Total Communication Policy
Greenvale School

Mission Statement
Communication is fundamental to education and personal development. Good communication skills are essential for our students' emotional well-being and to enable them to fulfil their potential, be happy, build and maintain meaningful friendships and achieve maximum possible independence. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that everyone is aware of what provision is available and that there is consistency of communication across the school.

A Definition of Communication:
Communication is more than being able to speak or being able to put words together in the proper order. It is the ability to let someone know that you want or don't want something, to tell someone about an event, to describe an action and to acknowledge another person's presence. This can be done either verbally or non-verbally. It can be accomplished through gestures, vocalisations, sensory cues, objects of reference, signs, symbols or words.

Communication also implies a social situation between two or more individuals, sending or initiating the message and listening, to receive and respond. In communication exchanges, the role of the initiator and listener switches backward and forward. To be fully competent in these skills students need opportunities to practice them. Our job is to provide students with reasons and opportunities to communicate using a range of different strategies.

Total Communication:
Total communication makes use of a number of modes of communication such as signed, oral, auditory, and written and visual aids, depending on the particular needs and abilities of the students. Students at Greenvale are taught to communicate their ideas and emotions to others through their preferred means of communication such as symbols, Makaton signs, PECS, switches, speech, eye gaze, vocalizations and gestures. It enables them to express themselves creatively and imaginatively and to communicate with others effectively.

Aims

The overarching aim of Total Communication is to promote a consistent approach to communicating. The main aim of Total Communication contributes to the whole school aim which is to provide opportunities for all pupils to develop to the best of their ability as follows:.
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- ✓ Within the school, we aim to create an environment that both fosters and is responsive to each student's individual communication needs and skills.
- ✓ We aim to provide communication aids and experiences, particular to the needs of each individual as detailed in their Individual Education Programme.
- ✓ Opportunities for Total Communication will be available through all areas of the curriculum and cross-curricular activities.
- ✓ To enable each student to indicate their wants and needs.
- ✓ To provide opportunities to influence what happens to them in their environment by making choices and indicating preferences.
- ✓ To provide opportunities for social interaction by enabling pupils to communicate and interact with their peers and adults within their environment.
- ✓ To learn new concepts and ideas.

Communication at Greenvale

LSB:

The Learning Support Base provides each individual student with profound and multiple learning difficulties the opportunity to work on a one to one basis with a staff member on their appropriate forms of communication. The LSB works in close co-operation with the speech and language therapy team and, where appropriate, the wider health team to support. We provide communication strategies other than speech for the students we work with, and work closely with the class teams to support these strategies in order to make sure there is consistency throughout.

- To give pupils a means of active participation in motivating social situations.
- To work closely with the pupil's family.
- Communication group
- Training
- Working alongside the speech therapists
- Environment

Objects of Reference for PMLD students:

An Object of Reference (OOR) is a tangible (multi-dimensional, multi-sensory) 'symbol' which is used to represent a P.O.L.E. (Person, Object, Location or Event). Every student identified as working at an object of reference level has been provided with a transition bag and OORs for the key locations around the school. Matching door markers have been placed in all key areas to correspond to the object being used by the student. When the student arrives at their destination they are supported by a staff member to match the two objects of reference in order to reinforce/further their understanding.

Photographs:

Students who have progressed on from objects of reference, and have been identified as showing some understanding of coloured photographs, have been provided with a set of photographs when travelling around the school in order to aid their understanding and independence.

Coloured photographs are actively used to help students demonstrate their choices when choosing an activity/ object through either eye pointing or gesture.

Switches:

Voice output switches:

Switches can be programmed to make a vocal sound or word, when pressed. By achieving a response, students will learn through cause and effect, that an action produces a result. Repeated experiences, transferred to other situations, may enable the pupil to move from pre-intentional to an intentional stage of communication.

Tactile switches:

A tactile switch programme has been developed to help particular students to differentiate between two activities when making a choice, as well as to aid students with a visual impairment in their understanding of what each activity might be.

Wall switches:

Wall switches are present at key locations around the school to support the students' understanding of where they have come to. A visual aid is placed on the front of each wall switch (e.g. photograph) as well as a pre-recorded message telling them the name of the place.

