



**South Gloucestershire and Stroud Academy Trust (SGSAT)**

**Communication Policy (Pegasus School)**

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## Introduction

**SGS Pegasus School** is a special school for students with a diagnosis of Autism, with significant needs with communication and interaction. 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 through play, 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 student.
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 Communication**

- SaLT will do an assessment of all new students (who are required by their EHCP and/or recommended by the Communication Lead and the Class Teacher)
- All students will be assessed using the SEN TOOL KIT or the Early Years Goal
- All students will have ongoing assessment of their communication needs and target areas identified according to their current needs
- Students using PECS will also be assessed on the stages they are working on (stages 1 – 6).

## **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 when required by the student
- Access to assistive technology and programmes such as, Dragon Dictate Software, iPads, Grid Player
- Pre-teaching of key topic vocabulary
- Staff will model effective communication skills
- Preparation for transitions and changes to routine
- Display boards and working walls to support understanding
- Varied ways of recording learning (such as recording on iPads)
- Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCAs) such as switches, sound pegs and switch-it
- OOP (One Page Profiles) which will be updated regularly.

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

Comic Strip Conversations, Social Stories, Colourful Semantics, Drawing to Communicate, Social Communication groups, Speech and Language, Social Snack, Thrive, TEACCH and Lego Club, Speech and language sessions including assessments, individual, paired and group sessions

## What everything is....

### **Makaton**

Makaton is a form of sign used alongside verbal language and supports both expressive and receptive language. Only key words are signed.

### **Symbols**

Communicate in Print is a software package which is available on three of the lower primary class computers and both computers in the staff room.

Symbols are used consistently across the curriculum and school to support understanding and to enable students to communicate their knowledge and understanding.

Visuals including symbols are used to support understanding and expression across the school environment.

### **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 understand more symbolic materials.

### **One Page Profile**

Each student has a OPP which is updated regularly. The OPP has a section on what students find helpful or not helpful when communicating with them. The OPP is created with the student where possible and is available for all staff to see.

### **Augmentative and Alternative Communication (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 Grid Player 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), choosing boards or Makaton and Grid Player.

### **Grid Player**

Grid Player is a high-tech ACC which can be used to request items, share ideas, teach lessons.

### **Colourful Semantics**

Colourful semantics is an approach which aims to support children on how to build and understand sentence structures. Looking at, **who**, **what doing**, **what** and **where**.

**Who? - Orange**

**What doing? - Yellow**

**What? Green**

**Where? Blue**

## **Attention Autism**

Attention Autism or “bucket sessions” are for those children who need help with gaining and maintaining their attention, for those who require help with developing their speech & language and communication skills either via verbal commentary or non-verbal through expressions, and to help children be able to learn social and physical skills by sitting within a safe circle among their peers. They are learning to learn through shared enjoyment of group activities.

Within the bucket sessions, there are rules in which we must go by. These include:

Supporting adults - modelling what is expected of the child. Not prompting them. Always sitting unless asked by the session lead to join in. Responding to the child if they make a comment about the bucket session. Not chatting to other adults in the room.

- If you are in the room, you are a part of the session
- Remembering that the bucket belongs to the session lead and should not to be touched. E.g., “It’s Katie’s bucket”
- Sing to the bucket, and only once.
- Keep it simple.
- On the white board, draw it out, write it out, say it out. This reduces anxiety around the child knowing what is coming next.

## **Thrive Language**

Thrive language is a key way to communicate with a student. It allows you to acknowledge how the student may be feeling and recognise that you see them and you will then respond appropriately. The scripts also allow for students to have time to process what may be happening for them. Scripts to be used such as:

- I wonder if you might be feeling angry, I have noticed that your body has become tense?
- I can imagine that was really frustrating for you. When you are ready to talk about it I am here for you.
- I notice that you're really giggly and wiggly, I wonder if it's making you feel yellow zone?
- Can you tell me what was happening/ going on for you?
- Would you like to explain to me?
- Are you able to describe that/ what happened?

It is important to remember to be playful, loving, accepting, curious and empathetic when talking to students. The combination of the above is key when needing to attune, validate, contain and regulate a student.

## **Speech and Language Therapy**

The Speech and Language Therapy service (SALT) is provided through Claire Watson. 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.

**First and Then**

This is a visual way to show a student what they are currently doing or meant to be doing, often followed by a reward.

**Visual Timetables**

These should be shown in every class to show the student what they are going to be doing throughout the day. It can use writing, symbols or both, but it needs to be seen. Some students may need their own visual timetable to help them transition.

**Play**

Play is where a student can use language in a less pressured environment. This can be done in games and role play.

**Intensive Interaction**

This is done by, observing and copying the student's actions and or sounds and imitating. It's all about communication at the level the student is attaining. The goals are for the pupil to respond, imitate, take turns (with movements or vocalisations) and initiate interactions.

**Social Stories**

Social stories are a way to explain to a person on the Autistic Spectrum a range of social situations. This could be from an explanation of what puberty is and how it affects them, or why we line up. Photographs or symbols are used alongside clear and simple language.

**Lego Club**

Lego club is where a group of (preferably 3 students) work together and communicate to build something together. There are set roles that encourage the students to communicate with each other to achieve their goal.

**Social Communication Groups**

Pupils are grouped together at similar levels of communication and work together to develop different communication skills according to the needs of the group.