

## ELKLAN Speech and Language Support in the Classroom Training – Evaluation of Impact

Following on from the ELKLAN course we ran in September-December 2008 we invited participants, on the 08/06/2009, to share their experiences in order to evaluate the impact Elklan had in schools.

### 1. Which sessions/topics did you find most useful?

All participants said that the communication chain was useful as it formed the foundation. One participant said “before this course I thought it was just speech...”; “misconception that speech therapy is about speech-it’s also language.”

All participants said they found ICW’s and the blanks model useful. One participant said although this was useful due to the lack of preparation time she did not use it to the extent she would’ve liked. Two teaching assistants from the same school are in the process of developing a screener based on ICW’s. One teaching assistant said she found ‘mind maps’ useful and is using this regularly her class.

Other sessions/topics that individual participants commented on usefulness were: attention and listening and independent learning skills, developing expressive language, development of phonological awareness-(again this led to the development of a screener in the abovementioned school), memory, speech and linguistic concepts.

### 2. Have you been better able to identify pupils with Speech, language and Communication needs? Explain how.

All participants said they were better able to identify children with SLC difficulties and in particular the specific area/s they are struggling with. One participant said “I hope to be able to identify any new children in the future”. One school is developing a language screener in conjunction with advice from a speech therapist and they are confident that this will hone in on their identification skills. They plan to screen all the children in year one for the early identification of children with SLC needs. One participant said they were better able to identify the specific sound errors a child had.

### 3. How have you implemented ELKLAN strategies for pupils at your school?

One participant said “I have tried to incorporate the strategies learnt as part of the everyday routine in the classroom. The strategies mentioned in the topics in question 1 have been the ones used on a regular basis”. One participant said that she was now able to implement IEP recommendations in the classroom. A participant reported that their school has adopted a whole school programme of using good sitting, looking and listening posters. One participant said that she is more aware of NVC and uses and withdraws it as applicable; she said NVC “is more purposeful for reassurance and encouragement”. Another participant said that modelling is used more regularly and it has become “a habit”. A school has adopted visual strategies and action plans for a classroom with varying success. A participant said that a teacher she works with incorporated her feedback for homework planning which led to differentiation for the pupil/s with SLCN.

#### **4. How have pupils responded to work based on ELKLAN? Have you seen improvements/progress?**

One participant said “There have been improvements in some of the children. I have noticed that they are more independent when working. For one child I use a small white board to display a lesson plan with all the tasks required of him. This he now expects and will work by himself (mostly) to get the job done. There are still some days when he is not “switched on” and will use lots of distraction techniques so as not to do the work, but there is progress.” Three participants made the important link between phonological awareness skills and reading/spelling as they said that by working on the children’s rhyming skills and sequencing of sounds their reading and spelling has improved-they found visible results in that the children were writing more that they previously did. One of the participants said that the “phonics programme is running in tandem with Elklan strategies “and this has shown a child move from ‘school action plus’ to ‘school action’ “. Some participants noted an increase in self esteem to be progress in children.

#### **5. What barriers or difficulties have you encountered in trying to implement ELKLAN strategies in school?**

The consensus was *lack of time* allocated to teaching assistants for preparation including getting resources ready and then consequent implementation strategies. One participant said “The main difficulty is not having any time to prepare. This means that not all strategies are used when they should be. The ones easy to implement are often used.” Some of the other barriers that came up are summarized as:

- ❖ Lack of or limited teacher involvement which can prevent “taking it into the classroom”
- ❖ Lack of consistency of application of strategies
- ❖ Staff changes
- ❖ Whether a speech therapist goes into the school or not
- ❖ Relationships between the teaching assistant and teachers/head teachers/SENCo’s impact whether strategies are taken on board or not.
- ❖ Teaching assistants that work within specific years groups have little opportunity to follow through with strategies when the child moves on
- ❖ Teaching assistants that are allocated to an individual child (maybe due to a statement) may not have the opportunity to share/use strategies with the other children/rest of the class
- ❖ Some schools have received a 2-3 hour post Elklan follow up course for whole school staff. Teaching assistants said that schools that did not participate were at a disadvantage and less likely to adopt Elklan principals’.
- ❖ Class teachers who are also SENCo’s are more likely to adopt Elklan strategies for the whole class than those class teachers who have limited experience with children with SEN

One participant said “ it would be fantastic for a teacher to attend one of the Elklan sessions that we attended to plant a seed in some of their minds”.

