

Enabling students with SLI to access the English Curriculum in Key Stage Four



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Background

- Students identified as having S.L.I (Bishop, 2006) have significant difficulty with literacy skills, including errors in decoding (Catts et al., 2002, Stothard et al., 1998), weak reading comprehension (Nation et al., 2004, Mackie and Dockrell, 2004), spelling difficulties (Mackie and Dockrell, 2004) and struggle with the many aspects of writing (Bishop and Clarkson, 2003, Dockrell et al., 2009). These deficits in expressive and receptive language skills will have a direct impact on their ability to access the G.C.S.E. English Language curriculum and the grade they achieve in the final exam.
- Key Stage Four students attending a Specialist residential school for S.L.I were identified as needing a specific and collaborative teaching approach during their G.C.S.E syllabus.
- Previous studies have focused on outcomes across a range of G.C.S.E subjects: Snowling et al. (2001), Dockrell (in press) and Conti-Ramsden et al. (2009). Dockrell found performance in Maths and English was an area of weakness relative to national data for other designated groups of pupils with special educational needs.
- Methods of teaching have been developed in the classroom by the teacher, STA and SALT working together using and adapting specific strategies to meet the students specific needs in the areas of: speaking & listening, reading and writing.
- The aim was, therefore, to show that this approach is effective in improving the pupils' performance in English in Key Stage 4.

Collaborative Practice

- The English curriculum in Key Stage 4, which includes Entry Level and GCSE qualifications, is planned and delivered by a multi-disciplinary team comprising a teacher, speech and language therapist (SALT) and a special teaching assistant (STA). The collaborative initiatives comprise the following:
- Collaborative planning meetings on a half-termly and weekly basis
 - Collaborative identification of class and individual needs and objective setting
 - Collaborative expressive / receptive target setting for individual students (termly)
 - Assist students in using class resources
 - Speech and language therapists devise and implement groups based on student needs
 - Individual and small group literacy support and phonological awareness skills development
 - Collaborative co-facilitation and delivery of lesson
 - Individual support within the lesson for students with additional needs (task dependent)
 - Strategies to support differentiation
 - Generalisation of targets between therapy and class
 - Document key points in lesson and provide as a record for students
 - Provide constructive criticism and direct and specific feedback to students so they can improve aspects of their work-both through written comment and discussion

Strategies

Speaking/Listening

- Support discussions
- Model structure and support cohesion of discussion through targeted questioning
- Provide conversation starters
- Facilitate inclusion of less confident students to enable the discussion to achieve its main objectives
- Outline and model good speaking and listening behaviour and make direct links to exam board assessment criteria

Reading

- Comprehension
- Question cards to establish links between questions and answers
- Use of signing to support question words
- Support tracking while reading
- Check the understanding of what is read by asking recall and comprehension type questions
- Identification of supporting evidence and use of evidence in answer synthesis

Text work

- Direct support with vocabulary knowledge and use
- Re-read/summarise read text post lesson to reinforce content
- Make notes / displays for student study aids
- Visual support for text on whiteboard, interactive whiteboard and through viewing of motion picture and displays
- Contextualising of text before embarking on study

Strategies cont.

Literacy

Bi-weekly individual support for students using 'Toe by Toe' & Units of Sound reading program

Writing

Structurally

- Provision of sentence starters
- Assist with use of framework resources to enhance any tasks
- Use of Shape Coding (Ebbels) technique in written responses
- Personalise proof reading checklist - general aspects of proof reading are taught. Students select what is relevant to them and create an individualised proof reading checklist
- ACE dictionaries
- Thesauri

Writing process: Plan- Draft-Proof read-Improve

- Vocabulary support
- Writing skills
- Weekly touch typing lessons
- Occupational Therapy 'drop in' group for improving/developing handwriting skills
- Positioning/Posture
- Desks that tilt
- Pen grips
- Writing boards

Resources

Speaking and Listening

- Language Choices Programme (Rinaldi)
- De Bono Thinking Hats (De Bono)
- Assessment for learning feedback sheets

Reading Comprehension

QUACK: Specific strategy taught to improve reading comprehension skills both literal and inferential. Focuses on accurate identification of keywords in the question and of supporting evidence in the text.

