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CHILDREN'S CONSULTATION REPORT

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Background information and aims

Background

The aim of the consultation, commissioned as part of the Bercow: Ten Years On review, was to gather the views of children and young people with SLCN across a range of settings. There were clear guidelines from the RCSLT and I CAN, adhered to by the consultants recruited, to ensure aims and objectives were met.

The report below explains the process involved in recruiting and consulting with the children, including brief details of methodology and how any perceived consultant bias was addressed. It summarises the data gathered and presents key findings.

We wanted to find out –

Here were four main questions I CAN/RSLT were keen to address, which were based on outcomes of the online children's consultation process.

1. Who helps CYP with their talking and understanding, how and where they do it?
2. What CYP like and don't like in terms of the type of support they get?
3. How involved CYP in making decisions about the support they get?
4. How the support CYP gets makes them feel?

Who did we talk to?

A total of 56 children shared their thoughts with us. All children were identified as having speech, language and communication needs and were asked to join the consultation by their teachers.

We spoke to children aged 5 to 16 years of age, with a range across different key stages. They were seen in 8 different schools, some mainstream others in special or specialist provision, primary and secondary across a geographical spread.¹

What did we do?

We asked children and young people whether they received help for their talking and understanding. We explained that we were interested in finding out more about their experiences. We explained we were interested in finding out what they liked and didn't like about the help they received.²

What did we do with all the information?

- We summarised all the information gathered
- We looked at all the information and picked out ideas that were similar in the different groups and interviews.
- We included ideas and quotes from the children
- The report summarises the information, including the main questions asked, the ideas shared by children and young people, examples of what they said

¹ See appendices for details

² See appendices for more information on explanations given



Our questions answered

Question 1 - Who helps children and young people with their talking and understanding, how and where they do it?

The results of older and younger children showed some differences, so this information was analysed separately. **For primary aged pupils**, there were several people who children felt gave them the most support. The majority of mentions were given over to both parents and teachers, with specific examples shared of how these different people helped.

***My teacher "helps me do my rhymes"
"helps me understand some words and we do sentences"***

Another example was given of how they felt other children helped

'When I say it wrong Eve says it properly, so I can say it again'

Children talked about a range of other people that helped them with their speech, language and communication, though these individuals were quite different for different children.³

For secondary aged pupils, the majority of mentions created a narrower range, with most falling into parents/grandparents or teachers. Again, for individuals there were specific people who helped, including specific tutors in school or wider family members at home.⁴

Overall, both groups received most support from teachers and family members, though other adults such as after school teachers, TAs and speech and language therapists did play an important role for some children. Other children and team mates were also mentioned as important by some children.

In terms of location, most responses mentioned home and school as key areas of support, with after school activities important to around a third of all children.

We also discussed with the children who doesn't help when it comes to supporting speech, language and communication. This proved to be more difficult as it depended very much on the children's individual experiences and varied greatly across and within the groups of children consulted. They were able to give general information about why some groups did not help them

Sometimes adults can be all speaking at the same time it's so difficult to hear (primary pupil)

They were also clear around some of the barriers to others helping

...students because they don't know how to (primary pupil)

There was little real consensus about who specifically doesn't help, with the view that all groups were capable of helping or not. However, children showed some great insight into why some individuals were not helpful to them

Someone who works in a shop, he talks too fast and I can't understand what he's saying (primary pupil)

The main exception to this was other children/bullies who children felt were particularly hurtful or unhelpful. This was more noticeable in the responses from older, secondary aged pupils

Bullies they make you feel rubbish (secondary pupil)

³ See appendices for summary graph

⁴ See appendices for summary graph



Question 2 - What Children and Young People like and don't like in terms of the type of support they get?

Children across both primary and secondary phases were clear about the types of support they found more or less useful. There were a range of strategies and ideas children highlighted, not specific to SLCN, but more general in terms of the attitudes and general support they found helpful from the people around them. The most commonly mentioned strategies by both older and younger pupils related general good practice and the attitudes of the people around them, rather than specific strategies or approaches directly related to SLCN.

