



Using Intensive Interaction as a Teaching Approach September 2005 – Summer 2008

This project has been running at Sunfield for three years, and was developed in order to investigate the impact of teaching social interactions and communication in a student-led way by using Intensive Interaction, an approach developed in the early 1980s by Melanie Nind and Dave Hewett. Intensive Interaction is a way of accepting the communicative skills that our students already have, and also teaching new ones.

The basis of the intervention was to encourage meaningful communication in students who had only very early communicative skills, appeared to have little interest in other people or their surroundings, and seemed to have little or no understanding of spoken language, symbols, photos or objects. The initial class group, which started in September 2005, consisted of four students, all boys, of mixed ability but with similar levels of social and communicative skills. A fifth student joined the group in September 2006. Base-lining took place in September 2005, using video evidence and Kiernan and Reid's Pre-Verbal Communication Schedule (PVCS) (1987) across a range of settings.

Intensive Interaction sessions were led by the individual student, and the staff member working with them began to learn how they communicated with the world and sought to establish communication on their level. Video (January and April 2006) and PVCS (July 2006) data subsequent to base-lining showed that students had begun to express themselves and gradually to develop basic social skills. Students demonstrated improvements in eye contact, initiation of interactions with staff, understanding of gesture and speech and, on several occasions, interactions with peers which had not occurred previously. There was also a reduction in challenging behaviours as the students began to communicate more effectively.

The project continues this year, with a new group of students, and will be monitored, assessed and documented in the same way as the original class group. The original year of the project will be written up as a thesis for a MA in Special and Inclusive Education to be finished in Summer 2008.

References

- Kiernan, C. and Reid, B. (1987) *Pre-verbal Communication Schedule*. Windsor: NFER–Nelson.
Hewett, D and Nind, M. (1994) *Access to Communication*. London: David Fulton.

Please contact the PDC centre for further details.