Ysgol Maes Hyfryd Flintshire Communication Policy	

Policy approved by the Governing Body on : 10ᵗʰ October 2018

Signed:...Chair of Governors

Reviewable on : October 2020

Introduction

This document is a statement of the aims, principles and strategies for communication at Ysgol Maes Hyfryd. All staff are given a copy of the policy to highlight the communication ethos at Ysgol Maes Hyfryd.

Ysgol Maes Hyfryd is a Specialist High School, which caters for students aged 11 -19.

The sensory department meets the needs of students with severe profound/multiple learning difficulties students as well as complex needs. All students within the Sensory department have a communication and interaction difficulty. Some students are on the ASD spectrum. Communication underpins all learning and therefore we are committed to provide a Total Communication environment.

Aims

Our school aims are to:

1 Adopt a Total Communication approach throughout the school, where students have access to their own means of communication throughout the day.

2 To develop a means of communication appropriate to each students individual needs.

3 To create opportunities for communication throughout the curriculum to enable each student to communicate to the best of their ability.

All students have the following specific communication rights in their daily interactions:

- Be spoken to with respect and courtesy
- Be in environments that promote one's communication as a full partner with other people, including peers
- Request and receive another person's attention and interaction
- Receive a response to any communication, whether or not the responder can fulfil the request
- Express personal preferences and feelings
- Ask for and receive information about changes in routine and environment
- Be offered choices
- Request desired objects, actions, events and people
- Refuse undesired objects, actions or events
- Receive intervention to improve communication skills
- Have access to AAC (augmentative and alternative communication and other AT (assistive technology) services and devices, if appropriate to their needs
- Have AAC and other AT devices that function properly

Definition of Total Communication

"Total Communication" describes an approach that seeks to create a supportive means of communication to understand and be understood' (Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists). This means that staff and students are encouraged to use every available form of communication to develop expressive and receptive communication skills.

At Ysgol Maes Hyfryd we aim to create a best fit system of communication to facilitate an individual to communicate, optimizing his/her skills and reducing his/her impairments.

Total communication is important for students who have difficulty speaking and understanding spoken words. Total communication presents information in a variety of ways to enhance the student's ability to be understood and to understand in all aspects of life.

Total communication means that we encourage the use of all appropriate means of communication:

- Verbal skills including speaking and listening
- Written text
- Signing including on body signs, natural gesture and body language
- Picture symbols and photographs accompanied by written word (s)
- Signifiers / Objects of reference
- High Tec communication aids (such as the Go Talk range and iPads
- Low Tec aids e.g. PECs, now and next boards, PODD books

(This list is not exclusive.)

Pre-intentional Communicators

At this stage of development a pupil may give behavioural responses to stimuli, such as stilling, eye widening, mouth movements or body extensions. It is essential that school staff build close relationships with pupils who are pre-intentional in their communication and that they respond to pupils consistently and sensitively. A period of careful observation is needed to establish their reactions to different stimuli which precede any intervention. An 'Affective Communication Assessment' (ACA) is recommended in supporting observations and widely used in the PMLD classes. At this stage of development staff will undertake the Routes for Learning assessment and devise appropriate communication targets.

Alternative and Augmentative communication

This term is used to describe the different methods that can be used to help people with disabilities communicate with others. These methods can either be used as an alternative to speech or to supplement it. All methods of communication used at Ysgol Maes Hyfryd are augmentative communication systems, we seek to develop our students communicative abilities through spoken language, with additional methods appropriate to each students needs.

Communication methods

1 Signing systems

Signing systems have been in use for some time, especially in the deaf community. Different systems have been developed to meet the needs of individuals with learning and motor disabilities. Signing systems have the major advantage of not requiring any additional equipment or materials, but can be harder to learn. Ysgol Maes Hyfryd uses the Makaton signing system.

a) Makaton

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

b) On body signing

On body signing or touch cues are a way of giving blind/deaf students, or students with learning difficulties information about what is going to happen.

