Trying out the 'think time' rule

This is a really simple and effective strategy that every single teacher could use – it does take a bit of practice, but the benefits are well-evidenced. Research shows that many teachers wait for less than one second when they ask a question! It also shows that increasing wait time to up to seven seconds leads to many benefits for students:

- The length and correctness of their responses increase
- Questions from students are more frequent
- The number of their "I don't know" and no answer responses decreases
- The number of volunteered, appropriate answers by larger numbers of students greatly increases
- Responses from less able students increase
- The scores of students on academic achievement tests tend to increase

Research also shows that using 'think time' in this way benefits teachers too:

- Their questioning strategies tend to be more varied and flexible
- They decrease the quantity and increase the quality and variety of their questions
- They ask additional questions that require more complex information processing and higher-level thinking on the part of students

HOW DOES THIS LINK TO THE CODE?

Don't forget, by turning the spotlight on to how teaching can better develop communication skills, the Commitment helps support effective teaching of speaking and listening for all pupils - including those pupils with SEN and SLCN. As the 2014 SEND Code of Practice states, *"High quality teaching, differentiated for individual pupils, is the first step in responding to pupils who have or may have SEN"* (section 6.37).

So, as part of the Communication Commitment, we're asking teachers to try out the 'think time' rule and see what happens. Can you wait for 7 seconds for a response? The benefits are evidenced across all school phases – early years and primary years through to the end of secondary school.

Step 1 - Give it a go! It's a good idea to tell your pupils that you're introducing think time into the lesson, otherwise it may take some of them a bit by surprise! It's important also to consider the type of question you leave more time for; it's useful to give more time for more complex questions – "why" questions, for example, can really get children thinking. It's also useful to monitor students' responses so you can adjust the timing depending on your groups. Then you can decide how long your 'think time' might last. Some schools we know aim for five to seven seconds. You might want to vary it, to see what works best for you and your pupils.

Step 2 - Reflect on what happened. Did 'think time' make a difference to participation and quality of learning? What went well? Would you do anything differently? Will you use 'think time' more often as part of your teaching? What did your pupils think? You could jot down your ideas or use the monitoring sheet overleaf. Set yourself the next target for when you will try out 'think time'. The ultimate goal is in every lesson!

Step 3 - Share what you did with other people – and tell us how it went too! You can do this by Sharing your story on the Commitment site.

The Communication Commitment is run by The Communication Trust and sponsored by Pearson

Possible Monitoring sheet

Date	Lesson	Class
Question		
How long was time between question and answers?		
How many hands up?		
Whose hands are up?		
Examples of responses		
Reflections		
Planning for next time		