Top 12 support strategies identified by children and young people	
General	Specific
Be good at explaining Encourage us Make it easy to ask questions Make things fun Be patient	Pictures/Visual support/Symbols Check I understand Give choices* Give time to talk Don't speak too fast Give help with work

*important especially for older students

For both primary and secondary school pupils, being encouraged and supported was seen as being hugely important

"Encourage us - I think it's gooder because they will make us confident to do it" (primary pupil)

Secondary pupils made similar comments

"Encourage us - If they encourage us they respect us."

"If they encourage us it will help us more at work, if you ain't got good qualifications you can't get a good job, you even need qualifications to be a cleaner"

For both groups there were comments on talk of teachers and pupils. Some comments were around having time to talk, both for social interaction and to support learning and understanding. Others were more specific around what is helpful in the **way** teachers and pupils can talk and interact

In primary, children commented on how useful it was to have time to talk to other children

"Give me time to talk - Cause we like talking. We can talk to each other"

And to adults

"...because if you want to tell your grown up something exciting you can."

And to support learning

"...because if you don't know something you can ask by putting your hand up."

The same themes were clear for secondary pupils, but they were more specific around **how** adult talk can support their learning

"Talk at my level - Helpful because you are understanding what the person is saying"



There were also comments about the pace of talk – they felt some teachers spoke too quickly, which impacted on their understanding

Talk slowly - Because we need to take things slowly - because do you understand this (demonstrated speaking quickly)

They also commented more specifically on how to ensure they are understanding ... and why it is useful for the teacher to do this

“Check I understand - in a way it can save time”

Primary aged pupils also talked about the importance of being able to ask questions when they were unsure

“Make it easy to ask questions - because they can help you like (TA) helped me when I was in class”

Some of the older children also commented more generally on the importance of being listened to, both for their learning and understanding, but also to support their wellbeing

“I need to listen, so I can do work, they need to listen, so they can understand what you're feeling”

There were more specific strategies mentioned by pupils, particularly relating to the classroom and wider school environment

“Things around me in school to help like symbols and pictures, it might help you to learn (primary pupil)

Secondary school pupils also commented on the need for more independence and control over their learning

In my lessons teachers give us a choice what we think is best (e.g. talking or writing)

However, they also highlighted the importance of doing this in the right way to avoid further confusion or lack of understanding

‘They give us lots of choices its good but if they give us too many questions it's not helpful, it's confusing’

Some pupils also highlighted the importance of help outside of school

“... they're helping you with your speech”

Children were asked if there was anything that doesn't help?

There was a long list of things pupils found unhelpful, with the most commonly identified challenges fell into the following themes:

1. Teacher talk /Teachers shouting/shouting if we don't understand
2. People Talking too much /people being noisy
3. Working in Silence
4. Lots of writing
5. Spending time on naughty children

Teacher Talk - a lot of teacher talk was difficult for many pupils

When Teachers talk lots, we need to wait there for lots of time

... if they talk really long, everybody get really bored and they might not listen

Talk too many words and my head can't do it really like BOOM!



Pupils also commented on how difficult it was when teachers shouted, particularly when they didn't understand

It isn't good when they shout if we don't understand, 'cos people might get a little bit sad

Other people talking

Pupils commented how challenging it was to work with lots of noise, disruption or chatter, though equally that working in silence was not conducive to work for most. People messing around, talking too fast and big groups of people talking were also challenging for pupils. **Too much talk** generally was challenging and resulted in isolation for some pupils

Because sometimes people talk too much and I don't know what they say, so yeah it is bad

It was also difficult for pupils to shift their attention between thinking and talking

"people talking when I'm thinking – that's not good"

Working in silence

Although noise and too much talk was difficult, many of the children found talking was helpful to support their understanding

"...talking helps me with understand"

And working in silence unhelpful

"Working in silence - That is bad. Because the teacher is telling us to be quick when we are trying to ask questions. It doesn't help at all."

Writing

Lots of children commented on how challenging it was to complete writing tasks, particularly when they viewed it as being a lot of writing. Some children had clearly turned off writing altogether; a number of children described it as "boring" and others as "rubbish." It was an area children with SLCN found particularly difficult.

