

Red Kite Special Academy



Language, Literacy and Communication Policy September 2019

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Impact:

At Red Kite Special Academy we value all modes of communication and methods of reading and recording.

We believe that communication is a fundamental human right and are all fully aware of the implications of a lack of functional communication as a barrier to inclusion. We are also very much aware of research which suggests that the academy has a fundamental responsibility to foster a love of reading and we are striving to become an outstanding reading school. Therefore this policy sets out how, at Red Kite Special Academy, we will support all of our pupils:

Aims – Our Curricular Intent

- To provide all children with methods of communication appropriate to their needs – verbal/signed/symbolic/tactile/written - which will support their learning and provide functional access to reading and recording
- To enable all pupils, whose primary mode of communication is not speech, to develop a formal mode of communication and so ensuring all pupils can express their needs, share their stories and be understood by others
- To share and enjoy literacy in its widest form to enhance their quality of life.
- To develop skills in reading and recording in an appropriate mode, which progress from learning to read and record to reading and recording to learn.

Objectives

- to develop consistent communication, reading and recording systems within school using objects, pictures, symbols, words, sound and smell
- to provide meaningful opportunities for communication in all curriculum areas
- to use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) aids (high and low tech) to enhance children's communication, reading and recording
- to develop a multi-professional approach in order to promote learning of communication and literacy skills
- to work as appropriate within the framework of the National Curriculum in order to develop children's literacy skills
- to enhance motivation and learning of language and literacy by enjoyment and involvement in books, stories, role play, drama and non-fiction texts.
- to nurture a love of reading in its widest sense, to foster enjoyment and wellbeing, this includes sharing story and other genre's (including sensory story, symbolised texts, screen based stories) and shared, independent access to multi-media stories and texts.)

Implementation and Planning

Language, Literacy and Communication is taught both as a specific subject and within all other curriculum areas.

Whole school communication system

Staff at Red Kite Special Academy base communicative interaction and development upon Communication and Cognitive Framework (Latham & Miles) and have developed a vocabulary list containing high frequency words in the various modes (speech, sign, symbol, objects of reference and photograph). This provides a core vocabulary and communicative functions for pupils working at

different developmental levels. The systems in place have been developed so that children with severe communication difficulties have a system to ensure the greatest opportunity to communicate their needs to as wide a range of pupils and staff as possible, and to help them anticipate and complete moves around the school as independently as possible.

All rooms are labelled outside the door with symbol, picture or photo, tactile label (Moon Script) and facility for addition of objects of association so that the child can match a communication or transition card / object and place it on arrival.

Within each class there are various tools to aid communication. A visual or tactile timetable is used to help children understand the structure of the day and children with profound and multiple learning difficulties and sensory loss have access to objects of association to structure their day. Classrooms have a variety of resources to support the total communication needs of their pupils and "Let's talk" communication boards are available at key points round the school.

For children who need to learn the very early skills of the 2-way interactive process of communication, a number of particular techniques are used. These include the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), Attention groups and Intensive Interaction.

Intensive Interaction is an approach to teaching aimed specifically at facilitating the development of the most fundamental social and communication abilities. It is used particularly with pupils with profound, severe and complex learning difficulties.

The development and generalisation of communication skills between home and school is valued, encouraged, and supported by PSAs, class teams and the LSA with responsibility for communication.

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

PECS is a structured way of teaching children to initiate communication by making requests using a picture based system. When this picture is presented it is then exchanged for the item – e.g. a drink. The Speech and Language Therapy team will liaise with class staff to identify appropriate students who would benefit from the use of this system, often then leading to the use of Colourful Semantics. After assessment and correspondence with home, the PECS program will be set up and initiated by members of staff. When appropriate the program will be introduced into the classroom and continued at the appropriate level by the trained member of staff and class staff. The monitoring of progress will be carried out by trained staff.

Derbyshire Language Scheme

This is a structured assessment and teaching programme for children with receptive and expressive language difficulties. It is often used in the school by Speech and Language Therapists and by trained Red Kite Special Academy staff, to support pupils understanding and expression and to support planning of progress.

Signing

In Red Kite Special Academy signing is used alongside speech as part of the total communication system to support the development of receptive and expressive language. **Signalong signs** are used at Red Kite Special Academy, their use being guided by the Cognition and Communication framework (Latham and Miles 2001) Staff and parents courses are run regularly.

