

Spotlight on Pendle Primary Academy

Pendle Primary Academy was the winner of the 2018 Primary School of the Year Award at the Shine a Light Awards.

Pendle Primary Academy in Lancashire places a high emphasis on its pupils' understanding and use of language.

The academy has invested in its own speech and language therapist (SLT), who works closely with parents, staff and NHS specialists to discuss children due to start reception. This ensures pupils receive the correct support in the crucial first years of their journey through full-time education. Where appropriate, children receive regular therapy sessions, and all pupils are assessed on entry to determine whether they might need group or one-to-one assistance.

Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) feature high on the school's priorities list, with staff receiving regular SLT training and support. The result is a truly inclusive approach to education, with signs and symbols in place to make sure pupils' wishes are known, used alongside visual timetables and special indoors 'Communication Spaces'. Parents and carers are also thoroughly included, and are invited to attend family activity sessions run by school staff in partnership with Lancashire Adult Learning.

Outside of their direct work with pupils, parents and staff alike, Pendle is an important member of Lancashire's SLT community, providing training to local schools and nurseries, and working with organisations such as the children's mental health charity, Place2Be. They have also formed strong connections with local paediatricians and occupational therapists.

As a result of their hard work and determination the school is now above the national average in reading, and prides itself on creating confident young communicators – a reputation which is spreading far and fast.

The Shine a Light judges were extremely impressed with Pendle's innovative approaches to SLCN, which include encouraging pupils to visit other schools and give presentations.

Judge Hilary Berry, Chair of Cheshire West and Chester Primary Heads' Association, commended Pendle's "whole-school approach", while Teresa Redmond, Lead Professional Advisor at The Communication Trust, was particularly pleased to see "the students' voice at the heart of what they are doing". She added that "their significant investment in hiring their own SLT showed great commitment to the children in their care."

For further information about the 2018 Shine a Light Awards visit www.shinealightawards.co.uk and follow us on Twitter #awards_SAL