

DEVELOPING EARLY LITERACY SKILLS IN EYFS

Central Primary School

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Central Primary School —Our context:

A significant proportion of our children start the early years with skills and knowledge, which are significantly below those typical for their age. A large proportion of learners have delayed speech and language skills, particularly in the areas of Speaking and Understanding. Limited verb vocabulary, conceptual understanding and gaps in expressive language are evident within baseline assessments. As a team, we asked ourselves:



- How can we best ensure our early literacy strategies combine approaches that will best support the development of knowledge, skills and understanding for all learners?
- How can we ensure our practitioners are skilled in identifying children's current level of development in all basic literacy components?
- How can we ensure our approach enable our practitioners to teach and close literacy skills gaps for all learners?
- What training can we offer our practitioners to provide a thorough grounding in the developmental approaches to teaching pre-literacy skills to children?
- How can we support practitioners assessment, tracking, planning, quality interactions and general thought processes?

Our Launchpad for Literacy Journey:

I had been fortunate to work with Kirstie Page prior to working at Central Primary School and observe the significant impact of using Launchpad for Literacy as an approach, in terms of outcomes for children and increased practitioner skillset, across a number of different schools and



academies. My first action was to ensure that all practitioners in EYFS and Year 1 were trained in using Launchpad. This included a number of professional development sessions to understand the theory behind the approach and to get to know the materials and assessment tools, beginning with one component at a time. There were also opportunities to build language enrichment plans for different areas within the environment and to discuss barriers to learning for a number of case study children.

Impact:

As with any new initiative, it will take time to fully embed the approach into our systems and provision. As a result of the first wave of our implementation strategy during 2018-19, practitioners are able to:

- Articulate what the child **can do** rather than what they cannot.
- Identify the **next step** for the child.
- **Match** support, interactions and intervention to the skills gap.
- Develop language rich environments that maximise opportunities to build gaps in knowledge, skills and understanding.

Feedback from Little Learners: (2 year olds)

“Amelia has made progress since joining Little Learners. She is now initiating her own play and activities much more than before when she used to mainly copy the activity and play of others. She is now using a greater range of single words and is engaging with voices and faces, demonstrating a readiness to repeat back new words if they are added using simple language structures. Next steps: Practitioners will utilise the target vocabulary enrichment with verbs and concepts, during language drop-ins.”

Feedback from Nursery:

“We have seen significant improvements in all areas tracked and analysed. The use of verbs has however, seen the greatest increase. We believe this has been in part due to the use of language enrichment plans in key areas of the Nursery which has supported Key workers to model the use of verbs at every available opportunity. There has also been a conscious drive to promote language enrichment between the permanent staff and with supply staff who may only be here for short periods of time.”

Feedback from Reception

“Over the course of the year, a group of children have had daily Launchpad intervention, carried out as group sessions and objective led activities within the classroom provision. The greatest impact has been within Sequential Auditory Memory, which was a barrier identified for learners within the group. In comparison with an average starting level of 2 words, the children are now able to ‘hold’ 4 to 5 words in their auditory memory in the correct order, understand them and carry out an instruction. 72% of this group have now developed the skills to orally blend at CVC level.”

Going Forward:

During the second wave of our implementation strategy, we are taking Launchpad across the whole school and training all staff to utilise the resources as a diagnostic tool to supporting pupils with additional needs.