

Developing speech and language - Secondary

By Helen Bownes

Mikey is a Y11 pupil. He has historically had significant delays in his speech and language acquisition. He attended an additionally resourced primary provision for speech, language and communication difficulties. He was deemed appropriate however for attendance at mainstream school with enhanced provision. He is currently a year behind his chronological age due to the fact that his progress was hindered by his complex difficulties. He no longer requires speech and language therapy. His speech however can still be difficult to understand for the unfamiliar listener.

In terms of barriers, Mikey's difficulties with all aspects of language have resulted in him having difficulties with his cognition and learning that relates to literacy. He also finds it difficult to maintain his attention and concentration for sustained periods of time, especially when a task is challenging. There are also some elements of social communication and interaction that Mikey finds problematic on a daily basis.

Mikey continues to face challenges in his learning, despite receiving high-quality teaching, as a result he requires additional strategies, or different provision, in order to meet his needs. Mikey is very resilient and determined, he embraces all interventions put in place and support offered to him. His family are valued stakeholders in the entire process. They are realistic, supportive and provide endless encouragement from home. There are now currently no other external agencies involved in the provision for Mikey, although this may change as he transitions into his post 16 pathway.

Assess - using the graduated approach judgements need to be made using all of the data we hold on that particular pupil. For Mikey the data pointed to there being significant difficulties faced by him whenever language was the barrier to his learning. That means the language barrier needs to be addressed even in subjects like maths, where the barrier needs to be removed to allow him to 'see' the maths. By doing this it enables Mikey to experience success in areas that he is more accomplished at, once his primary barrier is removed. Mikey also felt when he chose his key stage 4 pathway that he wanted to complete more vocational courses and steer away from modern foreign languages, as he felt he would struggle to overcome the barrier of the speaking component.

Judgements about the progress Mikey makes alerts you to any barriers that may be getting in the way of him making comparable progress to their peers. As Mikey started key stage 4, there was a shift to where the support was placed. There was an emphasis on teaching assistants in the core subjects, and the deployment of staff was shifted. Mikey had previously been reliant on 'velcro' style of support, the need was to focus on him utilise more of a model of support that allowed him to develop the skills to become more independent and to support him in getting himself out of the learning pit where he previously might have been reliant on an adult. The heavy use of collaborative learning combined nicely with this shift in support. There was an overwhelming improvement in Mike's ability to discuss topics and be involved in working with others, as a result.

Plan - This part of the cycle involves discussing, planning and agreeing what will be put in place as an outcome of the assessment information gathered. The planning should involve the pupil, parents and staff from the school who know the pupil well. Where other professionals are working with the child, they should also contribute to planning. The initial step of the planning process includes agreeing targets for the pupil in order to focus attention on key areas and give them a clear idea of what they need to do to improve their work. In Mikey's case there was an abundance of previous strategies and interventions which continue to support him fully in accessing mainstream educational provision.

Following this, personalised support was implemented for Mikey to address his identified outcomes, specific teaching strategies were communicated to his teachers via his Learning Plan outlining the approaches and resources that must be used in his lessons to meet his needs. At this stage these included:

- Pre-teaching of new vocabulary
- Using of a laptop for extended writing tasks
- Using social stories to support social interaction
- Carefully planning when to work collaboratively
- Developing strategies to support independence and self-help when struggling with tasks
- Providing scaffolding and/or word banks for extended writing
- Providing visual cues and memory

Do - The Code of Practice makes it clear that it is the responsibility of class and subject teachers to implement the plan on a day-to-day basis.

Review - A timescale for reviewing the plan, and details of how progress will be monitored, also needs to be identified. When the review meeting between the pupil, parents and any relevant professionals takes place, it is helpful to consider the following questions:

- What progress has the pupil made? Have they achieved their agreed targets and what is the evidence for this?
- What impact has the support/intervention had on progress?
- What are the pupil's, parents' and professionals' views on the support/intervention?
- What changes need to be made to targets or provision next term?

The assess, plan, do, review process is a cycle – the idea being that this process is continual. If the review shows a pupil has made really good progress, this may mean they no longer require the additional provision made through SEN support. If this is the case, the pupil is likely to be taken off the SEN record and, instead, will be monitored to ensure progress is sustained through inclusive high-quality teaching. This is a continual process unless the pupil narrows the progress gap between them and their peers sufficiently.