

Spotlight on The London Bubble Theatre Company

The London Bubble Theatre Company was the winner of the 2019 SLCN Innovation of the Year Award at the Shine a Light Awards.

The London Bubble Theatre Company has created a highly effective and innovative drama intervention, which due to its amazing outcomes is now not only helping children in London, but also in Kent and Greater Manchester.

Speech Bubbles is a unique programme developed in partnership with speech and language therapists, education psychologists and school staff to provide a drama intervention that supports children in Key Stage 1 who have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

This fantastic school-based initiative places a drama practitioner alongside a teaching assistant to co-deliver weekly creative sessions. The sessions involve a series of repeated drama games and activities that promote both verbal and non-verbal communication. Each week, one child tells their own imagined story to an adult and the following week, that story is used as the content for the next drama session.

The programme was initially developed for schools in South London following the *2008 Bercow Review of Services for Children and Young People with Speech, Language and Communication Needs*. Following its great success, the programme was preceded by a three-year pilot project in eighteen schools in Lewisham and since then it's gone from strength to strength. This year Speech Bubbles is reaching 1,200 children across 65 schools in Greater London, Greater Manchester and Tunbridge Wells!

This initiative doesn't just develop pupil's speech, language and communication skills but it also benefits Teaching Assistants and drama practitioners through the Speech Bubbles CPD certified training programme. In 2017/18, the ninth year of Speech Bubbles, over 330 people attended training with 12 new drama practitioners having been trained for this academic year. In May 2019, London Bubble Theatre will be hosting two free trainings for staff working in primary education, sharing some of their drama techniques. More information can be found at www.speechbubbles.org.uk.

The London Bubble Theatre Company is taking part in the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and RSA Cultural Learning randomised control trial of Speech Bubbles across 26 schools. The trial will look at dual primary outcomes with a measure of children's communication and one of academic attainment.

This will be the third research study Speech Bubbles has been involved in, the first two providing great results. The University of East London noted that Speech Bubbles was a 'highly valuable intervention' due to the positive difference to children's speech, language and communication and the significant impact on children's spoken language, storytelling and social interaction abilities.

The Shine a Light judges were unanimous in their decision to award London Bubble Theatre Company the SLCN Innovation Award as the results speak for themselves. In 2017/18 Speech Bubbles helped 85% of children on the programme improve their learning, speaking and listening skills, 86% showed improved emotional behaviour and conduct behaviour with almost nine in 10 teachers reporting positive changes.

For further information about the 2019 Shine a Light Awards visit www.shinealightawards.co.uk and follow us on Twitter #awards_SAL