

FOX WOOD SCHOOL



TOTAL COMMUNICATION POLICY

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Philosophy

Communication occurs all the time, throughout every aspect of school and home life. It is a basic human right. It is the way that we make friends and build relationships, express our needs and feelings, make choices, learn and achieve independence. For children and young people, communication is integral to healthy development. When considering the Every Child Matters framework, children and young people will only be able to achieve the identified outcomes of being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being, if their communication needs are fully met and supported.

The development of appropriate communication skills is therefore a priority for the pupils at Fox Wood School, as a means of accessing the curriculum and participating in everyday life experiences.

This policy outlines the aims, principles and strategies for the development of communication skills at Fox Wood School. It reflects the consensus of opinion of the whole teaching staff and has the full agreement of the governing body. We believe that all children and young people have the right to understand and be understood in all aspects of life.

What is Total Communication?

“Total Communication” describes an approach that seeks to create a supportive means of communication to understand and be understood’ (Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists). This means that pupils and staff are encouraged to use every available form of communication, with a particular emphasis on what is relevant to individuals. A Total Communication approach acknowledges that communication is not simply about talking and emphasises the importance of body language, gesture, photos, symbols, signs, objects, AAC, ALI (assisted language input), the ShREC approach and more creative mediums such as music and art.

Total Communication is important for children and young people who may have difficulty speaking, reading, writing and understanding spoken words and it also supports the learning and understanding of all children and young people by presenting information in a variety of ways.

Aims

Our aims in teaching communication skills are that all pupils including those with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) will:

- Develop the necessary skills to communicate effectively, appropriately and confidently to the best of their ability. This includes the use of body movements, eg whole body movements, eye gaze, facial expressions, or eye pointing/ pointing), the use of objects of reference, on body signing, Intensive Interaction, Makaton signs, photos, picture

communication symbols, PECS books, symbol books and charts, communication software, a wide variety of communication aids, vocalisation, and speech.

- For pupils to develop the ability to listen, to understand, and to respond, from their own starting points.
- For pupils to have access to Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) aids, appropriate to the needs of individual pupils, including Makaton signing, electronic communication aids, such as iPads or eye gaze
- For pupils to be exposed to ALI (assisted Language Input) which is a method of modelling speech and use of AAC to pupils without the expectation of the child using the device
- To work with the Speech and Language Team on pupils individual targets throughout the school day and curriculum.
- For good practise to be shared with home
- To provide structured and unstructured opportunities to develop deliberate language
- be supported outside school to ensure continuity.
- be provided with structured opportunities to develop spontaneous language
- where appropriate take part in Intensive Interaction sessions.

For further information about AAC, Intensive Interaction and on-body signing please see Appendices

Teaching and Learning Styles

The teaching of communication skills takes place throughout the school day, and is addressed in all lessons, in particular, but not only, the Spoken Language element of the English curriculum. Communication skills can be developed through individual, paired, group or whole class activities. Pupils will be encouraged to communicate with each other through working collaboratively and sharing their work and experiences as appropriate. This communication may be verbal, using signs, symbols, photos or electronic communication aids.

Teaching staff use non-verbal communication such as symbols, signing and gesture as appropriate, to aid pupil understanding. Speech is used at a level appropriate to individual understanding, ranging from the use of 1 or 2 key words to phrases and sentences.

Teaching and learning takes place in a variety of settings, including educational visits, snack and lunch times, play activities, and activities in the multisensory room. During whole school activities, e.g. assembly, Makaton signing, photos and symbols are used to support communication. Symbols and communication aids are also used as part of displays in corridors and classrooms. Consideration is given to not use displays in areas of classrooms where they may be a distraction to pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

