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## **Building a graduated approach to support speech, language and communication needs**

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## Building a graduated approach to support speech, language and communication needs

### Strengthening speech and language in the early years

## School/Background Context

We are looking to develop our early language provision and offer in nursery and reception. We are an Infants and Nursery School and have 202 children on roll. From these 202 children 73% are EAL and 43% are pupil premium. We have 46 children (23%) on the SEND register. We currently have 68 children on the caseload for Love 2 Communicate which is our Speech and Language therapy support, an external support that the school funds. The highest area of need in is school is Speaking, Listening and Communication needs.

## The Challenge

Children are screened in Reception with Welcomm screener and a high number fall into the red band on assessment. Children are then sorted into speaking and listening groups with our external provider Love 2 Communicate. We currently have 1.5 days support from Love 2 Communicate but this definitely doesn't seem to be enough and we cannot meet the demands of the caseload with the capacity that we have. Intensive interaction time is scheduled in for identified children but there is less support during free flow as phonics has become such a high focus.

We need other approaches to build on vocabulary and develop language and understanding. We also have a high number of EAL children so this can sometimes hide genuine need and/or blur the lines making it hard for us to see what it the root cause for difficulties and can act as barrier to providing the right support. We need to develop a graduated approach so that there is support at all levels.

## What They Did

In order to improve speech and language skills and ultimately children's learning across the curriculum, we are in the process of building a graduated approach as detailed below:

- Targeted one to one therapy offered at one-to-one or one-to-two level. This is with a speech and language therapist who can apply their specialist knowledge to provide support for the children who are identified as of significant need. Targets will be personalised once a full assessment has taken place. I have secured locality funding for one time with our speech therapist to meet demand for our new reception cohort. Our speech therapist also gave a talk to nursery and reception parents regarding what they can do at home to improve speech and language.

## What We Did (continued)

- Middle layer – Targeted intervention – Language Link. This is for children who do not have significant need but who have been identified as having speech and language difficulties; both receptive and/or expressive. Moving forwards, all nursery and reception children will be screened using Little Language Link. As part of this project, we have just taken part in a trial with Little Language Link and have screened a pilot group of 15 children. We can then take the resources from this programme which comes with training for all early years staff. Assessments inform what programme of intervention the child needs with reviews 3 times a year. These will be delivered by trained TA's.
- Improving ordinary provision and specifically oracy in the classroom. Focus on simplified language and repetitions 'make it visual' visual word banks, use of visual media and pre-teaching of vocabulary. Early years classes both have a book of Makaton and sounds they are using. There has been a push to deliver class inputs where children are given stem sentences to repeat. There are lots of opportunities to talk in the class inputs as well as planned in for activities
- Lesson observation sheet – needs to specifically refer to language provision and checklist. How are teachers explicitly teaching vocabulary?

## Outcomes and Anticipated Impact

It is difficult to see at the moment what the impact is as we are still at the very early stages of implementation. However, it is worth noting that for this to be successful everyone is responsible at all levels and should play their part. Teachers are expected to plan and deliver sessions with this SLCN in mind and TAs are accountable for delivering quality intervention as designed in the programmes. To continue to develop the whole school graduated approach of support, there needs to be close monitoring of data and observations/learning walks to ensure quality of delivery are staying true to the programmes. If a group of learners are not making progress there needs to be some investigation – specifically working with TAs and feeding back on their delivery of programme. There needs to be peer-to-peer observation, with more training if necessary. EEF research shows us that interventions only work if this learning is being reinforced in class. Explore how teachers are reinforcing these individualised targets and could it be refined further?

How are we measuring impact of the programme as a whole? We will need to demonstrate the difference between the start point and the end point of all learners who are on the SLC caseload. For example, 80% of learners met their target in one term. How many children did not achieve their target? Or scores have improved from 60% to 80%. This will show the difference we have made and the impact of the intervention. This data will need to be closely monitored. For example if 100% of children are meeting targets are they too easy? Conversely, if not enough children are they maybe too difficult. We will need to monitor how many children are making sufficient enough progress to come off the programme and add new children on.