



COMMUNICATION POLICY



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Approved	Full Governors	22.06.22	2 years	June 2024	Recommended	AHT SEND

Introduction

Lampard Community School is a special school for students with a complex profile of need, with significant needs in the area of communication and interaction. Many have a diagnosis of Autism and/or needs relating to speech, language and communication (SLCN).

The ability to communicate and listen is fundamental to successful learning and to social development. Communication is embedded within all areas of our school curriculum and staff promote functional communication skills throughout the day.

Aims

Our school aims are:

1. To create opportunities for communication throughout the curriculum and enable each student to develop communication skills to the best of their ability.
2. To promote a Total Communication approach throughout school, to find and use the right combination of communication methods for each person.
3. To provide a stimulating educational environment that supports understanding, communication and promotes independence.
4. To adapt and support a variety of means of communication most appropriate to meet needs.

Assessment of student's language levels

Every student is baselined using TALC (Test Of Abstract Language Comprehension) and progress is reviewed annually. The TALC is an assessment that looks at children's understanding of abstract language through verbal reasoning. By carrying out this assessment at the beginning of the year it gives tutors an overview of their student's language level ability to enable them to communicate with students in an accessible way and accurately plan targeted support.

Ways to support Communication used around school

Makaton/British Sign Language (BSL)

Makaton is a form of sign supported English and supports both expressive and receptive language. Key words are signed. BSL (British Sign Language) is also used to support the needs of individual students, where appropriate.

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Symbols

Communicate in Print is a software package which is available on school computers. Symbols are used consistently across the curriculum and school to support understanding and to enable students to communicate their knowledge and understanding.

Communication key fobs

Some students may have a communication key fob which include symbols to help them communicate; the symbols are regularly reviewed and updated where necessary.

Objects of Reference

An object of reference is a real object that represents an activity or place. This is most appropriate for those students who are not yet able to cope with more symbolic materials.

Communication Passport

Each student has a communication passport which is updated regularly. The passport outlines what students find helpful or not helpful in communicating with them. The passport is created with the student and is available for all staff to see.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication aids (AAC)

Alternative communication refers to systems that replace speech as a means of communication. Some students may have an iPad with communication software such as Proloquo2go loaded on it.

Augmentative communication refers to the use of any aids or techniques that supplement existing vocal or verbal communication skills. This includes Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) or Makaton.

Thought Books

If appropriate a student can be provided with a Thought Book in which they are encouraged and supported to express and regulate their emotions. Visual strategies such as Comic Strip Conversation and emotional scaling are used within the Thought Books.

Speech and Language Therapy

The Speech and Language Therapy service (SALT) is provided through Children and Family Health Devon. Referrals can be made if a functional difficulty is present. We work closely with the therapists to support and deliver programmes to support students' communication skills. Therapists will identify goals and liaise with parents/carers to agree strategies for the home environment.

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The school can access input from a Speech and Language Therapist to advise on programmes, resources and provide training as needed.

We have a number of skilled Teaching Assistants who deliver speech and language interventions as part of our 'Personal Programmes' (targeted provision) either in a small group or 1:1. Any targets or strategies outlined in a Speech and Language report are put in place by the class tutor and delivered as part of the everyday provision where appropriate.

Other external agencies/professionals

We work closely with colleagues from a variety of advisory and support agencies such as the Educational Psychologist, Advisory Teachers for Hearing / Visual Impairments and the Communication and Interaction Team. Parent/carers will always be consulted if staff feel the involvement of an external agency is required and they will be part of the consultative process.

General approaches and strategies used throughout the school

We use a variety of approaches and strategies across the phases and school, employing more specific strategies where required. As a minimum, the following will be in place:

- Visual support, cues, schedules etc
- Use of Makaton for key words
- Consistently used Communicate in Print symbols throughout curriculum areas
- Staff will use reduced and chunked language, giving additional processing time
- Access to assistive technology and programmes such as Clicker 6, Dragon Software, I pads,
- Pre – teaching of key topic vocabulary
- Staff will model effective communication skills
- Preparation for transitions
- Display boards and working walls to support understanding
- Varied ways of recording learning (such as recording on iPads)
- Use of word mats / webs
- Communication Passports which will be updated regularly

Additional interventions staff may put in place within the class environment/timetable

- Approaches such as Comic Strip Conversations, Social Stories, Colourful Semantics, Drawing to Communicate
- Personal Programme interventions with TAs including Social Communication groups, Speech and Language, Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning, Soundwrite, Language for Thinking and Talkabout.
- Emotion keyrings/cards, photographs to aid understanding
- Specialised learning approaches such as TEACCH

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This list is not exhaustive, the document ‘Creating an environment that supports understanding, communication and independence’ which focuses on the SPELL Structure (Structure, Positive, Empathy, Low Arousal and Links) shares additional strategies used around the school.

Social Communication and skills

Students with communication difficulties may need to be taught how to interact appropriately with adults and other children. Social communication skills are promoted throughout the curriculum through paired and small group work and also at breaks/lunchtimes. Social communication skills can be delivered as part of a Personal Programme in order to work towards outcomes within the students’ Education, Health and Care Plan.

