



Communication Policy

Introduction

This document is a statement of the aims, principles and strategies for communication at Haymerle Primary School. All new staff are given a copy of the policy to highlight the communication ethos at Haymerle School.

Haymerle School is a primary aged special school that offers support for pupils with learning difficulties as well as ASC – Autism / Social / Communication difficulties.

Many pupils at Haymerle have a communication and interaction difficulty.

Communication underpins all learning and therefore we are committed to providing a 'total communication' environment to our pupils.

Aims

Our school aims are to:

1. Adopt a 'total communication approach' throughout school, where pupils have access to their own means of communication throughout the school day.
2. Develop means of communication appropriate to each child's individual needs.
3. Create opportunities for communication throughout the curriculum to enable each child to communicate to the best of their ability.
4. To be competent communicators.

Pupils Starting School

On entry to school the majority of children are already known to the Speech and Language Therapist Team (SALT). If a pupil is not known, the school's SALT will work closely with the class teacher supporting base lining the pupil setting appropriate goals.

A pupil's communication needs are assessed within 'Speech Therapy sessions' in the school setting using a combination of individual assessments; classroom observations and liaison between staff and family.

Pupil's needs are best met when education and SALT work closely together in the following ways:

- SALT will conduct observations in classes, share good practice and negotiate further communication targets within classroom settings
- All staff to be supported in helping pupils to generalise new skills being taught.
- Baseline level of training for all staff, and specific training according to individual staff needs, as well as making sure that all members of the school community receive ongoing training in the use of PECS (two day PECS training and refreshers when needed). The school continues to work closely with the SALT and with the Consultant/s from Pyramid Education.
- Communication targets are embedded across all areas of the curriculum.
- Keeping other professionals updated on the means of communication for pupils they work with (e.g. Physios, occupational therapists, etc.).

Monitoring and Evaluation

The importance of monitoring and evaluating a pupil's progress is central to their development. As with all communication methods, regular opportunities to use these are vital for the pupil to achieve success. Signs, symbols, photographs, objects of reference and communication aids must **always**, with appropriate support from staff, be available to the pupils:

Within the class

Around school

In the community

The appropriate SALT will monitor pupil's progress over the course of the year. The class teacher is to continually monitor the progress of each student through the filling in of the appropriate documentation – planning / IEPs / PECS tracking forms.

Communication Methods in School

At Haymerle School we adopt a 'total communication' approach using a range of alternative methods to support and encourage two way communication and speech and language development. These are not used in isolation and a pupil may use several of these methods.

1) Makaton Signing

This is a signing system used alongside speech to develop a pupil's understanding of language and their ability to express themselves. The use of signing throughout the school day by staff greatly enhances a child's ability to be an effective communicator.

2) Objects of Reference

Some pupils will need to use objects of reference to aid their communication and understanding of language. An object of reference will be a real object that represents an activity or a place.

3) Symbols / Photographs

The use of symbols/photographs provides valuable support and is encouraged even if pupils are not using PECS. It is the responsibility of class staff to provide symbol / photo vocabulary as appropriate. Most pupils use:

- Picture Exchange Communication System – PECS (Frost and Bondy)

PECS is where pupils learn to exchange symbols/photographs to communicate.

4) Communication Aids

If the need arises, a range of voice output communication aids are available for use in the school.

These include iPads.

5) TEACCH

At Haymerle we have adopted the TEACCH approach and it is an integral part of 'our' communicating with pupils.

Developed in the early 1970's by Eric Schopler, the TEACCH approach includes a focus on the person with autism and the development of a program around this person's skills, interests and needs. The major priorities include centering on the individual, understanding autism, adopting appropriate adaptations, and a broadly based intervention strategy building on existing skills and interest

Structured teaching is an important priority because of the TEACCH research and experience that structure fits the "culture of autism" more effectively than any other techniques we have observed. Organising the physical environment, developing schedules and work systems, making expectations clear and explicit, and using visual materials have been effective ways of developing skills and allowing people with autism to use these skills independently of direct adult prompting and cueing

An important part of any TEACCH curriculum is developing communication skills, pursuing social and leisure interests, and encouraging people with autism to pursue more of these opportunities independently.

OT's and SALT are involved alongside class teachers. Both parties work together with the class teacher in order to provide opportunities to encourage communication with the school.

Home/ School Communication

In our school we aim to have clear and effective communication with all parents/carers and with the wider community. Effective communication enables us to share our aims and values through keeping parents well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting the school.

Good communication between the school and the home is essential, and children achieve more when schools and parents/carers work together. We send a newsletter to parents at the end of each term. It contains general details of school events and activities and a copy is forwarded by email as

arranged and is available on the school website and is sent home as a leaflet. We send other letters of a general nature when necessary.

Children in all classes have a home-school diary. This enables parents to record a wide range of information that they wish to share regularly with the teacher. Teachers use the home-school diary to record achievements, and as a regular channel for communication with parents.

The school encourages parents to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity. Staff meet with parents as soon as it is possible. All pupils have a person centred annual review to evaluate, and if necessary develop an action plan regarding all aspects of the child's life. Representation from all professional services working with the family attend also.

We arrange three parent meetings for parents in the year. These are held during the school day. These meetings help to explain areas of our curriculum and discuss progress.

We also offer parents the opportunity to visit with our parent school link advisor. These meetings currently take place on Mondays. The advisor offers general advice / opportunities to share difficulties with other parents with regard to specific behaviour difficulties they experience at home, as well as attending vital training offered by the school.

The school also offers information via its website. The website is updated regularly and important dates / meetings etc are shared on the site.

If a child is absent from school, and we have had no indication of the reason, the school secretary will contact a parent (by telephone, if possible) to find out the reason for the absence.

Safeguarding

The ability to communicate one's needs and sense of wellbeing is central to safeguarding. As such, we place a lot of emphasis on helping children to develop the appropriate skills in requesting 'help.' The ability to communicate – with others in various circumstances and situations – is central to making our school a safe and secure place for all. As a 'safe school' we encourage communication.

Professional Development

Identifying training needs of staff is vital to ensure continued progress for our pupils. These needs will be identified and met as follows:

- 1) An induction session to be offered to all new staff where they begin to access an understanding of 'Total Communication'. It is the school's responsibility to identify the staff's training needs. The school will work with SALT and other external agencies with regard to training whether this is on site or off (courses).
- 2) Staff are responsible too, for identifying their own training needs and can apply to Senior Management to discuss relevant courses. This may be through the performance management structure or at any other appropriate time.

- 3) Parents are also offered training by SALT and the school works closely with our parent link advisor to facilitate this. A parent questioner is also regularly sent home to engage the needs of the wider parent body so as to ascertain future training needs.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be regularly monitored, and will be reviewed by the communication lead teacher/ senior management / head teacher and curriculum committee governors.

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