"lots of writing - because it's really boring and really really tricky"

Other challenges were discussed by different groups of children, including **"hard words"** **"hard phonics"** **"hard work."**

Spending time with naughty pupils

Children saw the difficulties for teachers in spending a lot of time with particular pupils,

because teachers might want to spend time with children who are being good, but they are being with naughty children

and commented particularly on the impact it had on them

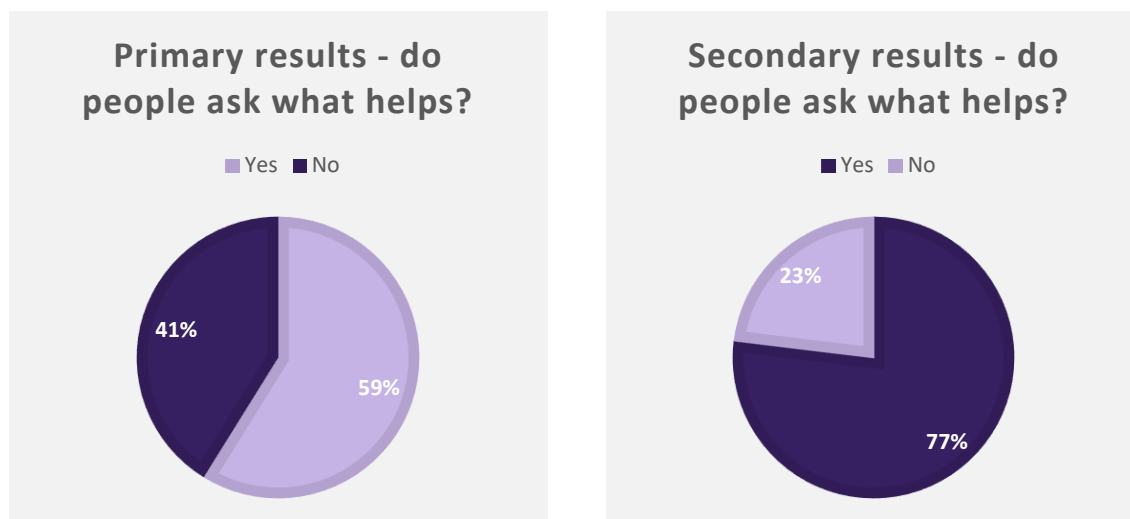
Spend time with naughty pupils because then they (teacher) don't call on me

More general types of support were also seen as unhelpful, though this varied greatly between individuals; these included **"someone sitting next to me"** and **"working in a group,"** though other children found this equally helpful. Other comments included **"people not listening;"** **"being patronised"** **"being underestimated"** and **"people bullying me or others,"** possibly reflecting difficulties children were experiencing at the time of the consultation.



Question 3 - How involved are children and young people in making decisions about the support they get?

The results of primary and secondary aged pupils were analysed separately as they presented a slightly different picture. In primary just over half of the children were involved in decision making, whereas in secondary it was almost three quarters.



Children commented on what this involvement looked like, though they tended to give examples of when they were offered help – e.g. **'do you need some help' (Mum) 'I'll help you' (Teacher)**, rather than when their views were sought on what type of help they needed. Even the older children struggled to be more precise. They commented on whether it was helpful – **"It's helpful"** **"it makes things easier"** or who asked their views **"My brothers, grandparents, mother and teachers ask me."** **"Teacher sometimes will ask if I'm struggling"** **"Yes, teachers and TAs ask"** **"some teachers ask"**

Some children were able to be a little more precise **"Teacher sometimes will ask if I'm struggling"** **"Teacher will give a choice in lessons"** or **"Yes. I like when people ask me "do you understand?""**