AAC

VOCAs

Voice output communication aids (VOCAs), may be low or high-tech augmentative, and alternative communication (AAC) devices that produce speech for a child who has limited or no means to communicate orally. They are used for children at many different stages of development to provide a means to gain attention, interact and share their story. They include single celled VOCAs, sequential and multi-celled VOCAs, and high tech devices on iPad or designated use devices (usually for named individuals). For these children with severe and complex communication difficulties the school follows the Northamptonshire Multi-Agency Practice and Procedures for High Technology Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Devices (2008)

Communication Mats and Books:

Red Kite Special Academy uses communication mats or boards to support the receptive and expressive language of our pupils. The format is as devised by ACE, with staged core vocabularies ranging from stage 1 to 5 which are provided according to the pupils level of communicative development. When children have developed skills in using single mats, a communication book may be introduced at home and at school.

More general communication mat resources are found in each class, including hello mats and talk mats, and are stored with resources to support particular areas of learning

Parent's courses on the use of aided communication are run regularly.

Language, Communication and Literacy across departments

Early Years Foundation Stage

In the Foundation Stage long term learning objectives based on the Early Learning Goals have been written for communication, language and literacy, one of the six areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). These objectives may be incorporated into cross-curricular schemes of work, delivered in three weekly themes, or delivered through play or particular focused activities. Specific communication and literacy sessions are also delivered, particularly focusing on early communication skills, and readiness to read and record. Specific literacy themes ensure children are encountering a range of different genres. Children are encouraged to explore these themes in a way that supports the early appreciation of literacy through multisensory learning techniques and the teaching of early phonics through six phase high quality teaching. This begins with the basic knowledge of how sounds link with letters used in the alphabet and creates meaning in words (high frequency words and "tricky" words that don't follow phonic rules) through to comprehending the text as a whole. This allows the introduction of exciting characters, settings and stories which aims to foster the beginnings of a lifelong love of language and literacy.

Primary

In KS1 and KS2 all classes (generally) have a daily English, literacy and communication session. According to the developmental level and learning styles of pupils teachers make decisions as to whether children need focused teaching in the basic skills of speaking, listening, reading and recording (in whichever mode) i.e. they are learning to read etc., or whether children have acquired fluency in these areas and can develop skills, knowledge and application in the context of literacy themes. (Reading to learn).

The Literacy Themes schemes of work involve a 3 yearly cycle based on the text level work identified in the National Curriculum for English, but differentiated to accommodate the special educational needs of the children within the school. Children are sometimes regrouped across the department for specific literacy sessions, based on their particular stage of development and next steps.

ASD

Within the autism department, classes generally have four English, literacy and communication sessions per week with a specific focus which includes reading, fine motor, recording and writing, speaking, listening and communication, and literacy themes based over a four year cycle. This ensures skills are taught explicitly in a relevant and purposeful context. In addition to subject specific Literacy lessons, communication and language skills and reading and writing skills are taught discretely through day to day routines and in a cross curricular manner to support the children to generalise these skills and to prepare them for adulthood.

Secondary

Secondary classes have four English, literacy and communication sessions per week with a focus such as reading, fine motor skills, recording and writing, speaking, listening and communication. This is delivered with the discrete use of programmes such as Step Up to English, Access Literacy, Write from the Start and the English Language GCSE course through AQA. Students are assessed regularly and

taught in line with their aspirations for the future. We encourage a love of literacy first and foremost in line with the expectations of the national curriculum and opportunities offered to all students who are capable of achieving a range of suitable qualifications. We study a range of texts in different genres and we look to prepare the secondary cohort for life outside of the academy once they have graduated. Students are encouraged to develop skills such as turn taking, working with others and noticing detail as well as becoming enquiring and independent learners. Social skills and the ability to express opinions in many forms is fostered and encouraged by the demands of the courses provided. Students are taught to read and write both fiction and non-fiction texts. Access Arrangements are assessed in this phase in line with the recommendations of the latest updates from the Joint Council for Qualifications and reasonable adjustments are made for each individual in line with their needs and recommendations of the EHCP.

Reading Approaches:

Interpreting Symbolic Information

Reading and recording (writing) skills are developed using systems appropriate to pupil's levels of development and sensory needs. Children 'read' and record using a range of systems and media; such as placing and interpreting objects of association, reading and recording using symbols (Picture Communication Symbols from Mayer Johnson are used), pictures and photos. Structured teaching of a symbol vocabulary is often necessary to facilitate progress and functional use.

Approaches based on Colourful Semantics are utilised to support symbol based recording for many children, in addition to the benefits in developing receptive and expressive language.