Ysgol Maes Hyfryd uses on body signs taken from Cheshire multi-sensory Impairment Unit.

When using the signs receptively with students some of the signs are produced by the adult on the student's body or they can be made co-actively with the students by using their hands to create the sign. When using the signs expressively the student can create them on their own body or use their hands independently to create the signs.

2 Environmental cue

It is essential that we communicate with all students about what they are doing and what will be happening to them, in order to do this we use a range of techniques at a level appropriate to the child.

Studies have shown that over a quarter of the school day is spent in transition. Helping our students to understand, anticipate and cope with transitions is therefore extremely important.

Sensory cues allow students a multi sensory cue to daily events /activities for example the fragrance calendar is used to indicate the day of the week and consequently the events and activities for the day, e.g. Monday is peppermint. All of the fragrances used at Ysgol Maes Hyfryd are also can also be used as edible cues at snack time to indicate the day of the week.

Students also enter the school to a different piece of music each day, to indicate the day of the week and help students to anticipate events during the day e.g. Monday is Mozart.

Songs or objects are frequently used a signifiers for specific lessons e.g. "He's got the whole world in his hands" and a globe for R.E.

3 Touch cues

Touch cues help individuals understand activities through the use of touch, for example, touching a hoist will indicate that the student is about to be moved. When all communicators use these cues consistently in daily routines, this helps students to understand and make sense of their surroundings, activities and people they meet. These cues can be used alongside on body signing.

4 Signifiers/ Objects of Reference

Through the use of objects or tactile symbols students can build up a wide range of communication skills. These systems are generally used with students with visual difficulties and/or severe learning difficulties who are non-verbal. In their simplest form students are given an object so that they can anticipate what is going to happen e.g. wipes for being changed. However this form of communication can be used in more complex ways for example the object can be reduced in size, the prompt for a drink being a cup, moving on to half a cup, a handle and then part of a handle to indicate drink. Certain textures can be used to denote locations and events for example a cork coaster to denote assembly. These objects can be used by staff initially, to communicate an event or could be used by students to initiate communication or make a request.

Personal Identifiers

An item or object that a member of staff consistently wears and shares with the pupil each time they greet them. A personal identifier is an Object of Reference for a specific member of staff.

5 Visual strategies

Visual pictures, symbols and photographs can help many students with learning and communication difficulties. They can be used in a variety of ways to enhance understanding and expression.

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Some classes haves a daily timetable in the classroom to indicate what is happening during the school day, this approach relieves anxiety for some pupils. Some classes have individual timetables available to students according to their needs. Sometimes timetables can be in photographs/symbols or written words depending on the needs of the pupils and these can be individualised for students in order for them to follow a personalised timetable.

Some students also use Now and Next boards to clearly explain to students what is happening and what is going to happen using photographs or symbols.

6 Picture Exchange Communication System – PECS (Frost and Bondy)

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

Symbols and photos are used throughout the day to help students make choices at snack/lunch time and to allow them to ask for specific items or activities outside of these set times,

Students learning to use PECs learn to exchange a picture of a desired item for that item, by performing this task the child is in charge of initiating communication a receives a reward. Students are taught to scan and select from an array of picture symbols, locate and persevere in attempt to engage an adult, and present the chosen picture- symbol to an adult to communicate a message.

PECs is developed using five stages:

1 Identifying favourite objects

2 Physically assisted exchange

3 Further symbols/ pictures

4 Discrimination of pictures/symbols

5 sentence building

8 Communication books (PODD)

These are indexed books of symbols that can be used to aid a student's communication.

PODD is a means of selecting and organising symbols so that people with complex communication needs and their communication partners can communicate more easily. PODD is a way of organising whole word and symbol vocabulary in a communication book or speech generating device to provide immersion and modelling for learning.