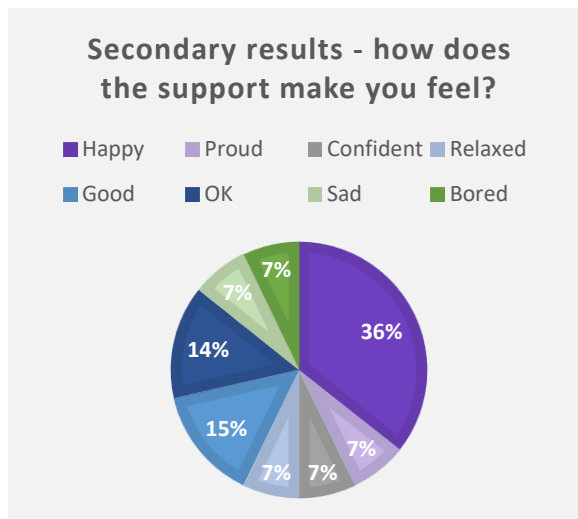
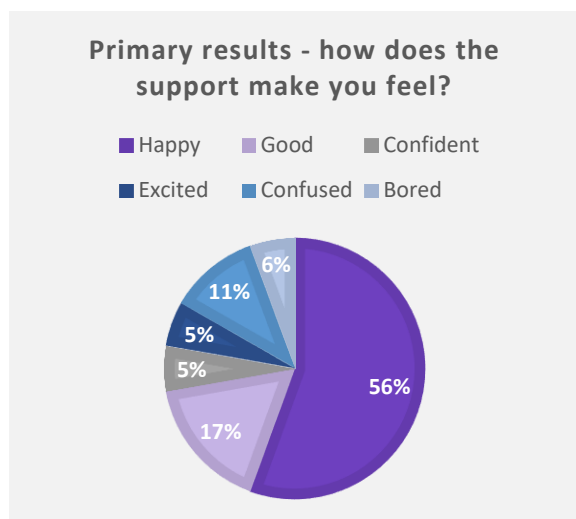
"Yes, on a regular basis and work with me to solve problems and help me to do what I need to achieve"

Most often, the help came from parents, teachers or friends. Children who weren't asked what helps also commented that it would be useful

it would be good because then people are helping me

**Question 4 - How the support Children and Young people get makes them feel?**

overall, children were very positive about the support they received. In primary aged children, the responses were predominantly positive, with just 17% of children reporting the support they received made them confused or bored. Almost three quarters of children reported the support they received made them feel happy or good.



The results for secondary aged pupils more varied in range. Just over half of the young people said the support made them feel happy or good. 14% had negative feelings, with sadness or boredom.

Conclusions

The children and young people were on the whole interested in the process of the consultation and where their views would be heard. They were keen to share their ideas and felt it to be a good thing to do. Many commented on positive support from adults in their lives, including teaching staff and parents, though they also commented on what made life more difficult for them in terms of communication and more general learning.



Appendices

Process information

Recruitment of groups. The recruitment of children and young people was carried out with the following criteria in mind:

- A range of settings, to include mainstream primary and secondary schools, primary and secondary special schools and specialist provision
- A geographical spread to include schools and academies from different areas of the country
- A balance of settings, i.e. that weren't all in the same academy chain for example
- Children with speech, language and communication needs⁵

Management of bias

- To avoid consultant bias, schools where the consultant was providing regular therapy were avoided
- The consultant involved in the wider Bercow review was involved minimally in direct work with children and where possible, other therapists were involved in the direct consultation with children and young people
- Recruitment was, on the whole, through consultant networks and contacts

Consistency

- To assure consistency across all consultations, the guidance and materials sent from RCSLT/I CAN were shared⁶ and explained
- Discussion took place between the lead consultant and each of the specialists running the groups to ensure understanding of the rationale and process
- Although consistency was important in approach, it was important to follow the lead of the children and not restrict their responses by too rigid an adherence to the guideline questions
- Further flexibility was encouraged in follow up questions and, where appropriate, alternative signs or symbols were used which were familiar with the children and young people
- All adults consulting with children were experts in communicating with children who have SLCN, most were speech and language therapists and one a specialist teacher. Their primary concern was to ensure the process was easy and enjoyable for children

Information was shared with the children and young people to ensure full understanding and consent to the process and to sharing information more widely. It was explained clearly to the children what we were hoping to achieve with the consultation and why.

Methodology

The process was carried out within a robust framework to ensure the opinions were objectively gathered and representative of the young people we spoke to. There were strategies in place to ensure there was regular checking to ensure we had clearly represented their views. Informed consent was gained before the interviews, by the young people themselves and/or an appropriate adult. Before each session, they were given information again about the Bercow review, aims of the consultation, issues around confidentiality and consent as well as methods of reporting. They were informed they did not need to continue and could choose not to answer any questions at any point.

