Communication Policy

Aims

This document policy is a statement for the development of communication at Peak School.

It outlines the aims, principles, and strategies for communication at Peak School.

All new staff are given a copy of the policy to read and sign to highlight the communication ethos at Peak School. We provide education for young people aged 3 to 19 who have a range of special educational needs. In line with their diagnoses, all pupils at Peak School will have difficulties with communication and interaction. Communication underpins all learning and therefore we are committed to providing a total communication environment.

Peak School's aims are to:

• Adopt a communication enabling environment throughout school, where young people have access to their own means of communication throughout the day.

• Develop means of communication appropriate to each young person's individual needs.

• Create opportunities for communication throughout the curriculum and to enable each young person to communicate to the best of their ability.

Young People Starting at School

On admission to Peak School, each young person will undergo an audit of their communication skills by the class team through formative and summative assessment during their first full term in school. This will look at all aspects of speech, language, and communication. The outcomes of the assessment enable the class team with support from SaLT to provide appropriate support for them to develop to their full potential. A young person's communication needs are assessed within the school setting using a combination of individual assessments, classroom observations and liaison between staff and family. The young people's needs are best met when education, care and the Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) work closely together in the following ways:

• SALT observation in classes to share good practice and negotiate further communication targets within classroom setting.

• Training opportunities are provided by the Speech and Language Therapist to all staff to raise awareness of best practice.

• Staff to be supported in generalisation of new skills being taught.

• Speech and Language Therapist to deliver specific training according to individual young person's needs.

• Communication targets are embedded across all areas of the curriculum.

Monitoring and Evaluation

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

- Within the class

- Around school/home environment

- In the community

If a therapy program is deemed appropriate, the Speech and Language Therapist will monitor the young person's progress termly, reporting overall progress against the targets set in the young person's annual review. The class teacher is to continually monitor and evaluate pupil's progress in the area of communication.

Communication Methods used at Peak School

At Peak School, our aim is to provide a total communication environment. We use a number of interventions to support the young person's Speech, language, and communication needs. We do not follow one approach as the needs of the young people vary. AAC can be defined as follows: 'Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) refers to any means by which an individual can supplement or replace spoken communication. Communication may range from any movement or behaviour that is observed and interpreted by another person as meaningful, to the use of a code agreed upon between people where items have specific meanings, i.e. a language. We all use some form of augmentative communication in our daily life, for example, gesture (waving goodbye) and graphic symbols (washing label symbols, road signs). AAC is both a means of accessing an educational curriculum and language in its own right. It is appropriate for individuals who have difficulty with receptive and expressive language due to physical, sensory or learning disability. It provides an opportunity to attain emotional, social, educational and vocational goals.' (ACE Centre Advisory Trust).

Intensive Interaction Principles

Intensive interaction is an approach designed to help people at early stages of development, people who have autism, people who have severe, profound or complex learning difficulties. Intensive interaction works on early interaction abilities- how to enjoy being with other people – to relate, interact, know, understand and practice communication routines. Intensive interaction teaches and develops the 'Fundamentals of communication', attainments such as use and understanding of eye contacts, facial expressions, vocalisations leading to speech, taking turns in exchanges of conversation and the structure of conversation.

Makaton

 Each one of us use gestures, actions and body language to communicate with others. Using our hands to add meaning when we talk helps us to get our message across. For young people who find it difficult to communicate verbally, gestures and actions might become a tool for

communicating their needs and opinions to others. We can support young people to extend their natural vocabulary of gestures, actions and body language by teaching them new signs to represent the items and activities that are important to them. At Peak School we use Makaton. Makaton is used alongside the spoken key words to the young people to aid their verbal language development and support their understanding.

Symbol Use

At Peak School we use Communicate In Print3 in colour with the young people. Symbols are used throughout the school environment and in the community. Once the symbols are learnt by the young person, it is imperative that the same size and the same symbol picture are used consistently, as this prevents the young person from having to relearn the symbol. All symbols are to have the written word underneath as this support's the young person with their early literacy skills. A consistent font is used on symbols. Young people who use symbols as a means of expressive communication must have access to their symbols at all times so they can initiate interactions.

