

Youth Music - Communicate Through Sound Project **Term 4 Winter 2023 Report**

Key

ML - Music Leader

ASC - Autism spectrum condition

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 4 were held at Holtspur Pre-School for 12 weeks. The children we worked with had speech and language delay, emotional difficulties, autism spectrum condition (ASC) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and or undiagnosed ASD/ADHD. We worked with up to 18 children for each session.

The theme for term 3 was 'Animals' which included weekly sessions focusing on different animals in different habitats e.g. a lion in the jungle

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 at Holtspur Pre-School were a mixed group of children who could use speech and language and communication skills effectively alongside a 4-5 of their peers who had speech and language delay, emotional difficulties, found music sessions challenging and had diagnosed and undiagnosed ASC and ADHD.

The children quickly became familiar with the structure of the session and would imitate the ML with welcome signs and greetings including “It’s time for music (sign), singing (sign) and dancing (sign).

The children enjoyed meeting new animals each week, learning their signs and imitating the animals sound. The ML would often pretend to forget what sound the animal made to further the use of sound making and communication. The use of humour is an effective tool that motivates children to respond whether that be verbally, with actions or signs.

The hello song was action led creating time and space for the children to move various body parts and also for them to suggest their own body parts to move. Again this created further ways to encourage the children to communicate with the ML.

The warm up songs are an important part of enabling the children to feel comfortable in the sessions. Often humour led these also provide opportunities for visual communication using body language, gestures and facial expressions.

Song:

Skideramerink a dink a dink (roll arms)

Skideramerink a do (roll arms)

I love you (using Makaton signs)

O (This is intake of breath and hands cover mouth as though in shock)

The children found the song incredibly funny and sang the words with ease, they anticipated and were excited for the intake of breath section which included lots of shocked and happy facial expressions and eye contact with the ML.

The group instrumental song this term was “Down by the Bay”.

Song:

Down by the bay

Where the watermelon grow

Back to my home

I dare not go

For if I did

My mother would say

Did you ever see a FROG (ribbit sounds) walking a DOG (woof sounds)

Down by the bay

The second from last line was changed weekly introducing new animals each week providing opportunities for exploring new animals and their sounds.

To initiate the activity the ML would use a puppet for the lead animal in the song e.g. Frog. The ML would ask the children what animal it was and what sound it made. Further the ML would then sing the part of the song e.g. Frog (ribbit) walking a Dog (woof) using sounds, signs and or actions.

By demonstrating these parts first the children began to understand their turn taking role. The ML would leave pauses in this section and the children would reply with sounds, actions or signs whilst also playing their musical instruments. The children again enjoyed the anticipation of waiting for this section in the song where they could shout out and lead the song.

The singing section of the lesson plan also enabled the children to communicate with the ML and make sounds or verbalise within their needs.

This section relied mainly on mainstream nursery rhymes that the ML presumed the children would know e.g. incy spider and 12345. This enabled all children to try and recall words and phrases and join in with singing with as many words as they could remember.

There were 3 key children who were identified at the beginning of the term and observed by the ML.

These included:

Child A - Diagnosed ASC

Child B - Undiagnosed ASC

Child C - Speech and Language Difficulties

Child A - Diagnosed ASD

Child A found group music sessions challenging to begin with. The unfamiliarity, sounds and sensory overload initially was difficult for him to process. Child A would lie down, cry and thrash around and only had brief movements of calm.

However after 2 weeks we started to see a changes as Child A became curious of the ML and her bag. He would often come over as the ML was setting up and peer into the bag. His curiosity grew and he would reach into the bag to see what he could find. The ML did not discourage Child A and allowed him to get instruments out of her bag as it was encouraging him to feel comfortable.

The ML suggested small 15min 1-1 sessions with Child A after group sessions. Child A was curious about different instruments listening to the sounds and then quickly moving on to the next one. He would often line up instruments in groups such as the drums and chime bars as these were instruments he could play with a beater or bells and shakers as these he could play with, with his hands.

The 1-1 sessions enabled Child A to feel more comfortable with the ML which in turn had a positive impact on his participation in group sessions. Each week his progress was acknowledged as he began to sit with the group for small sections of the session. He was always looking at the ML for what instrument he would be given and or what sound the ML would make which intrigued him.

By the end of the term Child A participated for majority of the session with the group. He would not necessarily engage with his peers but his connection with the ML was strong and would look to her as what to do next. Child A's 1-1 sessions also progressed as he began to trust and form a relationship with the ML. He started to make vocal sounds and initiate turn taking by hitting his chest and chanting h h h which meant his turn. The ML repeated the gesture and hit her own chest suggesting it was her turn. Child A enjoyed this social interaction and it enabled the music leader to use a variety of instruments allowing for intensive interaction activities.

