



Total Communication Policy / AAC and Assisted Technology

Introduction

Pupils at White Ash School have a communication impairment which results from a wide range of learning needs including moderate, severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties, autism and cognitive disabilities. Therefore, the central aim of communication at White Ash School is to ensure that there is a Total communication approach, with a high emphasis on visual support cues (signs, symbols, pictures, text, gestures) and the spoken word forming a multiple cue (Alternative and Augmentative Communication – AAC)

Total communication at White Ash School currently encompasses Makaton, PECS, vocal sounds and speech, facial expression, eye pointing, gesture and body language. With additional augmentative communication aids being used for individual children as identified in their ILP or individual speech programme from the SALT.

Intent

This document is a statement of the aims, principles and strategies for communication at White Ash School.

We believe that it is important to promote a positive attitude towards communication amongst all our pupils in order to develop self-confidence and a sense of achievement.

The principles for communication are:

- Policy and provision are evaluated and reviewed regularly.
- Staff work alongside the Speech and Language Therapist.
- Staff are confident and competent in all aspects of communication.
- Resources are planned and budgeted for and in a yearly subject action plan as part of the School Development Plan.
- The governing body of the school follow their statutory responsibility in relation to the development of communication.
- Cross curricular links will be highlighted where appropriate.

Aims

Our school aims to:-

- Adopt a total communication environment in which all our pupils are encouraged to progress with their communication skills.
- Use communication to enhance achievement through relevant and differentiated communication systems.
- Create a learning environment which creates a need / desire to communicate.
- Ensure the communication needs of all our learners are met appropriately in order for them to develop expressive and receptive communication skills.

- Provide motivating learning opportunities so our children can develop their speech, language and communication skills in a meaningful, functional and enjoyable ways both to effect social interaction and access the curriculum.
- Ensure continuity of provision throughout school, whilst promoting a positive learning environment in which all pupils are encouraged to communicate effectively.
- Develop confidence in the use of Total communication, both throughout school and in the wider community so that individual systems can be used consistently by our learners.
- Strive for excellence in the field of communication and interaction.
- Work effectively with other agencies.
- Develop strong relationships with parents and carers to ensure individual communication systems are in place at home.
- Create opportunities for staff to acquire expertise in communication through the use of AAC and AT.

Implementation

Teaching Approaches and Learning

Successful learning for our children depends on successful communication. All learners have a right to communicate, not only to access the curriculum but also to live an everyday life. At White Ash School, a Total Communication approach is used to develop the functional communication for all our pupils.

These communication methods include:-

Makaton

Makaton is a signing system which is used alongside speech to develop a child's understanding of language and their ability to express themselves. By using Makaton signs consistently throughout the school day and across the curriculum, we are greatly enhancing our children's ability to become effective communicators. Makaton signs are always used alongside speech and symbols are introduced to enable the children to build up associations.

Picture Exchange Communication

PECS: The Picture Exchange Communication System or PECS, allows people with little or no communication abilities to communicate using pictures.

The Six Phases of the Picture Exchange Communication System Are:

PECS PHASE I: How to Communicate

The child with autism learns to exchange single pictures for items or activities they really want.

PECS PHASE II: Distance and Persistence

Still using single pictures, the child with autism learn to generalise this new skill by using it in different places, with different people and across distances. They are also taught to be more persistent communicators.

PECS PHASE III: Picture Discrimination

The child with autism learns to select from two or more pictures to ask for their favourite things. These are placed in a communication book, a ring binder with Velcro strips where pictures are stored and easily removed for communication.

PECS PHASE IV: Sentence Structure

The child with autism learns to construct simple sentences on a detachable sentence strip using an "I want" picture followed by a picture of the item being requested.

PECS PHASE V: Answering Questions

The child with autism learns to use PECS to answer the question, "What do you want?"

PECS PHASE VI: Commenting

Now the child with autism is taught to comment in response to questions such as, What do you see?, What do you hear? and What is it? They learn to make up sentences starting with I see, I hear, I feel, It is a, etc.

TaSSels : Tactile Signing for Sensory Learners

TaSSels is a system of touch-speech cues to promote effective communication with people with profound and complex learning disabilities, some of whom may have a visual impairment. The system utilises touch to promote meaningful interaction by communicating what is going to happen next and preparing learners for changes. This allows our pupils to be involved in their own routine and it offers them comfort, nurture and respect.

AAC

A range of voice output communication aids are used throughout school. These include, big macs, talking tins, go talk grids and I pads. Other high tech communication systems include, the Go Talk, Eye Gaze and Tobii software. These systems provide pupils with an opportunity to communicate effectively throughout the day and specialist programmes provide a hierarchal learning journey developing a unique form of communication.

Implementation-

At White Ash we recognise that it is important to focus on our children's preferred means of communication. Therefore, both communication and interaction skills are taught through:

- Structured group sessions and interventions
- Whole class sessions
- Adult role modelling
- Individual targets
- 1:1 work
- Specific activities within school
- Characteristics of learning
- Social stories
- Key words in displays, worksheets etc. and where appropriate, these are symbolised aid understanding
- Opportunities for outdoor learning

We also identify the pre verbal communication, such as awareness of others, interactions, eye contact and turn taking are all important aspects of communication and we ensure our children have access to therapy sessions which include intensive interaction, Attention Autism, Rebound and Jabadeo to ensure every opportunity for communication is utilised.

We also recognise the sensory needs of some of our children and place emphasis on strategies to support sensory processing and sensory needs including Deep Pressure, Fun with food and intensive interaction, with additional groups on offer to support fine motor and gross motor skills.

Assessment

The assessment of Communication follows the same procedures as set out in the Overall Curriculum policy.

The Role of the Speech and Language Therapist

The SaLT are responsible for the identification, assessment, target setting and programme design of all the children on their case load. The Salt will also set up strategies for individual pupils and support school staff in the achievement of these individual targets.

The Role of School Staff

The Head teacher has overall responsibility for ensuring every child's speech, language and communication needs are met and that the school meets the aims and objectives of this policy. Our specialist teacher for communication holds additional responsibilities including staff training, parent liaison groups as well as individual / group work on specific speech and language targets. They also offer advice and support to teachers and support staff and help with making and identifying appropriate resources. They also liaise closely with the Speech and Language Therapist and communication leads within school.

The Role of the Class teacher / Class Communication Leads

- To aim to develop communication skills with pupils.
- To develop and update skills, knowledge and understanding of Communication.
- To identify inset needs in Communication and take advantage of training opportunities.
- To keep appropriate on-going records.
- To plan effectively for Communication, liaising with co-ordinator and SALT when necessary.
- To inform parents of pupils' progress, achievements and attainment.
- To analyse progress data in conjunction with assessment co-ordinator and suggest interventions where appropriate.

Recording and Reporting

- ILP's to be written and evaluated by teachers and support staff through Evidence For Learning.
- Annual Reviews to be written by teachers with additional support provided by key group leaders and SaLT.
- SaLT records

- Sensory Curriculum evaluation
- Monitoring whole school progression document

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be accepted and regularly reviewed by the Head teacher and school governors in liaison with the specialist teacher for communication.

We incorporate Communication into a wide range of cross curricular subjects and seek to take advantage of multicultural aspects of Communication. All children have equal access to the curriculum regardless of their gender or ethnicity. This is monitored by analysing pupil performance throughout the school to ensure that there is no disparity between groups.

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By Keara Crabtree