

Developing speech and language – Early Years

By Lucy Azopardi

This case study describes how we have used the Graduated Approach to support a pupil – referred to as Pupil A throughout this video - with communication and interaction needs. The system follows the four stages, often referred to as a 'cycle': **Assess, Plan, Do, Review**. *(For further information about this cycle, often referred to as the 'graduated approach', see Chapter 6 of the SEND Code of Practice 2015.)*

Pupil A is a 4 year old, Asian, summer born boy, who started his Reception year after having a limited time spent in an education setting, from our feeder Nursery School. The pupil is also a second language learner, speaking 'inko' at home. Pupil A does not have any diagnosis of specific language impairment (SLI) at this stage. His non-verbal skills are a relative strength. He displays signs of phonological disorder with features of verbal dyspraxia which means he makes pronunciation errors, but again no diagnosis as his attendance was poor at nursery. Pupil A also has a hearing impairment and is involved with the hearing specialist teacher who supports with radio aids. He does not wear his hearing aids at home which is impacting on his hearing loss. These concerns are severely impacting on his ability to make himself understood. He doesn't have an EHCP at present, but concerns were raised by the SENDCo at the previous setting.

Assess (don't need to read these headings – these are just for the editor)

As the class teacher, I worked closely with the SENDCo to discuss Pupil A's needs and created a baseline assessment by which progress will be measured. One of the significant issues we faced was parental engagement with learning at home which became clear through, for example non-engagement with home learning tasks, reading at home and attendance at meetings. A review of hearing aid use at home was also completed by the hearing impairment specialist which revealed the lack of use of hearing aids at home, this revealed that Pupil A, therefore had a severely limited exposure to language and which was impacting on the amount of progress he was making – which was limited. A sharing meeting was held between myself, parents, SENDCO and the Hearing Impairment Specialist to discuss all of the issues outlined above. In this meeting, we also found that his parents felt Pupil A could speak in complex sentences in his home language so our commissioned Speech and Language therapist arranged for a language assessment in his home language.

Plan

The speech and language assessment provided a thorough assessment in Pupil A's home language and showed that he was significantly below in his home and second language. Parents needed support in accepting that he had additional needs, even though mum had started comparing him to her 2-year-old. A plan of additional support was drawn up for him where both staff and parents agreed what outcomes they hoped would be made, and by what date. For example, one outcome was for him to be able to recall a number of nouns for common objects e.g. television, banana etc. by the next review date. A record of this plan was kept in the school and one was sent home.

Do

Pupil A was given extra support. Some of the interventions that were put in place were adaptations to my classroom practise whilst others were interventions carried out by specialists. We also involved his parents in this stage of the process. Some examples of the adaptations to practice made were:

- Using a visual timetable to support with routines.

- Pre-teaching of topics before it was introduced to the rest of the class.
- Allocating a quiet space with the support of the hearing impairment specialist.
- Providing daily Time to Talk interventions with a small group of children.
- The Commissioned Speech and Language therapist focussed on Blank Level 1-2 questioning and quieter speech sounds such as 'sh', 'ch', 'th' and 'r.'
- Asking parents to practise basic words with him
- Asking his parents to ensure he wears his hearing aid at home and making them aware that this would be monitored.
- Each half term, the hearing impairment specialist scheduled home visits to check the frequency of the use of hearing aids at home

Review

I as class teacher attended half-termly meetings with the team around the child including the SENDCo, Hearing Impairment Specialist, Speech and Language Therapist and parents. Here we reviewed his targets and quickly identified that Pupil A was struggling to make progress. In particular, he found it challenging to retain information. As an outcome of the meeting, it was agreed that the SENDCo, with the support of the class teacher writing a description of the needs of Pupil A, would engage the community paediatrician in order to enable us to explore any further underlying issues.

The Graduated Approach – The Second Cycle

During the review stage of the first cycle, it was found that Pupil A was not meeting his outcomes, so a second cycle began which included a more detailed assessment which led to an even more personalised plan to support Pupil A.

Assess

Through the involvement of the paediatrician, the Early Support Monitoring Protocol for Deaf Babies and Children (ESMP) was used to assess his development. This indicated that Pupil A, who was 4 years and 9 months old at the time, experienced a significant cognitive delay and was at a level development of a child between 15 and 18 months of age.

Plan

During the second plan phase, it was recommended that Pupil A was offset and so he could repeat his Reception year. The reasons why this was necessary were clearly explained to his parents and they supported this decision too. New outcomes were decided upon and the cycle continued.

Do

Using the graduated approach helped to identify Pupil A's significant needs. The **Assess, Plan, Do, Review** cycle needs to be fluid and flexible to ensure both the teacher and school can respond to pupils needs. By keeping him back a year, we were able to help him meet new outcomes. Several of the interventions included in the initial 'Do' phase continued into the second cycle.

Review

Although Pupil A's attainment remained behind his peers, his progress became much more rapid and sustained over time. The **Assess, Plan, Do, Review** cycle is continually used as Pupil A moves through

school to ensure the provision in place supports his evolving needs as identified on his EHCP which was gained during Pupil A's offset year in Reception.