



Contingent Talk with a Book Report 2024/25

The Early Years teachers and expert Contingent Talk Ambassadors, Christine Lovett and Kathryn Sikora, from Alexandra Primary School have successfully trained a new cohort of practitioners this year.

Registration and attendance

10 schools registered 18 delegates to receive the training. Attendance was at about 70% at the start of the programme when most of the training happened. Although the last two sessions had less delegates, Ambassadors reported that the networking and sharing of practice in a small group was valuable.

Case studies

Four delegates wrote a case study, reporting on the following themes and questions:

Rationale – Why did you choose contingent talk as an intervention? How did you select the children for contingent talk?

Context – How did contingent talk work in your setting?

Impact – What has been the impact on the children that you have worked with?

Reflection – How has your practice changed? How have you embedded contingent talk into your practice? What have been your successes and challenges?

What's next for your school? – Things to consider – mentoring new staff, modelling good practice, encouraging others to complete the training for their own CPD, involving parents, etc.

You can read individual case studies on the [Contingent Talk Padlet](#).

Films

Programme leaders have always encouraged delegates to film their interactions with the children to share with the group. This can be at the start of the programme so they can seek advice from the experts, or towards the end of the programme to show how far their practice has come and



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the impact it has had on the child they've been working with. This year delegates have added three more films to their archive of practice. You can view these films on [Contingent Talk Padlet](#).

Exit survey

At the end of the programme, delegates were invited to complete an exit survey. Here is a summary based on 6 submissions:

100% of delegates engaged between one and three times a week with one or more children in their setting.

100% of participants expressed confidence in their Contingent Talk practice. Every participant agreed that they:

- are confident in helping children choose a book that will interest them
- know how to use books to foster talk with children
- feel confident using child-led book talk to develop children's language.

The feedback on the quality of sessions and facilitators was overwhelmingly positive with 100% of delegates saying that both the sessions and the ambassadors met their expectations.

100% of delegates stated that they would recommend this programme to other EYFS colleagues.

Some delegates provided additional positive feedback including:

- their appreciation for the support
- finding the training sessions useful
- noting the programme's potential long-term impact on provision for children
- having the knowledge and confidence to train support staff.



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What our Contingent Talk Leading Ambassadors have to say:

“It has been a real pleasure working with the delegates who have engaged, developed their confidence and fostered contingent talk in their schools. It has been a privilege to lead the programme and enable others to share their experiences of contingent talk and the impact this has had on their children. It is fabulous that so many children in Hounslow have benefited from this opportunity of contingent talk.”

A message from programme facilitator, Charlotte Raby

The Contingent Talk project is a low-cost high-impact evidence-based intervention that is changing the life chances of the children that take part.

The Writing Framework (2025) states:

‘Children first develop language through talk. Interactions with adults enable them to develop speech and their control of spoken language. This is vital for learning about written language, since reading and writing are acquired skills. The value of talk to children’s mastery of language is as important for writing as it is for reading and pupils should be taught how to engage in dialogue that enhances learning.’

This is further affirmed by the Education Endowment Fund:

‘Language provides the foundation of thinking and learning and should be prioritised.’

Children in Nursery and Reception who come to school with higher language needs are most vulnerable to difficulties with reading comprehension later on (Suggate et al., 2018). We know that we will make the greatest impact when we work with children as soon as possible and this project which centres on dialogic talk and interaction strategies ensures exactly that.

The Book Trust Reading Rights Report (2025) states: *‘Shared reading also helps overcome disadvantage. Children who are read to from their earliest years are more likely to overcome socio-economic inequalities.’*

I urge all schools in Hounslow to engage in this high-quality practitioner-led course which has made a huge impact in the schools that have already implemented it.



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Contingent Talk 2025/26

The programme will continue for a fifth consecutive year. This year's delegates are now Ambassadors of the programme and we have invited them to the launch in July to join and talk about their experiences. This meeting is an opportunity for EYFS and Nursery leaders to think about who might benefit from joining the programme in the autumn term. Registration for the 2025/26 cohort opens following the launch and remains open until the middle of September to allow for new staff joining a school in September to sign up.

The Year of Reading 2026

With the announcement by the Secretary of State for Education, Bridget Phillipson on 7th July, that **2026 will be The National Year of Reading**, it's even more important that the work we're doing for early reading and language development through books continues. HEP is committed to supporting schools to embed the joy of books and stories as a tool for talking and developing language with their youngest children.