What are the best forms of communication

For children with Early Years developmental stages who have MLD..

Summary and Recommendations of the Project

Insert an overview of why you chose the project- link this to the SIP:

I chose to complete this research project to improve my own teaching practise and understanding of early communication. The youngest children entering Abbey School are more frequently experiencing difficulties with their communication and language skills. As a result of this I wanted to conduct research in order to gain an understanding of how better to support them whilst at Abbey School. As a result of conducting the research I wanted to design, build and provide a language rich environment which would inspire and motivate children with communication difficulties to begin to communicate or to communicate more confidently. I wanted to research how to effectively increase the number of words in a child's vocabulary alongside increasing their understanding of spoken words. In doing this I would give children the tools to communicate their needs, feelings and emotions. It would also give children the ability to communicate and play with their peers enabling them to develop crucial social skills and the ability to learn to play with others.

Where this research project fits into the SIP 2017-18.

Improvement Priority	Objectives	How RP would feed into the objectives
Improvement Priority 1 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment	1.1. Academic research projects demonstrate impact on the school and beyond.	The research project demonstrates an impact on student's ability to communicate using PECS or spoken words. Children's ability to communicate effectively with peers will increase as will their understanding of vocabulary. Classrooms will provide a language rich environment modelling the use of language.
Improvement Priority 1 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment	1.4 All staff to move to their next level of professional competence.	Completing the research project will provide me with the opportunity to pass on expertise, findings, strategies and ideas of how to build vocabulary and communication skills to NQTS and ITT students. This is imparting my knowledge and expertise on other members of staff across the school enabling me and others to develop professionally.
Improvement Priority 1 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment	1.5 Investigate a range of interventions for pupils identified with barriers to speech and language.	The research project will enable me to become more skilled in developing techniques and strategies to support children with speech and language difficulties. I will then be able to work alongside the SALT TA in order to support interventions of children in my class.

Term 1

I began my research project by visiting the 'Early Years Centre-Little Explorers' at Kimberworth. Here I was able to observe the Teacher and TAs work with the children to observe how they created opportunities to develop communication and language in Early Years age children. I was also able to take some inspiration from this on how to design my own learning environment to support developing language and communication. I also focused on PECS during my visit and how the staff created opportunities and activities for children who were using PECS to communicate.

On my second visit to the 'Early Years Centre-Little Explorers' I met with the Class Teacher and one of my TAs to discuss assessment techniques used for children with communication difficulties. This resulted in myself and the TA setting up individual assessment folders specifically tailored to the pre-verbal children in our class. This has proved very successful throughout the year and has allowed us track the small steps of progress that our children have made.
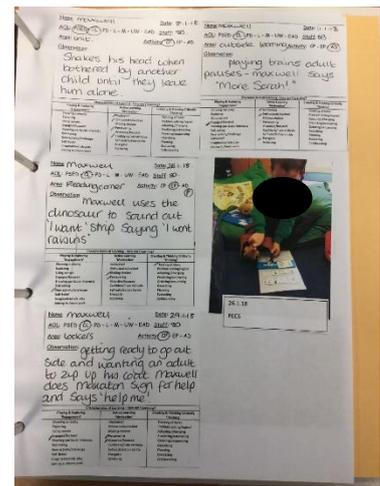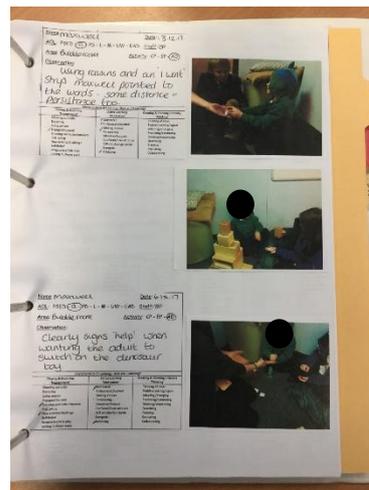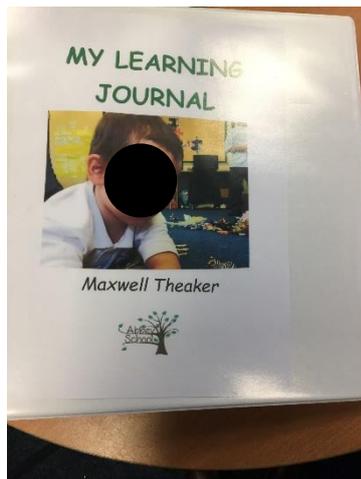
During this term I also visited the KS1 setting at Kelford School. Here I met with the Class Teacher to discuss the layout of the learning environment and how this contributed to providing a language rich environment. This supported me to develop my own continuous provision approach to my own classroom.

I also visited Heatherwood School in Doncaster in which I was able to spend a whole day observing other classes and speaking to staff about how they develop communication and speech in their school. This was great in providing practical ideas and strategies to implement in to my own practise and across the school to develop communication.

I also completed the 'Word Aware' course which is aimed at developing an understanding of children's language and how they develop this. I was able to gain practical strategies and techniques of how to teach new vocabulary to children to

ensure that they fully understand the meaning of words and how to use them appropriately.

Term 2

This term I focused on using my position as an NQT Mentor and an ITT Mentor to disseminate the strategies that I had gained in order to support children in other classes across the school.

