



‘In Speech Bubbles this year we...’

1. reached more children and supported more drama practitioners.
2. connected with specialists.
3. had a range of positive outcomes.
4. continued to learn and adapt.
5. listened to our theatre partners.
6. planned for the future.

1. ...reached more children and supported more drama practitioners.

In what proved to be another stop-start year in schools we delivered the standard Speech Bubbles programme through our national network of 9 theatre companies.

This reached

- **772 children**
- **40 schools**

We also delivered an adapted version of the programme funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF) with a ten-week programme of drama for communication and wellbeing. This programme had a smaller number of children in each session (8). and was supported with additional training around Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs.

This reached

- **257 children**
- **16 schools**

We supported the current freelance practitioner team and the school delivery staff with additional training around children's Social, Emotional and Mental Health and the connection with communication.

In addition, we trained:

- **13 new Speech Bubbles practitioners**

2. ...had a range of positive outcomes...

This year the outcomes are separated into the benefits for children who took part in the standard programme and those who took part in the shorter 'Recovery' model. Whilst the children in the standard model had a greater number of sessions they were considerably more disrupted than the shorter programme which took place across the summer term when there was initially less disruption.

In the standard Speech Bubbles programme

These outcomes are based on the 460 fully completed post project assessments. We had 594 completed referral and pre assessments. We feel this is a good percentage of completed forms given the unprecedented pupil and staff absence at the end of the summer term.

For children

The thing that we are most proud to report on is that the children showed significant progress in the programme with classroom teachers reporting that:

- **80% showed improvements in emotion behaviour and conduct behaviour**
- **77% showed improvements in speaking, listening and learning**

And in the comment's teachers reported that:

- **81% showed improvements back in class**

The following comments represent the range of children's progress that was reported on, this includes children who showed no progress and those who slipped back:

Pre Assessment	Post Assessment
Striking Improvement	
Shy and quiet in class, more likely to speak in a small group. Needs support to form bonds with a variety of members in the class.	A is confident in class, speak well with adults and children, concentrates on her work and takes pride in her learning.
T has started to vocally participate in lessons, but she still needs some support/direction from adults in the class. Needs support in raising her confidence.	T has made great progress this year. She has grown in confidence and continues to do so. She is happy to share her ideas and thoughts during class discussions. T works with resilience.
Clear improvement	
Reluctant to join in whole class discussions	More willing to put her hand up on the carpet and share - shows more self-belief and confidence in own abilities
Reluctant to speak in class, very shy, lacks confidence in her own work and ability	B's confidence has grown throughout this term. She is eager to participate in class discussions and is always proud of her work.
A struggles to form a sentence (verbally) He has good expressive body language, but struggles to keep attention at times.	A joins in with discussions in the class. He is able to speak confidently to peers and adults.
Slight Improvement	
A is a very quiet boy. He is shy and doesn't have much confidence.	A is a quiet boy in class but his confidence is now developing.
Tries hard to listen but struggles to recall. Also lacks some self-confidence and can be a little overly sensitive.	A little more confident. Tries incredibly hard and can recall what has been said but still struggles to apply and retain information.

No Change/Slipped back	
Limited vocabulary, limited confidence and self esteem	J still struggles to take turns.
Can find it difficult to take turns and work in a group.	Unfortunately, I think it is hard to see the progress this year due to it starting late.

And in the shorter 'recovery' model supported by PHF

These outcomes are based on the 179 fully completed post project assessments. We had 257 completed referral and pre assessments. We feel this is a good percentage of completed forms given the unprecedented pupil and staff absence at the end of the summer term.

For children

The thing that we are most proud to report on is that the children showed significant progress in the programme with classroom teachers reporting that:

- 90% showed improvements in emotion behaviour and conduct behaviour
- 87% showed improvements in speaking, listening and learning

And in the comments teachers said that:

- 95% showed improvements back in class (this is based on a slightly smaller data set than the numbers above.