Phonics is taught (as appropriate) using a synthetic phonics approach. There is an eclectic approach to resources, including Jolly Phonics, Oxford-reading tree (including Project X), the Letters and Sounds programmes and multi-sensory teaching. We choose this approach over a reliance on a single programme, as our entire philosophy is rooted in engagement, motivation and personalization. We therefore expect to move across schemes, materials and approaches, matching to success indicators of the child. Phonics is delivered both as an integral part of literacy lessons and as specific phonic lessons for pupils as appropriate. It is noted that phonics should not be focused upon for pupils at earlier levels at the expense of LLC foundation skills of communication, speaking and listening.

Whole word reading: The Whole Word method of reading instructs learners to recognise words as whole units without breaking them down into sounds or letter groupings. It focuses on the word as the minimum unit of meaning and therefore the essential base element of reading. For many of our pupils, particularly those with ASD, this is a particularly powerful approach

The Reading Schemes have been organized into colour-coded levels, following the Book Bands for Guided Reading. This gives children a wide breadth of different reading styles and content within any one reading level. It also offers children the opportunity to select their own books from within a wide choice.

At the early pre-reading level children's literacy skills are developed by picture books, word labels and captions, and simple symbol or text books made in school, relevant to the individual child or the current unit of work. We also understand that liaison between home and school is an integral part of the success of our reading programmes and communication with parents is key.

Writing is taught in a multi-sensory way by developing gross and fine motor skills. The OT works with staff to develop gross and fine-motor programs which will ultimately support the development of pencil skills. Mark making is encouraged from early stages and practiced in many different contexts. Children are taught to form letters using a cursive form right from the initial stages. When appropriate they are then taught to join letters up. The font used on computers for all children's work is Sassoon Infant Primary, although it is acknowledged that to support the generalisation of reading skills, other fonts are also used. The development of writing skills further on in the academy is a strong focus, in line with national curriculum expectations and the individual needs of each student. These can be based on writing for pleasure and creativity or more practical activities which help students to develop a wide

range of vocabulary, spelling, accurate grammar and skills such as letter or email writing, the use of language for different contexts and writing for purpose and effect. We will use the DASH (Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting) test and the Access Reading Test to assess the need for access arrangements to allow all students to reach their potential.

ICT forms an important part of the communication and literacy curriculum.

Children with severe communication difficulties use a range of technology to augment their communication e.g. switches and voice output communication aids (VOCA's) such as Big Macks, Step by Steps, Go Talks or dynamic aids.

All children use ICT, including PCs, laptops and Ipads, to enhance motivation and learning through a variety of software programmes

In addition Ipods, MP3 players, digital cameras and video, karaoke and telephones are used extensively. At Key Stage 4 students will be given the option of using assistive technology in any external examinations through the access arrangements process and again, in line with their EHCP's and recommendations of their teachers, as their normal way of working within the academy. This may take the form of the ReadWrite programme which is designed to relieve the burden of issues with writing or recording their work and allow the student to focus on the objectives of each assessment and show what they are really capable of; without giving an unfair advantage. They will also be taught to use ICT to record their work in external examinations if this is appropriate. As an innovative and current skill, touch typing will be taught discretely to a number of students to allow them to achieve their potential both at RKSA and beyond.

Impact : Assessment, Recording & Reporting

Impact in Communication and Literacy for every child will be recorded in line with the school's Planning, Assessment, Recording and Reporting Policy. As in all subjects progression is measured against the individual.

Assessment for all strands is assessed through our assessment scales on Onwards and Upwards. Due to the complex nature of many of our pupils with communication difficulties, there are additional formative assessment documents available for teachers to use including Routes for learning, The Affective Communication Assessment and Derbyshire language Scheme.

The use of PECS will be assessed and monitored by staff using PECS Scales on Onwards and Upwards.

Monitoring & Evaluation

The Curriculum Leader

- will monitor medium term planning (scheme of work)
- will hold informal surgery to discuss issues with class teachers

In line with the schools Curriculum Monitoring and Evaluation policy:

- will, with the data manager interrogate the data for LLC and highlight trends, patterns and concerns
- will observe lessons and conduct learning walks
- will review and amend the subject policy as appropriate
- will prepare a SEF based report to present to the Headteacher
- will prepare a short presentation for governors as requested

The Headteacher

- will fulfil their role as stated in the schools Curriculum Monitoring and Evaluation policy
- will monitor pupil progress annually and provide evidence and information for co-ordinator to review curriculum planning against

- will monitor Communication and Literacy in classes during performance management observations

The Literacy Governor

- will engage in regular classroom experience.
- will feedback from above

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Red Kite Special Academy Learning and Teaching Policy and Red Kite Special Academy Reading Policy.