

## Spotlight on Hampstead School

*Hampstead School in the London Borough of Camden was the winner of the Secondary School/College of the Year Award at the 2015 Shine a Light Awards.*

*Hampstead School focuses explicitly on developing communication, speaking and listening skills through consistently promoting active listening and effective speaking among staff and students.*

Since 2009 Hampstead School has been working with their local speech and language therapy (SLT) team and has participated in their Listen-EAR (Enjoy, Achieve, Respect) approach, appointing a teacher to ensure the approach is carried out across the whole school.

The school's lead teacher for speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) works closely with the SENCO and the Camden SLT team to identify communication strengths and needs of students and decide what interventions they need. In addition, they consider which of their subject teachers require extra support and/or resources.

The school collaborates with several external experts to enhance pupil's experiences and allow them to access a wider range of interventions. In addition to working with two Camden SLTs and a Listen-EAR leader (who works with the school weekly on six-monthly projects for which the school has to apply - a bidding process for all Camden schools for which Hampstead has been successful on three occasions), the school also works closely with the educational psychologist and a clinical SLT.

For those students who require speech and language therapy assessments, these are carried out and the school is supported in running communication interventions such as Lego therapy (where the building blocks are used for increasing motivation to participate in social skills intervention, providing a medium through which children with social and communication disadvantages can effectively interact) and social communication groups.

With regards to students themselves, all year seven students receive an active listening lesson as part of their PSHE programme. It is here that teachers observe the children and feed back to the SEN team if any students are identified as needing further support with their communication skills.

Outside of year seven, teachers are constantly observing their students, whatever year group the students may be in, referring to the SEN team and completing where necessary a SLCN screening questionnaire.

To encourage communication throughout the whole school, Hampstead School runs reward scheme - 'star of the hour' and 'speaking and listening stars' - linked to effective use of speaking and listening to enable students to have a wider range of opportunities to use their skills and be encouraged to do so.

To make sure this happens, staff are reminded at the end of every lesson to give the 'star of the hour' to a pupil via a pop up message on their computer. In addition to this, the school runs annual communication promotion weeks such as Listening Week, Talk Fest, Speak Week and regularly runs *No Pens Day Wednesday*, where pupils put down their pens and take part in speaking and listening activities.

The result in all this activity, lesson study and evaluations have indicated that, of the students who had known SLCN, 89% made at least one sublevel of progress, 63% at least two sublevels and 36% more than two levels on their national curriculum framework.

On self-rating scales, 118 students out of 179 rated improved listening after listening lessons and listening strategies in class and, anecdotally, school staff have reported that students were listening better, becoming more engaged in learning tasks and therefore were enabled to talk about what they were learning more accurately and use more complex vocabulary.

Hampstead School has been awarded the *Secondary School/College of the Year Award* for their continuous commitment to communication, to not only those students with SLCN but to all students in the school.

Hampstead School shows that with the right training, collaboration and encouraging students through running reward schemes and communication weeks, a real difference can be made to students' progress.