The following comments represent the range of children's progress that was reported on, this includes children who showed no progress and those who slipped back:

Pre Assessment	Post Assessment
Striking Improvement	
Z has 1:1 support in class to support his learning. He is reluctant to work alone, and struggles to join in during carpet time activities. He gets upset if things do not work out how he wants them to, and gives up easily.	Z has made leaps and bounds of progress. He sits down at every carpet time and listens intently when it is lesson time. I am so proud of his progress.
B is a very shy child. She rarely speaks in class. She can find it difficult to follow 2 step instructions.	B has become much more confident talking in the classroom. She has started talking about her interests. She is able to ask for help when needed.
Clear improvement	

Poor listening skills. Struggles to focus. Can struggle to interact with peers.	S has grown in confidence and is less dependent on adults to remind her of instructions.
K can sometimes struggle with resolving issues with peers. Can take things to heart and refuse to talk to peers when a small mishap takes place.	I have noticed that K takes his time more often instead of rushing and making hasty decisions. I have also seen him show more empathy towards other and an improvement in his social problem skills since starting speech bubbles.
His lack of understanding of the English language is holding him back. I would love him to be able to clearly share his ideas.	Improved confidence and relationship with peers has improved.
Slight Improvement	
S will speak in social contexts with friends, but does not speak or contribute during classroom learning activities. She can struggle in social contexts with children often saying she has been unkind to them.	S engages more in talk partner situations, but is still reluctant to offer her ideas and opinions to adults
Difficulty with focus and concentration	A enjoys expressing her own opinions in class discussions.
No Change/Slipped back	
Quiet, withdrawn and shy	E is quiet in the classroom and does not openly share anything. quite withdrawn

For the adults

As well as the positive outcomes for the referred children the following comments and thoughts from teaching assistants were gathered at the end of year evaluations.

Teaching assistants' positives:

- Giving children more time, modelled by practitioner and transferred to class.
- Accepting all forms of communication, transferred to teaching practice.
- Allowing children to 'show' an answer in reading group when they aren't able to explain it in words.
- Being silly, allowing children to see a different, more accessible side of the staff
- Broaching feelings and emotions in group allowed children to do the same out of the group when things (particularly covid) were worrying them.
- Getting to know the children better in a small group playful session helps relationship for the whole time in they are in school.
- Learnt a lot about dinosaurs!
- Self-confidence increasing
- Saying things twice in exactly the same way, TA is now using in other work.

- Borrowing songs and activities for other lessons.
- Technique for bringing the children back together at the end of a session is now used in other interventions. Observed by the Headteacher who was really impressed with the TA.
- The joy of making children laugh.
- Learning to give children as much time as possible, particularly 1-1 (hard to achieve in the school day).
- Enjoying the use of play, a break from classwork to encourage pure imagination in the children.
- Learning that games don't need a lot of resources and that it was a benefit for staff and children to think on their feet and imagine things they needed.

Of course no intervention can be all positive and the following challenges were recorded.

Challenges:

- A few TAs felt they hadn't had a chance to use as much of their learning as they could have due to their normal intervention timetable being cancelled because of COVID, but were confident to use things in the future.
- Disruptions due to school staff being away and TAs being called out to cover the class.
- Children's absences and the stress of trying to deliver an intervention when bubbles are being closed
- Wanting some children to have more sessions
- Due to the bubbles in school it wasn't possible to adapt the makeup of the groups to suit different children's personalities

3. ...connected with specialists.

Through the PHF funding we have been able to improve the programme by engaging with specialists in the field of communication, creative education, and social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH):

Melanie Cross www.linkedin.com/in/melanie-cross-b4157b50/?originalSubdomain=uk

Melanie is a Speech and Language Therapist and the RCSLT lead on children's SEMH. For this programme she has:

- Reviewed our referral criteria and our pre and post project assessments, which she confirmed were highly appropriate with only minor technical changes.
- Delivered online training on the connection between SEMH and communication for school support staff, drama practitioners and our theatre partners.

- Provided extensive resources on the PACE(P) model of positive adult interaction, on emotional coaching and the power of saying yes.

Playful: relax, be genuine and enjoy the interaction

Accepting: everyone has a voice and a valid perspective

Curious: be interested in the young person and what they have to say

Empathic: try to see it from the other person's point of view

Patient: give others time

- Adapted the online training to a film that can be used in all Speech Bubble induction training. This will have benefit and improve the whole programme. The training film will be used in all induction days in the 21-22 school year reaching in the region of 70 schools.