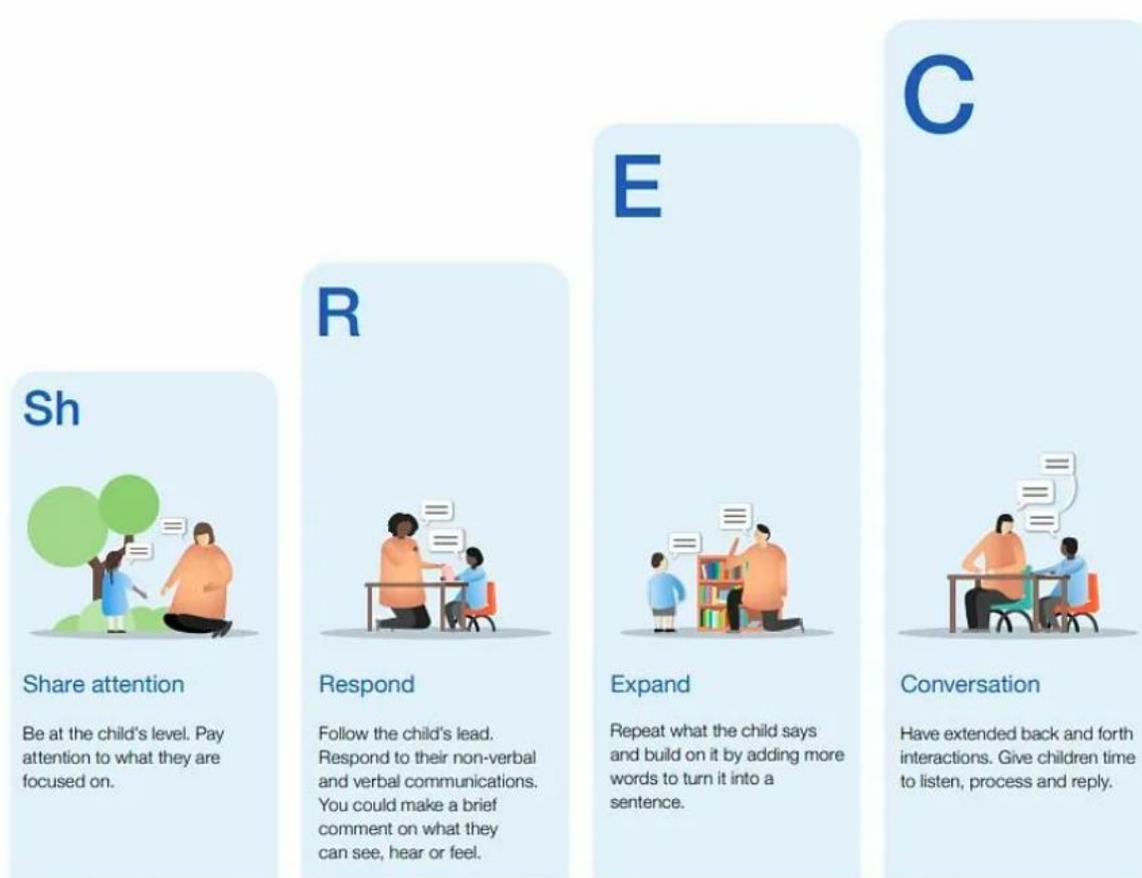
Additional input in communication skills is provided by five Teaching Assistants who have had specialist training provided by Speech and Language Therapists.

Speech and Language Therapy (SALT)

The Speech and Language Therapists work on a consultative basis in conjunction with the Speech and Language Therapy Assistant, school staff, and parents. Assessment may involve observation in the classroom, individual assessments, or home visits.

Following assessment, SALT provide treatment plans which are carried out throughout the day by school staff and parents/carers. A pupil may also receive group or individual direct therapy sessions with an assistant. General advice is also given to staff regarding development of pupils' communication skills and whole staff training is provided as required.

ShREC



All staff have had training in the ShREC approach. The ShREC approach is research-based from the EEF.

Research tells us that we should prioritise the development of children's communication and language through socially meaningful interactions. Children thrive on conversation with people they have a strong relationship with, focused on things they want to talk about.

High quality interactions often look effortless, but they are not easy to do well. The ShREC approach provides us with a simple and memorable set of specific, evidence-informed strategies which we can embed into everyday practice. We can use these strategies with every child, every day.

ShREC opportunities are addressed throughout the day, with specific activities being conducted on a 1-1 basis with individual pupils.

Provision for Pupils in Early Years

Pupils will follow the characteristics of Effective Learning outlined in 'Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage' (2012). Pupils will follow the Prime and Specific Areas of Learning and Development which includes Communication and Language as a Prime Area.

Resources

Communication resources are located in classrooms according to the needs of individual pupils within those classes. Resources are ordered in line with the school budget. Some resources may be provided by SALT. Each room has access to the agreed objects of reference, and many classes introduce the days of the week using a set aroma and colour. Careful consideration is given to resourcing for pupils to ensure they are selected for the individual and that they are motivating.

ICT provision

ICT is used to support the development of communication skills in both low and high tech forms. A range of speech output devices are used to assist speaking and listening activities, and may comprise of electronic aids, big macks, big points, digital photos or symbol packages such as Boardmaker. All classes have a communication iPad and the Pre-Formal Classes have eye gazes.

Cross Curricular Links

Communication skills are used and developed in all areas of the curriculum which allows for individual targets to be addressed in a number of contexts throughout the week. Motivating situations, in which children can enjoy developing their communication skills in a meaningful, functional and enjoyable way are facilitated throughout the day

Assessment, Recording and Reporting

Targets for IEPs are taken from the pupils EHCP and/ or SALT plan. Targets for Spoken Language/ communication/ Communication and Language are taken from the whole school progression document.