The main data collection techniques were through individual interviews and focus groups, talking in detail to relatively small numbers of children and young people. A semi structured approach to the interviews and

⁵ See appendices for details of SLCN

⁶ See appendices



focus groups was taken to introduce an area of discussion and enable the young people to comment and discuss in whatever way they chose. They were also encouraged to think of specific scenarios, situations and or people to help think about the issues.

Within the consultations, a range of methodologies and approaches were available to ensure all young people were able to contribute. The interviewers were qualified speech and language therapists with expertise in interviewing children and young people with a wide range of communication needs.

- Sorting and categorisation tasks
- Open questions
- Use of emojis / emoticons and other visual support
- Use of drawings – e.g. drawing round hands to share top tips of things that work
- Use of graffiti wall strategies to share ideas of older children
- One thing that does or doesn't help – use of speech bubbles
- Use of scenarios or examples to help with descriptions
- Postcards for children to send to parents / teachers

Practicalities

We took notes during the sessions, using the templates prepared by I CAN/RCSLT.

Throughout the discussions, we checked with the children we had correctly understood their views and made any changes where we had misinterpreted. They were encouraged to ask about anything they were unsure of and we did lots of checking throughout to ensure understanding.

Explanations to children and young people

We began with explaining what we meant by talking, ensuring children had a clear idea of this before we began. We explained, talking could include using signing, pictures or symbols or using communication aids.

We explained that we wanted to share the information with the government and with other people. We explained we wanted to share with these people what was important for children and young people who needed some extra help to talk.

We checked children were happy for us to share their views. We also asked whether they wanted their views known to their own teachers in school. It was made clear to the children that they did not need to take part in the consultation and could choose whether their views were shared more widely.

We told them we would write a report, but their names, or other people's names they mentioned wouldn't be included.



Range of SLCN of children consulted – schools were asked to describe the SLCN of the pupils involved, resulting in a varied list of descriptors. There were some duplications, usually within one setting.

Phonological disorder

Speech

Speech and language disorder

Severe consistent speech disorder

Significant and complex speech and language difficulties

Moderate-severe speech disorder

Significant language and social interaction difficulties

Significant language difficulties

Moderate – severe receptive and expressive language delay

SLI (not known as DLD)

Severe profound receptive and expressive delay

Profound expressive language disorder and profound speech disorder

DLD

Significant difficulties with speech and expressive language

Developmental verbal dyspraxia

Speech and Language needs and syndrome

Language and ADHD

Speech and Language needs and Communication – ASD?

ASD

Language

Voice

Currently being referred for language assessment



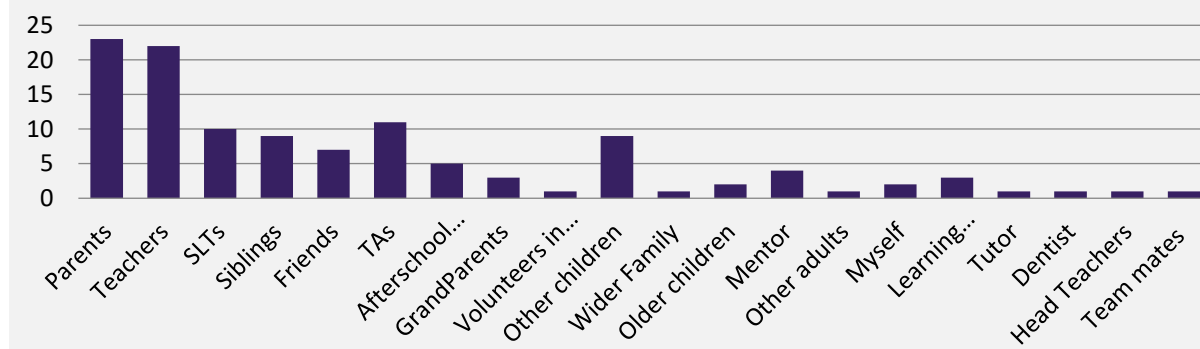
Children's details

Key stage	Number of children
Key Stage 1 (5-6)	18
Key Stage 2 (7-10)	18
Key Stage 3 (11-13)	12
Key Stage 4 (14-16)	8

