

***Bercow: Ten Years On* Case study**  
**Support for long-term SLCN at Bensham Manor School**

**About Bensham Manor School**

Bensham Manor School is a secondary special school in South London which caters for students with autism and moderate learning difficulties. The school employs a speech and language therapy team, made up of two speech and language therapists (SLTs) and one speech and language therapy assistant (SLTA), and also receives support from the NHS speech and language therapy service 1 day per week.

The Bensham Manor speech and language therapy team used the Key Features of Effective Practice in Schools checklist, developed as part of the [suite of supporting resources](#) for the *Bercow: Ten Years On* report, to evaluate its practice and identify areas for service development.

**Key features of effective practice**

- **A lead in school for speech, language and communication**

The in-house speech and language therapy team take the lead on speech, language and communication, ensuring it is kept high on the agenda and embedded in policies and practices.

- **Speech and language therapist is part of the school team**

The speech and language therapy team are employed directly by the school, which means they work closely with other school staff, as well as with the local NHS speech and language therapy service.

- **Speech, language and communication is embedded in policies**

The school has a Communication Policy, and has been accredited by Elklan as a Communication Friendly School. The importance of adapted communication and a communication-friendly environment is further embedded in school policy documents such as the Accessibility Plan and the Teaching and Learning Policy. Furthermore each cycle of teaching observations includes the speech and language therapy team and the communicative environment is assessed alongside the quality of the teaching.

- **A three wave model of support for students' SLCN**

The school takes a three-tiered approach to SLCN support:

- **Universal:** This includes training, awareness and upskilling of staff and parents to better support SLCN within the classroom and at home.
- **Targeted:** Social skills groups, interview skills training and combined Speech and Language Therapy/Occupational Therapy (SPOT) class groups are provided.
- **Specialist:** Direct interventions delivered by speech and language therapists to those students that need them (44% of all school students in 2017/18).

- **Pupils tell you what SLCN support they feel makes a difference**

Students contribute to setting their own targets about what they would like to achieve, both in therapy and within schools. A student council has recently been set up to give students a safe place to share their views; speech and language therapists provide training to the staff team who support the student council.

- **Spoken language is part of quality first teaching**

Teaching staff understand the importance of using spoken language when teaching; speech and language therapists take part in lesson observations to provide teachers with feedback on their communication style.

- **A rolling programme of workforce development**

The in-house speech and language therapy team provide a rolling programme of training; in 2017/18 training delivered to all staff included Blank's Levels of Questioning model to support development of comprehension skills, and Makaton signing. Additional training to small groups included introduction to autism, and using precision teaching to support English and Maths.

- **Know the impact of SLCN interventions**

At the beginning of all interventions baseline data is taken and this is compared with post-intervention data to enable data on progress to be collected. In addition the speech and language therapy team collect staff feedback on the reported impact of speech and language therapy on educational attainment and wellbeing.

*"Students' reading improved a great deal after speech and language therapy intervention."*

*"I noticed a vast improvement in communication skills both in the classroom and socially."*

*"I saw a marked improvement in their physical and mental being."*

- **All staff know how to identify and support students with SLCN**

Staff receive training on how to identify SLCN, and the use of a communication tracker supports systematic identification. Training also provides staff with strategies to support students with SLCN, and the presence of an embedded speech and language therapy team means all staff are able to refer students or seek advice about students' SLCN.

- **There are systems in place to track spoken language**

A communication tracker is used to collect baseline information on every year group in the school. The information helps to track progress made, and can be used to identify individual targets as appropriate.

In addition, the school demonstrates strong engagement with parents in relation to SLCN, including parent workshops in supporting communication with the home, and meet the therapist sessions. The speech and language therapy team are also present at parents' evening, providing parents with the opportunity to talk about their child's progress and take home information on SLCN and speech and language therapy.

Students' comprehension is benchmarked against Blank Levels at the beginning of each year by the staff to support their verbal reasoning across the curriculum throughout the year.

### **Next steps for Bensham Manor School**

In order to continue to develop their service and provide better outcomes for their students, through this process of audit and evaluation, the speech and language therapy team have identified three priorities for the year ahead:

- Increase frequency and quality of staff training at a universal level
- Increase staff and parental involvement in target setting, intervention and feedback
- Develop a tool to measure student involvement and collect student opinions on the service.