Touch cues:
Touch cues are signals placed on the student's body to give a specific message. Touch cues should be used with our students who have profound and multiple learning difficulties, as well as potentially dual sensory impairments .Touch cues will help our students to anticipate events and interpret information from the environment. Touch cues help students gain control over their environment and provide a vehicle for communication between the student and staff member.

Eye gaze:
The LSB provides the opportunity for students who have been identified as relying on assistive and augmentative communication to make their voices heard in order to live more independent and integrated lives. Those students identified have the opportunity to use the Tobii eye gaze during a communication session in which they build their skills and understanding in order to

Intensive Interaction:
Intensive interaction is an approach to teaching the pre-speech fundamentals of communication to students who are still at an early stage of communication development. Opportunities are provided for those students' to work with a staff member on a one to one basis in a distraction free environment in the LSB.

Key environments around the school:
- Interactive Room
- Hydrotherapy pool –hydrotherapy theatre
- LSB

CSB:
The CSB is a highly structured environment specifically developed and maintained for students at Greenvale School with communication impairments. The majority of these students are with ASD. The CSB runs individual and group sessions which promote not only functional communication skills, but also give students the tools/systems in order for them to be more effective communicators. This is done by teaching them strategies and promoting processes which act as a template for them to use in different spheres. As well as this, the CSB supports students across the school with ASD by working with and supporting class teachers on a one to one basis and via small, focused series of training sessions.

Symbol Exchange Communication System (PECS)

P.E.C.S is an interactive communication system, which provides students with the skills required to successfully and appropriately communicate their needs and wants to a partner using a picture or symbol. It encourages the development of spontaneous communication and has six progressive phases or levels which develop the students' ability to communicate.

Objects of reference for ASD students

The use of objects of reference is most appropriate for ASD students who are not yet able to cope with more symbolic materials. They are used to help students understand what is going to happen next and therefore begin to learn to anticipate. Some children will begin to use objects of reference to make requests. At this point they are often ready to begin to learn to use the PECS.

Social stories:

Social stories are short descriptions of a particular situation, event or activity, which include specific information about what to expect in that situation and why. They can provide a student with ASD some idea of how others might behave in a particular situation. They can also introduce a new social skill. Social stories can be strengthened by using visual supports, such as symbols or illustrations.

Timetables

Timetables are a good way of helping create structure and routine across the whole day or part of a day. The aim of this is to take away uncertainty and help make school life more predictable for students with an ASD. Timetables allow students to make transitions more independently within the classroom and from one place in school to another. Timetables are presented to the students in a way that matches their preferred mode/level of communication. These may include Pictures, symbols, objects or words. Some students may need smaller bite sized pieces of information in regards to their day. These students have the use of Now/Then cards. They generally carry these around with them and again use their preferred mode/level of visual communication

Work plans/Schedules:

These are put in place for students in order for them to be able to visualise a beginning, the steps needed in between and the end of a task that contains more than one component. Where the timetable lets the students know of the overall task, a work plan informs the student of the task in hand. They are individualised and the student may use numbers, symbols, words, pictures or colours to indicate each step. This

can be used within a number of spheres such as completing a work task or taking part in structured play tasks. When using this, students are able to manage their own progress (within a task) and develop their levels of independent learning.

TEACCH

TEACCH focuses on altering the environment and using visual supports (timetables and schedules) to help provide structure, reduce stress and improve understanding. The key aims of TEACCH are to inform the students of What, When, Where and How. In doing so, this allows independence to be promoted and increases the levels of self-confidence within a person with ASD.

Colourful Semantics

Colourful Semantics is a simple programme designed to improve spoken sentence development. Grammar is not taught explicitly within the delivery of the programme, however, it is picked up by the children naturally due to the repetition of correct grammatical models provided by the adults delivering the programme .Once children master the basics, Colourful Semantics can be combined with Shape Coding to work on more complex skills such as past tense and future tense, sentence types and constructions. The basic idea of Colourful Semantics is to assign a colour to a particular part of a sentence. This way, children can be taught what a grammatically correct sentence sounds like using the added visual support. If a colour is missing from their sentence, then there is something wrong with it. They can use their visual information to repair it.

