

Speech and Language Therapy at Bowden House School.

Speech and language therapy is currently provided to Bowden House for 2 days a week.

Therapy is provided for all speech, language and communication difficulties e.g. improving listening and attention skills, developing processing and understanding of written and verbal language, improving expressive written and verbal language, improving social communication skills, articulation of speech and improving fluency levels (working on stammering).

Providing speech and language therapy to children with SEBD is relatively new and innovative. Recent research has uncovered high levels of speech, language and communication difficulties among young offenders and among boys excluded from school. These boys were in the main previously undiagnosed and untreated.

References:

- *Karen Bryan IJLCD vol. 39 2004 "high levels of speech, language and communication difficulties are found among young offender populations".*
- *Karen Bryan IJLCD vol.42 2007 "58 participants were selected at random from a establishment for juvenile offenders aged 15-17, high levels of speech, language and communication difficulties were found".*
- *Kate Ripley and Nicola Yuill Educational Psychology vol.75 2005 "patterns of language impairment were found in boys excluded from school" "many boys excluded from school had previously undiagnosed language problems" "There is a need for early recognition and intervention of speech and language impairments"*
- *Maggie Snowling CBand MH 2000 "Juvenile offenders have high levels of general verbal deficits incl. language and literacy"*

Evidence from my assessments at Bowden House reinforces the literature and adds to it.

There are some boys at school who have previously been diagnosed with speech, language and communication difficulties, these difficulties are recognised on their statements and it is for them that I was initially recruited. There is a legal obligation to provide speech and language therapy for them. What has been interesting is the high level of previously undiagnosed speech, language and communication difficulties.

Speech and language assessments have included use of The Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals 4 (CELF4 UK), this is an in depth assessment of expressive and receptive language skills. It includes subtests to look at understanding of concepts, ability to follow directions, ability to recall sentences, give definitions, construct sentences etc. adding up scores from key subtests provides an overall core language score which can be converted into a percentile rank. A percentile rank expresses an individual's score relative to his or her age group. It indicates the percentage of person's who have scored equal to or lower than a specific score. An average percentile score would be 50, with the "normal range" being 25 to 75.

Student	Core Language Score (composite of sub test standard scores)	Percentile Rank
1	43	61
2	29	14
3	24	5
4	22	4
5	19	2
6	18	1
7	16	1
8	10	0.1
9	9	0.1
10	7	<0.1
11	6	<0.1
12	5	<0.1
13	4	<0.1

As can be seen all of the boys except student 1 have exceptionally low scores, indicating significant receptive and expressive language difficulties. Difficulties at these levels would certainly have impacted on their social, emotional and academic ability.

Speech and Language therapy at school consists of **assessing** all new pupils, providing **advice and support** to teaching staff about their language levels and learning needs e.g. advising staff that a boy's level of language is equivalent to that of a 6 year old, that they need instructions to be short, with simple vocabulary, that language should be reinforced with visual prompts (demonstrations, pictures etc.), that they do not understand sarcasm etc. Advice is given verbally at staff meetings and in written format on the shared computer system.

Speech and language therapy is provided in the classroom, particularly in English; supporting the staff to plan and prepare lessons and worksheets, and working alongside individuals in class, differentiating the lessons for the boys

with speech and language needs. It has been helpful to provide the language therapy in class particularly for the older boys, so that they do not miss out on the curriculum work and some of whom are more reluctant to come for 1:1 help.

The time spent in class has also helped me to understand what is required in class and enabled me to observe their functional levels of language. It informs future 1:1 sessions.

Direct speech and language therapy is also provided on a 1:1 basis, I have written up 3 examples as case studies to demonstrate the effectiveness of this.

Case studies:

Student 3 (S3)

Initial assessment revealed severe attention and listening difficulties, delayed vocabulary levels and immature use and understanding of grammar. In addition he had poor speech production.

He has attended weekly 1:1 sessions in which we have been working on:

- **Speech production:** When first seen he produced l and th as "r" and r as "w" and had very limited insight into his difficulties. When asked which sound if any he found difficult he said "f because I can't say fwog" (meaning "frog"). S3 has made significant progress in this area. He is now able to produce the target sounds in isolation, blends, words and sentences. In spontaneous conversation his production of the target sounds is approximately 80 percent accurate and when prompted he is able to self- correct.
- **Vocabulary skills:** When first assessed he scored 43 on the RWFVS this was age equivalent of **7 years**, he is now scoring at the ceiling of the test age equivalent of **at least 8 years 6 months**.
- **His ability to listen to, process and understand language:** As a result of his poor listening skills, poor vocabulary and poor understanding of concepts S3 often struggles to process and understand the language directed at him. S3 now has a greater insight into his difficulties. He takes his ADHD medication more frequently and in 1:1 sessions is, usually able to focus for the full 45 minute lesson. As a result of this and the increased vocabulary levels he is able to process longer and more complex instructions. A year ago he scored at the **5th percentile rank** in the sub test "Concepts and Following Directions" when reassessed he scored at the **12th percentile**.

