

Introduction to 'Superstars'

The National Literacy Strategy makes a significant impact on most pupils, and Wave 2 interventions (ELS, ALS, FLS) are available for those pupils who require a boost to catch-up with their peers. However, there will remain some pupils at School Action Plus who require some Wave 3 support in Literacy.

This programme is adapted from the ELS materials and is designed to provide a programme of learning for Y3/4 pupils with Special Educational Needs in Literacy. The learning objectives remain the same as in ELS but the activities are adapted to meet the needs of older pupils. The main emphasis is on the acquisition of basic literacy skills but equally to increase pupils' self-confidence.

Aims

The aim of the Superstars Programme is to enable Year 3/4 pupils with Special Educational Needs in Literacy to develop their basic literacy skills through activities which they find fun and highly motivating.

- To develop reading, writing and spelling skills, speaking and listening skills and High Frequency Word recognition.
- To secure, practise and apply key literacy objectives by building on success. Opportunities are provided throughout the programme for pupils to talk about their learning and reflect on their progress.
- For pupils to be supported in concentrated learning, back to the individual's appropriate/backtracked NLS objectives.
- To help pupils build up their confidence and self-esteem in a fun way and begin to apply what they have been taught as they work independently.

How was 'Superstars' developed?

'Superstars' was developed in St John the Baptist Church of England Primary School in Whitwick. It was felt that an intervention strategy was needed for pupils in Y3/4 at School Action Plus who were working at a level significantly lower than their peers in Literacy.

The priority of the programme from the outset, was to create an atmosphere which promoted a positive attitude to the pupil's learning and, indeed, to the children themselves. It was from this that the idea of 'Superstars' was created, underlining the 'can do' ethos, and removing any obvious (and maybe off-putting) reference to Literacy.

It was clear that 'traditional' teaching styles had not had a significant impact on these children. Therefore an important aspect was to enrich the styles used to incorporate auditory, visual and kinesthetic learning. This multi-sensory approach not only provided variety and a 'new' way of learning, but also made the learning enjoyable and memorable. It was noted, however, that it was important not to patronise the children and to make activities age appropriate.

Main Features and Organisation of the Programme

- 12 week programme of three modules (4 weeks in each module) which allows for flexibility of time and phonic content according to the needs of the group. The first module of 4 weeks is included here.
- 4 daily sessions of 20 minutes each, with a TA supporting a group of 6 pupils.
- Pupils should be screened using the ELS screening material before and after the programme. This allows for specific needs to be identified and is then a measure and evidence of progress.
- The programme is not reliant on the completion of homework activities. The 'Take Away' follow-up tasks are suggested as in-class activities.

- A balance of activities is planned within each week to include physical activities, drama, art and music.
- The Key Objectives of each session follow the same format and order as The Early Literacy Support (ELS) Programme. However, the suggested phonic and High Frequency Word (HFW) work can be adapted to meet the needs of the group, depending on where their difficulties lay.

- Each session follows the same format:

On Your Marks! A warm up physical activity which stimulates the brain, focuses the pupils and improves their concentration.

Get Set! Informal discussion recapping previous learning and 'Take Away' activities and introducing the Key Objectives (from ELS) and target/s for the day.

Go! Activities and investigations including phonic and word level elements, individual and shared group reading and writing, speaking and listening.

Finishing Line A quick activity to reinforce and recap.

Take Away In-class activities for the pupils to complete before the next session. Only planned for 3 of the 4 days per week.

- The resources required are listed on each daily sheet. Resources listed in italics are provided at the back of the file. Schools are expected to provide any other resources.
- Schools will need a 'Twister' mat or a grid of a similar size (for inside or outdoor use) for the physical activities.

Does it Work?

A pilot was carried out with 6 pupils from Years 3 and 4. The Year 1 ELS screening was used to select pupils for the trial, and was repeated after the first 4 weeks of 'Superstars'. The initial screening identified School Action Plus pupils who had a weak phonic knowledge and were continuing to experience difficulties in reading the Reception High Frequency Words.

