



From Little Rivers Mighty Oceans Grow.

Communication & Interaction Policy

Revised: September 2020

To be reviewed: September 2021

Riverbank academy is a broad spectrum special school for secondary age students within the Sidney Stringer Academy Group, welcoming students' from across Coventry. We are a fully inclusive environment and aim to ensure everyone feels safe and happy irrespective of gender, disability, ethnicity and social, cultural or religious background. We aim to provide a safe place where curiosity is nurtured, learning is celebrated and expectations are high, enabling our students to become active members of their wider community beyond the school day. Through our policies and practice we aim to help all Riverbank students uphold the schools core values of being *Motivated, Creative and Caring*.

This policy identifies the wide range of communication needs and abilities within our community and ensures we have suitable assessment practices and communication tools throughout the school environment and beyond.

Purpose

- To ensure teachers can effectively assess children's communication levels and identify their preferred method of receptive and expressive communication
- To assist staff to provide an environment where all learners have the opportunity to communicate using their preferred method with both adults and their peers.
- To imbed communication skills and opportunities throughout the curriculum, developing on individual preferences and motivation.
- To ensure we meet our statutory requirements for teaching communication skills as laid out in the National Curriculum for secondary and post 16 learners.

Pupil Starting School

On entry to the school the majority of students who require additional Speech and Language support are known to SALT.

A student's communication needs are assessed within the school setting using a combination of individual assessments; classroom observations and liaison between staff and family.

The school supports transition by: -

- Liaising with primary schools
- Enhanced transition programme
- Baseline level assessments
- Communication targets embedded across all areas of the curriculum
- Liaising with external agencies.

Monitoring and Evaluation

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

- Within the class
- Around the school
- In the community

The appropriate SALT will monitor pupils progress. The class teacher is to continually monitor and evaluate pupils progress in the area of communication. Support will be given as needed and/or requested.

Communication Methods in School

At Riverbank Academy we adopt a Total Communication approach using a range of alternative methods to support and encourage two-way communication and speech and language development. These are not used in isolation and a student may use several of these methods.

1) Makaton Signing

This is a signing system used alongside speech to develop students understanding of language and their ability to express themselves. The use of signing throughout the school day by staff greatly enhances a student's ability to be an effective communicator.

2) Objects of Reference

Some students will need to 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.

3) Symbols/Photographs

The use of symbols/photographs provides valuable support and is encouraged even if students are not using PECS. It is the responsibility of class staff to provide symbol/photo vocabulary as appropriate: Some students use:

Picture Exchange Communication System – PECS

PECS is where students learn to exchange symbols/photographs to communicate.

4) Communication Books/Boards

These are indexed books/boards of symbols that can be used to aid a student's communication. Initially these are produced by SALT and are then the responsibility of the class staff and they require updating regularly.

5) Communication Passports

The inclusion team is responsible for writing and updating these plans, seeking advice from the class team. These should be reviewed and updated annually following the annual review process or earlier if information changes significantly. These give people vital information about a non-verbal student's individual needs including personal information, as well as how they communicate.

6) Body Signing

This is a receptive method for sharing information primarily used with learning with sensory impairments, but may also benefit pre-intentional communicators.

7) Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCA)

These are generally provided for individual learners depending on their needs/abilities, via a referral for an assistive technology referral. This may include switches, I pads, eye gaze computers or other touch screen devices.

Home/School communication

In our school we aim to have clear and effective communications with all parents/carers and with the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values, through keeping parents/carers well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that the family play in supporting the school.

Good communication between the school and home is essential, and students achieve more when schools and parents/carers work together.

We send a newsletter to parents/carers at the end of each school week. It contains general details of school events /activities and is available on the school website. We send other letters of a general nature when necessary.

The school has a Twitter feed which celebrates students' achievements.

Our curriculum offer is available on the school website.

Students in all classes have a home-school diary. This enables parents/carers to record a wide range of information that they wish to share regularly with their class teacher.

Teachers use the home-school diary to record achievements and as a regular channel for communication with parents/carers.

The school encourages parents/carers to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity.

All students have a person-centred annual review to evaluate and develop an action plan regarding all aspects of the student's life. Representation from all professional services working with the family are invited to attend.

We also arrange three parents/carers evening meetings a year ; one per term. These are evening meetings to explain areas of our curriculum and discuss progress. Parents are invited into school prior to residential visits regarding planning and content of the visit.

If a student is absent from school, and the school has no indication of the reason the school admin team will contact the parents/carer (by telephone, if possible) to find out the reason for the absence.

Professional Development

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

- An induction package for 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 and SALT to support understanding
- On site Makaton training (Level 2)
- Participation in Special school's network communication meetings.
- Staff are responsible 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.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be regularly monitored and will be reviewed by the Deputy Headteacher and governors.