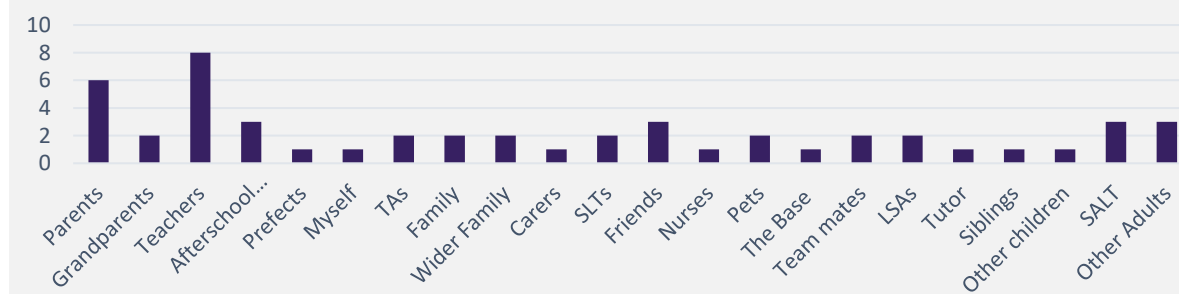
School locations	Phase	Mainstream / Special	Children
Midlands	Secondary academy	Mainstream	9
North	Primary academy	Mainstream	10
Midlands	Primary school	RP	13
North	Primary school	Primary	2
Midlands	Specialist school	Special	5
North	Primary school	Mainstream	6
North	Primary school	Mainstream	5
South	Secondary school	Mainstream / RP	6

Summary graphs

Primary Results - People who help



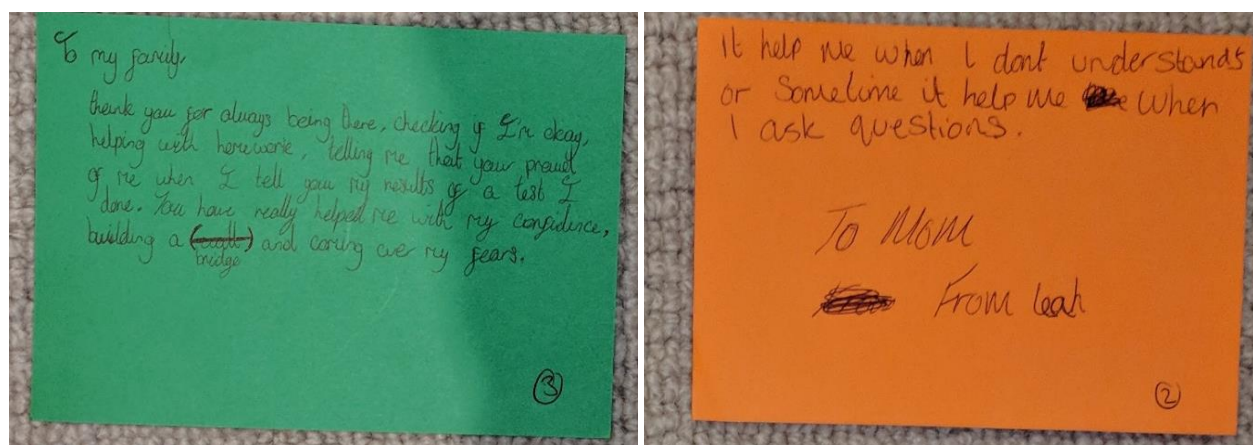
Secondary Results - People who help



Primary places.docx Primary people.docx Consent Form.docx Things that help.docx Secondary places.docx Secondary people.docx

rating scale.docx Children and young person consultation p

Postcards



The image shows two pages of a child's drawing book. The left page features a drawing of two trees with various text labels. The right page features a drawing of a flower with several text labels and a note at the bottom.