The drama practitioners had the following to say about this additional training:

- Yes, I always think about how to say no without saying 'no' - I do it all the time now, even to adults.
- Melanie speaking about 'playful' interactions has definitely stuck with me. And the 'conditional yes' instead of saying 'no'. Helped me feel warmer with the children in Speech Bubbles (and also at home with my nearly 2 year old!)
- Reinforced practise and helped to deepen what we do
- Reminded me that lots of people are involved in supporting children with speech and language needs. We're not alone in Speech Bubbles
- How much we feel affects how we communicate and vice versa. It made me more aware of the journey of each session and of the project and trust that it was ok for it to take time to the children to relax into SB
- I have held it in mind, especially trying not to use "no".
- Emotional coaching felt very present in sessions this year...
- Taking time to check in and reflect each session on how we are feeling

Dr Jonathan Barnes <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jonathan-barnes-04353320/>

Jonathan is a well-respected expert in cross curricula learning and children’s wellbeing. In this year he has:

- Reviewed our working practice in supporting Teaching Assistants.
- Carried out interviews with self-selecting school support staff to ensure we continue effectively supporting them and the programme has the maximum benefit of their collaborative working..

This work will carry on in to the 21-22 school year.



4. ...continued to learn and adapt

This years' experience has confirmed to us the role that Speech Bubbles can play with children who have both Social, Emotional and Mental Health support needs alongside communication needs. In this period, we have had increasing support from Speech and Language therapists particularly through our Speech Bubbles advisory group. This has led to a revised purpose, values and vision document presented here in an 'easy read' form.

Big thank you to Tara Milan-Brophy for her work on this.

Speech Bubbles Purpose, Values and Vision



Purpose: What we do

- We help children learn, play, communicate and feel good about themselves. We do this by:
- Running drama groups in primary schools.



Values: What we care about

We believe every child has the right to communicate. Every child has the right to understand and be understood.

We will:

- ✓ Be fair to everyone.
- ✓ Treat people with care, respect and interest.
- ✓ Make our work enjoyable and engaging.
- ✓ Listen to children and their stories.
- ✓ Use research to learn about and improve what we do.

Vision: What will we achieve in the future?

By 2025 Speech Bubbles will:



- Increase the number of trained drama practitioners from 100 to 300.
- Increase awareness of how drama can support children's communication development.
- Have enough money to be able to carry on our work and pay our staff.

Contact Us



speechbubblesdrama@gmail.com



@speechbubbles20



www.speechbubbles.org.uk

5. ...listened to our theatre partners

Throughout this year our partner network continued to deliver creative activity for children and young people. Speech Bubbles is just part of each company's programme of work and I urge you to look at their websites to see the extraordinary things that they have managed to achieve.

Here is the Speech Bubbles 20-21 story from six of our partners...

[Immediate Theatre](#)

Despite the obvious challenges of the past year, we have enjoyed another successful year delivering the Speech Bubbles programme. Thanks to funding from UBS and Paul Hamlyn we delivered in a total of six schools (the highest to date!) across Hackney, introducing Speech Bubbles to five of these schools for the first time.

Our Practitioners rose to the challenge of adapting the delivery of sessions in a range of formats including online sessions delivered to participants based at home during school closures and practitioners delivering remotely from home to students based in school, managing to maintain consistently high quality, fun and engaging sessions. This experience has equipped our Practitioners with a range of additional skills and the ability to deliver Speech Bubbles (and other programmes) online in the future, if required.

We were delighted to be back delivering face to face in all of our schools by the summer term. One thing that remained consistent throughout was the children's enjoyment of the sessions and the fantastic progress they made. Schools experiencing Speech Bubbles for the first time reported how impressed they were by the project and how it offered the children a much needed safety net, support network and space to relax and have fun, in amongst the turbulence of the pandemic.

Many of the children's stories included references to the pandemic which proves that Speech Bubbles also provided a much needed outlet for them to express themselves. We really appreciated the opportunity to offer the condensed PHF version of the programme to three schools who desperately needed this specific support for children's social, emotional and mental health.

[Oldham Theatre Workshop](#)

Oldham Theatre Workshop has been running the Speech Bubbles programme in 4 schools this term. We had 2 full programmes and 2 running through the Paul Hamlyn funded programme.

Despite a very difficult term with COVID restrictions and consequent school isolations we have had a very successful term of work with fantastic feedback from schools and children. The groups had many positive experiences, not least of which was the children taking on the 'Director' role with their own stories. Being director raised a wonderful response, smiling

faces and excitement. The children's ability when telling their stories and choosing to be a performer or not in their stories was a really positive step. Just making that big decision was impressive.

The children's ability to adapt after a few weeks together was wonderful to see. If someone was off or we had to do more than one story in a week due to bubble closures we thought would cause confusion possibly even upset but it actually made the children and group work stronger together helping each other and respecting each child's part of the story.