#### **6. Have you shared your knowledge with other staff? How?**

One participant said “Only with the class teachers that I work with and the other TA's who had been on the course. I have discussed with the teachers what work they want the child to do & I have suggested ways using the strategies learnt as to how I am going to get the child to do the work. The teachers have also picked up on some of the strategies that I have used.” Another participant said that other teaching assistants in the school have come up to her to ask for advice about specific children/areas of concern.

The participants suggested how to continue to do this:

- ❖ Support from the SALT department to do whole school training for an “awareness type approach and give them an insight into Elklan”
- ❖ Teaching Assistants from various schools could meet and discuss “what’s in my box?” to share resources-two participants have developed a variety of memory games following the Elklan course. “there is currently no forum for us teaching assistants to get together”

## 7. Any other comments?

### *Direct quotes from Participants:*

“Maybe more strategies for the older children (yrs 5 & 6) – we have a yr 5 child with speech problems”

“The course only touched on stammering & we need additional strategies for one of our pupils”

“It’s the best training course I’ve ever been on because I’m using it!”

“everything you learn it actually works”

“the yellow book is a bible”

“I would have not done sequencing before”

“made us valuable to the school as TA’s”

“you wouldn’t have necessarily noticed it that there are other things they cant do”

“we lucky that she (the class teacher) actually implemented the rhyme”

“I’m working so much more closely with N (the SALT) its so useful because we can understand her”

“we feel like we actually achieving something”

“half the difficulty is that now you can find the child that has lots of problems but you don’t know where to start”

**Only one Senco/class teacher attended the session for the “class teacher/Senco” slot. This participant attended the Elklan teacher training sessions for 10 weeks to support the teaching assistant that the school put on the course. The following information was gathered:**

### **1. Which ELKLAN strategies have been most useful in your school? Why?**

All. After Elklan she realized that speech therapy is more than ‘speech’. She understands that SLC is not compartmentalized.

### **2. Have you been better able to identify pupils with Speech, language and Communication needs? Explain how.**

After attending the Elklan she found identification easier and realises the need for this training/skills to spot children that could have been ‘missed’. This Senco said that “every Reception teacher and teaching assistant should be on this” in order to identify children early who may have SLCN or be at risk.

### **3. How have you supported Teaching Assistants in implementing ELKLAN?**

She has given the TA extra time during the course for completing the portfolios tasks.

They do the timetable together-joint planning.

Post course the SENCO gives the teaching assistant time to develop resources. She gives the TA respect by showing interest in the strategies the TA suggests. She provides ongoing support to the TA also ensuring they have good communication. A key factor has been giving the TA “protected time” for SLC. The participant stressed the importance of having “senior leadership” backing SLC support in schools.

**4. How have pupils responded to work based on ELKLAN? Have you seen improvements/progress?**

The children have responded to the visual strategies in class. Some children have been discharged from SALT for improving after working with the TA on specific areas.

**5. What barriers or difficulties have you encountered in trying to implement ELKLAN strategies in school?**

The following were most apparent:

- Time constraints
- Personalities and attitudes of other staff members towards SLCN and responsibilities
- Having structured programmes
- High staff turnover

**6. Have you shared this knowledge with other staff? How?**

Yes. Through Inset days, after session teacher training, IEP reviews, talking to other teachers, provision mapping.

**7. How do you envisage Speech, Language and Communication support in your school in 6-12 months time?**

Screening children in year one for early identification and early intervention.

More whole staff training

Specialist training for the SALT TA

Keeping the dedicated SLC hours which is currently 4hrs a week.

**8. Any other comments?**

Speech and language therapy : "It's not a come and fix solution"

The participant valued the follow up whole school training as it had a positive impact on those staff that didn't attend Elklan.

Summarized and written on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2009 by Yajna Bhagwandeem. For original scripts and attendance register of participants please contact me on:

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