

Case study - St. Marylebone Bridge School

Type: Special School Location: London Website: frog.stmaryleboneschool.com/index.phtml?d=552864



2014 was St. Marylebone's first year taking part in *No Pens Day Wednesday* – hopefully it will be the first of many more! The day was a great success, and was fully embraced by pupils and staff alike. As St. Marylebone's is a special school, staff are often required to use lots of different speech, language and communication strategies to engage with the pupils. For this reason, *No Pens Day Wednesday* acted as the perfect crash course for some of our newer members of staff, as many of the strategies that we were encouraged to use throughout the day were those that should be embedded within their day to day teaching practice.

It was so refreshing to see how all of the teachers catered to the 'no pens' format in inventive and original ways. In English, the pupils focused on imagery within poetry, discussing and debating the different evocative images that poets were able to conjure up through language. The students then went on to create their own pieces of art based on the imagery within the poems.

In ICT, the pupils were taught all about how technology has changed over time and how this has affected the way that we live our lives. They looked at images of different objects used extensively in the past such as old maps, candles, film based cameras and even carrier pigeons. They then got into groups, with the teacher asking them to research the modern day equivalents. Ultimately the conclusion that the students came to is that technology has made things more convenient and accessible – the jobs of a map, a candle, a camera and a carrier pigeon can all be done easily by a modern smartphone!



It was lovely to see so much support for the day - A few of the teachers had their formal annual observations that week and were given the option of not taking part. However, they did not choose to do so, instead opting to fully embrace the ethos of the day. The children too were huge advocates of the day. If ever a teacher absent-mindedly reached for a pen to write something on the whiteboard, they were halted by a hearty cry of 'No, we can't use pens!'

It was also wonderful to see the impact the day had on individual pupils. One of our students in particular really struggles with writing and often feels very pressured when attempting written work. However, during the whole of *No Pens Day Wednesday*, they were so much more relaxed, as they knew that the day focussed solely on speech, language and communication, and as a result they were truly able to shine.

We are definitely going to continue with *No Pens Day Wednesday* and build upon the progress that we made this year. All of the materials and the resources on The Communication Trust's website were really helpful in planning the day. As a special needs secondary school, we took information from a range of different sources, including the primary and secondary mainstream resources and supplemented them with a few of our own materials. In the future, it would be wonderful if The Trust could find a way to allow for schools to post and share the innovative lessons plans that they have created for *No Pens Day Wednesday* – this would really inspire creativity and fuel collaboration!

Dominic Sunderland, Deputy Head