

Developing speech and language - Early Years

By James Howard

Pupil A was a child in Reception. He began school in September and had not previously attended the Nursery provision at the school or elsewhere. His learning behavior was compliant, and he enjoyed attending each day. His attendance was good.

Assess phase

During the assess phase, the team baselined the whole cohort to establish their development against their age. The Pupil was working below his developmental age; there was a significant delay in communication, language and literacy. Following discussions between myself and the team, we prioritized target children and identified next steps. Pupil A was identified as a priority for communication and language support. More specialist assessment then took place with a teaching assistant using the school's speech and language program. The language program was introduced to the academy during a research trial with the Education Endowment Foundation.

Plan phase

The assessments enabled the team to identify a clear pathway for pupil A and the team generated short term targets alongside teaching strategies. The strategies had three layers. The three layers were for whole class teaching and provision, targeted 1 to 1 intervention and targets and activities for home. A review day of 6 weeks was planned.

Do phase

During the do phase, the teacher implemented strategies to ensure that high-quality teaching and continuous provision was meeting his needs. Examples of this were blank level questioning – questions were carefully constructed when speaking to the pupil to ensure he was able to process them. Responses were frequently modelled to support his early language development. The second strand consisted of group work three times a week and two 15 minute one to one sessions on the NELI - ELKLAN program, which focuses on improving the spoken language ability of children in reception classrooms.

Review phase

At each review session, the pupil's progress was carefully monitored. After twenty weeks he had made significant progress and the gap between his birth age and developmental age closed. By the end of the Reception, he was achieving in line with the early learning goals.