Methods of assessment and recording include on-going observation within class and evaluation of IEP and lesson objectives, B Squared assessment. Work is uploaded to Evidence for Learning. Reporting to parents takes place via annual reports, completion of SaLt targets and the person centred annual review process and where appropriate, through the home-school diary.

Appendix A

Alternative and Augmentive Communication (AAC)

Introduction

Alternative and Augmentive Communication is used to describe the different methods that can be used to help people with disabilities communicate with others. As the term suggests these methods can be used as an alternative to speech or to supplement it.

All of our pupils can communicate. Some pupils will have difficulty in getting their message across and staff are trained to be active listening partners and support this communication.

Symbol systems

Fox Wood use symbols from boardmaker and we have an agreed set of symbols to ensure uniformity and consistency across the school.

Symbols are widely used throughout the school for timetables, diaries, dinner menus, symbol strips, now/next visuals. They are used in conjunction with communication aids.

Signing and gesture

All staff are trained on using Makaton and use this to support verbal communication with pupils.

Communication Aids

There are a wide range of devices used in school. These range from simple devices such as a big mack with a single message, to complex devices or portable computers. Electronic aids are used alongside, or instead of, other systems, such as paper based charts, signing systems and other low tech methods of communication.

Few pupils with communication difficulties will use only one particular method of communication. In most cases somebody using an electronic aid will reinforce its messages with gesture, head movement etc.

Pupils may use eye gaze, ipads or switches to enable communication.

Appendix B

Intensive Interaction

Introduction

Based on work carried out at the Harperbury Hospital School in Hertfordshire, this approach has been used successfully with people whose unresponsiveness and/or mannerisms may hinder or prevent the development of a close relationship with other people.

Drawing on the 'natural' model of early child development, staff try to identify ways of relating to pupils. Rather than setting out to change someone's behaviour, this approach tries to establish communication with them – but in their own way, and on their own terms. It has been possible to persuade those who are in 'another world', or who are wrapped up in emotional states of anxiety and fear, to choose to make contact with staff.

The approach usually starts with a process similar to parent/baby interaction, and aims initially to develop an awareness in the child of the presence of an adult. The parent may play with the child, imitating noises and gestures in a way which they both enjoy. As the relationship develops, the child learns that it can make demands and get some of the things it wants. Very small babies discover that they have the power to control many key aspects of their lives.

Intensive interaction is developed through four key stages which are known as development stages: awareness, anticipation, pre-emption and voluntary signals.

Stage 1: Awareness

The individual becomes aware of the other person (communicative partner), when previously they may have been engaged in stereotypical behaviours such as hand flapping, string-twiddling or eye-poking. They may show awareness by stopping the activity momentarily or in the case of a severely physically disabled person, showing a change in muscle tone or posture. This may involve sitting close and copying the pupils actions or holding out a hand for them to touch.

Stage2: Anticipation

At this stage, the individual anticipates that the carer is going to engage with them. Again, they signal awareness, but now this happens before the carer actually engages. Staff may

use 'peek-a-boo' games to encourage this stage or repetitive actions such as tickling which can then be paused so the pupil looks for the expected tickle.

Stage 3: Pre-emption

Here the anticipation is more active, and the individual shows clearer signals. These might include leading a staff member towards something, placing the staff member's hand on an object or showing eye movement towards an activity that the individual wishes the staff member to share in.

Stage 4: Voluntary signals

Here pre-emptive actions are changed to deliberate acts by the individual to engage the carer in particular activities.

In using this technique, it is important that however unpleasant staff may find the individual's dribbling, scratching, or repetitive behaviour, they show the individual that they consistently care about him/her by concentrating upon him/her when 'interacting' and providing a safe environment, which is meaningful to that person.

Play should develop from prompts by the individual, not from staff. When the individual decides that they no longer wish to participate, the staff member must also stop and wait for the individual to instigate the activity again. In this way, the person learns that they can influence other people – they can develop some power to control their world so it is vitally important that staff do not try to dominate.

Intensive interaction can develop mutual trust, eye contact, physical contact and turn taking, all vital components of communication development, and can also be fun.

On Body Signing

Body signing is a tactile communication system designed to inform pupils of what is about to happen. It was developed for pupils who have no or extremely limited expressive language. When they are used consistently in routines they should allow the pupil to gradually make sense of what otherwise could be chaotic experiences. Making the patterns, routines and sequences of life explicit to the pupil through the use of these signs will increase their feeling of security. Pupils may develop anticipation of events when using on-body signing for routines e.g. going to be moved, work is starting etc. They should be accompanied by clear, simple speech. At Fox wood, there are agreed on-body signs, although some of these are different for individual pupils, allowing for reduced range of motion.

