and supports the school to develop Speech and Language provision at the universal, targeted and specialist levels. The Link Therapist for Mersham Primary School in **Christina Eakins**.

This way of working will improve outcomes for all children and enable children to access support at the right level at the right time. The link therapist supports the Balanced System® principle of place-based support, meaning that support is delivered in the most functionally appropriate and relevant place for the child or young person, for their development and learning. The link therapist is the lead point of contact for the school around any of the speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) of children across the school. Link therapist time is allocated based on need, so schools with higher levels of SLCN are likely to require more time than schools with lower levels of need. This provides opportunities for the link therapist to use their expertise to meet need through appropriate support across the five strands. This will enable pupils to access the curriculum, be socially integrated with peers and thereby improve mental health and well-being. Support is focussed on functional outcomes, ideally lead by the child/young person and their family.