Links through the curriculum

Communication skills are central to both social development and academic progress. At Lampard School, we have developed our curriculum to promote and facilitate communication across all aspects of school life and all subject areas.

Communication and Language:

From our youngest students to our oldest, Communication and Language skills are taught both explicitly and implicitly. Speaking and listening skills are modelled and practiced. Vocabulary is built up over time, with pre-teaching opportunities used as an integral part of increasing core understanding. Staff are skilled practitioners in using specific TEACCH, Total Communication and/or Speech and Language Therapy-based approaches to support the communication abilities of each individual student.

Literacy:

Reading: Embedding a love of quality literature is central to our ethos at Lampard School. We ensure our students access a wide range of stories, and we use our daily reading time to practise new vocabulary in our spoken language. Through our school library and resources accessed through Devon Schools Library Service, we provide books which are accessible through large print, symbols supporting text, and audio books. For those students not making progress in the area of reading we have also developed an “Access To Reading” policy.

Writing: We encourage our students to engage with writing across the curriculum. For those needing extra support, we can offer handwriting support through programmes such as Writedance, High Five Emergent Writers and Handwriting without Tears as interventions. We also support students in their fine motor skills development through, where appropriate, hand/wrist strengthening activities and bilateral activities. Wherever possible, we encourage the use of alternative ways of recording learning if a student requires this.

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Colourful Semantics is a strategy that is used in classes to support oral expressive language and the understanding of sentence construction.

ICT:

ICT provides valuable support in developing communication skills and most students respond positively. Using appropriate software, students can learn to communicate their ideas and thoughts. We try to integrate ICT throughout our curriculum and make use of software such as Clicker 6.

Physical Development:

Students experience a wide range of movement and physical activities at Lampard through their PD lessons, Daily Physical Activity sessions, Outdoor Learning activities and lunchtime activities. The structured lessons help to develop social skills (for example turn taking, team games). Communication is an integral part of the lesson as students learn to respond to instructions and each other.

Specialist TA for Total Communication

This new position was appointed in May 2021. The role of this senior teaching assistant is to provide classroom support and/or guidance in removing barriers to communication and to provide interventions to support communication needs. They also act as a communication mentor for staff and provide mentoring support for children with specific barriers to communication. School Values signs have been symbolised and displayed across the school and key vocabulary is being symbolised as part of the curriculum planning. The school website has an updated, more prominent section relating to Total Communication, including videos of Makaton vocabulary taught in school.

Professional Development and Staff Training

Training priorities and needs of staff are identified through the School Improvement Plan and/or individual staff appraisal. Every new member of staff undertakes a detailed induction which involves learning about effective strategies that support communication. There has been a significant training programme to improve the understanding of Total Communication for all staff and to develop Makaton skills through our ‘Tuesday Training’ and INSET programmes. These sessions can include training led by a Speech and Language Therapist. Example workshops include Makaton refreshers, Communication strategies and training on specific software. We actively encourage and support the cascading of skills and knowledge within our staff team. We also have a number of training days each academic year where we may use external providers who give focused training sessions.

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Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body.

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Page	Version	Section	Amendment	By Whom
1	2	Assessment	Removed 'at the beginning of the academic year'. Replaced with 'and progress is reviewed annually'	LS
1	2	Makaton/BSL	Added 'where appropriate.' To end of final sentence	LS
3	2	Speech & Language Therapy	Removed 'Lampard currently employs a Speech and Language Therapist one day a week to carry out a small number of assessments and to deliver specific interventions. She also works alongside class teams to help develop effective approaches that can be embedded in every day practice. This ensures all students benefit from SALT approaches within our universal provision. In addition to this face to face student work, she has also led whole staff training such as Lego Therapy, BLANK language levels and Talkabout.'	LS
3	2	Speech & Language Therapy	Added 'The school can access input from a Speech and Language Therapist to advise on programmes, resources and provide training as needed.'	LS
3	2	General Approaches – bullet point 7	Removed 'Alphasmarts'	LS
4	2	Literacy	Removed 'each student has their own iPad with apps and programmes to support speech-to-text and symbol writing.'	LS
5	2	Physical Development	Removed 'Forest School' and replaced with 'Outdoor Learning'	LS
5	2	Total Communication Focus Group Subheading removed	Removed 'We have a focus group for Total Communication that meets regularly to look at the school environment and share good practice. The group is made up of key members of staff including teachers and senior leadership. '	LS
5	2	Specialist TA	Added 'School Values signs have been symbolised and displayed across the school and key vocabulary is being symbolised as part of the curriculum planning. The school website has an updated, more prominent section relating to Total Communication, including videos of Makaton vocabulary taught in school.'	LS

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5	2	Professional Development	Removed 'are further regular training opportunities every half term' from the third sentence and replaced with 'has been a significant training programme to improve the understanding of Total Communication for all staff and to develop Makaton skills'	LS
5	2	Professional Development	Removed 'our employed' and added 'led by a' in the sentence which refers to the Speech and Language Therapist	LS