

Speech and Language Development in the Small Specialist Barton Clough Pri



At Barton Clough, we are fortunate enough to have been supported by Ms Moran, a highly specialised speech and language therapist to help us assess children and write personalised therapy plans. With the recent changes to the speech and language service, Ms Moran will continue to provide assessments, support and advice for all the children referred, however the delivery of the programme will now be carried out by school staff. The teachers and teaching assistants working in the SSCs have attended the training courses provided to parents and school staff by Trafford and worked hard to find ways to best meet the children's needs using the ideas and strategies learned from this training.

The children in the small specialist classes have been placed on targeted or specialist pathways with identified therapies to address their learning needs however due to the complex difficulties of the children within Acorn and Oak classes, we feel that embedding the strategies and ideas into our teaching and learning will better meet those needs than the programmes that are recommended.

Some examples of how the different therapies are incorporated into our lessons are outlined below:

Narrative Therapy is designed to address objectives around understanding story components, sequencing events, telling stories orally and planning and writing stories with a plot. These outcomes are planned into our daily English constructs allowing children to learn the skills and apply them in lots of different narratives. This then allows us to use texts that are more interesting to the children and take into account both their hobbies and interests as well as addressing areas of knowledge linked to other areas of the curriculum.

Listening Skills is split into auditory memory and concepts and instructions. Some time is dedicated to listening skills daily during our snack time where conversations are scaffolded and modelled to inspire confidence and rehearse real-life experiences. Asking and answering questions is encouraged and children are given time to rehearse and repeat to help them to develop these skills even further. Within lessons, there are opportunities to develop listening skills all the time for example, during English lessons, there may be a short session on listening to instructions on how to build up a picture of a setting that will be used for descriptive writing later on. Alternatively, children may be



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given a list of equipment to find ahead of a maths lesson to help the development of their auditory memory. Barrier games with single and multi-step instructions are often included in RE or humanities sessions where children are identifying different artefacts.

Thinking Skills are essential for reading and understanding the world and this is an important element of all our reading. The children read with an adult several times a week, increasing the opportunities to be exposed to inference questions from the 1 therapy session per week. In RE and PSHE we often use pictures to look for evidence, solve problems and answer questions, all of which form part of the outcomes for this therapy. Again, making the links between the subjects we are covering and the skills identified as a therapy area for the children means the learning is embedded rather than arbitrary.

Lego Therapy is intended to give children opportunities to experience different roles that may take them outside of their comfort zone. While we do include some Lego Therapy sessions within the Small Specialist Classes, we also expand this to our roleplay provision and to drama work as part of our subject learning too. Children also take turns to have different responsibilities such as collecting milk, giving out equipment or being in charge of an area.

Vocabulary focuses on increasing the number of words known, pre-learning topic words and making semantic connections. There are many ways these skills are embedded into the practice within Oak and Acorn. A Bingo game may be used to introduce synonyms for a mathematical term, Head's Up or Taboo type games may be used to help children to categorise words around the same idea eg 'vehicles', 'furniture' or names of flowers. Within each topic, we have a focus on possible new words or forgotten words that will help them to talk about the subject. In our daily phonics sessions, we play games with real and 'alien' words with a focus on understanding the meaning of words as well as reading and writing. As specialist classes focusing on language needs, staff are very aware of the need to support children with vocabulary at every opportunity and have received coaching from Ms Moran to support ways of doing this.

Social Communication includes outcomes around starting and joining in conversations, taking turns, keeping the conversation going, how and when to interrupt and what to do if others interrupt as well as ending conversations. Other skills around understanding jokes and compliments are also a part of this. The complex needs of the children in the Small Specialist Classes mean that



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understanding social rules, expectations and niceties is particularly difficult and opportunities to think about body language, emotions and how to behave in a variety of social situations needs explicit teaching. A weekly therapy session could not possibly begin to address the multitude of needs of a group of 10 children with additional needs, therefore the specialist staff are highly skilled in weaving this into every aspect of the school day. There are individuals who need additional 1:1 or small group support and we employ a variety of techniques such as Social Stories, Homunculi Approach, play therapy techniques and sensory equipment to help children to find the strategies that they can employ themselves in order to function successfully in society.

Speech sounds therapy is highly individualised and this will continue to take place during 1:1 or 1:2 sessions. The programme will be provided by Ms Moran and delivered through weekly sessions, with an initial direct input from Ms Moran and observation of her to ensure quality therapy. When a target has been met, there are opportunities to request further advice and Ms Moran will carry out an assessment to plan the next steps.

Ms Moran will continue to provide support from 1:1 coaching, telephone or face to face advice, modelled group sessions and assessments of children to help us to deliver the best curriculum to meet all of our children's needs. We are committed to staff development and will continue to research and employ new methods and strategies as and when necessary as well as being open to future training and support from the Speech and Language service.