The feedback from schools has yet again been overwhelmingly positive and both class teachers and TA's have reported a huge leap in confidence, self-esteem and communication skills.

We look forward to the next term, more stories, more smiles, more adventures.

[Northwest Drama](#)

Whilst we've had to be more resourceful than we could have imagined this year, we were determined to find a way to deliver the project successfully for our regular programme schools this year (not least to respond to the inevitable increased level of need following the pause of the programme last year). With the support of Adam and Amelia and the other partner organisations (including Kazzum Arts who delivered insightful Trauma Informed Practice training), it feels that we've achieved a huge amount this year.

Online delivery to pupils who remained in school was a challenge due to staffing issues, but practitioner relationships with school staff were galvanised and built upon in ways we hadn't seen before. On reopening of schools, we managed to deliver all but one of the expected sessions, which was a real achievement. The flexibility required to achieve this was a credit to our Speech Bubbles practitioners.

We were delighted and incredibly grateful to be allocated funding to deliver 3 shorter placements through Paul Hamlyn Foundation funding (with our partner organisation Peoplescape Theatre). Whilst these needed to be shortened from 16 to 10 weeks following the January school closure, the outcome of these placements was incredibly strong. Analysis of the pupil outcomes suggest that impact was noticed in most children very quickly and with significant improvements in learning and behaviour and speaking and listening. We're very happy to report that our cohort of schools for 2021/22 has increased significantly, and we're incredibly grateful to be able to support even more children's communication, well-being and confidence.

[Half Moon Theatre](#)

I don't think we could ever have imagined a more difficult academic year for delivering a drama intervention programme in primary schools that relies heavily on consistency and low-anxiety settings. But, if ever Speech Bubbles was needed, it was this last academic year. With the support of East End Community Foundation and Tower Hamlets Arts and Music Education Service, we were able to deliver Speech Bubbles with five primary schools in Tower Hamlets. Our practitioners did an amazing job of adapting their Speech Bubbles sessions to work within Covid-safe policies in the schools, which included working with Year

1 and Year 2 separately, working in a physically distanced way, delivering some online sessions and pre-recorded sessions and delivering two sessions a week in some schools in the summer term to make up for all the lost time during the spring lockdown.

Each of the schools we worked with could not have been more adamant that they would make Speech Bubbles work this year. They absolutely knew that the children who do Speech Bubbles are those children who have most been affected by the disruption to their lives and their learning over the last 18 months. From the feedback of the schools, it was clear that the impact Speech Bubbles had this year was more significant than ever. We believe that the programme this year has solidified some schools' commitment to this programme for the long-term and that they will continue to find the funding on an annual basis for many years to come because they value the contribution the programme makes to the personal and social development of their children.

[Kazzum Arts](#)

"I like all the fun we have in Speech Bubbles and how we act and try our best to act in people stories and appreciate each other." Year 2 Student

Despite the challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic presented, Practitioners and Schools have remained committed to the delivery of Speech Bubbles, with over half of our planned workshops taking place in person.

This year, more than ever, we witnessed how precious our 45 minutes sessions were for the children. The importance of having a safe space that is consistent, fun and full of connection was clear through the children's joy and engagement.

"Speech Bubbles is the highlight of our student's (and the teacher's!) week. It has become a really special time for the children where they are able to express themselves and take risks in a non-judgemental and fun environment. I have seen many of the children make wonderful progress since they have started the sessions. Thank you, Speech Bubbles!" Year 2 Teacher

The success of our sessions was not only reflected in our Partner Schools feedback and desire for us to return next year but in the children themselves. Many children started the year withdrawn and disoriented due to the disruption to their schooling caused by the pandemic. Our Practitioners provided emotional support during this time and as the weeks progressed, the children gained confidence and understood Speech Bubbles as a space where they felt safe. They were encouraged to explore, imagine, and play, gaining a sense of autonomy through the telling of their stories.

"There is nothing more special than Speech Bubbles" Year 2 Student

[Peoplescape Theatre](#)

What a joy and a challenge to be with our new Speech Bubbles children this spring and summer! We are very grateful to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation for recognising the children's needs and the role that Speech Bubbles can play in addressing those. 10 weeks isn't long and it meant some difficult decisions for teaching staff regarding referrals; we know that children who are frequently not in school can really struggle however a couple of sessions missed would be a significant percentage. It also meant that we had to have contingency plans for a child not being with us on the week of their story right from the start.

