

## **Policy Connections**

The policy should be read in conjunction with the Schemes of Work for English, Reading and Writing which set out in detail what pupils in different Key Stage ability ranges will be taught in relation to the programme of study for Spoken Language (which includes Speaking & Listening), and the Supplementary Guidance for Policies (covering Philosophy & Ethos, Policy Connections, Audience, Monitoring & Evaluation of subjects, Assessment, Recording & Reporting and Supporting Learning Beyond the School).

## **Aims and purpose of study**

The national curriculum for English (2014) reflects the importance of spoken language in pupil's development across the whole curriculum, underpinning the development of reading and writing. The quality and variety of language that pupils hear and speak are vital for developing their vocabulary and grammar and their understanding for reading and writing. Our purpose is to provide an environment, which actively promotes children's speaking and listening, language and communication skills and places language and communication awareness as one of the highest priorities in the school. Communication through speaking and listening, spoken and sign language, gestures, symbols and pictorial representations form the foundations of all learning and we aim to:

1. Enhance pupils' ability to communicate in a functional way in their environment to become successful communicators.
2. Enable pupils' to make sense of their world, both in understanding and expressing their wishes, needs and feelings.

In order to achieve these aims, the school needs to adopt a clearly understood approach, which does not leave language and communication development to chance, but instead provides consistency, clarity and the opportunity to measure individual progress. These aims are consistent with our school philosophy and take account of LA curriculum policy, National Curriculum Statutory guidance.

Spoken language (including speaking & listening), and communication is planned and delivered as outlined in the Schemes of Work for the subject/planning for English and as practical and appropriate elements throughout all curriculum areas. Language and communication development is a continual and cross-curricular activity and, as such, should be happening throughout the school day. Teachers are required to identify opportunities for broadening their preferred mode of communication (including language and social interaction) on medium term plans for all foundation subjects. However, opportunities to teach communication skills must also be planned for and taught discreetly and teaching should build on children's strengths in order to move them forward. Pupils have personalised learning outcomes linked to communication that are reviewed termly and linked to the Annual Review.

## **Language**

At the Loyne Specialist school, we recognise that language is not restricted to verbal expression and comprehension - it includes other forms of communication such as the use of body language, gesture, sign and symbols. The ability to communicate our thoughts,

---

feelings and wishes and to empathise with the thoughts, feelings and wishes of others is a fundamental skill, which should be developed in all pupils. Activities for developing language and communication should be based on exciting and multi-sensory approaches. Intervention programmes for language and communication should be informed by comprehensive assessment of a child's skills and are based on schemes such as Derbyshire Language Scheme and Welcomm.

There are opportunities during:-

- Teaching sessions, formal and informal, and general activities
- Discreet language projects such as the Top Tips box, Talk Together project and Talkabout.
- Social times, in the playground, drinks and lunch times and visits out of school
- Times of transition, arriving at school and going home
- Movement around the school

### **Speech & Language Therapists input into Language & Communication Programmes**

The role of the Speech & Language Therapist (SaLT) is complex and wide-ranging and addresses the following issues:

- Speech and Language Therapy is provided by NHS therapists and they have an identified caseload of pupils. The school also has an 'in house' speech and language therapist who also provides advice to staff about implementing a whole school approach to communication and support to pupils across school who are not on the NHS SaLT caseload
- Assessment, diagnosis and therapy is carried out in conjunction with school staff and parents/carers – working collaboratively through jointly agreed targets, strategies and approaches which will be relevant to both home and school environments
- SaLTs provide active support to consider the communication and language focus in the classroom in respect of both peers and school staff
- SaLTs provide education and training in all aspects of language acquisition and speech, language and communication difficulties related to the classroom and the curriculum
- A consultancy model of a SaLT working with staff is an important aspect of collaborative working to ensure school staff are more knowledgeable and confident in supporting pupils' communication difficulties
- In all cases, the SaLT will work with/observe a pupil to identify need and then advise staff on developing communication skills using a variety of techniques and resources. The role of the SaLT is therefore **not** to work 1:1 with the pupils but to ensure that everyone is promoting the effective development of communication skills as advised.
- At present, class teachers are also trained in ELKLAN; a specialist speech and language course for pupils with SLD.

### **Staff Communicating with Pupils at the Appropriate Level**

It is important to remember that children with learning difficulties need clear and simple messages and a total communication approach. When speaking to pupils with learning difficulties staff should keep language simple, emphasise the key words relating to the activity and use appropriate Makaton signs and visuals to help understanding. The tone of voice, speed and manner of body movements reflect the mood and attitude of the carer or professional communicating with the pupil e.g. Patience – or lack of it, boredom, happiness, expectation of success or failure. All pupils' key word understanding has been assessed and a colour coded, visual reference is available in each classroom to clearly and easily identify the level of understanding of each pupil, thus enabling staff to effectively support the pupil through the correct use of the verbal language level. Opportunities for learning are ensured if an adult has an appreciation of the pupil's level of communication and responds appropriately to communicate effectively with pupils. Staff should be mindful of the over-use of incidental language to the pupil, which is not suited to the pupil's level of understanding. Staff should always involve pupils in conversations relating to them and should never talk about pupils' negative behaviours in a front of other pupils, unless this is related to PSHE/ Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) Plan and a positive outcome is identified.

