



Newick House Special School in West Sussex has been working with WebPlay to adapt the WebPlay Local programme for children with special needs.

Teacher Vikki MacRae found that WebPlay Local can be successfully adapted and integrated into the special school curriculum. Staggering the programme into manageable, bite-sized chunks and providing opportunities for children to ‘overlearn’ – for example introducing children to the concept of ‘role play’ before the project went live - helped ensure that the children had time to feel comfortable with new learning styles:

‘By the time we got to do role play about being secret agents, the children were letting their imaginations roll! We never envisaged one child describing in detail his ‘night whisper coat’ which enabled him to vanish into thin air! Role play became a natural part of the project.’

Much of the class literacy work was planned around WebPlay Local, whether working on punctuation using text from the weekly video link or incorporating other aspects of the project into the day to day curriculum. Using ‘still images’ to represent people and places helped enhance the children’s drama skills and was a huge boost for those who struggle to make their speech understood. Arranging visits around the local area with camera and Dictaphone on hand helped the children prepare their guidebooks.

To help the children ‘play’ at being agents, the school set up a ‘secret agents room’ with a secret keypad to enter, was full of the evidence about the local area that the children had collected. This really helped the more nervous ‘role players’ to experiment in a relaxed manner. The room was a great source of interest to ‘outsiders’ and the children took it in turns to show visitors around - without revealing any secrets, of course.

With a ‘parents WebPlay workshop’ involving parents in their children’s learning from an early stage, Newick House School found that adapting WebPlay for their pupils was a success:

‘It does take more thought and a positive attitude but we all felt at the end of the project that the children had enjoyed themselves, gained new skills and really increased their confidence and self esteem.’