

## Elklan Evaluation

As SENCO this course has been extremely useful in furthering my own professional knowledge in relation to Speech and language Development. Prior to this course I had some understanding of expressive and receptive language difficulties but Elklan has provided a deeper understanding and offered many practical strategies for developing children's language skills.

However, the greatest benefit of the Elklan training has been empowering all our Foundation Stage staff to be able to identify, understand and empathise with children who have speech and language difficulties while equipping them with the skills needed to change classroom practice so that these children may access the curriculum.

This training was offered to all teachers and classroom assistants within the Foundation Stage. All staff felt valued when they realised the investment the school was prepared to make in their professional development. By training teachers and classroom assistants together it has facilitated useful discussion, not only during training, but the professional dialogue has continued during daily activities in the classroom. The classroom assistants also report that they have a better understanding of the purpose of Talking and Listening activities and also feel better equipped when working with groups of children.

It has been obvious when I am discussing individual children with Foundation Stage teachers that their knowledge of Speech and Language Development has increased. Teachers now talk confidently about expressive and receptive language and are much more specific when talking about a child's difficulties.

Previously many teachers would have described children as being badly behaved or weak learners because they could not follow instructions. Teachers are now looking for underlying difficulties and understand how to make adjustments to their own language, provide visual cues and use non verbal communication to help a child understand. Teachers and pupils are both less frustrated as a result.

There have already been changes to classroom practice as a direct result of Elklan training and further changes are planned for the next academic year. Primary 1 teachers are going to place a greater emphasis on Talking and Listening and phonological awareness activities especially during the first term. Observations made during these activities should also help to identify children with poor language skills. Staff also report that they feel more confident about how to interact with children during play activities in a purposeful manner which will enhance language skills. Observations during playtime can also have a more specific focus which will inform future planning based on the needs of the children.

One of the most enlightening aspects of the training was the Blank model of questioning. This has helped staff to reflect on their current practice and understand how to modify their questioning to take account of the different levels of the children.

In summary, Elklan training has provided staff with knowledge of children's communication skills, an understanding of how to identify children who are experiencing language difficulties and offered practical ways to ensure that all children can access the curriculum. Language is at the centre of all learning so by developing our children's language skills we should be increasing their potential for learning.

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