

Spotlight on Robert Mellors Primary and Nursery School Foundation Unit

Robert Mellors Primary and Nursery School Foundation Unit in Nottinghamshire was the winner of the Early Years Setting of the Year Award at the 2015 Shine a Light Awards.

Robert Mellors Primary and Nursery School Foundation Unit place provision for supporting children's speech, language and communication needs at the centre to everything that they do. Many children attend Sure Start Outreach sessions prior to joining Robert Mellors's Foundation Unit and as a result work closely with Sure Start to identify speech, language and communication needs. In addition Robert Mellors support parental meetings and home visits, encouraging the use of sharing books and rhymes at home, as well as the use of Makaton symbols.

When SLCN needs are known before a child starts at Robert Mellors, the provision will visit the other agencies involved, as well as provide helpful information for parents. The curriculum is highly responsive to children's needs and interests, which results in high levels of engagement from the children. All areas of the Unit, inside and out, have planned language and vocabulary opportunities embedded with them.

The primary and nursery school foundation unit have embraced different programmes and training, having been part of the *Talk2Learn* pilot study to evaluate the use of targeted interventions and training from a Speech and Language Therapist.

Staff have also been trained in I CAN's Talk Boost intervention, Narrative Groups, Listening and Attention Groups and Signs and Symbols training. Where additional assessments were needed the school have used The Communication Trust's Speech, Language and Communication Progression Tools to identify the support that children require.

All foundation staff have completed training in *Let's Interact*, which focuses on a range of strategies to support children's speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

Every week 'stay and play' sessions are held in class for families of children with SLCN where model strategies are used to support. Using the Communication Supporting Classroom Observation Tool from The Communication Trust, Robert Mellor's was able to evidence an increase of seven more interactions after the *Lets Interact* training and an increase in the types of interactions between practitioners and children.

The *Talk2Learn* pilot study increased senior leaders speech and language knowledge from 11/20 to 19/20 when taking a questionnaire before and after, and 90% of children receiving I CAN's *Talk Boost* intervention had age appropriate language upon completion.

On entry to Foundation Two there was a pupil premium gap of 50% in attaining the expected level for speaking. By the end of the year, there was no gap – an incredible achievement.

Robert Mellors Primary and Nursery School Foundation Unit has been awarded the *Early Years Setting of the Year Award* for their carefully measured impact on children's development, their well rounded training programme and number of varied innovative practices, as well as their strong partnerships and home engagement.