The aim of a PODD is to provide vocabulary:

- for continuous communication all the time
- for a range of messages
- across a range of topics
- in multiple environments.

7 Assistive Communication Devices

When pupils are discriminating between photos or symbols we investigate the use of a more permanent device for these students such as a PECs book, symbol book, Go Talk or an iPad with a vocabulary app such as Proloquo2go or Words.

It is important to mention that when looking at assistive communication devices, it is crucial that a through trial of several different options is undertaken to find the best fit for the student. The higher tech, most expensive option is not always the best; variables such as portability, functionality and speed of use also need to be taken into account.

9 Communication Aids eye gaze and partner

Some of the newest technology to access a computer or communication device is eye-gaze. The user's eye is calibrated with the screen and then eye movements correspond to the movement of the cursor. The user moves the cursor around the screen by the movement of the eye and to make the mouse click maintains the position on the appropriate picture or letter.

A low-tech form of eye scanning is the E_TRAN frame, or adapted communication book, to use the book the student requires a member of staff to follow the eyes of the student on a number of visual pictures or symbols, the communicative adult follows the message by following the students eye gaze and asking questions.

10 Intensive Interaction

Intensive Interaction is used with specific individuals in Ysgol Maes Hyfryd who have been shown to benefit from this approach. Intensive Interaction is an approach to teaching the pre-speech fundamentals of communication to people who have severe learning difficulties and or autism and who are still at an early stage of communication development.

 Dave NHewett PHD and Melanie Nind PHD were teachers who carried out Intensive Interaction research projects at the Harperbury Hospital School. Based upon a natural model of early child development this approach attempts to establish communication with people in their own way and on their own terms, it has been possible to persuade people who are in "another world" to make contact with other people. Intensive interaction is developed through four key stages:

1 Awareness

2 Anticipation

3 Pre-emption

4 Voluntary signals

ASD specific strategies to support communication in the classroom

- Use language that is clear, precise and concrete.
- Support communication with visual cues.

- Use less language – keep it simple.
- Give time for pupils to process what has been said.
- Don't use metaphors or sarcasm.
- Say what you mean and mean what you say.
- Use positive language!
- Carry some useful symbols on a key ring to support spoken communication, when appropriate

Further information about ASD specific strategies is available in Ysgol Maes Hyfryd ASD policy and in the supplement at the end of this document.

<u>Communication in the wider school</u>

Blank levels/Verbal reasoning

This verbal reasoning programme is based on the Blank Language Scheme and was written by Blank, Rose and Berline (1978). The programme is divided into the four level of the blank language model. This model breaks this complete area of language into smaller more achievable steps. It helps to develop from literal to abstract thinking.

Level 1: Matching perception

Level 2: Selective analysis of perception

Level 3: Reordering perception

Level 4: Solving complex and abstract verbal problems.

In Key Stage 3 communication is encouraged through the socially speaking programme. This is a pragmatic social skills programme. Effective social interactions do not come naturally to many of our pupils, however they are vital for developing and maintaining relationships and independent living outside school. The socially speaking programme is divided into three units:

Unit 1 lets communicate – looks at the basic skills of communication that are essential if the pupils are to use language in social situations and to make friends.

Unit 2 Let's be friends - learning how to develop friendships and relationships.

Unit 3 lets practice – pupils experience communicating appropriates ways to interact with people in various social situations.

As pupils progress through the programme their self esteem will increase, their listening skills will improve along with their language skills.

The "time to talk" programme is also used with pupils in the lower school to develop language skills. This is a programme to extend oral and social interactions skills. It has been devised to teach and increase oral language and social interaction skills. It helps to teach and extend the rules of

interaction in areas such as eye contact, turn taking, sharing, greeting, awareness of feelings, giving and following instructions, listening attention and play skills.

Assessment, recording and reporting

The importance of monitoring and evaluating a students' progress is central to their development. As with all communication methods, regular opportunities to use these are vital for the student to achieve and maintain success. The appropriate methods of communication must ALWAYS be used with students, within the class, around school and out in the community.

