



Villa Real School
together we achieve

Communications Policy

2019

Reviewed by: Jill Bowe

Date: May 2019

Signed and Adopted by the Governing Body:

Chair of Governors

Date: 22.05.19

Date to be reviewed: May 2021

Mission Statement

At Villa Real School we believe that becoming a competent communicator is key to our pupils/students achieving success within their school, personal and adult life. As such, communication is at the core of all our work at Villa Real and is embedded within the Curriculum and the wider school day. Developing communication skills is the responsibility of all staff and they should have the knowledge, skills, support and training to ensure that all pupils/students reach their communicative potential.

Aims

- Provide the basis for a whole school 'Total Communication' approach
- Define each staff member's role in developing communication
- Outline some of the approaches to support communication used within the School
- To promote collaborative working between school staff, and outside agencies
- To become recognised as a Communication Friendly School

Roles and Responsibilities

Management Team

- To ensure staff adhere to the Communication Policy
- To ensure that all staff have basic communication training in a range of communication strategies as part of their induction
- To support staff to develop their knowledge and skills of communication strategies
- To have an oversight and understanding of the range of communication strategies used within school
- To identify funds for purchasing resources and equipment and for accessing relevant training

School Communication Working Party

- To provide regular in house communication training via the ELKLAN plan
- To work collaboratively with the class team to devise and monitor communication targets
- To work collaboratively with parents and carers to help them support and develop their child's communication within the home environment
- To facilitate good home/school links
- To provide a comprehensive assessment of each pupil's/student's speech, language and communication strengths and needs on admission to the School, when transitioning between key stages and in preparation for their transition to adulthood
- To monitor and support progression of pupils'/student's communication skills
- To provide individual, small group and whole class direct intervention as deemed appropriate by the School speech and language therapist
- To manage and prioritise the School caseload
- To contribute to the Annual Review process
- To work collaboratively with the NHS SALT team
- To extend PODD Training

Class Teacher

- To adhere to the School Communication Policy
- To integrate communication throughout the School day
- To work collaboratively with the School Communication Team and/or NHS SALT to devise and monitor communication skills
- To provide regular opportunities for communication, allowing pupils/students to maintain and progress their communication skills
- To attend relevant training
- To ensure necessary resources are available throughout the School day
- To keep communication aids in good working order and to report any losses or breakages promptly to the communication team or IT staff
- To ensure all pupils/students have a communication profile
- To ensure all relevant information and resources are passed over at transition
- To give the communication rep time to hand over relevant information from the communication meeting
- To inform the School communication working party and/or NHS SALT of other relevant agencies e.g. the sensory support service who may be working with that pupil/student

Support Staff

- To adhere to the School Communication Policy
- To provide regular opportunities for communication, allowing pupils/students to maintain and progress their communication skills
- To attend relevant training
- To work as part of the class team to maintain communication resources
- To work collaboratively with the School communication team and/or NHS SALT to promote communication throughout the day

Total Communication

Effective communication is about more than just spoken language. It incorporates body language, facial expression, gestures and tone of voice. It may also include more formal modes of alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) including; sign language, sign supported English, symbol communication and high or low tech communication aids. At Villa Real School we aim to be a 'total communication' environment, this means that we recognise and respond to all communicative attempts in whatever form. Where the method of communication being used is not the most effective or appropriate we will work with the pupil/student to develop their communication skills. We also recognise that challenging behaviour is a form of communication and when this is an issue we again work with our pupils/students to support them to use a more effective method of communication. See Behaviour Policy for more details. Being a total communication environment also means that we will adapt our communication styles to best support the pupils/students we work with.

Approaches to Supporting Communication

The approaches used to support communication are individualised to each pupil's/student's communication needs. Below are some of the approaches that may be used within the School. Training and support on using these approaches will be offered to staff on a needs led basis.

