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Editor

Why don't they listen?

At last, it is confirmed that speaking and listening are important. I have lost count of the number of times that reception class teachers have held up their hands in despair with the complaint 'but they just can't listen'. Not only can't they listen but many of our children are coming into school never having heard a nursery rhyme and having a very bland diet of 'In the Night Garden' with with Makka Pakka and Igglepiggle..

Certainly, rich exposure to language is not the usual experience for many of our youngest children. And without that foundation for literacy it is no wonder that the peculiar structures of our written language are leaving them cold. Children need to be tuned into oracy in order to understand how our language works. Stories, rhymes, word play from the cradle help them to enter this strange and foreign world of the written word.

For too long, it seems, the importance of speaking and listening has been ignored and so it was with delight that I read the Bercow Report. At last there was recognition that it isn't only children with special listening and speaking needs who need support. Many children are suffering from a culture focused upon visual images and play station games.

The report is quite clear. Speaking and listening must be championed, its status raised and the primary interim review must pay more than just lip service to it. Whether it has or not remains to be seen. The interim review does acknowledge the request from Bercow to highlight speaking and listening and enforce its importance as part of literacy. How this will materialise as it bounces back from the QCA is yet to be seen.

Rosemary Sage, in the article 'Communication Matters: teaching children how to communicate', shares her theories around the importance of focusing on children's speaking and

listening skills. We provide catch-up literacy and numeracy programmes, but what about catch-up for speaking and listening? More about the Bercow report and the response from the interim review can be found in 'headliners'.

ICT is always in the spotlight but do we really know what our pupils perception of it is? 'Safety on the internet- a pupil's view' provides us with insight into just how much or how little our pupils know about internet safety. The results are worrying. And if having read this article you do decide your school needs a little ICT CPD then perhaps you should read 'Training for technophobes', and take a refreshing look at how we develop ICT skills in our staff.

We've waited hungrily for curriculum reform but does the interim review give us what we'd hoped for? Richard Gerver in 'Bloomin lovely or another thorny issue?' shares his thoughts on what is proposed. Having talked to headteachers and other lead professionals about the proposals, I am hearing the same concern. How can we fundamentally change the curriculum without reviewing and attending to the impact that SATs have upon everything that we do? It will be interesting to see how the Robin Alexander review, which does not suffer from similar constraints, will comment upon SATs.

And so to 2009. What can we expect to be on the agenda this year? Safeguarding remains at the forefront of our thoughts following the sad case of Baby P, and it will be interesting to see what additional recommendations are made in order to protect our most vulnerable children. I look forward to hearing how the new Ofsted will emerge and what the school report card will look like. There certainly is no let up in the barrage of reforms, reviews, reports and rallying calls that constantly land in our in-trays on a weekly basis. But is it all for the better? Let's hope so and in the meantime we're here to help you make sense of it all.



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