

Haymerle Communication Policy

This document is a statement of the aims, principles and strategies for communication at Haymerle Primary School. All new staff are given a copy of the policy to highlight the communication ethos at Haymerle School.

Haymerle school is a primary ages special school that offers support for pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder who have associated social, communication and learning difficulties. Many pupils at Haymerle have a communication and interaction difficulty.

Communication underpins all learning and effective communication skills are essential for children's development and independence. Therefore we are committed to providing a 'total communication' environment to our pupils. This means we will make use of all of the methods of communication that are available to the child.

Aims

Haymerle School's aims are to:

1. Adopt a 'total communication approach' throughout school, where pupils have access to their own means of communication throughout the school day.
2. Develop means of communication appropriate to each child's individual needs through working towards specific, measurable, attainable and realistic targets.
3. Create opportunities for communication throughout the curriculum to enable each child to communicate to the best of the abilities.
4. To be competent communicators.

Pupils Starting School

On entry to the school, the Speech and Language Therapist team (SALT) will work closely with the class teacher to baseline the pupil's current communication abilities and set appropriate goals.

All pupil's communication needs are assessed by the SALT in the school setting using a combination of individual assessment, classroom observation and liaison between staff and parents/carers.

At Haymerle, education and SALT work closely together in the following ways:

- SALT will conduct observations in classes, share good practice and negotiate further communication targets within the classroom setting.
- All staff are supported in helping pupils to generalise new skills being taught outside of structured sessions.
- Specific training for staff depending on individual needs as well as making sure that all members of the school community receive ongoing training in the use of the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) as it is a system used universally at Haymerle. This consists of two day PECS training when starting at the school and refreshers when needed. The school works closely with the SALT and the consultant/s from Pyramid Education.
- Communication targets are embedded across all areas of the curriculum and the SALT work with the staff to provide ideas as to how to do this.
- Multi-disciplinary team meetings are held with school staff, SALT, Occupational Therapy (OT) and Educational Psychology (EP) ensure all professionals are updates on the means of

communication for pupils that they work with. SALT work jointly with other professions in the school to ensure this is carried out.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The importance of monitoring and evaluating a pupil's progress is central to their development. As with all communication methods, regular opportunities to use these are vital for the pupil to achieve success. Signs, symbols, photographs, objects of reference and communication aids will **always** be available to the pupils, with appropriate support from the staff. This includes:

- Within the classroom
- Around the school
- In the community

The designated SALT will monitor the pupil's progress over the course of the year. The class teacher will continuously monitor the progress of each student through filling in appropriate documentation. This includes planning, IEPs, PECS record sheets, Intensive Interaction record sheets and Zones of Regulation across the day.

Communication Methods in School

At Haymerle school we adopt a 'total communication' approach using a range of alternative and augmentative methods of communication to support and encourage two way communication and speech and language development. These methods are not used in isolation and pupils may use several of these methods.

1) Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

A structured approach whereby children will learn to exchange a photograph or symbol to make a request or comment, depending on the stage they are working at. The use of visuals provides valuable support to help pupils understand and use language. The classroom staff will provide symbols and photographs as appropriate.

Further PECS strategies are used within the classroom to support student's behaviour. For example, visual schedules, 'Let's Make a Deal' positive behaviour reinforcement system, 'break' and 'wait' cards.

2) Makaton Signing

Some basic Makaton signs are used alongside speech, PECS and other communication methods in order to support pupil's understanding of language.

3) Objects of Reference (OOR)

Pupils who find it challenging to communicate through picture/symbols may use Objects of Reference to aid their communication and understanding of language. An object of reference will be a real object that represents an activity or place and pupil's will be transitioned using this object to support their understanding.

4) High Tech Communication Aids

If the need arises, a range of voice output communication aids are available for use at the school and can be attained through onwards referrals if appropriate. This includes iPads with communication programmes installed, such as Proloquo2Go.

5) TEACCH

At Haymerle, we have adopted the TEACCH approach and it is an integral part of communication with the pupils.

Developed in the early 1970's by Eric Schopler, the TEACCH approach includes a focus on the person with autism and the development of a program around this person's skills, interests and needs. The major priorities include centring on the individual, understanding autism, adopting appropriate adaptations and a broadly based intervention strategy building on existing skills and interests.

Structured teaching is an important priority because of the TEACCH research and experience that structure fits the 'culture of autism' more effectively than any other techniques that we have observed. Organising the physical environment, developing schedules and work systems, making expectations clear and explicit and using visual materials have been effective in developing skills and allowing people with autism to use these skills independently.

