

Youth Music - Communicate Through Sound Project Term 2 Spring 2023 Report

Key

ML - Music Leader

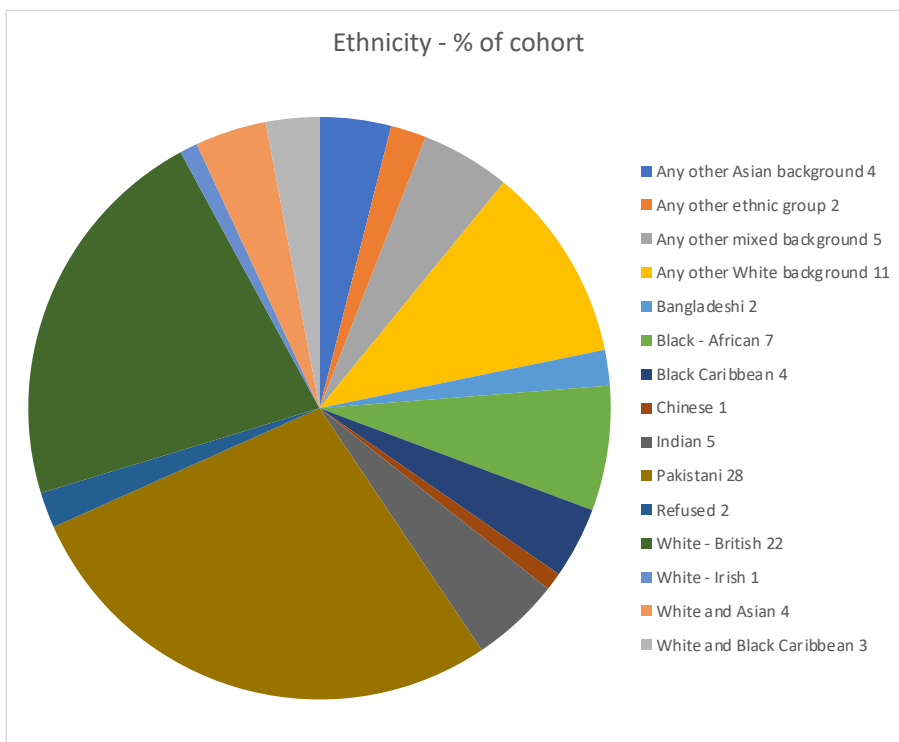
Aim: To improve communication skills and to help improve communication between the child and their wider family unit or social setting. All of the children taking part will have some form of communication delay/need.

Group sessions for Term 2 were held at Bowerdean Nursery School for 12 weeks. Children who attend the nursery are from diverse heritages and the school has a 50% capacity catering for children who are looked after and or have social, medical or educational needs.

Up to 40 children attended any one session supported by the nursery team.

At least 50% of the children had speech and language delay, communication difficulties or varying needs such as:

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD)
English as an additional language
Global Developmental Delay (GDD)
Visual Impairment (VI)
Selective Mutism



April 2023	Bowerdean	
Total Number of Pupils	101	
Children aged 3 & 4	87	86%
Children aged 2	14	14%
Funded 2s (% of chn 2)	9	64%
Girls	43	43%
Boys	58	57%
EAL	67	66%
Early Years Pupil Premium	7	7%
SEN	28	28%

The theme for term 2 was 'Insects' which included weekly sessions identifying a new insect each week. Each session followed the same musical structure that included:

- *Hello*: Using our voices to greet each other and make sounds
- *Warm Up*: Making sounds and using Makaton signs
- *Group Playing*: Playing untuned percussion or ukuleles with familiar sounds and words
- *Group Singing*: Various instruments including shakers, bells and chime bars to sing/ make sounds or communicate with
- *Moving to Music*: Moving with pom poms, dance ribbons, scarves and communicating with peers and family members
- *Drumming*: Playing with Djembes or claves to feel the beat and encourage vocal/ physical responses
- *Listening*: Playing chimes and triangles to tune in to quieter sounds and vocal responses
- *Goodbye*: Using our voices and sensory props to communicate with the group and each other that it's time for music to end

The children were all very excited each week to see the ML. They would often run to the door or go over to the music area whilst the ML was setting up. There was definitely eagerness, excitement and anticipation of what the ML would present each week.

The hello song was quickly picked up by a core group of children who would sing along with all the words. This in turn encouraged those children who had communication difficulties to pick out key words so they could join in with vocalising too. The majority of children would join in with actions and were eager to see what would come next.

All sessions were very Makaton led. Each new insect was presented with a visual aid (puppet) then sound, then Makaton sign. We would repeat the sign throughout each session and would recap on insects from previous weeks. The children readily copied the

signs each time and sometimes throughout sessions the ML would see them making the signs with their friends.

Before each section the ML would say and sign "It's time to play our instruments" or "It's time for dancing" etc. This enabled the children to understand that the structure was the same each week which the children were able to anticipate and get ready for in their own way.

