

SCHOOL CASE STUDY:

Commissioning Speech, Language and Communication Services

AN EXAMPLE OF COMMISSIONING PRACTICE IN SCHOOLS



ROLE: INCLUSION MANAGER (PRIMARY SCHOOL)

What was commissioned?

We commissioned an SLT to come in twice a week to the school. She has offered a range of services including helping us to build a provision map, screening the reception class using Wellcomm, training all EYFS staff to create a communication friendly environment, small group work with children and training staff on specific interventions. Her work has also extended to supporting the school in parent meetings to inform parents of any additional support that their child is receiving.

What process did you use?

When I started at the school I found that there was no specific SLT support offered and after assessing the reception class, it was clear that there was a need for this. So I presented the need to the Head Teacher and explained the impact that buying an SLT in could have on students and staff in the school (including links to OFSTED). Once the Head teacher had approved, I contacted a private SLT company at which I knew a SLT that I had previously worked with when she was training. After specifically requesting her time, she started with us soon after.

How has it gone?

She has been a huge help for the school. We have monitored her work with children at the school by monitoring their progression to check that there has been a positive effect. We have also monitored the effect of training on staff by using staff surveys as well as observing staff member's use of approaches and strategies that she has recommended.

A big perk of the SLT company that we have gone for is how flexible they are and their access to additional resources that they are willing to share with schools buying in their services.

What have you learned from the commissioning process?

Having known the SLT was a bonus for me however what I have learned since buying in her services at the school, is the worth of knowing the extent of what an SLT can offer and what the company package is. I think I've also learned how important it is for both sides (school and SLT) to be open to trying approaches that might not be so familiar to them. I've found that sometimes strategies that the commissioned SLT has recommended to class teachers have required providing extra support internally to help teachers incorporate them into their lessons.

Please Note:

This case study was developed from an interview with schools staff **BEFORE** TCT's 'One Stop Guide' for schools commissioning speech and language therapy services was written. Its inclusion is to demonstrate an example of schools commissioning practice. It does not provide an example of how practice may/ should look after using TCT's 'One Stop Guide'.

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ROLE: SENCO, PRIMARY SCHOOL

What was commissioned?

We were looking for a speech and language therapist (SLT) to supplement our core SLT provision and existing support from the SENCO in our school.

What process did you use?

A private SLT service was recommended to us by our Inclusion Network Lead after having good experience of working with them in another school. We contacted them directly to check whether they could meet our need and whether they had capacity.

How has it gone?

The SLT has worked well within our school; we monitor her work by monitoring progress within the classroom as well as more general measures such as pupil attendance. The SLT also provides an annual report to share her progress.

What have you learned from the commissioning process?

The commissioned SLT was inducted by a member of our school senior leadership team and the SENCO. We have a graduated response chart for each year group, so we used this to talk them through what the school already offered. For example the TA runs a group support session that was useful for the SLT to be aware of. We also used this time to run through general school policies that would be good for them to consider when working with pupils. The SLT found having this information before planning her sessions for pupils really helpful.

In hindsight another learning for us was that it that would have been good to have considered at an early stage the commissioned SLT's supervision needs, and their own company's policies that they had a requirement to adhere to eg consent and data protection. The latter would have been particularly helpful when managing expectations of teachers with how much of an individual pupil's case notes they could access.

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The Communication Trust
Every child understood

ROLE: SPECIALIST TEACHER (SECONDARY SCHOOL)

What was commissioned?

We were looking for a speech language therapist (SLT) to deliver services to our special support class for students with literacy and language needs. All students in this special support class had statements or Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) and were allocated places through Local Authority admissions. Most had speech language and communication support (SLC) as part of their provision.

What process did you use?

Due to time constraints we utilised our Local Authority (LA) speech and language service to find an SLT that was available. We commissioned this SLT's time to deliver direct intervention for students and advice to staff. In addition the school has an allocation of time from the same Local Authority SLT service for the main school caseload.

How has it gone?

The SLT works with students in our Specialist Support Centre during the time that we commission. She comes in half a day per week to both deliver direct intervention for students and accompanying administration. Using the commissioned time to do both can be a challenge for the SLT and the school, as it does result in a small proportion of contact time with students.

Progress against SLT targets is monitored by the SLT and fed back to the SENCO. Assessing impact of the intervention against functional language skills in the curriculum and in learning is harder.

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What have you learned from the commissioning process?

If we had more time and the freedom to put a commissioning advertisement out to tender, we would have factored in experience of working within a mainstream school and the KS 3/4 curriculum when looking for an SLT. We've found this to be a challenge as the SLT that we've commissioned is more familiar with specialist settings and clinic based work, so does not work in the classrooms alongside subject teachers so her recommendations and targets are not always closely enough linked to the development of skills in the context of the curriculum. Ideally we would have liked the SLT to observe in class and work alongside subject teachers, to develop staff understanding and expertise, and improve functional skills in the learning environment.

Ideally I would like to see schools more involved and working collaboratively with Local Authority SLT services in training, for example training on school processes and tips on working within a classroom environment. This would have a positive long term effect on outputs from the SLT and relations with school staff.

With regards to Local Authorities (LA), our LA commissions a consultative monitoring service for SLTs to work in mainstream schools. There are increasing numbers of pupils/ students with complex SLCN in mainstream schools who require direct and specialist interventions as a provision in their statement/ EHCP and this cannot be met from a consultative monitoring service. So I would like to see Local Authorities carrying out more detailed audit of the caseload to inform commissioning, ensuring that the commissioned service had the capacity to deliver specialist interventions as well as more general consultative services.