- **His ability to construct sentences and narrative:** A year ago S3 scored a **percentile rank of 0.4** on the “formulated sentences” subtest of the CELF he is now scoring at the **9th percentile**. In our sessions we are writing a story together. It had previously not been possible in class to get him to write a story. The support and structure in therapy has proved highly motivational; S3 is using adjectives and complex sentences. We are currently on the 3rd Chapter of the story which is now 6 pages long.

He attends each week and cooperates well with the sessions.

His National Curriculum levels have significantly improved over the year overall from 2C to 3A.

	Reading	Writing	Speaking and Listening
AF July 2013	3B	1A	4C
AF June 2014	4C	2B	4B
NC July 2013	3C	1B	3A
NC June 2014	4C	2B	4A

Student 4 (S4)

Formal assessment and classroom observation indicated that S4 had a complex speech, language and communication profile: He had good attention and listening skills, clear speech and when verbal instructions were reinforced with visual cues his comprehension was good.

He does, however, have severely disordered vocabulary, sentence construction and literacy skills.

He is seen each week and attendance has been 100 percent. He focuses throughout the 45 minute session and appears to enjoy our sessions.

Therapy has targeted:

- **Expressive Vocabulary:** As assessed using RWFVS was 37/50 Age Equivalent of **6 years 6 months** in May 2013, he is now scoring at the ceiling of the test age equivalent of **at least 8 years 6 months**.
- **Sentence construction:** As assessed using CELF in May 2013 was at **2nd percentile**, it is now at **15th percentile**.
- **Narrative:** We are working to construct and write a story, in line with what the rest of the group have done in class. He is enjoying this. His

narrative was initially very much focused on the here and now, we are extending this to include descriptions with adjectives and some exploration of fantasy and imagination.

- **Literacy:** His literacy is steadily developing, when seen initially his literacy skills were minimal. He can now read basic texts and can use phonic knowledge to sound out some words. This is evidenced in his THRASS test scores (sight reading) which have risen from 45,47,59,75 and currently to 77 in the period Oct 2012 to March 2014.

In class his progress is evidenced by greatly increased independence, he requires less 1:1 support and is now able to ask for support when appropriate rather than needing someone with him at all times. He also presents as a more confident communicator. S4 will now willingly read aloud in front of his peers.

In addition his national curriculum levels have significantly increased overall from 2C to 3A. See table below:

	Reading	Writing	Speaking and Listening
AF July 2013	2A	1A	4C
AF June 2014	3A	2B	4A
NC July 2013	2B	2C	3A
NC June 2014	3B	2B	4B

Student 11 (S11)

When seen for assessment S11 could not consistently read or write anything other than his name. His attention and listening skills were poor as were his receptive and expressive language skills (all subtests at or below the 1st percentile rank). S11 has been seen twice a week for the last year.

Therapy has focused on:

- **Improving motivation and attention and listening skills:** S11 has had 100 percent attendance for his speech and language therapy sessions. When first seen he could only attend for 5 or 10 minutes at a time, he is now almost always able to remain focused for the full 45 minute sessions.
- **Improving ability to process and understand the language directed at him:** When assessed a year ago he scored at the 0.1 percentile rank on the concepts and following directions subtest of the CELF (age equivalent of 4 years 6 months) when retested recently he scored at the 9th percentile rank (age equivalent of 9 years 2 months).

- **Alphabet Knowledge:** When first seen S11 was able to recite the first 5 letters of the alphabet, he is now able to recite the whole alphabet apart from confusion with 2 sounds.
- **Letter – sound correspondence:** When first seen S11 was not consistently able to name the phonic sound of any letter (i.e. b- “buh”-not bee). We have worked steadily through them, he is consistently able to label most single sounds now and at least 10 blends of consonants.
- **Sight reading and spelling of high frequency words:** A year ago S11 was not consistently able to read any words. He is now able to read and write the first 21 high frequency words.
- **Reading books:** S11 has read all of the books in the first two stages of the Oxford Reading Tree Programme and we have progressed to the third stage.

S11 is extremely proud of the progress he has made, in terms of his ability to focus for the whole lesson and in terms of his literacy levels.