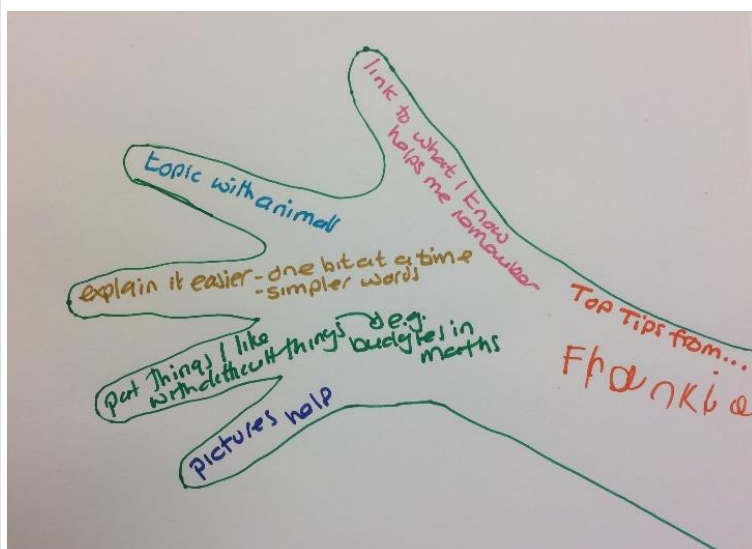
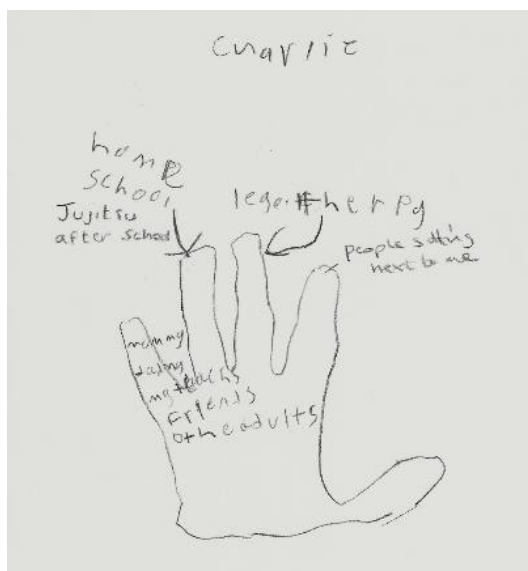
Left Page:

- Top right: *Family*
- Top left: A circular drawing with a spiral inside.
- Center: Two trees with text labels: *hard*, *leaves*, *being in a group*, *small*, *leaves*, *leaves*, *leaves*.
- Bottom: Three small circular drawings, one labeled *small*.

Right Page:

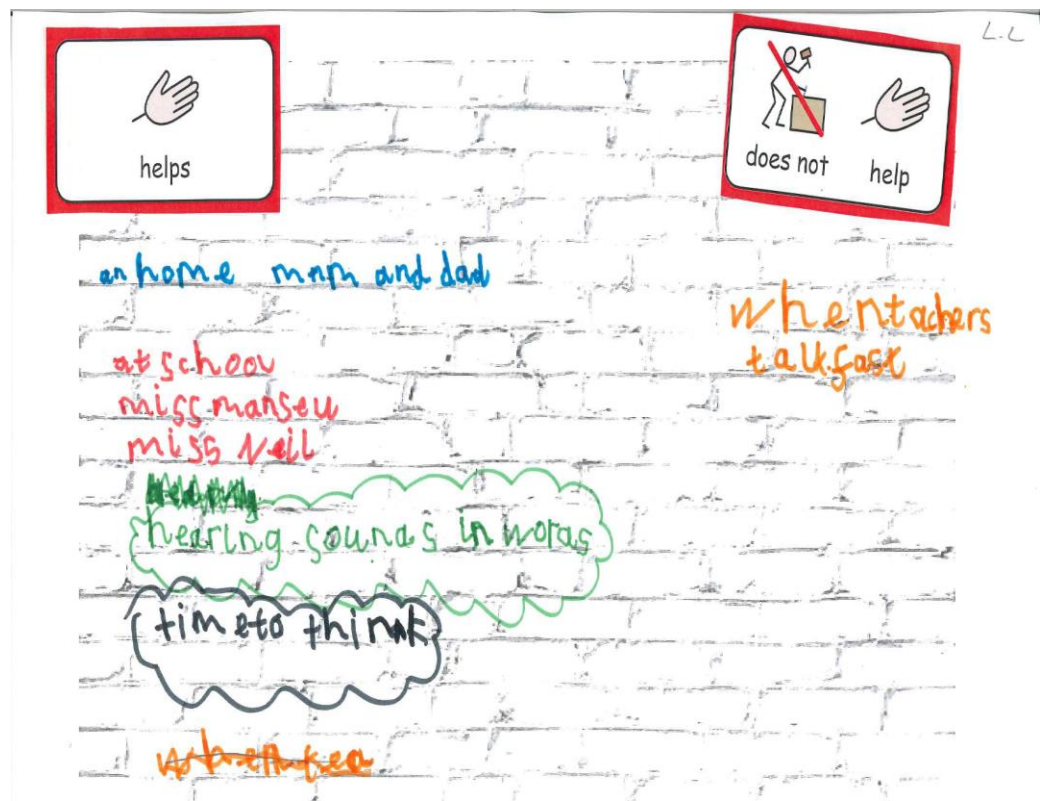
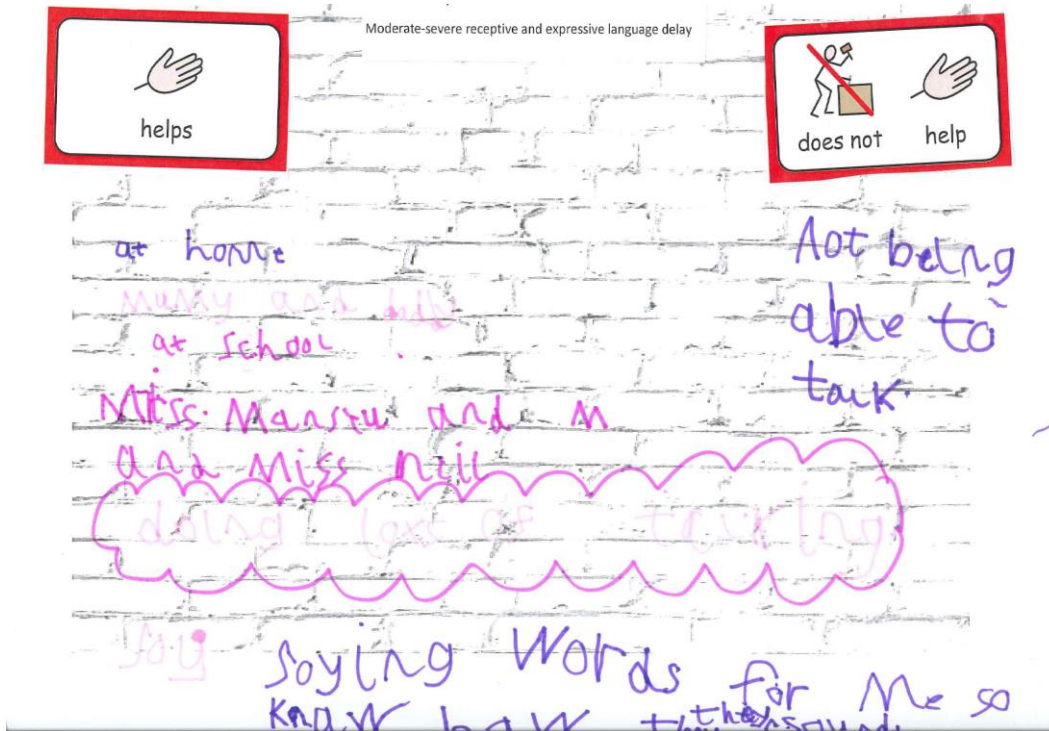
- Top right: *Aloeia*
- Top left: *Need mole to make French*
- Center: A drawing of a flower with a long stem and several leaves. Text labels: *Some on*, *Dinner*, *Me.*
- Bottom left: *Picture on the wall.*
- Bottom right: *Like arentio version from in balls form.*
- Top right (near flower): *Thank me*
- Top right (near flower): *He loves her*

Handprints





Graffiti walls





Acknowledgements

A huge thank you to all the children and young people who very kindly shared their thoughts and views. Thanks also goes to the schools who offered up their time and support and to the speech and language therapists that supported the process.

Greenwood Secondary School

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Topcliffe Primary School

Alderwasley Hall School

St. Mary's Primary School

Birkdale Primary School