- Time Tables: Some pupils/students within school will have an individual timetable. Using visual supports to backup spoken language has many advantages. The use of visual planning supports difficulties with respective language and increases independence. All pupils/students at Villa Real should begin their school day by planning in a way that is meaningful for them. This may take the form of objects of reference, photos, Communicate in Print (CIP) symbols or a written only and may be now/ then, half day or full day depending on the child's level of understanding. It is important that we plan for regular activities so that if there is an unexpected change we have a format for explaining this change that is familiar to the pupil/student. Pupils/students should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own timetables
- Use of Symbols: We predominantly use Widgit Rebus Symbols (CIP). It is important that the use of symbols is as consistent as possible across all resources. As a general default all symbols for timetables and PECS are black and white with the text on top. The font for symbols should be Sassoon CRInfant
- Communication Aids: there are a number of different communication aids used by pupils/students within school. These include low tech options such as communication books up to high tech aids such as eye gaze systems. With all communication aids it is important that pupils/students are encouraged to use them frequently in motivating and purposeful activities. These are the voice of the pupil
- PODD – Pragmatic Organised Dynamic Display - A way of organising vocabulary for communication at any time. PODD uses Boardmaker PCS colour symbols, also available in high contrast to support the visual difficulties of individuals. The intervention used with PODD is aided language stimulation. This is a strategy by which adults or communication partners use the system to speak to the individual, (pointing and saying the symbol label) to teach them what they could say, when to say it and who to say it to. In PODD communication books and page sets for high tech systems (windows and iOs) vocabulary is organised according to communication function and conversational discourse requirements. Aided language development is supported through the provision of multiple page sets (communication books). The range of page sets reflects a developmental process as reported in the literature on both typical and aided language development. Page sets are selected to enable the use of aided language stimulation that leads the individual's development. Individual requirements (skills and lifestyle) are taken into account in the design. This includes a range of access methodologies and visual presentations which allows potential access to the systems by **any** individual with or

without physical and sensory difficulties. The routine placement and availability of vocabulary assists to develop automaticity, language learning and initiation. PODD is being used successfully with individuals with a range of disabilities including Autism, Cerebral Palsy, syndromes and degenerative conditions across a number of countries including Australia, America, Sweden, France, Norway, Denmark and the UK.

- PECS: The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is a unique augmentative/alternative communication intervention package for individuals with autism spectrum disorder and related developmental disabilities. It focuses on developing spontaneous functional communication. See the ASD policy for more detail.
- Makaton: Makaton is a form of sign supported English. It is used alongside speech and can support understanding of spoken language as well as being used by pupils/students as a form of expressive language
- SCERTS: SCERTS is a multi-disciplinary framework that focuses on building competence in social communication, emotional regulation and transactional support. It is not a specific approach, but rather a way of assessing, goal setting and monitoring progress in the areas of social communication and emotional regulation. It also supports collaborative working between professionals and families
- Colourful Semantics: Colourful semantics is an approach used to help pupils/students develop their understanding and use of grammar. It links different elements of a sentence to different colours and question words. For example, subject, 'who?', words e.g. 'The boy' are yellow and verbs, 'doing what?' words are pink. See guidelines for the use of symbols in County Durham School. Colourful semantics is most effective when used in a meaningful context, for example when used as part of a literacy programme or when related to personal experiences
- Social Skills Teaching: The aim of social skills teaching is to enable pupils/students to interact successfully within the wider community. Effective social skills teaching will incorporate direct teaching of social skills with real life opportunities to practice these skills and reflect on performance. Social skills teaching that is not directly linked to practical application of these skills is unlikely to be effective
- Social stories: Social stories are used to describe a situation, skill or concept. They have a set formula as to what type of sentence they should include. They do not directly aim to change behaviour, but it is hoped that by increasing a pupil's/student's understanding they may be able to behave in a more socially acceptable way

These are just some of the approaches that may be used and should not be viewed as an exhaustive list. These approaches may be suggested by the SALT following assessment. Wherever possible SALT intervention will be integrated into pupils'/students' timetables and should not be viewed as a standalone activity that only takes place during structured sessions. Spontaneous and naturally occurring opportunities for developing communication skills should be utilised wherever possible.

The School are training staff in ELKLAN in order to develop supportive practice and become a Communication Friendly School.

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Senior Management Team to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the School.

This policy needs to be read in conjunction with the;

- ASC Policy
- Behaviour Policy