Travel Plans

At Greenvale we promote independence wherever possible and travel plans allow our students to be more so. They are work systems/plans/schedules that are specifically designed to aid a student travel from one place to another. As such they become portable and the student is encouraged to refer to it as they travel.

Objects of Reference for students with ASD

Depending on the student and exactly the same as objects of reference for students with PMLD, they give the student information

on the person, object, location or event. Generally objects of reference for students with ASD will be used to aid transitions from place to place (Location).

Communicate in Print:

Communicate in Print is a software package which is available on most school computers. As well as being used in the PECS, symbols are used to support understanding and to enable pupils to communicate their knowledge and understanding across the whole school and across the whole curriculum.

Makaton:

At Greenvale, signs are used to support spoken English and this is known as Makaton in which speech is encouraged and used with keyword signs as part of our Total Communication approach. Makaton uses signs, symbols and speech to help people communicate. Signs are used, with speech, in spoken word order. This helps provide extra clues about what someone is saying. Makaton is extremely flexible as it can be personalized to the students' needs and used at a level suitable for them. Using signs can help our students to:

- share thoughts, choices and emotions
- label real objects, pictures, photos and places
- take part in call and response activities and songs
- listen to, read and tell stories
- create recipes, menus and shopping lists
- write letters and messages

Speech and Language Therapy team
The speech and language therapy team provides consultation, advice, and support for the school staff and parents regarding communication. Staff and parents are supported to implement strategies identified and modelled by the speech and language therapists to support and develop communication.

This input may include the following:

1. All students, on starting at Greenvale, will have a communication assessment and from this a communication information document and recommendations provided.

2. Recommendations are made for the students to develop communication skills within the school and home environment. These are reviewed and updated on request from teachers or parents.

3. Working collaboratively with classroom staff to help them to differentiate the curriculum according to language levels.

4. Supporting teachers to ensure students have a functional and meaningful communication system in place which is used throughout the school day.

5. Providing whole school training on areas of communication that are raised as a high priority.

Assessment:
When a student first joins Greenvale School information is gathered and assessments are carried out where appropriate and information is shared with the school team. Students' progress is carefully monitored by the class team to ensure that systems used continue to be effective. The use of a "Total Communication" environment is encouraged. The communication devices and systems used are differentiated according to the students' needs. "How I communicate" charts are reviewed yearly by the class team to ensure consistency and to ensure that systems of communication used remain appropriate for the students. If changes need to be made the speech and language therapy team are consulted. When students leave Greenvale School they have either a report and Communication Passport to support transition written by the speech and language therapist.

Staff training and development:
There is regular training and updating of skills for all staff working at Greenvale School. Training is delivered by the Speech Therapist team, CSB Coordinator and the LSB coordinator. The following training should be available;
• Awareness of the policy.
• Training and updating in the communication methods.

Communication and computing

ICT is an extremely important means of increasing and consolidating communication skills and vice versa and every Scheme of work in the curriculum has very clear ICT links listed. Computer work, word processing, and switch work allow access to the curriculum and increases independent participation and communication for all students.

Communication in Print aids students with symbols to support reading, and also supports writing by producing symbols when the word is spelt correctly. IPads, digital cameras, PowerPoint and video all allow students to present information in a way that is accessible and interesting to students of all ages.

The School Environment

Classes are organised and the environment modified so that students can maximise their opportunities to communicate. Lessons, academic and social activities are planned so that pupils have realistic challenges, and fully address the communication targets. The use of symbols, switches, objects of reference, timetables, touch cues and signing by all staff are integral to the school. A number of our students also use communication books and electronic aids to maximise their potential for communication. The school environment is labeled in so many ways.

Resources:

The responsibility for the management of and distribution of resources is shared with the class teams, The Communication Base, The Learning Support Base and the Speech Therapist.

Responsibilities and evaluation:

The Total Communication group will have meetings on a regular basis to review the current communication needs of individual pupils within the school. Responsibilities for the implementation and reviewing of this policy lies with Lina Avila, in close liaison with Victoria Sharman, Aaron Collins and the Speech and Language Therapist. The Head teacher and governing body will also monitor and review this policy and in line with the School Improvement Plan with a view to future actions and development.

Spring Term 2015 Greenvale School

Document: Lina Avila
Staff share/shared work/ communication/ policy