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1. What is *Primary Talk*?

Primary Talk is an evidence-based practical programme to help schools support children's speech, language and communication. It gives staff confidence to identify children with language difficulties and provide appropriate class-based support.

Primary Talk provides a framework for a whole school approach to ensure children's speech, language and communication skills are developed and prioritised in every aspect of school life. By doing this, children are more engaged with learning.

Primary Talk has two elements:

- Training
- School Toolkit (with optional Award)

These can be supported by mentoring and advisory support.

Primary Talk is a flexible package available to local authorities, multi-academy trusts, clusters or individual schools and academies. It can be implemented according to what schools need; as a full package or with elements available individually. It can be delivered directly by an I CAN advisor or by a local I CAN licensed tutor/mentor.

2. Does it work? What evidence is there to show it works?

Yes it does. *Primary Talk* training was piloted in Somerset, Bradford and Walsall from the beginning of 2008 to March 2009. We ran the programme in 80 schools. An independent evaluation was carried out by Sheffield University. They found that *Primary Talk* had a significant impact on the school environment. Compared to other schools, the research team found that in *Primary Talk* schools:

- Staff used significantly more strategies to support children's communication
- There was a highly significant change in the amount that lesson planning differentiated for children's speech, language and communication needs
- Communication skills were more frequently taught
- Staff grew noticeably in their confidence to monitor speech, language and communication.

Headteachers and staff found *Primary Talk* a valuable tool with which to engage staff in the speaking and listening curriculum and provide a communication supportive environment to meet the needs of all children.

In a follow up survey of pilot school, staff reported a positive impact on pupils' communication skills, on their engagement in learning and their behaviour.

"There is a culture of talking in the school that means no classroom is silent."

Primary Talk at Ditchat Primary School, Shepton Mallet

Collecting evidence is ongoing and we continue to gather case studies from schools we work with.

Primary Talk training was further evaluated in 2015 to explore its impact on children's communication skills. This small scale study showed that there was a statistically significant increase in teachers' perceptions of children's level of engagement in class activities, and an increase in teachers' rating of impact on practice. The report for this study can be found [here](#).

3. Who needs to be responsible for *Primary Talk* in school?

I CAN recommends that each school appoints a *Primary Talk* co-ordinator who can ensure that a joined up approach is maintained within the school by influencing practice, monitoring development and liaising with senior leadership. *Primary Talk* has been shown to be particularly effective when actively led and supported by the school senior leadership team. It may also help to organise a small working group to support the *Primary Talk* co-ordinator. This is especially the case for working with the School Toolkit and may also help for developments following on from the training.

4. Which children will benefit?

All children can benefit from *Primary Talk*. Improving children's spoken language skills improves their self esteem, educational attainment and behavioural and emotional development which in turn leads to greater attainment and better life outcomes. For the 50% of children who may have poor language skills on school entry, *Primary Talk* can provide the kind of support they need to catch up with their peers.

5. How does *Primary Talk* involve parents?

Primary Talk training highlights ways in which school and parents can work in partnership. Schools using the *Primary Talk* School Toolkit will review and develop how they work with parents / carers.

TRAINING

6. Does I CAN provide training to support teachers?

Yes, *Primary Talk* training is a whole school training package at Supportive and Enhanced levels for staff working with children aged 5-11. It aims to increase staff knowledge and skills – not only their understanding of the importance of speech, language and communication in primary schools but also highlighting the difficulties those children with language difficulties experience in accessing the curriculum.

It gives staff the skills they need to identify a child who is struggling with speech, language and communication as early as possible *and* provides practical ideas of how all school staff can make a difference.

It includes follow-up activities and a personal action plan to help embed learning and make real changes to practice.

Supportive level training equips the school to support all children's communication development and identify those with difficulties. Staff receive copies of the *Talking Strategies* resource which help to embed strategies in everyday teaching activities across the curriculum.

Enhanced level training helps develop staff knowledge and understanding of speech, language and communication beyond the Supportive level and ensures staff not only identify those children who may need extra support but gives them ideas and strategies to provide that support.

7. Is there any ongoing support?

Yes. If you attend an I CAN training course ongoing e-mail and telephone support is available. I CAN Advisors are also available (subject to contract) to provide onsite support and mentoring.

The I CAN Help Enquiry Service is also available to provide free expert information to parents and practitioners about speech, language and communication. I CAN Speech and Language Therapists can help – whether you would like to check communication milestones or find out how to support a child with a known speech, language and communication need.

8. How much will it cost?

Delivery from I CAN:

Please contact primarytalk@ican.org.uk 0207 843 2515 for details.