The ML would also sign before each activity started "ready" and the children would simply respond "Yes" or nod their heads. This again allowed for constant interaction and opportunities for the children to communicate with the ML. This also ensured that the children were listening and following instructions.

The ML would also ask questions using Makaton about the insects e.g. "Are spiders fast or slow?" She would demonstrate the Makaton sign and the children would respond either with a movement or by copying the sign they choose.

Throughout sessions there were always opportunities for sound making either a sound the insect made or from the insects surroundings e.g. for a Bee the ML and children buzzed and flapped their wings and for a spider who liked the rain the ML and children patted their knees and made the sound pitter patter. This again provided different ways of communication either through sound or body movements.

Individual instruments also played a huge part in allowing the children to have sensory engagement and feedback which resulted in many communication responses. These included:

Laughter

Babble

"It sounds like rain" "oooooo" "ahhhh" "I like it" "My turn" "wow"

Wiggle, run around, or try to have another turn

Shout to a friend who was on the periphery "look at this"

Smile

Move away from sound

Push the sound away

By including multiple opportunities for the children to communicate with the ML this enabled the children to feel connected to the session, listened too and that their ideas were valued and implemented.

This in turn enabled the children to grow in confidence and improve their social skills interacting with the ML, resources, friends and key workers.

The team at Bowerdean Nursery were also a real asset to sessions. They were all willing to engage, use the Makaton signs and join in with sessions just as the children did. They also encouraged and actively supported those children who had varying needs to join in how they could. This enabled the children to feel comfortable and supported by those they know and trust.

There were 4 key children who were identified at the beginning of the term and observed by the ML.

These included:

- Child A - Selective Mutism
- Child B - Undiagnosed Autism
- Child C - Undiagnosed Autism
- Child D - Undiagnosed Autism

Child A - Selective Mutism

Child A stayed for all the sessions and watched with enthusiasm and excitement each week. She would sit quietly within the group but would play her instruments, dance and move around the space following instructions with ease. She communicated with the ML by offering eye or movement signals. For example the ML asked how she would like to play her instrument fast or slow. The ML showed her the Makaton signs and she would then copy the sign she wanted to choose.

The ML also offered hands which she could tap e.g. if you want to play fast tap this hand if you want to play slow tap this hand. When the ML would ask children to sing their names the ML would offer her a few different names and then she would smile or gesture when it was her name. A mixture of different methods worked really well and her communication with the ML was very strong and improved weekly.

Child B & C - Awaiting diagnosis for possible ASD

Child B and Child C would come in and out of sessions choosing to be on the periphery of sessions at times. They would often stand right next to the music leader and try to play her guitar or hold her hand or simply be next to her when present.

Throughout the sessions their interaction and engagement became stronger as they began to sit or stand with the group and join in with friends, move and dance around the space whilst keeping eye contact with the ML and towards the end of the term stayed for the majority of the session.

Child B - Awaiting diagnosis for possible ASD

Child B became quickly comfortable with the ML. She would run to greet her and be present for the beginning of most sessions. Child B was very social and liked to join in with her friends. As she moved in and out of the space at times she would sometimes become distressed and pull on the ML arm trying to get her to move to another space in the nursery to help her with a task in another room. Child B clearly connected with the ML and would often show her preferences to instruments by either saying "no" to the one she was offered or rummaging around in the box until she had the one she wanted. Child A was also very vocal often heard laughing, shouting and chatting to friends. She would often choose key words or phrases to enable her to get what she wanted e.g. "not that one", "I choose". Towards the end of sessions Child B was able to stay for longer periods of times, follow instructions, communicate her preferences and use Makaton signs.

Child C - Awaiting diagnosis for possible ASD

Child C was non verbal and offered sounds, gestures and movement to communicate with the ML. He would often stand right next to her and touch the guitar to get sensory feedback from the vibrations. At the beginning of sessions eye contact was minimal but towards the end of sessions Child C began to offer eye contact with the ML often smiling and touching her arm. He would often play his instrument either right next to or in front of the ML trying to maintain eye contact or offering vocal sounds to communicate. Gradually Child C would stay in the sessions for longer periods of time. He especially liked the movement section perhaps because this was very visual (using resources) and free. He would dance around energetically, smiling and making vocal sounds but at all times within a small space either around or next to the ML. Child C also enjoyed the sensory feedback from instruments the ML would showcase e.g. the large chimes. He would look at the instrument first, slowly reach to feel the different textures and patterns and then play the instrument in his own way. This at times was energetically, crashing instruments to make loud feedback sounds which he communicated to the ML that he enjoyed by smiling or touching her arm. Child C was aware of his peers he would sometimes stand close to one and reach for them but mainly his socialising skills during music sessions between him and the ML.

Child C - Awaiting diagnosis for possible ASD

Boy C was also very present during sessions. He would come with his coat and bag on to every session. I believe this was a comfort to him and something he tends to do throughout nursery life. He would often repeat key phrases that we sang regularly during sessions such as "Hey ho off we go", "Tidy up up up", "ready", "ahhhhhhh" (during drumming crescendo). He would stand and move constantly around the space but at all times keeping eye contact with ML and interacting with her but rarely distracted by his peers or interacting with them. He was intrigued each week to see what instruments the ML had to offer. He would communicate this was by either asking "What's next" or standing next to the bag and peering in.

