

Case study of local good practice in identifying children with SLCN

Tor Bridge High School Plymouth

Systematic identification

An Assess, Plan, Do, and Review cycle for children with SLCN is fully embedded in school policy. Most students who undergo an assessment for speech, language and communication had their SLCN identified in primary school or earlier. Because of this, each year, the head of inclusion, Carmen De Pablo Lopez, checks the file of every year 7 student to ensure that information about current or historic SLCN is not lost in the transition to secondary school.

The language support centre co-ordinator, Marina Breed, then screens students (with current or historic SLCN) using an in-house assessment tool that looks at expressive and receptive language as well as more functional, classroom-based language



skills such as understanding ‘teacher talk’. Depending on the outcome, students may undertake additional assessments to pinpoint the nature of their difficulties.

A whole school approach

To monitor and share which students have been identified as needing extra support. Tor Bridge has integrated ‘codes’ into their register system. These codes provide a quick and easy way for the support staff to communicate to tutors and subject teachers. For example, students who have a history of communication concerns, and may experience difficulties with classroom activities, have a “WC” (watch communication) code by their name. Other codes prompt monitoring of students’ sensory, emotional or literacy needs.

The school’s inclusion department features a specialist speech and language support centre with provision for 10 students with significant SLCN. The centre’s staff also offer information and advice to teachers on issues including identifying speech, language and communication difficulties and specialist referrals. Staff training takes place through

Introduction

Tor Bridge High is a mixed secondary school and sixth form for students aged 11 to 18. The school is located in Estover, Plymouth, an area where SLCN levels are higher than the national average. Tor Bridge has a speech and language support centre and recently won ‘Secondary School of the Year’ at the 2017 Shine a Light Awards for their work in identifying and supporting students with SLCN.

the Centre’s Internal Continuous Professional Learning menu, and once a year they run a training session for other schools in Plymouth, as part of the Plymouth Learning Partnership (PLT). In addition, a local authority speech and language therapist comes to the school once a week to work with students and to advise and train staff.

Working holistically

Due to the complex nature and impact of SLCN, the school hosts holistic intervention meetings with external agencies including speech and language therapy, CAMHS, the Youth Service, and Educational Psychology, to discuss what support is required and, importantly, where it will come from. The multidisciplinary nature of these meetings provide opportunities to identify underlying communication difficulties (such as those often associated emotional, social and mental health problems) that are often missed or misdiagnosed.



The Communication Trust
Every child understood

The Communication Trust
020 7843 2526
www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk