



Spotlight on Ingfield Manor School

Ingfield Manor School in Billingham was the winner of the Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Award at the 2017 Shine a Light Awards.

Recognising that its AAC-user students were often missing the opportunity to learn the vocabulary available to them in order to support their communication and learning, the senior staff at Ingfield Manor School decided that AAC needed to be recognised as a subject in its own right.

Previously Ingfield Manor School's AAC-user pupils were relying heavily on adult support to initiate communication, however they felt it was important that all students were appropriately equipped to meet increasing communication demands as they got older. The school's answer to this was the introduction of AAC as a curriculum subject, giving timetabled, structured opportunities for students to explore the language on their high- and low-tech devices through 'Aided Language Stimulation' and modelling.

A new, age-appropriate vocabulary set was also introduced and an accredited City and Guilds 'Effective AAC' qualification launched alongside the AAC lessons, enabling students to measure their own success and achievements. Informal 'chat' sessions were also timetabled for non-verbal students to give them opportunities to initiate conversations outside of the curriculum.

Students can now show progress in their linguistic, operational, social and strategic skills, whilst the school's AAC team are able to set clear and achievable targets that are then shared on a termly basis with the wider team and families, as well as the local authorities at the students' annual reviews.

The school provides the opportunity for families and carers to attend the AAC lessons and/or take part in one-to-one training sessions with the team, placing great importance on working with the students' community therapists and other agencies, such as respite care and holiday clubs, as required.

In addition to this the team run clinics held at the school to assess specialist equipment and seating, the results of which are fed back directly into the classroom setting.

For staff, regular whole-school training and AAC display boards give development opportunities for teaching assistants on access, programming and the skills required to use Aided Language Stimulation, and support staff shadow the speech and language therapist and technologist when working with students to develop their understanding of how students access their communication systems.

Outside of immediate school activity, the school works with, and is supported by local charities and organisations to ensure every student has the appropriate equipment they require, as well as organising its own internal fundraising.

The introduction of AAC as a curriculum subject has had a noticeable impact on the students' communication. Within two years, there was a clear improvement in the students' National Curriculum levels. Speaking and listening levels rose from 29% of AAC users making expected or better than expected progress to 100%. This was reflected in the City and Guilds Effective AAC qualification with

100% of students achieving their awards, matching formal qualifications achieved by their verbal peers.



Ingfield Manor School has been awarded the *Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Award* for prioritising AAC as part of the curriculum and allowing it to be studied as a subject in its own right. The opportunity the school has given to its students to be able to achieve a City and Guilds qualification is commendable, giving the students recognition for their learning whilst providing a long-lasting impact on their futures.