We also have a network of I CAN licensed tutors and mentors who are trained to deliver Primary Talk training and/or support schools with the School Toolkit. We can put you in touch with a licensee (if available in your area) who you should contact for details of their costs. Alternatively you can look [here](#) to see if there is a suitably trained licensee near you.

9. What do I get?

Both Supportive and Enhanced training are 1 day training courses consisting of three sessions. Some licensed tutors may be able to deliver the sessions as twilights.

At Supportive level the focus is on introducing speech, language and communication; supportive strategies for the whole school and what to look out for when children are struggling.

Enhanced level covers further detail of speech, language and communication; the range of speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) experienced by children and focused strategies and additional ways of supporting children with SLCN.

Both courses build skills and competences at Universal and Enhanced Stages (respectively) as detailed in the Speech, language and Communication Framework

www.slcframework.org.uk

At both levels each participant gets a Participant Book that includes a range of tools to support school speech, language and communication development including *What's Typical Talk* – a poster showing typical language development from 4 – 11 years. At Supportive level staff receive a *Talking Strategies* resource box to enable them to apply the strategies learnt into classroom practice.

All I CAN training courses are delivered at a time and venue to suit you, and can be delivered to single schools or clusters of schools (to share costs).

10. Can we buy training without the Primary Talk School Toolkit?

Yes. *Primary Talk* is flexible. Both elements are available individually or as a package.

For full details of Primary Talk Training courses see the I CAN website at:

www.ican.org.uk/primarytalk

SCHOOL TOOLKIT

11. So how does the Award work?

The *Primary Talk* School Award is an optional extra when working with the School Toolkit. To achieve the Award, the school must work with an I CAN advisor or I CAN licensed mentor and submit specific evidence to an I CAN Award panel. The panel must be satisfied that the evidence meets the required standards of good practice.

The School Toolkit provides an audit tool, guidance documents, templates and additional information to support schools in the process of developing provision and, if they choose, working towards the Award.

When awarded *Primary Talk* School status lasts for three years, subject to an annual review after the 1st and 2nd years.

12. What does the school get from being awarded *Primary Talk* School status?

The *Primary Talk* School Award is a nationally recognised award demonstrating that a school is meeting the communication needs of its children. Quality assurance is provided by the rigorous monitoring process within I CAN.

The Award can be made Supportive (universal) or Enhanced (targeted) Level.

13. How much will it cost?

Costs vary depending on the amount of mentoring support provided and whether the mentoring is provided by an I CAN advisor or licensed mentor.

15. What happens if we don't gain the Award?

In the event of a school not providing sufficient evidence, the awarding panel may decide to defer the Award. An action plan should be put in place and performance improved so that the necessary results can be achieved. The action plan should be based on the award panel report which will also recommend a maximum time for re-submission of evidence for the Award.

The panel and school will agree a date for resubmission of the evidence. This date must be within six months of the original Award panel meeting.

16. Will we have to pay again if we don't gain the Award first time around?

No, not if you are able to put the action plan into place within 6 months. Your mentor will be able to support you with this.

17. What happens after 3 years when the Award runs out?

Schools can apply for a new Award. The process and costs are the same. Much can happen in three years and despite the interim reviews, this is a good time to take a step back and a fresh look at practice within school.

18. Can we have the Toolkit / Award without buying the training?

Yes. *Primary Talk* is flexible. Both elements are available individually or as a package.

19. Can different areas in the school be awarded at different levels?

No. *Primary Talk* is a whole school approach. It is important that the framework has everyone working to the same level.

For full details of *Primary Talk* School Toolkit and optional Award see the I CAN website [here](#).

MENTORING

20. What kind of mentoring help can you provide?

I CAN Advisors are available to provide schools with mentoring and support for following up from training or developing practice and evidence when working towards the School Award.

We also have a network of I CAN licensed tutors and mentors who are trained to deliver Primary Talk training and/or support schools with the School Toolkit. We can put you in touch with a licensee (if available in your area) who you should contact for details of their costs. Alternatively you can look [here](#) to see if there is a suitably trained licensee near you.

21. What does it cost?

For full details of *Primary Talk* mentoring please contact info@ican.org.uk

22. Can we buy the mentoring without wanting to go for the School Award?

Yes. *Primary Talk* is flexible. All elements are available individually or as a full package. Schools should explore the possibility of commissioning mentor support through a *Primary Talk* licensed mentor.

To find out more about any aspect of Primary Talk:

- www.ican.org.uk/primarytalk

If you have any further questions:

@ primarytalk@ican.org.uk

☎ 0207 843 2515