Students identified as having SLI (Bishop,2006) have significant difficulties 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 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 SLI 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.

Strategies cont.

Literacy
- Bi-weekly individual support for students using Toy or Toy Units of Sound reading program
discussing
- Provision of sentence starters
- Assist with use of framework resources to enhance a ny tasks
- Use of Shape Coding (Elkies) 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

A C E dictionaries

Therapist

Writing process:
Plan-Draft-Proof-read

Vocabulary support

Writing skills
Weekly touch typing lessons

Occupational Therapy ‘drop in’ group for improving/developing handwriting skills

Proof reading: Postcards that lift

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

Writing

Language Choices Programme (Rinaldi)

Structured Writing Frameworks

Proof reading checklists

References


DOCKRELL et al, 2010. Exploring the academic achievement of school-leaving for pupils with a history of language impairment: previous academic achievement and literacy skills. Child Language teaching and Therapy, 25, 221-222


CONCLUSIONS

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-RAMSEYER 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 (SELF-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 slight 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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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 planning of individual and group needs and objectives
- Collaborative monitoring of progress for individual students
- Read and share resources
- Collaborate with speech and language therapists to assist in setting goals
- Collaborate with speech and language therapists to meet the students needs
- Collaborate on the generalisation of targets between therapy and class
- Monitor and keep records and provide feedback
- Use the students’ strengths to support learning
- Provide constructive criticism and direct and specific feedback to students so they can improve aspects of their work through written comments and oral discussion.