



HEDGEWOOD SCHOOL

Communication Policy

2020-21

1-1-2021

COMMUNICATION POLICY

MISSION STATEMENT

To enable all our pupils to communicate to the best of their ability and to be involved, as far as possible, in decisions that affect them.

RATIONALE

At Hedgewood School we value the importance of all communication. The development of communication skills is at the forefront of all learning and social experiences as the majority of our pupils have social, language and communication related difficulties, associated with their diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Condition. We also have many children to whom English is an additional language. It is therefore essential that all staff offer good models of all modes of communication. Every effort to communicate should be acknowledged and responded to in a positive way to provide an environment in which language and communication skills are valued.

Children are supported to develop understanding and learn to initiate communication, communicate their needs and ideas and express their views. We believe all forms of communication are to be valued equally (non-verbal and verbal) and all children need a communication system that is tailored to meet their individual needs. The learning context is an adapted TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication handicapped Children), led school environment, which provides the setting and structure that supports children in 'finding their voice.'

Hedgewood School is a Total Communication environment committed to developing effective communication skills, in line with the child's identified individual need. We are a 'communication' friendly environment (Signing and Symbol friendly).

The ideal 'Communication Team' includes the staff, parents and pupils, working collaboratively to ensure the best progress for each child.

INTENT

At Hedgewood we want to provide an environment that actively supports the children in their communication and language acquisition and appropriately meets the individual child's communication needs.

The aims and objectives are:

- To create an educational environment within which a multiplicity of communication modes are used and understood in order to enhance the communication skills and learning opportunities of all children to help them to access the school's academic, social and educational life.
- To ensure that all children are given appropriate communication aids to reach their true potential, through the relevant curriculum pathway, working with their strengths and adapting for their individual needs.
- To incorporate AAC technologies including the use of computing to ensure equal opportunities and to provide enthusiasm, motivation and ensure success.
- To provide children opportunities to communicate and share and their learning in a variety of situations, including small group work, adult led groups, pairs and one to one adult attention.
- To provide children with personalised communication targets set in Personal Curriculum Plans and under constant review.
- To ensure that classroom impact of the Speech and Language Therapy team is maximized to its full effect through an integrated therapy approach that ensures pupil's communication needs are addressed throughout the school day and in different contexts.
- Through the use of Attention Autism (Bucket Time) we aim to develop pupils engagement, turn-taking, and increase their attention.

For children whom English is a second language:

- To identify those children for whom English is a second language and to provide additional language based support to enhance their language acquisition and understanding.

For children who have visual impairments:

- To teach an alternative form of reading and print (i.e. Braille) and to modify and adapt the environment and resources accordingly, allowing them full access to the school's curriculum and community.
- To develop listening, communication and social skills through programmes such as 'Attention Autism' (Bucket Time).
- To use a tactile form of communication if needed.

For children who use speech as a principle communication mode:

- To work towards using the vocabulary and grammar of Standard English, formulating, clarifying and expressing ideas clearly.
- To support verbal children with autism to develop understanding of and use of social language

For children who use Signing as a principle communication mode:

To identify children for whom Signing is required to support understanding and/or oral communication and develop language. In a few cases signing may replace spoken language. We aim to teach children to read and make signs, and to do so within a school which is a fully Signing establishment. We will fully incorporate the use of signing (including idiosyncratic signing for our more complex pupils). We aim to ensure signing individuals have more opportunities to communicate with a wider audience within the school, including their peers, all staff, the governors who have common contact with children and anyone who works in class with the children.

For children who utilise other methods of communication:

- To identify children for whom neither oral communication nor signing seem to hold great significance and to recognise and use alternative means of communication (e.g., symbols, writing), and to ensure that all members of staff are aware of their particular individual communication needs.
- To provide 'Objects of Reference' to support and develop communication skills for more complex pupils.

IMPLEMENTATION

WHOLE SCHOOL STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE COMMUNICATION:

The curriculum

The majority of pupils at Hedgewood are autistic with a broad range of needs ranging from complex non-verbal to verbal pupils with social communication and emotional regulation challenges.

Hedgewood has three curriculum pathways dedicated to functional communication, independent life skills and based on ensuring optimum quality of life experiences and opportunities for life-long learning and well-being.

For our most complex pupils our **Essentials for Living** (EfL) pathway focusses on developing a method of communication to enable requesting, making choices, develop independence and to understand communication from others to help keep them safe and enjoy future well-being. For many of these pupils, incidents of challenging behavior function as communication and we aim to reduce these behaviours by giving young people an effective method of communicating.

Our second pathway, **Foundation for Life** (F4L) focusses on functional communication at the heart of its aims and develops independent living skills, functional early Maths and English, develops social interaction and emotional regulation.

Our **Core Curriculum** (CC) is our third pathway and is intended for more verbal pupils who will study a wide range of adapted National Curriculum subjects, but strands relating to social communication are a focus in line with young people with autism's area of need.

(Please see our Curriculum Policy for more information)

Resources and strategies used across the school

- Sign along
- Symbols
- Communication books
- Go-Talk
- Choosing boards
- Quick talker
- Proloquo2Go
- Sound buttons
- PCS (Picture Communication Systems)
- Attention Autism (Bucket Time)
- Interaction posters
- Colourful semantics stories
- Visual timetables
- Extending vocabulary strategies
- Task Plans
- Talking mats
- Shape coding
- Social Jigs
- Social stories
- Objects of reference

CLASS TEACHER RESPONSIBILITIES TO SUPPORT COMMUNICATION:

Work within the integrated therapy approach to ensure speech and language targets and individual strategies and programmes that develop the communication needs of each individual are an integral part of daily teaching and support.

