

Case study for *What Works*

This case study contains details provided by a practitioner of how he or she has used the named intervention with specific children. If you would like to provide a case study please use the template provided on the What Works website.



Title of intervention

Colourful Semantics

Context

This intervention is carried out regularly by the Speech and Language Therapist in a Special School setting as well as being used by teachers and teaching assistants in the classroom across a variety of lessons.

Children

Colourful Semantics is being used during 1:1 sessions with a Speech and Language Therapist to develop the receptive and expressive language skills of pupils within our school of varying ages who present with a range of additional needs e.g. Down Syndrome, ASD, Global Developmental Delay, Hearing Impairment. Many of the pupils who are receiving this intervention present with delayed/disordered expressive language and many also struggle to understand/answer wh-questions.

Adults

The school's Speech and Language Therapist delivers this intervention on a 1:1 basis. Frequency of sessions per week depends on the needs of each child, however generally this is between 1-3 times weekly. Staff have also received training on Colourful Semantics and are supported by the school's Speech and Language Therapist to use Colourful Semantics in the classroom to support generalisation.

Practicalities

Colourful Semantics is used in 1:1 therapy sessions during structured activities. Depending on the child, different sentence strips are used showing 'Word and Symbol', 'Word only' and once familiar with what the colours represent, 'Colour Only'. 'Who' is introduced first and we talk about who is in each picture; next moving on to 'what doing', 'what' and 'where' (being creative in how this is done e.g. talking about 'who' is in each classroom, playing action games for 'what doing' etc.). When a child shows understanding of each colour and what it represents, they are supported to use the Colourful Semantics sentence strip to describe what is happening in pictures or photos that are of interest to them, for example, photos from home, school trips or activities in the classroom. The sentence is always modelled back, especially if smaller grammatical words are missed out e.g. "Molly **is** playing football **on the** beach". Following whole-school training, teachers and teaching assistants have been using Colourful Semantics in class during English, for weekend recounts, talking about feelings and to support learning of new vocabulary by talking about what they are doing during practical subjects e.g. Food Technology - "I am chopping a carrot" or "Sam is grating cheese".

Outcomes for children

Re-assessment has shown progress in pupils' expressive language; for example, using a wider range of verbs, showing improved grammatical structure and

lengthier phrases and sentences. Pupils are supported to contribute verbally more often in class, we have seen pupils demonstrating sound understanding of 'who', 'what', 'where' and 'when' questions and staff have reported certain pupils using lengthier phrases in their spontaneous language.

Top tips

- **Using pictures and photos that a child is interested in makes this intervention functional and increases motivation.**
- **Showing relevant examples and giving specific ideas during whole-school staff training built practitioners' confidence and had a positive impact on carryover of the approach into lessons.**
- **Be prepared with resources needed! It becomes very tricky when the 'who' word or 'what doing' word that is needed for the photo or activity isn't there!**
- **When introducing a new colour to represent a new element e.g. 'what like' words or 'when' words, focus on them in isolation first before adding them into the sentence strip.**
- **Be creative! It is a very versatile approach that can be used in many different activities and situations to support development of expressive language.**