An important part of any TEACCH curriculum is developing communication skills, pursuing social and leisure interests and encouraging people with autism to pursue more of these opportunities independently.

SALT and OT are involved alongside class teachers, working together in order to provide opportunities to encourage communication within the school.

6) Intensive Interaction

Intensive interaction is a framework designed to support pupils in the early levels of their development. The aim is to develop the 'Fundamentals of Communication' including skills such as interacting with others, social responsiveness, eye contact and joint attention. Intensive Interaction is a fun process that can also help pupils develop their communication abilities and enjoy the company of their communication partner.

7) Zones of Regulation

Zones of Regulation is a strategy used at Haymerle to support pupils with self-regulation, understanding and expressing emotions. It is a colour-based system used to create a visual structure representing our feelings and energy levels. Pupils are encouraged to 'Check in' regularly throughout the day, whereby they will identify the zone that they are currently in, either independently or with support from an adult. Individual toolkits are created for every pupil, identifying strategies and approaches to help children move between zones or remain in the zone that they are already in.

Some pupils at Haymerle have individual 'Zones of Regulation Grab Bags' which are used if the pupil needs time outside of their classroom to regulate. These bags contain motivators and calming strategies which are specific to the child in order to support them in their regulation. The children will be supported to 'check in' during their time outside the classroom, in order to monitor how they are feeling and when it is an appropriate time to transition back into the classroom.

8) Attention Autism Programme

The Attention Autism Programme is an intervention designed by Gina Davies. Attention skills underpin pupils ability to develop play, social interaction and communication skills. Classroom staff are supported by SALT to carry out Attention Autism sessions regularly within the classroom and adapt these sessions to their current curriculum.

9) Colourful Semantics

Colourful Semantics is an approach created by Alison Bryan. It aims to support pupils in developing their grammar, understanding of the meaning of words and often understanding of language in general. It is a colour based system that pupils can use to create sentences, allowing them to comment on what they can see.

Home/School Communication

At Haymerle, we aim to have clear and effective communication with all parents and carers and the wider community. Effective communication enables us to share our aims and values through keeping parents well informed about school like. This reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting the school.

Good communication between the school and the home is essential and children achieve more when schools and parents/carers work together. We send a newsletter home to parents/carers at the end of each term. It contains general details of school events and activities and a copy is forwarded by email as arrange. The newsletter is also available on the school website. Other letters of general nature are also shared when necessary.

All children have a home-school diary. This enables parents/carers to record a wide range of information that they wish to share regularly with the teacher. Teachers will also use the home-school diary to record achievements and as a regular channel for communication with parents.

The school encourages parents to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity. Staff meet with parents as soon as it is possible. All pupils have a person centred annual review to evaluate and, if necessary, develop an action plan regarding all aspects of the child's life. Representation from all professional services working with the family attend also.

We arrange three parent meetings for parents/carers across the year. These are held during the school day. These meetings help to explain areas of our curriculum and discuss progress.

The SALT team provide regular coffee mornings for parent carers to attend virtually or in person when possible. They provide information regarding the communication strategies that we use at Haymerle and explain how these can be used at home as well. The coffee mornings are a great opportunity for parents to ask questions, get advice and share ideas with one another and the SALT team.

If a child is absent from school and we have had no indication of the reason, the school secretary will contact a parent (by telephone if possible) to find out the reason for the absence.

Safeguarding

The ability to communicate one's needs and sense of wellbeing is central to safeguarding. As such, we place a lot of emphasis on helping children to develop appropriate skills in requesting **'help'**. The ability to communicate with other in various circumstances and situations is central to making our school a safe and secure place for all. As a 'safe school' we encourage communication. Staff also receive regular safe guarding training and are aware of safe guarding protocols.

Professional Development

Identifying training needs of staff is vital to ensure continued progress for our pupils. These needs will be identified and met as follows:

- 1) An induction session to be offered to all new staff where they begin to access an understanding of 'Total Communication'. It is the school's responsibility to identify the staff's training needs. The school will work with SALT and other external agencies with regard to training, whether this is onsite or off site (courses).
- 2) Staff are responsible too, for identifying their own training needs and can apply to Senior Management to discuss relevant courses. This may be through the performance management structure or at any other appropriate time.
- 3) Parents are also offered training by SALT and the school works closely with our parent link advisor to facilitate this. Following the success of the speech and language teletherapy service during school closures in 2020/2021, effective methods have been developed to provide support to parents and carers in using communication methods at home.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be regularly monitored and will be reviewed by the communication lead teacher/senior management/head teacher/SALT team and curriculum committee governors.

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