Child A also began to sustain his interest in instruments and explore them for longer periods of time which increased his focus and attention. Child A particularly enjoyed the harmonica and recorder where the music leader would make a sound and he would try to copy or make a similar sound. Without the need for words the ML and Child A were able to communicate effectively which often led to moments of humour, eye contact, turn taking and enjoying making music together.

Child A began to look forward to each 1-1 session often waiting by the ML bag after group music anticipating his turn. Child A was calm, focussed, motivated and able to participate how he wanted too which enabled him to also develop his communication and social skills as well as his clear enthusiasm and love of music.

Child B - Undiagnosed ASD

Child B was an observer for most of the group music sessions. He would actively be part of the group and watch and observe the ML with interest. He joined in all activities with movements, playing instruments but chose to only verbally say his name.

Child B instead liked to watch, participate how he wanted too and take in all the information rather than verbally participate.

Child B would often seek out eye contact with the ML and smile indicating he was having fun and enjoying the activities.

Child B particularly enjoyed the movement sections and would often make up his own moves and move freely to the music using sensory props.

Child C - Speech and language difficulties

Child C initially did not like to sit in the music area with the rest of her peers. She chose to sit almost behind the music leader or to one side.

Child C appeared anxious about new experiences and would often pull her legs into her chest as though protecting herself from the ML and activities.

Slowly throughout the weeks Child C became more confident with the structure of music sessions. She started by joining the group in week 4 but chose to sit apart from her peers and explored the musical instruments independently.

By week 5 she was able to verbalise her name and by week 7 she was an active member of the group participating in group activities, playing instruments independently and singing along to songs.

Child C needed time, space and support in order for her to feel comfortable in the sessions. By not asking her to conform like her peers and allowing her to process the information in her own way she became a confident music maker who had fun and enjoyed musical engagement.

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.*

Term 1, 2 & 3 - Visual cues for example puppets or pecs enable children to clearly identify an animal or object without the feeling pressure to initially understand a sign or word. These visual cues when working with a mixed ability group help all children to communicate in any way that they can. Often for children with communication delay this may be with sounds but as the sessions progress this can develop into signs and words. Throughout the project the use of visual cues has been a very clear similarity that impacts on communication responses.

Term 4 - Using gestures and facial expressions are important tools to communicate without the need for words or sound. Following a child's lead on how they wish to communicate open up's access into their word and in turn creates a trusting and respectful partnership.

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

Listening to the children's thoughts and ideas

Allowing extra time for vocal responses

Allowing time for 1-1 interactions

Supporting children to participate anywhere in the room that they feel comfortable and are able to engage

Looking for and understanding each child's different ways of communicating or responding to musical activities.

Term 1, 2 & 3 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.

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 3 skills needed

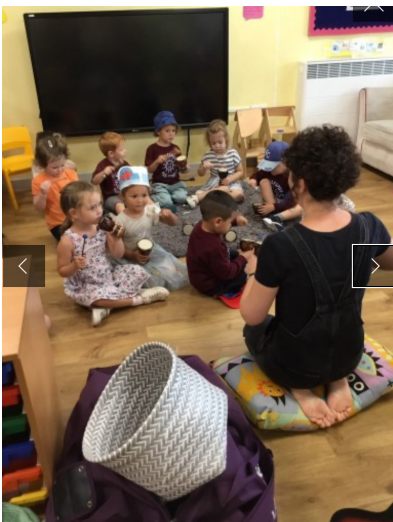
Time and space for processing information

Child led activities help to create trust and respect
Eye contact and praise for each child in the group
Repetitive tidy up songs to encourage independence, social skills (navigating others) and to understand that an activity has finished

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?

Throughout the project so far there have been opportunities with instruments and sensory resources to work on focussed interaction and attention. We aim to explore this method further in terms 4, 5 & 6. For ASD and ADHD children the method of "bucket time" or equivalent with instrumental resources helps the children to connect, listen and respond.

Observations and feedback from Holtspur Pre-School



“The music leader worked with a group of Pre-school children ranging from 2 years to 4 years once a week for the Autumn term. After completing the term the children had learnt the rules and routines of the session and by the end all of the children were taking part. The ML kept the children engaged and the children who initially found the sessions challenging made solid progress. This has helped us identify children who respond to music which in turn has helped us plan appropriate activities and has shown staff how to engage using different resources and musical instruments. The ML worked with one of our children (diagnosed ASD) who would watch the group sessions and had 1-1 sessions with him also by the end of his 1-1 sessions he began to participate with the group.”

Mrs S Bullimore - Manager, EYPS, SENDCo & Designated Safeguarding Lead