



COMMUNICATION & INTERACTION POLICY

**HORIZONS EDUCATION TRUST
AMERICAN LANE, HUNTINGDON, CAMBRIDGESHIRE. PE29 1TQ**

RATIONALE

Promoting functional communication is fundamental to the whole school approach. This is communication that occurs in everyday 'real life' situations, results in real consequences and includes, but is not limited to, spontaneous communication.

We believe that all behaviour is communication and that all communication should be equally valued.

The ability to communicate is a key skill that is fundamental to participation and achievement in all curriculum areas. Pupils communicate to access ~~to~~ the curriculum, make choices, transfer skills, build self-esteem, enhance social and independence skills, give autonomy and allow them to function in the community.

AIMS

Pupils are given every opportunity to respond to, communicate and interact with others within a total communicating environment, develop effective and appropriate communication skills in a variety of settings, develop and gain ownership of functional communication within the school, community and home and use a variety of methods to record and recall information in a variety of ways according to their levels of development.

Many of our pupils need to experience symbolic forms of communication, according to their level of development, such as objects of reference, photos, symbols and words.

As a staff, we support our pupils through the use of a full and diverse range of communication approaches throughout the school, which includes key word signing (Makaton), Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), Objects of Reference, photos, touch cues, sensory cues, auditory scanning, switches and communication aids/books.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The role of Communication & Interaction Manager includes:

- coordinating communication throughout the school;
- ensuring that pupils are making progress in their communication skills;
- ensuring that each pupil has access to support for their communication, including access to a Speech and Language Therapist (SLT), individual/group sessions, appropriate use of communication skills from staff;
- liaising between SLT and school;
- providing appropriate agreed resources;

- providing access to appropriate training, including an agreed rolling programme of refresher training;
- ensuring that the communication needs of all pupils, with especial reference to those with complex communication difficulties, are known by staff within the school community, for instance through up to date communication passports.

We are currently supported by three Speech & Language Therapists and one SLT assistant, who are employed by the NHS. Each therapist has approximately 6.5 hours allocated to Spring Common Academy per week. Within this time they will:

- provide assessment and facilitate intervention for children with speech, language, communication and/or eating and drinking difficulties;
- work with school staff, parents/carers and other professionals to facilitate pupil's communication skill development, for instance through the provision of specific targets, general strategies, or direct face to face therapy on an individual or group basis;
- to contribute to training for staff/parents on topics relating to communication and or eating and drinking;
- provide an annual report as part of the annual review process.

Where appropriate, programmes of support will be followed within the classroom. Copies of SLT targets will be kept by SLT, Communication & Interaction Manager, the school office and class teams.

ENTITLEMENT, ACCESS AND INCLUSION

All pupils on the SLT caseload will receive input for speech, language and communication skills from their class team as part of their broad and balanced curriculum. In addition, targeted support may be offered from the allocated SLT or SLT assistant.

This may take the form of a speech and language programme, specific targets or strategies that can be employed by staff to enhance the pupil's communication.

All classrooms will create a total and positive communication environment for all pupils which will include a consistent and accurate delivery of all augmentative forms of communication. Non-verbal pupils and those with complex speech disorders will have a Communication Passport which will inform staff about the communication needs of these pupils. All pupils will have an appropriate communication target included in their current IEP.

ASSESSMENT, RECORDING AND REPORTING

Pupils are assessed by their allocated SLT on at least an annual basis or when targets have been reached.

An assessment report is provide by SLT at Annual Review.

A SALT surgery for parents takes place biannually.

The Communication & Interaction Manager will track identified pupils biannually, looking at how a range of communication methods and styles are supported across the key stages. This information is fed back to class teams to support their practice. In addition, learning walks, not limited to those lead by the Communication & Interaction Manager, identify good practice across the school.

PLANNING FOR PROGRESSION

Frequent and thorough assessment has an impact on planning for progression as well as a consistent approach to planning and delivery of speech, language and communication programs.

Appropriate training for staff in different communication approaches, together with support provided from the Communication & Interaction Manager, will enable pupils to progress within their own level of language.

Evidence of progression is recorded using the Communication Register as an ongoing process.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring of communication and interaction will be carried out by the Communication & Interaction Manager.

This may take the form of 'drop ins', individual pupil tracking, learning walks, monitoring of speech and language programmes, monitoring of class lessons and planning, and discussion with class teams.

Evaluations will be reported to the SMT, Trustees, SLT and class teams.

RESOURCES

Resources are held in the Elaine Bartlett building of the school. These are accessible to all school staff and SLT.

New resources will be purchased by the Communication & Interaction Manager on request.