Visual Aids Many of the young people at Peak School are supported by the use of visual aids. Visual aids such as timetables, now and next boards, choice boards, transition cards, symbol cards aid the young person's understanding of the structure of the day and what they are being asked to do. Areas within the setting should be clearly defined with symbols. All visual aids are to be made using Communicate InPrint and Widgit online.

High Tech AAC

Some young people will be assessed for suitability of accessing a high tech AAC throughout their placement at Peak School, High Tech AAC is not necessarily the right approach for all young people. Detailed assessment with the Speech and Language Therapist will determine suitability for a device. During the assessment advice will be gained from the local NHS AAC hub and AAC specific companies. Throughout the assessment, liaison will take place with the young person's family, education staff and any other named professional known to the individual.

Any young person that has a high tech AAC device will need the functions on the device 'modelling' to them throughout the day. It is imperative that this happens as it is how the student learns the functions of the communication device. When a young person receives a high tech AAC training will be provided by the local NHS AAC hub/ AAC specific companies/speech and language therapist, to ensure all staff and parents/carers are familiar with the device. Any young person using a High Tech AAC must also have a Low Tech AAC back up.

Attention Autism

Attention Autism is an intervention model designed by Gina Davies, Speech and Language Therapist. It aims to develop natural and spontaneous communication through the use of visually based and highly motivating activities. The primary objective is that the sessions are fun and "offer and irresistible invitation to learn"! We are using this approach with the young people to develop their concentration and to improve their joint attention, as well as supporting the increase of non-verbal and verbal communication through commenting.

Colourful Semantics

Colourful Semantics is an intervention tool created by Alison Bryan (Speech and Language Therapist). It uses colour coding to help the young person learn the important elements of a sentence, and how to join them in the correct order. This intervention aims to develop/consolidate the understanding of "wh" questions i.e. Who?, What?, Where? Colourful Semantics uses specific colours and shapes. At Peak School, we use the Colours and shapes as recommended by Alison Bryan. Opportunities should be built into the curriculum to facilitate students using Colourful Semantics

Transition

Transition is an important part of a young person's life. At Peak School we recognise that it can be a challenging time for students and their families and we support them to prepare for the change in classroom or setting. Information on the young person's communication skills will be transferred between classes and settings. The young person will have a communication passport and current targets will be shared with the new teacher/setting. At Peak School, we prepare young people for transition through a variety of means, e.g. visits, social stories, discussions and photos as appropriate.

Policy into Practice

To ensure that the communication policy is put into practice we carry out the following:

• Regular staff training on communication and specific interventions used within the setting

• Regular meetings between SLT and school and families.

• Regular monitoring of the use of the policy including use of Progress 5 data

• Yearly annual review reports to contribute to the EHCP process, reporting on the student's communication skills, progress made and next steps.

• Wherever possible, statutory requirements of an ECHP plan, will be facilitated and implemented accordingly.

• Keep up to date of developments on communication (CPD)

Role of Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team

The Headteacher and the Senior Leadership Team will:

● Ensure all staff are aware of and comply with this policy; Policy to be initially read within the staff's induction training.

● provide leadership and vision in respect of equality;

● provide guidance, support and training to all staff;

● monitor the effectiveness of this policy by; observations, learning walks, ensuring that pupil's opinions are heard through discussions and questionnaires.

Role of the named Speech and Language Therapist

The named Speech and Language Therapist will:

 • work closely with the communication lead.

• be accountable for standards in this area.

• monitor standards by:

• monitoring pupil plans, observations of practice, discussions with pupils.

• provide guidance and support to staff and contribute to Progress 5 data

• keep up to date with new developments.

Role of the Education Staff

The education staff will:

• develop pupils' communication skills and vocabulary across the curriculum. To ensure that lesson planning is differentiated for a young person's communication needs by providing appropriate resources, for example; symbols, use of different coloured paper as directed, different size fonts

• ensure all students have access to individual communication systems in order to have full access to lessons, in close liaison with teaching/support staff.

• ensure that pupils have access to AAC throughout the day.

 • be a model as a communicator.

• provide meaningful contexts for each pupil to develop as a communicator.

Role of Pupils

Pupils will:

• be encouraged to work in partnership with Peak School by communicating preferences, making decisions and exercising choice in relation to their AAC system.

 • participate effectively in activities.

• Where possible, participate in discussions concerning progress and attainment with support