Throughout the project it was interesting to observe the number of children with varying needs within the group. Some of the children had strong social skills, vocal interaction and could maintain and hold eye contact and could follow instructions easily. Some of the children choose to sit on the sidelines or be comforted by a key worker in order from them to participate within sessions. Some of the children participated in solo seemingly not aware of their peers. All of the children were able to communicate with the ML in some way which over the 12 weeks enabled them to grow in confidence and musical ability. It was also interesting to observe how a large group are able to work so well together despite varying needs and abilities. The group on many occasions performed and played as one playing instruments together and or listening or communicating with the ML. The children readily accept each others individual personality's, needs and differences. The nursery should be commended for allowing such free flowing during music sessions where children can choose when and how they want to participate as this enabled children to not feel distress which in turn had a positive effect on their learning.

What we have learnt so far

We would like to learn from Communicate Through Sound two year project:

- 1. What changes and impact our curriculum has on children displaying communication difficulties and document any differences or similarities that may be shown between different groups of children.*

As discussed in term 1 children with ASD need the freedom to move around the space, initiate a musical activity and be given the opportunity to express their thoughts, feelings and ideas and for these to be acted upon by the ML.

In term 2 we also need to allow children the freedom and choice to leave a session but also know that whenever they come back that they will be praised for their efforts and welcomed back.

Makaton, visual cues and a set structure really helps a large group to come together and work as one.

As in term 1 we need to support each child to communicate how they want to and within their needs. This may be with a language response, a vocal response, a movement, a sign a gesture or facial response.

In a large group setting try to give eye contact at some point during the session to all children attending so they feel included and that they have been identified by the ML that their ideas and thoughts are valid. Follow this through with communication responses if possible.

- 2. What range of skills a music leader needs in order to work with children with varying needs who display communication delay.*

A good understanding of Makaton and other visual aids

A structure and curriculum that works for a large group - to include enough resources for each child

To allow children to dip in and out of sessions

Work with the centres team to encourage participation and also find out more about children's needs

Term 1 skills needed

Patience - allowing plenty of time for children to respond.

Adaptability - push the curriculum in a new direction if the child or children move it in a different way.

A solid range of resources to support different needs - Lots of sound makers for the children to try and make common sounds/words with.

A curriculum that supports varying needs - different ways of repeating the same activity within each child's capability. Ensure each child can succeed and not fail.

To go with and listen to each child's response and accept that it may be different from the one the ML was looking for.

Praise - Rewarding children with praise has a positive impact on their health and wellbeing.

What format will CreateED's curriculum move in, in order to work with early years children with communication difficulties and how is this influenced and adapted by the children and their families input?

The nursery identified that these sessions were valuable to the setting allowing the children to engage with music in their own way. As a result the nursery have secured funding to provide the afternoon children to have music sessions with the ML once a week.

Feedback from nursery team:

"Amazing and thoroughly engaging, we loved the way the ML was happy to include everyone and the way she accepted children coming and going."

"The Makaton is brilliant. It's spurred us to use even more signing with the children. It was different every week and the range of instruments was wonderful."

"The ML is so flexible with the needs of our children and shows such warmth towards them. We love the enthusiasm of the sessions."

"We have ordered some similar instruments (egg shakers & rhythm sticks) to create our own class boxes to build further on the sessions as the children and staff have enjoyed it so much."

CreateED's events will be held in various venues across Buckinghamshire that provide an accessible environment for children & families to enjoy musical experiences together. Live musical experiences will help to strengthen communication skills by experiencing music together as a wider but inclusive community, develop social interactions and friendships and provide an opportunity to enjoy, be joyful and celebrate music together.

We held our second community live music event. This was performed by The Rymatones who perform rock n roll and pop songs.

The event was well attended with 50 tickets sold. The audience was made up of (i) families from the 'Communicate through sound project' (ii) families referred from family centres (iii) families whose children attend local SEND provision either pre-school, nurseries or primary schools (iv) children and young people from South Bucks Down's Syndrome Group (v) children and young people with additional needs who the ML had worked with on other projects.

The concert was a real highlight in the spring term. The band were fantastic and the families were instantly on their feet dancing and singing away to classic songs. The children were given a variety of instruments and resources to play along with. A couple of the parents delighted the audience with some rock n roll and jive moves. Everyone was on their feet and their were smiles, laughter and singing in abundance. These events are so vital in the community to provide escapism, community spirit and to have fun with friends and family.

Quote from member of the CreateED Advisory Board

“The CreateED Spring concert was delightful. So many happy faces and so much dancing. You couldn’t help get on your feet and join in. The children were captivated by the band and their thoughtful approach.”

A video made by the Bowerdean nursery all about the sessions can be found by clicking the link.

<https://bowerdean-nursery-school.primarysite.media/media/communicating-through-sound-and-music>