Individual Educational Programmes and targets for communication may be taken after assessment using LNF, Routes for learning or the Communication Matrix. All students in the sensory department are baseline assessed using this tool and targets are used for communication intervention by the HTLA with responsibility for Communication. Staff may also use Affective Communication Assessment (ACA), Pragmatics Profile, British Picture Vocabulary Scale (BPVS). Methods of assessment and recording include on-going observation within class, evaluation of IEP and lesson objectives.

Reporting to parents takes place via annual reports, mid year reports, the annual review process and the home –school diary. Parents are also involved in completing a pragmatic profile with a member of school staff, if appropriate.

Pupil One Page Profile

The class teacher is responsible for writing and updating these plans. These are reviewed and updated at least once and year and give vital information about a student's individual needs including personal information, as well as how they communicate. These are updated annually at each students annual review and whenever necessary during the year.

Communication passports

Communication Passports are used in some classes in the Sensory Department. A communication passport is a way of supporting a student with severe communication and learning difficulties across transitions, drawing together complex information and distilling it into a clear, positive and accessible format. This helps staff and conversation partners to get to know the student. They can then interact/respond consistently to help the student make sense of events and get the best out of what communication abilities they do have.

At Ysgol Maes Hyfryd the communication passport includes:

- Important information staff working with a pupil need to know immediately
- Likes and dislikes (preferences)
- Receptive and expressive communication skills
- Sensory skills

SALT role

The Speech and Language therapists work on a consultative basis in conjunction with the Speech and Language Co-ordinator Class Keyworkers, The HTLA with responsibility for communication, school

staff, and parents. Assessment may involve observation in the classroom, individual assessments, and meetings with school staff and / or parents. Following assessment SALT provide plans which are carried out by classroom staff.

Roles of staff

SMT – The Senior Management is responsible for the training of staff and implementation of the communication policy and to establish a communication friendly environment.

Teachers – Teachers are responsible for the assessment and planning of individual educational programmes appropriate to the developmental level of each student. Teachers should also include Communication targets across all curriculum areas.

HTLA – The HTLA with responsibility for communication is responsible for individual assessments, developing targets in communication in collaboration with class teachers, and planning and running small group sessions to develop communication skills.

SALT co-ordinator – The SALT co-ordinator is responsible for liaising between classroom staff and speech therapists to ensure that all students that require it have access to a SALT assessment and classroom staff has access to resources to carry out SALT programmes within school.

Teaching Assistants- Teaching assistants are responsible for implementing individual educational programmes planned by the class teacher and reporting back to the class teacher progress being made. They may also be responsible for carrying out SALT programmes developed by the Speech Therapist.

Training

Staff are Ysgol Maes Hyfryd's most valuable resource, as it is only through their commitment and effort that good quality provision can be both established and maintained. We are therefore committed to providing good training and development opportunities for staff so that they are able to perform their roles both efficiently and effectively.

The School is committed to providing for staff:

- A full induction process.
- A regular system of appraisals and supervision.
- An up-to-date record of staff qualifications and training.

This will help to ensure that staff development needs are being met and that staff training and qualifications are meeting the requirements of the setting.

All staff have regular access to in-house training in:

Makaton

Picture Exchange Communication System

On-body signing

PODD communication books

These skills **are essential criteria** for all staff working within the sensory department.

When possible staff will be given additional training by attending the full two day courses for:

Picture Exchange Communication System

PODD communication books

Conclusion

Communication skills are prerequisite to accessing the curriculum, socialising and developing acceptable behaviour at school and in all areas of life. It is the duty of all staff at Ysgol Maes Hyfryd to respond to and develop the communication of all students by following a consistent approach.

Date: October 2018

Chair of Governors: Carolyn Worthington

Date of review: October 2020