

## Speech Bubbles 2015-2016

*I found a voice through making theatre and am proud to be the patron of Speech Bubbles, which helps hundreds of children to do the same.*

Mark Rylance



**The children and Teaching Assistant at St John's (Walworth) acting out a story**

**Report prepared by:**

**Adam Annand, Associate Director, Creative Learning  
London Bubble Theatre Co  
5 Elephant Lane  
SE16 4JD**

**London Bubble is a registered charity, no 264359**

## **Speech Bubbles 2015-2016**

This report is presented in five sections:

### **1. Monitoring**

Who we worked with

### **2. Assessment procedures and research findings**

The evidence of impact of that work

### **3. Developments**

Improvements that we have made this year

### **4. Forward plan**

An outline of how we plan to continue this work

### **5. Summing up**

## 1. Monitoring

This year saw another marked increase in the number of schools and children taking part in Speech Bubbles. This was mostly accounted for by the passion of our partner organisations in developing the number of schools they were working with and the continued enthusiasm of the schools near to London Bubble to continue booking the programme.

### Children and schools

- 42 schools
- 804 children

### Pupil profile

- 50% of children were reported as being eligible for Pupil Premium
- 59% were reported as EAL
- 33% were identified as having a statement or an education and health care plan. (Due to changes in the system this data may be less accurate this year)
- 65% were male
- 35% were female
- The vast majority of children completed the whole project; we have the following information on the children who didn't complete the project.

2 children were removed because the school felt referral was wrong.  
7 children changed school during the school year.

### Partners

- We have worked with 7 franchisees:  
M6, Peoplescape, Oldham Theatre Workshop, Face Front, Half Moon University of East London and Immediate Theatre
- Speech Bubbles was delivered in 10 Local Authority areas; Greenwich, Hackney, Lewisham, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Tower Hamlets, Enfield, Newham and Southwark.

## Training

- 6 whole day events
- 9 half day events
- Over 250 professionals and students attended. (Drama practitioners, storytellers, teachers, learning mentors, speech and language therapists, drama therapists, students.)

Speech Bubbles was delivered in **42 schools** with **804 children**.

By **8 organisations** in **10 local authorities**

And **over 250 professionals** attended training.

## 2. Assessment Procedures and Research Findings

We have continued with our pre and post project assessments across the Speech Bubbles project. The same procedures are used in schools where Speech Bubbles is delivered by London Bubble and where it is delivered by partner organisations. At the point of writing this report we had full data sets from approximately 50% of participating children. In the 2016/17 school year all data will be collected online and we are expecting nearer 75%.

### The Headline Figures

Across the project teacher pre and post project assessments indicated:

#### For Learning, Speaking and Listening

**87%** of referred children showed improvement

With **61%** having clear improvement – striking improvement

#### For Emotional Behaviour and Conduct Behaviour

**86%** of referred children showed improvement

With **56%** having clear improvement – striking improvement

### Teacher Comments

Analysis of the teachers pre and post project comments reveals that they report **86%** of referred children making improvement and of those **61%** showed clear improvement – striking improvement.

The following comments have been taken from the teacher's end of year reporting.

*XXX is now able to communicate his feelings using words rather than having a tantrum. His concentration has also improved. He is now able to use eye*

contact when communicating with others but he still needs reminding. His responses to questions are much more thoughtful and appropriate

*XXX's confidence has grown and grown and it has been a delight to watch. Her confidence and self-esteem have blossomed and this has had a positive impact across all her areas of learning. She is much more assertive in class and always participates actively.*

*xxx's confidence has soared since Speech Bubbles :) He brings in writing he has done at home and 'reads' it to the class. Thank you!*

Whilst it is fantastic to be reporting the good news of the successes of the project it also important to keep an eye on the information available about where children haven't shown significant progress.

### **No Change**

Across the project teachers comments reported that 1% of children slipped back and 14% of children showed no change. We have looked closely at the reporting of these children to see if there is any learning that could be drawn out to improve the project.

Of those that slipped back or showed no change:

- 43% Referred with significant emotional and behavioural needs

These were mostly children in specialist settings, where it is expected that progress will be slower and more difficult to achieve.

**Action:** We will continue to work closely with staff in settings with high numbers of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. At New Woodlands we saw particular progress when we limited the group to children who were motivated by the drama, the school are keen to build on this.

- 17% Showed improvement in the session but it hadn't transferred to class.

*"xxx has really developed his expressive and receptive (and attentive!) abilities during SB sessions. He loves coming each week, has improved relationships with peers as a result. However, as he is a very low level child still struggling day to day with literacy and numeracy, it may take some time for his confidence to really develop in the classroom setting."*

**Action:** We have plans to improve the communication with class teachers in the 16/17 school year. We will be introducing a simple note to teachers that can be used by Speech Bubbles practitioners to inform them of individual children's progress or on-going struggles in the sessions. The note system

can also be used to ask teachers for additional information about individual children.

- 17% Referred with very low confidence

This is in light of the overwhelming number of children referred with low confidence showing significant improvement.

*xxx's improved self-confidence and expressive skills found in SB are slowly and gradually coming through into the classroom. A shy boy by nature, he requires a lot of encouragement and support to rally come out of himself"*

- 9% Are selective mutes

Again this needs to be read in light of the fact that many children are referred to the programme with very limited communication with peers and adults. Whilst a few didn't demonstrate change back in class, many more were reported as making improvements.

*Before Communicates with adults not peers. Doesn't listen in class.*

*After No significant change - has referred to SALT*

More commonly comments for selectively mute children are very positive.

