

Chatterbugs Transcript

Hello.

ICAN, the children's communication charity, put out a report in July entitled *Speaking Up for the Covid Generation*, in which they summarise the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on children and young people, including lockdowns, remote schooling and limited socialisation opportunities.

Our children cannot learn optimally, develop socially, have good mental health, or get good jobs without the crucial skill of communication. In fact, it underpins all other skills. We should be making sure our education system teaches speaking in addition to reading, writing and maths – the last three are impossible without language.

ICAN and The Education Endowment Fund support and recommend, NELI, The National Early Language Intervention and Early Talk Boost programme – both evidence-based interventions which achieve positive outcomes for children who participate in them.

ICAN further recommends additional training for teachers and teaching assistants to understand their role in supporting children's speaking and understanding skills in the classroom and this is the thinking behind the Chatterbugs programme – skilling up the people working with children in school to enhance communication and give our children the best possible chance to become curious, confident, engaged learners.

If you hop over to my Chattercubs page, you will see what I plan to do to help parents/carers to support the development of strong communication skills in our under 4s, so that school and home are on the same page when it comes to maximising children's educational opportunities.

The communication pyramid is a graphic often used by speech and language therapists to explain the way in which communication develops. It is a simplified version of what actually takes place, but it is clear that strong attention and listening skills, and good play and turn-taking skills are the foundation of great communication. What constitutes effective support of communication development and best teaching practice dictate that the foundation skills of attention and listening and turn-taking are in place *prior* to working on vocabulary and language skills.

A crucial point to make here is that children who have insufficient attention/listening/turn-taking and language skills to participate in NELI or Early Talk Boost are at risk of falling further behind their peers if they do not receive some support. We know early identification and early intervention achieve the best outcomes and so it makes sense to start working with our youngest learners as quickly as possible.

The schools that I work with recognise the need for a communication-friendly environment and, among other provision, they deliver the Chatterbugs programme every year, in which trained teaching assistants work with groups of 4 children for a daily, 10-minute, play based session, in which they teach and encourage the children to develop excellent attention and listening skills, play and interaction skills and some basic early vocabulary and language.

We collect Baseline and Review data to analyse the progress that children make during the 12 week programme.

The aim is to develop 15 foundation communication skills to the point that all of the Chatterbugs participants are capable of consistently demonstrating these skills, independently, or with minimal support within the wider classroom setting, thereby optimising their learning experience. The programme aims to give children the best possible start to their early education by instilling cultural capital - the essential knowledge they need to prepare them for their future success while developing school readiness skills.

Over the course of the years that we have been running the Chatterbugs programme at Gipsy Hill Federation schools we have achieved, on average, positive outcomes for 88% of participants.

For those children that have not made expected progress, we have gathered robust evidence that onward referral and additional support are required – these children start their Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) journey as a result of participating in the Chatterbugs programme and therefore gain access to the specialist support they require at the earliest opportunity.

Several other schools have implemented the Chatterbugs programme, by using the resources and following the guidance in The Chatterbugs Manual. While it is possible to implement the programme without my input, I can also supply Chatterbugs Resource Packs and Chatterbugs Training to schools and nurseries on request.

I hope you found that information helpful. If you would like to get in touch with me, please do so by emailing at hellochatschool@outlook.com. Thank you.