Delivering the parent/carer session online was an unexpected triumph as we all enjoyed the medium of screen & cameras to zoom in and out, to disappear and surprise everyone else with our pretending.

Some schools have chosen to continue with the main programme next September and we are able to have some positive discussion with them about the possibility of a few children continuing.

This year we benefitted from training with Kazzum & Melanie Cross both of which were insightful and useful. It's hard to put into words how refreshing & nurturing it felt to be in a virtual room with so many drama practitioners.

Thank you to Adam and Amelia for your dedication, enthusiasm & guidance.

[M6 Theatre](#)

Despite the challenges of the year, Speech Bubbles has remained a highlight of M6's programme, providing children with a chance to come together, have fun and share their stories. It's clear this work is needed now more than ever, for staff as well as children, with one T.A. saying she could do Speech Bubbles every day. Our wonderful facilitator has been constantly surprised by how well the children adapted to the limitations placed on the sessions, way better than she believed possible. In her words: 'I'm so proud of them all'. M6 are looking forward to maintaining our partnerships with existing schools and welcoming a new one into our Speech Bubbles family. Our new head has told us that speech and language is the biggest challenge for her children post lockdown. I'm so pleased we can help with this wonderful, nurturing programme.

[Trinity Theatre](#)

This academic year, Trinity Theatre worked with thirteen schools across Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Malling and Sevenoaks. With thanks to funding from Kent County Council and The Brook Trust, we were able to provide the intervention over ten weeks in all schools, with one school participating in 13 sessions in total, and saw 250 children each week.

This has been an incredibly challenging year for schools and for the organisation to be able to facilitate work during the pandemic, but training was taken out of the theatre and online. Our team of practitioners quickly adapted to new distancing and PPE guidelines, whilst still ensuring the sessions were engaging and as fun as ever. This was a learning curve and meant us experimenting with different masks and visors until we found something safe and practical for everyone.

As well as their dedication to facilitating amazing sessions, the Youth and Learning Team at Trinity have been committed to supporting their facilitators during this difficult time,

and provided an extra training session and maintained open channels of communication to provide a support network.

Each of our practitioners brings their own personality and style to their Speech Bubbles sessions and as a group have shared ideas and techniques to help build on each other's practice throughout the year.

We were able to begin face to face sessions in April and have thoroughly enjoyed seeing the children taking charge of leading the song or the game in the sessions, gaining so much confidence.

We found that in some schools, TAs were being stretched thinly due to staff and class isolations, but many told us they were able to use the skills learned in the sessions to create things using the power of their imagination in the sessions and back in the classroom; one lovely example being that one child felt shy and the TA gave her some 'confidence' from her pocket, which really boosted the child for the rest of the day.

We are excited for next term where we will be working in 25 schools, with many returning from the previous year and cannot wait to hear the amazing stories all the children will have to tell!

6. ...planned for the future

Assuming that there is no further return to partial school closures we have a full programme in place for the autumn and spring terms. This will be delivered in Greater Manchester and Greater London and Kent. It will include the standard Speech Bubbles programme as well as the shorter Recovery version. We are in discussion with potential new theatre partners and hope to launch Speech Bubbles in at least one new region in 2022.

We will engage in the conversation that is happening across education about Oracy, both to support the principles of schools providing ‘communication friendly’ environments and to challenge the discrimination that can happen to children who don’t speak ‘Received Pronunciation’, or the equally misnamed ‘Standard English.’

In 2020 London Bubble undertook an organisational review. One of the outcomes of which was to recognise that Speech Bubbles had a local, regional and national remit and that this wasn’t best served by remaining part of a locally focused community theatre company. The decision was made therefore to spin off Speech Bubbles as an independent charity. The new organisation Speech Bubbles CIO is now registered with the Charity Commission and is poised to take over the running of the national Speech Bubbles programme as well as delivering in Lambeth and Greenwich schools. London Bubble will join the Speech Bubbles partner network programme and will deliver the project in Southwark and Lewisham schools.

Bubble is responding, focusing and changing

We thought you'd like to know

Marie and Lucy have stepped up as Joint Interim Directors




Speech Bubbles is developing into an independent programme with Adam as National Lead

We haven't stopped creating

Behind the scenes we're dreaming bigger

Exploring a future Bubble where the theatre we make has social justice, equity and equality at its heart