### **Body Cues**

A consistent means of communication using body gestures may be helpful to cue a pupil to respond or raise awareness of an activity about to happen. Such cues are particularly helpful for pupils with visual or physical difficulties, by helping them to learn routines and make sense of their environment. E.g. before moving a child – we should say 'I'm going to move you' and if necessary and reinforce this by a body cue.

### **Intensive Interaction**

Intensive interaction is an approach that supports a student's development of the 'Fundamentals of Communication' through interaction with an adult. Students who benefit from this approach should have time with an adult using these interaction strategies to support their early communication skills. These students will include younger pupils, pupils with Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) and pupils with a diagnosis of autistic spectrum condition and social communication difficulties.

### **Communication targets**

Targets for communication are set for all pupils for the Annual review. Targets are based on the outcomes highlighted in the Education Health Care Plan. Targets are set on a termly basis and previous targets are evaluated on the pupils personalised learning outcome plan which works towards achievement of the targets set at Annual Review. We aim to ensure that every child in school has been set specific and measurable language & communication targets and that these targets are monitored and evaluated on a regular basis. In setting targets, teachers liaise closely with Speech and Language therapists on a regular, planned basis and advisory teachers for hearing impaired / visually impaired (if relevant or accessible).

## **Augmentative & Alternative Communication**

Some pupils require access to Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems. Signs and symbols, photographs and objects of reference are an essential part of the day-to-day language and communication, which is taking place in school. It is important that there is consistency and continuity in the use of signing and symbols.

The following are guidelines, which should be understood by all staff. As guidelines, however, they are also open and flexible to intelligent, common sense interpretation:

### **Signing**

- The school's signing system is MAKATON. All staff should use Makaton signing at every opportunity.
- Where a Makaton sign is not available, BSL signs should be used. There may be BSL signers in school who can act as a resource for providing signs. As a general rule, those staff who are BSL signers should avoid confusing the two signing systems and use Makaton unless working with one of the few children in school who may be BSL signers themselves.
- Where pupils are working to develop their signing vocabulary, the signs should always be shared with parents.
- Whole class signing should be used to support all aspects of learning throughout the school day.
- Finger spelling alphabet – initial signs where appropriate should be used for children's' names.
- Signing should be clear and accessible to pupils. Attention should be paid to the language level of the individual. Sign only key words rather than whole sentences.
- Verbal expression, facial expression and the maximum use of cues to help the child understand should always accompany signing.
- Signing should be consistent to avoid confusion.
- Our current in house Speech and Language therapist is a qualified licensed Regional Makaton trainer and can support staff with delivery of Makaton through regular updates in briefing meetings and INSET training.

### **Symbols**

- The symbol system used throughout the school comprises Makaton symbols and Rebus symbols (Widgit - Communication in Print 2 is on most of the school's PCs and uses the Rebus symbols).
- If no symbol exists, then one can be made up and shared with all staff.
- Display work in the corridors and classrooms should, wherever possible and appropriate, have symbols and written descriptions. The symbols and written descriptions should be kept to a minimum and only contain key words. Please see guidelines available in Display Policy
- Symbols should always be placed at children's eye level. Children who have a visual impairment should have access to tactile representation.
- Consideration should be given to visual contrast of symbols. Also size, thickness, associated typeface and word size in proportion to the image should provide maximum clarity and fitness for purpose.

- Similar to signing, symbols should be in evidence in every class in the school to ensure consistency and continuity. However, the extent of the use of symbols has to be a decision for the individual style of the class team and the nature and ability of the children in the class.
- When using symbols to prepare a pupil for a following activity – the symbol should be presented in class and initially matched at the appropriate place e.g. For Multi Sensory Environment– use symbol & match/reinforce on arrival at the room.
- Symbols used on symbolic timetables should be removed following completion of the activity.
- PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) is used for some pupils. Consistency should be built into all contexts, aiming to develop independence.
- A visuals bank is available to all staff on the school network. This provides consistency in the use of symbols and photographs across school. The ‘Standardising Symbols Across School’ document highlights which symbols should be used.

### Photographs

The use of photographs is also an important part of the AAC used within school. Some children may respond better to photographs than to symbols or vice-versa due to their level of symbolic development. Photographs can be used in conjunction with symbols to help children understand the link e.g. showing a child the kitchen symbol and a photograph of the school cook. A further support to AAC is the use of real items (objects of reference) e.g. showing the child the symbol/photograph for the swimming pool and a pair of swimming trunks. The use of photographs is an effective home/school link for parents to know what special events may have happened at school.