Literacy:

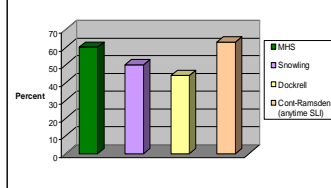
- THRASS (Davies and Ritchie)
- Units of Sound (Dyslexia Institute)
- Toe by Toe (K. Cowling)
- Word Wasp (Cowling)
- Nessy Fingers - Nessy Learning Programme
- Ace Spelling Dictionary (Moseley)
- Coloured Overlays

Writing

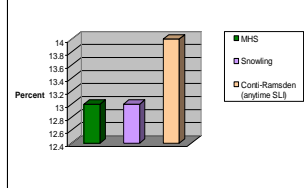
- Language Choices Programme (Rinaldi)
- Structured Writing Frameworks
- Proof reading checklists

Results

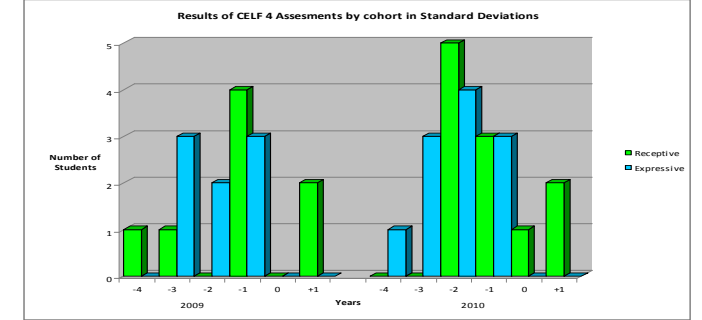
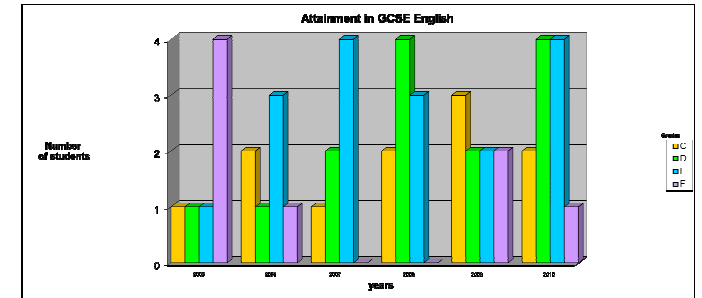
Comparisons of MHS GCSE English results with other students with SLI educated in other settings (2005-2010 inclusive) Grades A-G



Comparisons of MHS GCSE English results with other students with SLI educated in other settings (2005-2010 inclusive) Grades A-C



Results



Conclusions

More students at Moor House School are attaining a GCSE in English (grades A-G) than in either the Dockrell (DOCKRELL et al., 2011) and Snowling (SNOWLING et al., 2001) studies and their attainment is only minimally less than in the Conti-Ramsden (CONTI-RAMSDEN et al., 2009) study which included students whose SLI had resolved.

The results show that despite the severity of the students' language impairments, it is possible for them to attain a pass in GCSE English through the provision of specialised teaching and therapy. While the cohorts of students at Moor House School continue to present with moderate-severe expressive and receptive language difficulties (CELF-4); the numbers of students within each cohort who are successfully achieving a GCSE in English has improved greatly in the last three years and the results in the last five years show a shift closer to the upper symbols of the foundation tier.

The improvement in results could be attributed to the highly specialised and collaborative practice inherent in the delivery of the English Curriculum in KS4. This Collaborative practice has 'added value' to KS4 English outcomes and will continue to be developed.

In a recent Ofsted inspection (March 2011) in which the school was judged as 'Outstanding' the inspectors commented that:

- Close liaison between teachers, teaching assistants and therapists is a major strength.
- Pupils achieve well in their lessons and make excellent progress in English.
- Successful working partnerships between teachers, teaching assistants and therapists have a very positive impact on pupils' achievements and particularly on improving their speech and language skills.

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