Case study: Evie (aged 5)

Evie lives in Harlow with her Mum, Dad, older sister Ellie and younger sister Tillie.

Evie is very sociable little girl who has enjoyed going to preschool and now school.

Evie loves to play with dolls in the home corner. She enjoys using the playdough and looking at books.

Medical background impacting on her learning and development

Evie was diagnosed with Down syndrome with antenatal testing. She was born prematurely at 32 weeks. She had heart and lung complications and difficulty with hearing. Evie was given a soft band bone conduction hearing aid but she did not accept it so, before 3 years of age, she was referred to Great Ormond Street Hospital for bilateral grommet insertion.

Supporting Evie’s learning and development

Evie attended little Fishes Preschool from September 2013 until July 2015. Although she could have started school in the Autumn Term shortly after her fourth birthday, Mum and Dad decided the best thing for Evie’s development was to delay her school entry and keep her down for a year. Evie has therefore stayed at nursery for an extra year.

During that time, additional support was provided for Evie, advised directly by the service’s Area SENCO, Preschool Specialist Teacher and Family Support Keyworker.

The Preschool Specialist Teacher had originally joined the team of health professionals supporting Evie and her family in November 2010 when Evie was 5 months old, following an early notification from the health authority. Home-based support was provided to embed some key strategies to support Evie’s learning and development, with a Family Support Keyworker introduced at particular times. For example, Evie and family were supported to learn Makaton to improve communication, and to use choice and ‘first-then’ boards to help her concentrate and complete tasks.

During home-based sessions in the Spring/Summer Terms before starting school, the See and Learn resources were introduced. This included using flashcards to help Evie to listen to and discriminate between different sounds, and to practise the pronunciation of particular speech sounds. Another set of See and Learn resources were used for labelling (naming vocabulary) and matching. These resources were left with Mum so that she could practise with Evie on a regular basis.
Mum felt that Evie took to the *See and Learn* programme very well. It helped her to sit and concentrate, which was something Evie found difficult at this time. As the picture resources were broken down into 4 items of vocabulary at a time, it was possible to increase the amount Evie was expected to complete gradually through a small steps approach. Evie was encouraged to label the pictures before being given the picture to match. Evie enjoyed looking at the pictures and with each session tried to give verbal labels more and more. Mum felt that *See and Learn* was a “good tool for getting her communicating, and paved her way for reading”.

When Evie started school, Mum provided them with photos of the family to use for matching. She quickly moved on from pictures to being able to match written words.

Evie is also using Numicon in school. In a few of the home-based sessions, Evie played with the Numicon resources, but this was limited to an explorative manner only. Mum was pleased that Evie was introduced to Numicon before starting school, and she now has a Numicon home kit to reinforce her learning.

Mum feels Evie may have benefited from more input at an earlier stage to give her more information about Numicon and ways to play with it. She was able to refer to the Specialist Teaching Service’s Pinterest boards for ideas that might progress Evie’s learning.

Evie is doing well at school. She is wearing her hearing aids for most of the day, joining in with PE, sitting well at circle time and interacting with her peers.