

Case study – Sowerby Bridge High School

Type: Secondary School **Location:** West Yorkshire **Website:** <http://www.sbhs.co.uk/>

This year was Sowerby Bridge's second time taking part in *No Pens Day*. Our *No Pens Day* also happened to coincide with the first day of an OFSTED inspection - whilst many might feel that being assessed on lessons that focussed solely on spoken language skills may have been a risk at this time, we found that teaching was enhanced as a result of the sheer amount of time and effort our teachers had put into planning a range of exciting activities!

All subjects throughout the school participated in the day, and although some lessons lent themselves to the format more than others, teachers had plenty of novel and creative ways to avoid using pens. For example, in one of the Maths lessons, children used biscuits and icing sugar to calculate the lengths of the different sides of a triangle – educational and delicious!



It was clear that both students and teachers really enjoyed taking part. There was such a positive atmosphere throughout the school and everybody was enthusiastic and excited. The resources provided by the Communication Trust were also very helpful in increasing awareness about the day beforehand, which created a real sense of anticipation throughout the student body.

The day had a notable effect on the confidence of our students in class discussions and oral based tasks, particularly some of our younger students who had not participated in our first *No Pens Day*. We feel that it is important to note that although one day can have a large impact, dedicating time to spoken language all year round is crucial – this ensures that the progress made and skills learnt are embedded and consolidated. If this is not done, there is a real risk of students slipping backwards. After our first *No Pens Day*, we have already included more communication based activities in our day to day curriculum, and we are always adding more!

We would definitely take part in *No Pens Day Wednesday* again. Spoken language skills are so vital in today's society, and it is essential that we dedicate an appropriate amount of time to focusing on them to ensure that every child is given the best chance in life. In the future, it would be wonderful for the Trust to set up an avenue for schools to share resources with one another. Taking part in a new initiative for the first time can be an imposing prospect, and by reading about the positive experiences that schools up and down the country have had with the day, new schools would be able to enter into the project confidently and smoothly.



Kate Sanderson, Headteacher