

How we communicate

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 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.

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 Speaking and Listening 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.

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 the development of pupils' communication skills and whole staff training is provided as required.

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.

Boardmaker programme is used to produce symbols for use in PECS books, as visual aids in lessons, and as part of displays. Pupils can also type their own text into this programme so that their writing is accompanied by symbols if appropriate.

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.