

Castle School Communication Policy April 2019

At Castle we believe that developing communication skills is fundamental to providing our students with an effective education. Developing our students' communication and interaction skills fundamentally changes and improves how they interact with the world, their families and their peers. As such we see communication as core to every part of our teaching and learning.

Making communication fun, and purposeful from the child's point of view, is a fundamental element of our approach. This helps the child want to communicate, and facilitates the building of successful staff-student relationships, helping all learning to progress easily.

Our school aims are to:

- Ensure every child can communicate in the easiest way that facilitates their interaction with those around them, whatever form that may be
- Ensure every child forms positive and happy relationships with their peers and the team around them
- Ensure every child progresses their communication skills, enabling them to gain more control and impact on the world around them
- Ensure all staff can communicate effectively with the children around them with whichever means the child needs
- Ensure all staff have the knowledge and confidence to extend students' skills
- Ensure many opportunities are created for the children to communicate through the day, in class, out of class and outside the school building

The school is currently developing its structures to incorporate the use of SCERTS, a framework designed to foster the development of social communication skills and emotional regulation skills across the curriculum.

To help deliver our teaching effectively we identify all students in one of the following categories:

- Social partners
 - Students benefitting from being taught the earliest conventions of communication and interaction, e.g. initiating interaction or requesting a desired item

- Language partners
 - Students benefitting from being taught how to maintain and extend interactions and how to express feelings and self-regulate through their communication skills
- Conversational partners
 - Students who benefit from using language in a wider range of forms and with a greater understanding of others' needs in conversation

Once identified in one of these categories targets and assessment will be focused on developing these skills and progressing onto the next category as soon as the student is able.

Teachers, with class teams, and where appropriate the support of senior leaders, speech and language therapists, multi-disciplinary team members and in liaison with parents will set regular communication targets and assess these through the term. The school moderates evidence regularly to ensure consistency and the progression of students' skills as they move between different classes.

Parents are involved through regular meetings, contact in home-school diaries and the annual review process. When appropriate ad hoc sessions can be set up to support parents including meetings with our speech and language therapy team.

All classes are expected in their layout to facilitate students to communicate independently, all staff members have regular training, and further communication training needs are identified through the performance review process.

Communication Methods in school

Students at Castle are enabled to use the most appropriate communication method for their needs. As well as speech these are some of the more commonly used methods and/or communication interventions in our school:

SIGNING

Makaton signing is a system of communication that uses a vocabulary of "key word" manual signs and gestures to support speech, It can be used to help the development of speech and language in children, or by adults as a means of functional communication for everyday use.

SYMBOL USE

Symbols are used to support understanding of language in visual timetables, visual schedules, now/next boards, activity boards. They can be used to encourage pupils to express their choices and to comment. Many students use

PECS, the Picture Exchange communication System, as a method of teaching early communication skills.

PECS is a specific communication system designed to encourage pupils to initiate communication. It involves exchanging a symbol or symbol strip with the communication partner.

A PECS board may be used for whole class activities rather than individual PECS books. The principle of selecting and exchanging a symbol or symbol strip is still used.

A communication book/board consists of symbols that a pupil will point to. These are useful for those pupils who have no difficulty initiating communication (ie they are keen to communicate) but who lack the physical ability or speech clarity to do so.

INTENSIVE INTERACTION

Intensive Interaction is an approach used to facilitate the development of social and communication abilities in people with severe learning difficulties based on the model of caregiver infant interaction.

It is a teaching approach developed by Dave Hewitt and Melanie Nind which has shown to be particularly effective in promoting communication and sociability in individuals with severe and complex learning difficulties.

Intensive Interaction is characterised by regular, frequent interactions between the practitioner and the learner, in which there is no focus on the task or outcome, but in which the primary concern is the quality of the interaction itself.

OTHER METHODS AND APPROACHES:

We use whatever system is right for the child. You may see a variety of augmentative or alternative communication strategies and devices in place, include high tech communication devices (including iPad based methods), communication boards, gesture, objects of reference and more.