CASE STUDY

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As Inclusion Advisor at Barking & Dagenham, I have been working with schools to implement the Communication Commitment from its inception in 2013.

During its lifespan, at least eight schools in the Barking & Dagenham area have taken up the Commitment, with many other schools expressing an interest in doing the same. Although many schools are often quite daunted by the task of adopting a whole-school approach to communication (even the name 'Communication Commitment' can be a bit intimidating!), we try to emphasise as much as possible that many of the changes can be very simple and accomplished within one term. Schools are able to implement communication-friendly provisions at their own pace and in a straight forward way.

In my experience, I've found that the schools that have the most success in implementing the commitment are those that have multiple members of staff 'championing' communication; the task can be a lot easier when the workload is shared and isn't resting solely on one person's shoulders. However, it doesn't just have to be teachers acting as 'Communication Champions' within the school – TAs, Governors, Parents and Lunchroom Staff can all make fantastic champions!

Many of our schools in the Barking & Dagenham area have also had success in using *No Pens Day Wednesday* as a way to 'trial' the Communication Commitment. *No Pens Day Wednesday* is an annual national event from the Trust that encourages schools to put down their pens and run a whole day focussed on speaking and listening activities.

Having a successful day of communication based activities such as *No Pens Day* can also be a useful step in convincing members of a school's senior leadership team to get involved. This is particularly important, as without the senior leadership's involvement, it can often be very difficult for Communication Champions to implement the Commitment effectively. Often, one of the most effective ways of showing the positive effects of a communication-friendly school can be to use statistics and numbers. For example, If Champions are able to show that as a result of an increased focus on communication there has been a reduction in behavioural incidents within the school, the senior leadership team would be more likely to take an active interest in implementing the changes.

The videos on the website are also very useful, particularly for schools that are completely new to the Commitment. The 'Commitment Journey' animation gives users a step by step user friendly guide on how to use the website, and the 'overview of the Communication Commitment video' gives real practical examples of how a primary school has introduced the Commitment into their setting.