Individual children will respond better to different approaches.

### Objects of Reference

The use of objects is a means by which pupils can be helped to make sense of their world and develop understanding of events. An object is presented to the child with accompanying language to prepare the child for the event that is to follow e.g. before pupil goes to the bus at home time, they are given a seat belt (which they take along with them) to hold and explore. Over a period of time, with consistent practice, the object of reference should cue the pupil to anticipate the activity to follow. Where possible the object of reference should be reinforced where and when the activity takes place e.g. plate to represent lunchtime could be taken to dining hall to be associated with the meal. Some objects of reference may need to be individualised to a pupil, but to ensure consistency throughout school the use of standardised objects of reference is recommended as follows.

*Objects of reference were agreed as follows by a working group of therapists, teachers and support staff*

<b>Day</b>	<b>Olfaction</b>	<b>Visual</b>	<b>Tactile</b>
Monday	Geranium	Red	Red silk flowers
Tuesday	Orange	Orange	Dried orange slices
Wednesday	Chamomile	Yellow	Chamomile tea bag
Thursday	Grapefruit	Green	Green bath pouf
Friday	Lavender	Blue	Dried Lavender

<b>Aspects of the curriculum</b>	
Literacy	Book
Numeracy	Wooden numeral
Work	Box
Swimming	Own kit
P.E.	Own kit
Circle time	Bangle
Music	Bells
R.E.	Candle
Sensory room	soft play matting
Cookery	Wooden spoon
ICT	Mouse/switch
Home/visits	Seat belt
Assembly	Button switch (Good morning friends)
Cycling	Bike keyring
Rebound Therapy	Trampoline matting
<b>Daily events</b>	
Playtime	Airflow ball
Toilet	Toilet bag
Dinner	Plate
Break	Cup
Unique Kidz	Purple fabric with logo

### **Switches and Hi-tech Communication Aids**

Where appropriate, pupils are assessed by Speech & Language therapists, Occupational therapists, Physiotherapists and staff, working collaboratively to involve external agencies where necessary to enable access to switches and hi-tech communication aids (e.g. Big Mak, Springboards, iPads and personal communication aids. etc.) These are identified in the Educational Health Care Plan if allocated to meet individual needs. Switch skills would be applied in a variety of contexts related to ICT and other aspects of the curriculum as relevant.

### **Eye-pointing and Eye-Gaze Technology**

For some pupils, their main method of communication will be through intentional use of eye gaze. Pupils are given opportunities to attend to and look at a stimulus which may include letters, words, pictures, symbols or objects and their visual range at this point may need to be developed or extended (left, right, top, down). As a pupil looks or gazes at a stimulus this is interpreted by staff as a 'want or like' and the pupil will then be offered the item that they have looked at. This can then lead into 'choosing' as pupils are encouraged to scan between several stimuli before fixing on one. There is a progression document to support the teaching of skills needed for developing eye gaze as a communication method.

### **Switching & Eye-Gaze Supporting Guidance**

Each pupil who use switches and / or eye gaze technology will have guidance highlighting specific and individual instruction on how best to support these pupils. Guidance will include positioning of seating, switches, screens to enable pupils to access this equipment most effectively.

### **Communication Champions**

Each class has an identified communication champion that meet regularly with the Communication lead and the in house Speech and Language Therapist. This is to support a consistent and effective approach for all our pupils as they progress through school.

### **Personalised Learning Plans and Positive Behaviour Support Plan**

All pupils in school have a Personalised Learning Plan. This gives information on a pupil's preferred method of communication and how they can be best supported. Some identified pupils have a Positive Behaviour Support Plan to enable all staff to understand pupils' needs and where appropriate this may reference how the child expresses likes and dislikes and how staff may interpret particular responses and behaviours. They may include information regarding physical difficulties and how best to promote the child's communication. The Personalised Learning Plans and Positive Behaviour Support Plan are up-dated for the child's annual review or when necessary throughout the year.

**Policy reviewed :**                   **May 2020**  
**Reviewed by:**                   **Emma Flynn and Sarah Wisniewski**  
**Review date:**                   **May 2021**

### **Bibliography**

Primary National curriculum for England (2013)  
SEN Code of Practice  
Edwards, S. (1999) *Speaking & Listening for All*: David Fulton Publishers  
Aherne, P. et al. (1990) *Communication for All*: David Fulton Publishers  
Grangewood School *Language and Communication Policy*  
Primary National Strategy Speaking, listening, learning: working with children in Key stages 1 and 2  
DfES  
ELKLAN: Speech and Language Support for Pupils with SLD