Results of the pilot showed that pupils gained success in all areas of basic literacy after only the first 4 weeks of the 'Superstars' programme:

- 5 of the 6 pupils were able to read, on sight, more of the Reception High Frequency Words. One pupil who originally had difficulties reading those could consequently also read 40 of the Y1/2 HFWs.
- In addition to this, spelling markedly improved. One pupil who could previously spell 22 of the Reception HFWs achieved 35 words spelt correctly after the first 4 weeks of 'Superstars'. Another pupil who had previously been able to spell 21 of the Reception HFWs could successfully spell 33 words after the first 4 weeks of the pilot.
- There was evidence in class that the speaking and listening aspects of the curriculum improved. The pupils were more enthusiastic and keen to learn, offer answers and contribute in class discussions. It was noticed that the pupils showed a greater concentration on texts and listened more attentively to instructions.
- The most significant improvement was an increase in pupils' self-confidence. Their willingness to attempt written tasks before asking for help improved across all subjects and the pupils had a growing expectation that their written work should make sense.

It was noticed by many members of the staff that the pupils were excited by, and proud of, their 'Superstars' status. They frequently told other adults what they had been doing, and settled to their 'Take Away' tasks in class without prompting. Some pupils undertook extra 'Take Away'

activities at home to share with the group the next day, and these, in turn, were shared with the class.

The class teacher involved with the pilot taught the Y3/4 lower ability Literacy Group and noticed a difference in her own teaching styles and other pupils as she employed more of the kinesthetic and multi-sensory strategies in class.

In summary, the pupils took enormous pleasure in being a 'Superstar'. One child asked if the TA who teaches 'Superstars' was available. "Well," he said, "I want to know if we can do this every day."

The Materials

The following materials are arranged in 3 modules each containing 4 weeks of the programme. There is an overview of each module at the front of each section.

Thank you to all the staff and pupils of St John the Baptist Church of England Primary School, Whitwick, who developed and piloted the programme, in particular:

- Paula Baldry
- Corinne Clark
- Jenny Galpin
- Cheryl Pallett

Any further enquiries regarding this programme should be made to Julie Broad, Advice and Inspection Service, Education Department, County Hall, Glenfield, Leicester, LE3 8RF. Telephone 0116 265 6488.

The real difference I have noticed is the confidence and belief the children have that they can write. This has resulted in a huge improvement in spellings because the children are confident enough to use the strategies they have been taught. Teachers throughout the school have noticed and commented on the improvement in self esteem of the children involved in this project. It shows in the confident way they walk around the school, the quality of their conversation with adults and their 'I can do it' attitude.

Paula Baldry, Headteacher

"It makes me cleverer and better and you get stuff" Child A

"You mean you are given things to take away and do?" Literacy Co-ordinator

"Erm...well you do but I mean you get stuff...you understand it now!"
Child A

The children want to write now!

Cheryl Pallett,
Literacy Co-ordinator

The children are hugely enthusiastic about Superstars. It's clear from the various class teachers' feedback that it's making an impact. It's been a real pleasure to do something so worthwhile and rewarding.

Jenny Galpin,
Teaching Assistant

I have noticed that there is a buzzing enthusiasm and confidence with the particular children that I teach. They were extremely low attainers who were unable to write unaided. Now they readily get their work out and demand to be given a writing task. They frequently want more 'Take Aways' and ask 'Is it time for Superstars yet?' As SENCO, I have no hesitation in whole-heartedly supporting this project as the results have been immediate and outstanding. The children have more skills, strategies and self belief with which to be independent and 'one of the gang'.

Janet Alesbrook, SENCO

"It's still learning but you're having fun - it's like playing with toys."

Child B

Being part of the planning for the pilot has had a positive impact on my own planning and teaching: making it more accessible and inspiring by utilizing an array of learning styles and types of activity. It's great to see that within a whole class setting that those involved now achieve and take pride in their work.

Corinne Clark, Class Teacher