



Speech Bubbles: Information for Schools

Speech Bubbles is a targeted, year-long, evidence-based intervention for children in KS1 who have a Speech, Language and Communication Need. It is a 24-week (8 per term) workshop programme which supports children in KS1 in developing their Speaking, Listening and Attention Skills and enhances the skills of a member of school staff (a high-level TA, Learning Mentor or SENCo, for example) to run small group creative work.

In 2012-2013, Half Moon ran a pilot Speech Bubbles programme for two Tower Hamlets primary schools (John Scurr and Mayflower). Since then we have worked with a total of 25 schools and more than 1250 children. The full cost of the programme is £4300+VAT per year, per school. We aim to have funding each year to deliver the programme in a number of primary schools at a subsidised rate. Contact us to express interest in working with us.

THE PROGRAMME

The workshops are delivered by a Half Moon drama practitioner and a high-level TA, Learning Mentor or SENCo from your school. We work with 20 children per school in two groups of 10 (often a mixture of Year 1 and Year 2 children in each group). Each session is 30-45 minutes long. We normally schedule the sessions for an afternoon, something like:

- 12.45pm: practitioner arrives / 1-1.45pm: Session One / 1.45-2pm: Evaluate
- 2-2.45pm: Session Two / 2.45-3pm: Evaluate / 3pm: practitioner leaves

Programme Structure

- A September induction training day, attended by drama practitioners and school staff (can be delivered online). We can also start the programme in January on a 20-week programme with a separate induction training day in January.
- School identifies pupils, with assessment against referral guidance (Year 1 and Year 2 teachers complete an online form about each child at the start and end)
- Twilight INSET session for all KS1 staff (can be delivered online)
- 24 weekly sessions across the school year; same room, same day/time, same staff (20 if starting in January)
- 2 open sessions for parents (one in term one; one in term three), if appropriate in your school
- A half-day Collaborative Learning session (January) and an evaluation session (July)
- Ongoing supervision by the Speech Bubbles Team
- Evaluation report including evidence of programme impact

THE PRACTICE

Activity sessions are planned to promote communication in its broadest sense. We recognise that developing communication includes an awareness of; body language, proximity, gesture, facial expression, eye contact, sounds and words, leading to more complex language. The sessions are structured and creative, providing children with a safe and contained environment for development. The story drama approach places the child at the centre of the activity and they become, at different times, author, performer and audience.

One of the biggest advantages of Speech Bubbles for me was the fact that the children had equal ownership over the stories...you could tell it had a really positive impact on them.

A School Inclusion Manager



THE CHILDREN

We ask schools to refer children to the programme to develop their confidence in communicating in the school environment and to support their speaking, listening and attention skills.

THE COMPANIES

Speech Bubbles is now an independent charity to bring about real change in speech, language and communication needs for children in KS1. The programme is run in different areas across London and England. Half Moon is the Tower Hamlets Delivery Partner.

Half Moon is a local organisation with a national remit, committed to supporting young people at every stage of their creative development. Working from our base in Limehouse and throughout the community in Tower Hamlets, we make a big impact on the lives of young people. Our wide-ranging creative learning programme reaches 25,000 people annually and engages those who are often excluded from arts activity. We offer a season of professional plays for young audiences, national touring productions and an extensive creative learning programme, including eight youth theatres. We receive regular funding from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and are a National Portfolio Organisation of Arts Council England.

THE SUCCESSES

Independent research¹ and evaluation evidence from the Speech Bubbles programme identified the following successes:

- * Children gain confidence in using a range of communication skills
- * Children identified as selective mutes have chosen to speak in sessions

2021/22 Tower Hamlets schools reported that:

- * **81% of pupils improved their learning, speaking and listening skills**
- * **86% of pupils improved their emotional behaviour and conduct behaviour**
- * **96% of pupils showed improvements in the classroom**

Speech Bubbles is designed to support children's communication development but we have also started to see its impact on supporting literacy development in participating children.

* The number of children who were below age-expected targets for literacy (either working towards national standard or not meeting national standard) fell from 80% at the start of the programme in reading and 82% in writing to 60% in reading and 67% in writing at the end of the programme. The number of children working at or above national standard rose from 20% in reading and 18% in writing at the start of the programme to 40% in reading and 33% in writing at the end of the programme.

MORE INFORMATION

If you would like to find out more information on Speech Bubbles, please visit our website: <https://www.halfmoon.org.uk/learning/early-years-primary/speech-bubbles/>

¹ Research co-ordinated by Paula Robinson, Academic from Birkbeck College, University of London. Available to download from <https://www.speechbubbles.org.uk/research-reports-writing>