The mind map above gives an overview of Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) relating to a high school student.

The top half of the map shows the range of difficulties they may have and the bottom half the possible impact of those difficulties.

REFERENCES
Students may have communication difficulties in the following areas:

- **Understanding of Spoken Language** (verbal comprehension or receptive language skills): refers to whether a person understands the spoken word e.g. if you say ‘show me the sink’ they point to it.

- **Expressive Language**: refers to whether a person can use the word themselves e.g. if you say ‘what is this?’ the person says ‘dog’.

  *Receptive and expressive language skills can be described at different levels:*
  1) **Word level**: Vocabulary, word finding, concepts, question words
  2) **Sentence level**: Length of utterance, word order, grammar
  3) **Paragraph level (narrative)**: Understanding stories, telling stories, sequencing of events

- **Verbal Reasoning**: This is a higher level language skill including the ability to problem solve, inference, work out cause and effect, appreciate humour and understand non-literal language. Good social awareness, comprehension and expressive language skills are required to have good verbal reasoning skills.

- **Speech**: is the ability to speak words. Clear speech depends on skills such as: good phonological awareness, a correctly developed sound system and being physically able to pronounce the words. Some students may have issues with fluency or voice.

- **Social Use of Language (pragmatics)**: The ability to use language skills to interact effectively and appropriately. This includes: the ability to hold a conversation, non-verbal skills, ability to make and sustain friendships, ability to use language for a variety of functions and awareness of sociolinguistic variations i.e. varying how we speak depending on the audience/situation.

The impact of the communication difficulties will be different for each student and a range of these are shown on the mind map. It is important to understand the individual student’s strengths and weaknesses and be aware of what helps and does not help.
There are some behaviours which are frequently linked with communication difficulties and it is useful to be aware of these:

- Difficulty following timetables and using planners
- Presentation of work being very rushed and messy or over meticulous causing work rate to be slow
- Problems predicting outcomes
- Struggling to solve problems rationally
- Having literacy difficulties – particularly reading fluently but without understanding
- Being obsessed with certain topics/ routines/people
- Being isolated and vulnerable
- Finding it difficult to cope in non-structured times
- Distress resulting from misunderstanding other students behaviour/comments
- Inappropriate eye contact/ personal space when speaking or being spoken to
- Refusal to listen to staff or students when angry or upset
- Over-sensitivity to noise
- Easily becoming anxious or stressed for example by a change of room