In addition, a central bank of key augmentative communication aids and access technologies will be kept to trial with assessed pupils as required.

The Communication & Interaction Policy will be monitored by the Communication & Interaction Manager and SMT.

APPENDIX: Multi-sensory Cues

RATIONALE

The Communication Policy states that we aim to promote functional communication in everyday 'real life' situations, resulting in real consequences and including spontaneous communication.

Further to this, we acknowledge that some pupils, principally but not exclusively those identified as having profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), require very specific, structured approaches to communication.

PMLD PUPILS

PMLD pupils have difficulties with spoken language:

- Receptive language (understanding what is being said to them)
- Expressive language (saying something themselves)

They benefit from cues to help them understand and express themselves.

Cues might be:

- signs
- symbols
- pictures
- objects
- body language
- facial cues
- gestures
- vocalisations
- sensory (touch, smell, visual, sound, movement)

These cues help pupils to:

- understand familiar events and activities;
- develop a sense of security;
- anticipate and join in familiar events and activities;
- make transitions between activities;
- indicate their likes and dislikes;
- choose between activities.

Cues can provide:

- a command (eg: tapping on a child's shoulder to say 'sit down');
- feedback (eg: rubbing a child's back to say 'well done');

- information (eg: pressing on the child's hips to say 'time for the toilet').

Correspondingly we recognise that there is a broad progression in pupils' developmental understanding of symbolic communication:

Objects > Photographs > Symbols

We aspire to provide communication systems that most closely support the needs and abilities of our learners.

Cues should:

- be easy and convenient;
- have an obvious relationship to the activity;
- be accessible to the child;
- be pleasant or neutral for the child;
- immediately precede an action or activity;
- alert the child that something will follow the cue;
- focus the child's attention on the activity that follows.

On-body cues are very important for pupils with sensory impairments; to help them anticipate activities, people and places they can't see or hear. On-body cues are made on the child's body using distinctive motions or touches.

It is an expectation that all staff will use the full range of communication approaches throughout the school to support our learners.

OBJECTS OF REFERENCE (OOR)

Objects of Reference are objects that have particular meanings assigned to them, due to their consistent use. Each object acts as a consistent symbol. It is noted that:

- all objects are potentially multisensory in nature;
- objects of reference can play a key role in the development of receptive as well as expressive communication.

Objects of Reference can be used for pupils to:

- sequence events;
- anticipate what is going to happen next;
- make choices;
- understand that an activity has 'finished';
- give pupils the opportunity to initiate activities;
- use as an expressive mode (as an alternative to speech);
- use as the first steps towards reading and writing for a child with a visual impairment.

IMPLEMENTATION

Adults need to:

- take into account any particular likes and dislikes;
- make the cues very different from each other;
- use the cue as close to the activity as possible.

Object cues are everyday objects from daily activities used as a cue for those activities. The objects will be those that are used during the activity. For example, the child is shown or feels the cup they are going to use, which is then filled with drink and used for drinking:

- don't use that cup at any other time;
- don't use a different cup as the cue;
- don't leave more than a couple of seconds between the cue and the activity or the connection will have been lost.

Object cues should be child-specific so that objects that are meaningful and motivating to them.

The object stands for an activity, rather than being an object that is part of the activity.

ORGANISATION

The PMLD team, in conjunction with the Communication & Interaction Manager and Speech & Language therapists, will annually review the list of pupils identified as using objects and photographs as communicative cues, and make amendments as appropriate.

In conjunction with the pupil's class team, a list of appropriate cues will be drawn up or revised. This list will indicate when and where cues are intended to be used.

Only a small number of objects or photos should be introduced at any one time.

Objects and photographs should be used for activities that occur regularly within a pupil's regular routine.

The class team, in conjunction with the Communication & Interaction Manager, will ensure that the appropriate cues are available for use. Photographs will be produced centrally by the class team and stored centrally on the school's network.

PLANNING FOR PROGRESSION

Frequent and thorough assessment will have an impact on planning for progression as well as a consistent approach to planning and delivery of speech, language and communication programmes.

It is intended that there is a general progression for pupils, dependent on their abilities and needs:

Bespoke list of OOR > generic list of OOR > photographs of OOR > generic list of symbols

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring of use of multisensory cues will be carried out by the PMLD team, in conjunction with the Communication & Interaction Manager. This may take the form of 'drop ins', individual pupil tracking, Learning Walks, monitoring of programmes and lessons, and discussion with class teams.

Any evaluations will be reported to the SMT, Trustees, SALT and class teams.

Policy agreed on: _____

Signed on behalf of the Trustees _____

Committee: CURRICULUM _____

Author: Rae Goodwin _____

Review date (optional): _____

Website **Y**/N