- Ensure that their classroom is communication friendly.
- Exchange accurate up to date records, profiles and ways of working with child when transitioning to another class/school.
- Employing the TEACCH principles and learning approaches to establish a clear routine and system of work
- Employing multi-sensory teaching and learning approaches (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile)
- Adapting the classroom to suit the needs of individuals children who require a low arousal learning environment, sitting a child with visual impairment where they can clearly see the interactive whiteboard; having necessary resources available for children; children with hearing impairment are taught in a quiet environment and all auditory supports are maintained and in use; augmentative communication and support are in place e.g. signing, visual cues
- Teaching to the child's communication style, being aware of the appropriate communication strategies that the child can employ effectively
- Adapt resources and communication to support effective learning, including; large print on written resources for children with visual impairment; clear routine,

timetables and visual supports for children with Autism; books and resources to support and motivate both genders; extension activities for more able children, adapted activities for less able pupils

- Consult with SALT team and engage in professional discussions to note any changes or observations.
- Liaise formally with parents/ carers to discuss progress.

LEAD TEACHER RESPONSIBILITIES:

Overall coordinating, training and monitoring responsibility for communication provision and training happening with the school:

- Ensuring all areas of communication friendly framework are in place the communication policy is in place and staff can access it.
- Facilitate the training of teaching and support staff in providing provision for Speech, Language and Communication Needs, in particular communication needs of young people with autism.
- Liaise with external agencies and other support agencies when appropriate.
- Ensure that all new staff are aware of their responsibilities for supporting children with speech, language and communication needs in line with the curriculum pathway they are working within.

TRAINING PROVISION

In order to achieve a communication friendly environment we are committed to continually improve our training provision, to keep the school abreast of current research and practices in autism and communication difficulties.

Staff training is delivered through a dedicated training calendar for each academic year, weekly team meetings, regular in-year training sessions and bespoke training for classes and individual staff members when required

Staff training will ensure that all staff will have autism awareness, Signalong, using visual supports for communication and independence, communication and interaction and specific training on protocols used within curriculum pathways.

An ongoing programme of training and development for all staff, governors and parents will strive to provide deeper understanding and effective practice for developing the communication needs of young people with autism and additional needs. All new members of staff will undergo training on the different strategies that enable us to be an effective communication friendly school.

THE ROLE OF THE SALT TEAM

Speech and Language is delivered as an integrated universal service, with targeted programmes and sessions delivered by our therapy team. The aim is for direct class support to implement successful strategies to develop communication throughout the whole school day and in the context of every social and educational context.

The main areas of responsibilities are as follows:

- To support and advise colleagues in the teaching of all aspects of Communication, Speech and Language within the classroom setting.
- To liaise with the Communication Learning Manager, supporting the audit of provision and its effectiveness.
- To ensure that the speech and language resources meet current needs of our children and anticipate the future needs of our pupils
- To arrange parent workshops and events
- To monitor and assess the implementation of speech and language intervention across the school, through classroom observation, audit, formal and informal discussions and target setting
- To maintain, organise, update and audit the Speech and Language resources, including AAC aids, Attention Autism and visual cues
- ICT will be used to enable greater access to communication, in its widest sense
- Staff will teach and encourage appropriate and intentional forms of communication e.g. vocal, gestural, signed, visual systems, intensive interaction approaches and high and low tech assistive augmentative system (AAC)
- To provide training to all staff particularly focusing on new initiatives and programmes as well as ensuring new staff members have the appropriate level of skills to work at Hedgewood
- Develop and monitoring effective links with parents, working collaboratively with staff and the Family Worker and Extended Schools Manager.
- Seek information from parents to build a full picture of progress and to ensure that skills are generalised particularly for pupils with autism.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The guidelines outlined in the Health and Safety policy should be adhered to at all times.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

As advocates for our young people, all staff at Hedgewood are active in recognising and reducing the negative effects of a lack of equal opportunities. This will not mean treating all children 'equally' or every child achieving the 'same'. Some children will need more specialist attention, or different levels of support or challenge. For teachers this means planning for effective learning and communication for all pupils, irrespective of disability, heritage, special educational needs, social group, gender, physical or emotional needs or race or culture.

For a more in depth view of equal opportunities at Hedgewood please see Whole School Curriculum Policy and Equal Opportunity Policy.

IMPACT

The standards, progress and impact on intended outcomes in communication are monitored throughout the school by:

- Observation of by class teachers, senior management and leadership and SALT team.
- Ongoing formative and formal summative assessment of progress in the communication strand of each individual's relevant curriculum pathway.
- Report on progress through Personal Curriculum Plans, annual Reviews and SALT reports
- Audits of new initiatives, programmes and evaluations
- Liaison with school staff and families as well as other professionals
- Headteachers evaluation to the Governing Body

If a parent/ carer or staff member has any concerns over a child's speech, language and communication needs they can speak to either the class teacher or Speech and Language therapists. The Speech and language therapists will assess and refer to specialists bodies if appropriate.