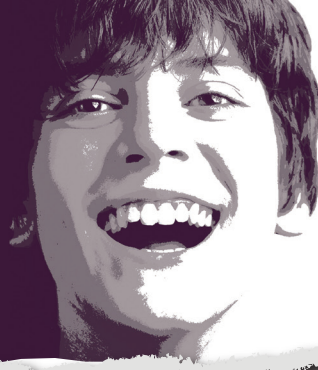


## What, why, how and Ofsted

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## What is *Secondary Talk*?

*Secondary Talk* is an evidence-based practical programme to help schools support their students to develop essential communication skills.

The practical changes schools make mean teachers teach more effectively – students do better and are more engaged with learning – and so *Secondary Talk* raises attainment and improves behaviour.

What it's not is a set, rigid programme that you have to follow – *Secondary Talk* is very flexible and works with schools on what they see as their priorities. It is not a kite mark or badge: it is a school improvement tool. To meet the standards, schools must show that they have improved their practice, irrespective of their starting point.

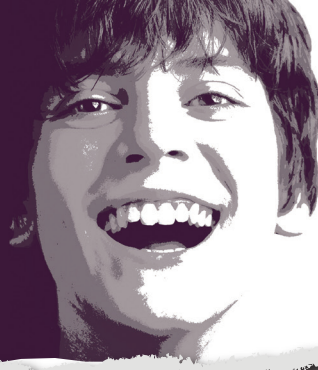
## What will *Secondary Talk* do?

*Secondary Talk* will give teachers the skills and confidence they need to make small but effective changes to improve the communication skills of students, which are an integral part of literacy. The changes teachers make to their practice will mean that students understand lessons better and become more able to develop and explain their ideas effectively. In turn this will result in greater engagement with learning, better behaviour among pupils and ultimately improved attainment.

Schools, staff and families all benefit as young people are given better life skills to succeed with this key phase of education.

## What impact can *Secondary Talk* have on achievement?

The heart of the programme focuses on making subtle changes to “teacher talk” and creating structured opportunities for student talk in the classroom. Through these and other changes, students become more engaged, independent and articulate learners. Beyond these core principles, schools can customise the initiative by selecting from a wide range of approaches that tackle their specific needs and desired outcomes. These include teaching vocabulary more robustly, supporting transition from primary school, addressing the link between poor language and behaviour difficulties, language skills to enable self and peer assessment, Pupil Voice activities and developing narrative skills for pupils to report on their learning.



## Why Secondary Talk?

There is a compelling body of evidence that highlights a connection between oral development, cognitive development and educational attainment. With Ofsted's new framework from January 2012 including communication as a key skill in inspecting literacy across the curriculum, schools need to be confident in how they respond. Schools that have engaged with the programme are already ahead of the curve in how they can demonstrate effective support for the communication development of all their young people.

**Many secondary schools have a number of young people with communication difficulties – 10% of all children have significant needs, but in areas of social deprivation some schools can have up to 75% of pupils who have poor language skills. Secondary Talk helps schools to ensure all young people get the best out of their education.**

## How does Secondary Talk link to Ofsted inspections?

Ofsted now has a spotlight on students' communication skills. The inspectors must consider "how well pupils develop a range of skills, including reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills and how well they apply these across the curriculum". *Secondary Talk* can help with this, for example, by:

- Teaching students how to work effectively in pairs and groups. So rather than teachers just saying "work with a partner", they might assign students roles with prompt cards to structure their conversations, and make explicit what good team working skills are.
- Focusing on the communication skills of students who repeatedly find themselves in trouble at school because they either don't understand instructions or keep saying the wrong thing at the wrong time.
- Helping students become more independent learners by teaching the sort of language they need to reflect on and extend their thinking.
- Training some students to give feedback to their peers and their teacher on what they learnt in the lesson, increasing their responsibility for their own learning.
- Focusing on subject specific vocabulary and working across the staff team on some of those key words that crop up across all subjects such as *evaluate*, *summarise* and *define*.

Students will have to show "high levels of resilience, confidence and independence". Good or better teaching will probably be buzzy, interactive, in part pupil led, with lots of collaborative work and confidence to tackle tasks. Good communication skills are absolutely key and *Secondary Talk* is an ideal vehicle to develop outstanding practice.

## How does *Secondary Talk* work exactly?

Although training is included in *Secondary Talk* (e.g. an initial short whole-school session, optional two-hour modules on different aspects of language and communication), the focus is more on coaching and mentoring. One of the programme's benefits to schools is its flexibility, so the I CAN advisor will help schools to make decisions about the most effective way to use the programme.

While recognising that you are the experts on your own school, the I CAN advisor will discuss possible options for starting the programme. This could involve building on good practice that already exists or identifying under-achieving groups in the school, and explaining how they would benefit. The starting point could be a particular subject area or a year group – some schools have successfully introduced changes within year 7 and then consolidated this change with subsequent cohorts.

We have found through the pilot and in our first year of roll out that what works best is trialling change within an identified area, measuring the impact and then using the positive results to recommend the approaches to colleagues in other parts of the school. Teachers often adapt the approaches during this process, thus building a sense of ownership and leading to better chances of effecting real, embedded change. This action research approach encourages staff development through trying something different, reflecting on changes and linking them with information or research.

## How long does *Secondary Talk* last and what are the stages?

The initial package is delivered over four terms with the pre-planning stage taking place in the term preceding the formal launch in school.

### **Pre-planning**

**Appoint *Secondary Talk* co-ordinator(s)**

**Receive materials and familiarise key staff**

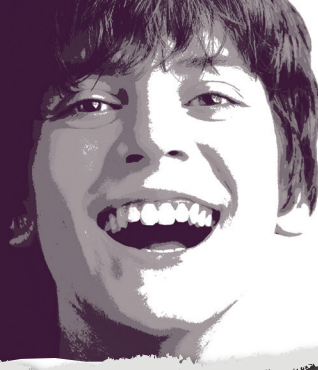
**Review *Secondary Talk* standards**

**How does your school already support pupils' language and communication?**

**Where are the gaps? What can be further improved?**

**Decide which level (Universal/Enhanced/Specialist) to work towards**

**Which part of school will be the starting point?**



## Term One

**Awareness raising training; introduce *Secondary Talk***  
**Disseminate how learning strategies work to the whole school**

### **Action plan**

**Choose activities to do in selected subject areas, year groups or other aspects of school**

**How will progress be measured?**

**Advisor support from an I CAN advisor to establish plan**

## Term Two

**Update action planning**

**Extend coverage of successful approaches**

**Select new activities to trial in lessons and across school**

**Measure resulting changes**

**Reflect, learn and share practice with colleagues**

**Advisor support to embed changes**

**Further training**

## Term Three

**Update action planning**

**Extend coverage of successful approaches**

**Select new activities to trial in lessons and across school**

**Measure resulting changes**

**Reflect, learn and share practice**

**Sustainable whole school change**

**Validate practice and recommend next steps**

Learning from the pilot, we feel that the minimum time needed to develop and embed new practice is one year. Most of the small changes will have an immediate impact; however, we recommend a full year is taken so that these first small changes are sustained and can spread more widely. Schools have the option of commissioning further support in subsequent years to move their practice on.

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