

Case Study: Preston Manor School

Preston Manor School's project started in 2010 when its Speech and Language Base teamed up with the English Department to deliver a curriculum project to a target group of Year 7 pupils. Their goal was to create an opportunity to develop a more inclusive approach to delivering the curriculum while promoting effective speaking and listening skills amongst pupils. With the launch of the National Year of Communication, they decided to do more.



In January, they began by getting pupils to design a logo for the Preston Manor campaign. They introduced a Communication Focus of the Week, using materials created by staff in the Autism Spectrum Disorder Provision. A 'Year of Communication' notice board was also created – and still exists – to display the Focus of the Week and other materials that are used.

Pupils in Years 7 and 8 were given a lesson exploring what it means to have a voice. They created speech bubbles, which were displayed on the board. Examples of the thoughts pupils had about the lesson included: one Year 7 pupil said "I think my voice is important because I like to talk to my friends", a Year 8 pupil said "My voice is my identity and that's proof of my existence" and "It's important to have a voice because to contribute in lesson or to express your feelings to others," said a Year 10 pupil.

Speech and Language Base Staff attended the 'Lost for Words: Lost for Life' conference (at City University, London, in June 2011) to reinforce the importance of communication beyond the curriculum. As a result, three Citizenship lessons were written for Year 7, focusing on communication skills for life - Understanding the 'Unwritten' Rules of Communication, Constructive Criticism and Negotiation and Compromise.

Before the project began, the pupils were asked to rate how difficult or easy they found speaking and listening, to create a baseline assessment score. Then after two terms of speaking and listening lessons, they were asked to repeat the assessment. Although the project wasn't created as a controlled study, staff felt the Year 7 pupils were more aware of their strengths and difficulties. These pupils are now in Year 8 and see speaking and listening as vital to their learning.

The Speech and Language Resourced Base has held several sessions for parents and carers during the school year. This has created an opportunity to meet parents informally, to give out a new Speech and Language Resourced Base information leaflet and share information about the Year of Communication.

The school also created a Speech and Language Film, which some parents appeared in, and this will be used in training for the 2011-2012 academic year. Through the creation of this film, it has become apparent that one mother believes her son with Asperger's Syndrome would not have made it through university without the support of the Speech and Language Base while at Preston Manor.