During this term I observed the NQT and 2 ITT students with a focus on developing language and vocabulary specifically for lower attaining pupils. From this I was able to meet with them in order to evaluate and question their own practise in regards to developing language and communication. I was able to provide suggestions and strategies to support children with communication and language difficulties in their class.

I also used the language rich learning environment which I had created in my own classroom to model to others how to use examples in their own rooms. This enabled them to Magpie ideas to use in their own practise.

Term 3

This term I returned to visiting other settings to observe how they provided language rich environments and activities to build communication and vocabulary. I visited mainstream settings including 'Thorpe Hesley Primary' and 'Bramley Grange Primary' where I observed practise both in KS1 and EYFS. This gave me inspiration and activity ideas to implement in to my own practise in order to boost vocabulary.

I also attended a 'Developing Communication in Early Years' course which proved very helpful in providing activity ideas in order to boost the vocabulary of children. I have since made and bought resources suggested on the course to support the development of vocabulary. This will also prove very useful for my class next year.

I also attended a communication course based around building communication through music and movement. This was fantastic in providing ideas of how to build vocabulary through songs, stories, music, outdoor learning and role play. I gained some fantastic ideas from this and know that I will put these in to practise especially with some of my children next year.

Recommendation 1

I would recommend that children of all ages across school have access to voice recording tools such as talk tins, talk boxes or IPADS in order to support their language development.

I would recommend this because:

- They allow children to record sentences as some children find it difficult to 'hold' them in their head.
- It reduces the number of mistakes in writing as children are able to replay their sentence to remind them of it.
- Children can re-record if they would like to change a sentence, this way they are not seen as making a mistake as they are not erasing something written down.
- It encourages the correct pronunciation and formation of words and sounds.
- Adults or other children can record sentences or messages to model language to children.
- They can be used around the classroom to explain tasks to children using clear vocabulary and language, modelling correct language used.
- Used as an evidence tool for Speaking and Listening.
- Use talk boxes to record words/messages for non-verbal children to communicate with. E.g. recording the word 'toilet' and allowing children to press it to communicate that they need the toilet.
- Encourages children to make up their own stories using new and exciting language.

Recommendation 2

I would recommend that children of all ages are given the opportunity to role play and take part in as many speaking and listening activities as possible.

I would recommend this because:

- From experience in my own class using role play has greatly increased children's vocabulary both socially and in a learning context where children can apply topic vocabulary and magic 12 vocabulary.
- Using role play encourages children to use their imaginations creating a new level of vocabulary. This then becomes a shared experience with other children who can then also learn new vocabulary.
- Play scripts can be used with pre-verbal children or with children who have limited language to model the process and the language of play.
- Using exciting and favourable objects to role play with can increase the motivation of a pre-verbal child to speak if they would like to play with it too.
- Setting up opportunities and activities where children have to communicate using vocabulary in order to work as a team. This encourages social language and builds relationships between peers.
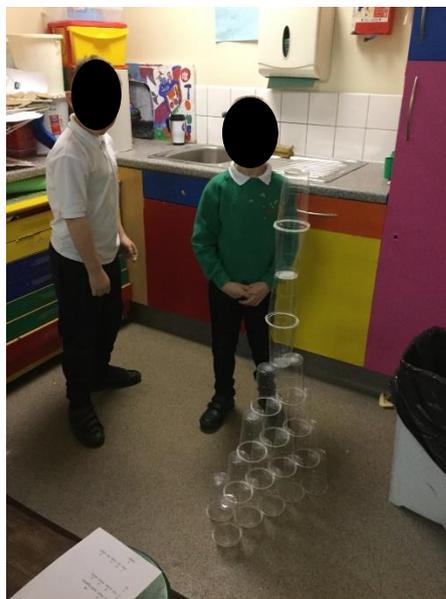
How the project effected my practice

I feel that completing the project has greatly impacted my practise therefore, impacting the children's learning in my class.

I believe that the project has made the following impact:

- Pre-verbal children are now developing their PECS and have made vast improvements in their communication. AB is now building sentences with his PECS book. He is using more spoken vocabulary to communicate his immediate needs. He is using more and more spoken vocabulary in class with staff and peers. MT is using his PECS book to communicate his needs. He is using more spoken vocabulary to communicate with staff and his peers.
- Children have developed the vocabulary and communication skills in order to begin to resolve conflicts using words   and not actions.
- Children are using the learning environment to practise their communication and role playing skills.
- Children have made great progress in phonics and reading due to having a language rich environment.
- Children's writing has improved due to their improved spoken vocabulary.
- My learning environment is language rich and provides opportunity to develop language and communication.
- This is continued in to the outside area.

Next steps

I believe that the next steps for me are:

- Continue to develop my understanding of PECS to support new pre-verbal children entering Abbey School.
- Support other teachers to adopt PECS for children in their class if required.
- Implement strategies and resources seen on the courses that I have been on to develop early language skills.
- Use a range of practical and sensory resources as a way to engage children to build vocabulary and language.
- Continue to use role play opportunities to develop vocabulary. Support other teachers to use this in their practise. (Specifically NQTS)
- Continue to visit other settings to gain expertise and experience with pre-verbal children.
- Ensure that symbols are used throughout school to provide a language rich environment.

References