

Lancashire Education Awards



Case Study

Establishment name:	Bleasdale School
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Lead contact name	Rebecca Parker
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Project title	Investing in Communication, raising the profile, knowledge and understanding of Communication across the school community.
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Award gained

Award category	X
Innovate <i>A project that demonstrates practice that is new or ground breaking, which successfully engaged and enthused learners.</i>	
Achieve <i>A project had measurable impact on raising outcomes for pupils.</i>	
Invest <i>A project that has had a positive impact upon an aspect of the wider school community.</i>	X
Collaborate <i>A project that involved work across more than one school or work with other agencies.</i>	
Include <i>A project in provision for pupils with Special Education Needs and Disabilities</i>	
Inspire <i>A project that demonstrates embedded exceptional provision of an aspect of the curriculum. Practice will have been developed and refined over time.</i>	

Project summary (maximum 200 words)

Developing total communication across the whole school.

Assessing each pupil's communication level and ensuring all staff communicate appropriately with each pupil.

Broadening staff knowledge and understanding of various aspects of communication and therefore how best to communicate with each individual.

Expanding the opportunities for meaningful communication with all pupils. Developing age appropriate opportunities to increase levels of communication.

Ensuring all pupils have an appropriate way to self-assess their learning.

Working alongside parents to develop their knowledge and awareness as we work in partnership to ensure consistent and positive communication approaches opportunities for all.

How did you identify the need for this project? What were you hoping to achieve?

The need for the project arose as we needed to have a consistent approach across the whole school for the every changing cognitive and sensory communication needs for our PMLD pupils with complex needs and very early communication skills. We wanted to upskill everyone's knowledge and understanding about total communication, this included staff parents and all stakeholders. We want to enhance opportunities and abilities for our pupils with early communication skills.

Who led the project?

Rebecca Parker with Arlene Fishwick

What steps/actions did you take?

Communication meetings were established and we introduced Communication Champions for each class room. These were members of staff who were responsible for promoting Communication in each classroom. They lead the communication projects within each classroom and fed back to the communication group. This ensured communication was at the forefront for everyone as each class has a positive role model to endorse communication methods.

We held whole school staff training sessions to explore and identify communication steps, creating a communication friendly setting, routines, objects of reference, development of symbolic understanding and the link with language and communication, developing resources and opportunities for exploratory learning, using objects symbols signs and symbols and means reasons and opportunities. This gave staff a greater understanding of which is the best

communication methods to use with pupils accessing communication at different levels. Increased staff knowledge lead to a more consistent approach across the whole school.

We have worked in partnership with parents and delivered signing workshops. These have focused on both Makaton and onbody signs. In order to help both staff and parents remember and practice the signs, we have developed the use of using QR codes. We now weekly up load a QR code onto the school website, which will take you to a video clip of the signs of the week. Using the QR codes on the website ensures we increase skills of all stakeholders involved with each individual pupil to make a consistent learning approach to develop communication.

To ensure all new staff and parents are aware of the wide range of total communication methods we use to ensure we meet individual's pupil's unique needs we developed an induction pack, outlining all approaches we use within school. This is a useful reference aid for both parents and staff to refer back to.

Responding to pupil's voice is very important to everyone at Bleasdale. We creatively use the switches to send messages between different locations. This helps develop the link between home / school and after school clubs. It also provides a purposeful link for siblings to be included in their brother or sisters communication.

We have also developed the use of pupil's voice for assessment for learning. Each classroom uses an age appropriate method to self-assess at the end of the session. Pupils are given the opportunity to reflect on their learning and using the most appropriate communication method comment on their learning, depending on the class this could be ; traffic lights, stars, or using popular characters within the younger classes.

By using pupil's unique communication methods allows them to also have a meaningful voice such as within school council meetings. This is where they vote and decided on matters such as what resources to have at dinner time, how to fund raise, and what music to listen to. This gives our pupils opportunities to use their early communication skills for a real purpose to make a decision and therefore a difference.

We have networked with other special schools, sharing and promoting good practise with communication.

What was the impact of the project and how was this measured/assessed?

The main impact of this project is that across the whole school we consistently use a pupil centred personalised communication system to enhance pupil's opportunity and skills in communication. Giving pupils with very early communication skills meaningful ways to communicate rather than tokenistic opportunities. Developing personalised communication systems has increased pupil's choice making skills and improved pupil's independence.

By enhancing staffs professional development, upskilling each members of staff through knowledge and skill has resulted in a clear consistent use of total communication strategies. Now staff have a clear understanding of the different communication methods, they have the passion and direction to implement them because they understand the importance of these personalised communication methods to enhance early communication skills.

Delivering workshops with parents has strengthened our links with parents and provided a more consistent approach for these children with complex needs. This has been measured through the take up of parent workshops and their associated comments, see below.

The impact of this project has been measured by learning walks taken part by senior management, Communication leads and communication Champions. Ofsted March 2017 also reported on the positive communication systems each individual pupil has so their “voice” can be heard. (see below for evidence) Outstanding Ofsted report March 2018.

What are the next steps? How will you follow up this work?

To become a centre of excellent to share our expertise with others so all PMLD pupils have access to a more meaningful communication system.

To offer the communication training to parents and other schools and settings so they too can develop purposeful communication, thus raising standards of communication across the wider community.

Do you have any other advice for establishments that might be considering a similar project?

Clear action planning to ensure the whole school shares the vision with clear training so staff have the knowledge and understanding why they are implementing new strategies.

Hold regular meetings with Communication Champions to reflect on the whole school vision. When you discover misconceptions, stop and readdress the situation, break the task into smaller steps to achieve the given outcome.

Monitor the impact through learning walks that Communication Champions are part of to ensure the whole school is implementing the changes and communication approaches are consistent across the whole school.