*Before xxx selective mute who doesn't speak to staff or children - parents says he speaks at home - mouths along to the group - no words nods or shakes head. Does smile sometimes - knows what to do but won't verbalise*

*After Now speaking to both adults and peers. Next step will be for him to initiate talking to staff more when he needs help of doesn't understand.*

*Before Rarely speaks, very limited vocabulary*

*After Far more vocal with adults and peers.*

9% Had significant life changes that affected their progress

5% Had very low attendance

## Impact on Academic Attainment – What do we Know?

Speech Bubbles is an intervention that supports children's communication and wellbeing, to date we have had anecdotal evidence that it also supports progress in literacy. The 2015/2016 school year was a particularly challenging one for all teachers with unique challenges for KS1 teachers in relation to the curriculum, the tests and changes to teacher assessment requirements. In that context teachers reported a much smaller degree of change in the children referred to Speech Bubbles than in previous years.

### Pre project

80% of children were reported as working below AET

### Post project

67% of children were reported as still working below AET

We are adapting our assessment materials for the 16/17 school year to reflect the new teacher assessment classifications.

## Alternative Assessments

In two settings we did not use the pre and post assessments:

- Brent Knoll

Brent Knoll is a Special School where we have an excellent on-going relationship. The class teacher provided the following testimony.

*We have seen all children make outstanding progress in terms of their receptive and expressive communication and their ability to: listen, take part and participate. Concentration, focus, and positive relationships can be a challenge for my class, however, they all showed developments in these areas throughout the Speech Bubbles sessions. The sessions have shown an improvement among the class in terms of behaviour, social interaction, and well-being.*

- New Woodlands

New Woodlands is a school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, we have worked there in partnership with the Lewisham NHS Speech and Language Therapy team. The Speech and Language Therapists provide a report based on their own clinical assessments.

This year they focussed on participation using an adaptation of Therapy Outcome Measures for Rehabilitation Professionals (Enderby and John 2015) (TOMs). Using the TOMs model, children were rated using a scale of 0-5, on five areas integral to participation:

- Making choices/impulsivity/self-control
- Integration into activity
- Confidence
- Self-awareness
- Following instructions

'Participation' Outcome:

- A general improvement in all areas for the majority of children could be seen across the year. (One child maintained full 'Participation' criteria throughout the year.) However, the emotional state of any one of the children, on any day continued to have a notable impact on that child's ability to 'participate' on that day.
- Improved 'participation' was expressed in increased creativity in the acting and other activities of the children.

(Vicky Slaughter; Speech and Language Therapist)

### 3. Developments

The developments for Speech Bubbles over the 2015/16 academic year have been focussed on maintaining the quality of the delivery of the project in the schools that are up and running and building the infrastructure and thinking needed to successfully scale up the programme.

In order to achieve this we have:

- Appointed a Speech Bubbles Coordinator. This role is essential in supporting the Associate Director to manage the network of relationships with practitioners, local schools and franchisees.
- Trialled the online monitoring and evaluation system. This will be used by all schools and franchisees next year.
- Developed a range of marketing resources to support franchisees to attract schools to the project. This includes a new partly animated film. <http://www.speechbubbles.org.uk>. The film was developed with the support of Clare Davis-Jones, Speech and Language Therapist and Advisory Board member.



- Continued to work with International Centre for Social Franchising (ICSF) to refine the franchise model. They have invited us to join a group of 10 organisations that are leading the way in social replication.
- Actively raised the profile of the project through social media, peer networks, presenting at events<sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup>and publishing blogs<sup>3</sup>.
- Joined the Lloyds Bank/School for Social Entrepreneurs scale up programme. This has been a fantastic opportunity to develop our knowledge, networks and thinking around replication.

#### 4. Forward plan

As we go into the 2016-17 academic year we have:

**14 schools** signed up in Southwark, Lewisham and Greenwich.

8 partners delivering the project in **36 schools** in Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Newham, Enfield, Manchester, Rochdale and Oldham. This includes our latest franchise partner North West Drama Services.

We are expecting to reach **1000 children** referred with a communication need.

In order to continue the successful scaling up of Speech Bubbles we need to:

- Complete the comparison group study and cost benefit analysis.

This is on schedule and we will have an interim report available in October 2016.

- Reach more schools in South London

We will be expanding our marketing to reach schools in Lambeth. We have support from a Senior Commissioner in the borough and have already had some interest from schools. Lambeth is our neighbouring borough and its schools are easy for our practitioners to reach.

- Expand our franchise network.

In discussion with potential franchisees we have identified some barriers to joining the network, especially in semi-urban or rural areas. These areas may have significant need but lack the density of schools that might make the

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ontheedge2016.com/delegates/symposium/symposium-timetable/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.inspiringcuriosity.co.uk/inspiring-curiosity-conference/>

<sup>3</sup> [http://peoplemaketheatre.blogspot.co.uk/2016\\_03\\_01\\_archive.html](http://peoplemaketheatre.blogspot.co.uk/2016_03_01_archive.html)

franchise sustainable. With ICSF we are developing a lighter touch franchise model that will work in those areas.

We have a list of 11 active enquiries and will be running an awareness raising event in Bristol in October.

## 5. Summing up

Schools continue to report a squeeze in budgets and face an ever increasing pressure to focus resources on direct academic achievement. Arts organisations likewise are finding that all funding avenues are over-subscribed and shrinking. In that context Speech Bubbles is continuing to grow, just a little slower than predicted, and it continues to make a significant difference to children referred with a communication need.

We have been shortlisted for a prestigious entrepreneur award which will be decided by a public vote. Just being shortlisted for the award will bring significant new attention to the programme. All announcements of the award are embargoed until the 3<sup>rd</sup> October.

We have worked hard to attract new franchisees and expect the franchise network to grow in the year ahead.