

# Ravenswood School

## Communication Policy



### Introduction

To achieve the school vision to be **“Inspirational Learning Community with High Expectations for All”** we believe everyone has the right to be heard and know that they have been listened to. At the heart of effective communication lies interaction.

All of the pupils at Ravenswood communicate. For some pupils, others within the school community need to take time and adapt their own communication to engage with them meaningfully.

Communication is the exchange of information by any means possible. This includes:

- Written
- oral/Vocalisation and tone
- Body language and behaviour
- Facial expression
- Eye contact
- Gesture
- Pointing and leading
- Makaton
- Photographs and symbols
- Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
- Objects of Reference
- Communication aids e.g. Go talk or ipad apps
- Behaviour

Pupils at Ravenswood have a variety of different communication needs and levels. We are aware they may perform better in either their receptive or expressive language skills. Communication is not limited to one form or another, so we recognise that Ravenswood should be a ‘Total Communication Environment’ responding to pupil’s needs and using their communication as a start point. We then need to develop a reliable communication method for each pupil..

### Aims

- To provide an environment rich in communication opportunities in its many forms
- To celebrate when pupils achieve communication in the most appropriate form
- To provide communication opportunities that build on prior learning and extend pupils’ abilities to be heard utilising the most appropriate system for the pupil, their family and their community.
- For pupils who have specialised forms of communication to be understood by staff and peers and know that they are understood.
- To provide a a high level of expertise in different communication methods amongst the school staff and other professionals
- For communication to be recognised as cross-curricular and key to accessing all learning opportunities. All pupils should have meaningful opportunities to communicate in their preferred mode throughout the school day.
- For assessment to have due regard to the individual’s communication method.

## Communication Policy

- To ensure pupils' achievements are not limited by adults not having the skills, time or empathy to communicate using communication methods particular to the individual.

### Objectives

Each pupil will acquire, use and develop his/her language and communication skills across subjects, people and situations both in school and in the wider community. Communication is everyone's responsibility. Staff are expected to adapt their communication to meet the needs of individual pupils. This means;

- Staff have core skills in different communication methods
- Know finger spelling and signs (Makaton).
- Staff to use symbols (Widgit) and portable symbols to ensure interaction for every child around the school site
- For portable symbols to be made available to regular visitors to the school
- For symbols to be visible in all areas of the school

The persons responsible for co-ordinating AAC within the school are the Speech and Language therapists with advice sought from the Paediatric Communication Aids Service (PCAS). They meet to discuss issues of AAC as required for the individual pupil and work closely with families and class teams.

### Strategies to be used at Ravenswood school to enhance communication.

#### 1. Receptive language:

Ensure that language used in lessons and communication is appropriate to the receptive language of the student.

You will find an analysis of the receptive and expressive language of all students within the care plan of each student. It is also evident in the NC/P assessment level for Speaking and Listening for those operating above P3. This information needs to be used in all interactions with the student. So for example if the student has a recorded receptive language of 2 words phrases such as "Good sitting" or "Good listening" would be appropriate. Some other useful phrases include "hands down" or "feet down".

Avoid using negative, e.g. don't run/no spitting, as Ravenswood School promotes the use of positive language

#### 2. Motivators during Time to Talk:

**Many of our pupils, especially** those who are on the Autistic spectrum, find social communication very difficult. We need to provide powerful motivators at times when we are teaching them to communicate socially.

Food and drink items are typically strong motivators. We maintain Healthy Food Standards for lunches. However, we provide motivating drinks (high juice orange and blackcurrant) and foods (cereals and plain biscuits) for the pupils to choose as a snack during Time to Talk sessions. Wherever possible we encourage and reward a healthier choice (e.g water, fruit, yogurts, raisins) but we are aware that for some pupils they need the strong motivators to encourage them to communicate.

# Ravenswood School

## Communication Policy



### 3. Use of symbols:

For continuity purposes, Widgit symbols should be used across the school. The symbol should be of a sufficient size for pupils to access the meaning of the symbol. This is particularly important for pupils with a visual impairment.

All pupils should have access to a timetable. For those with particular communication difficulties a clearly displayed visual timetable for the day will be more appropriate; this will be specified on their provision map and be tailor made to the needs of the pupil( see Timetable guidelines) Visual timetables should reflect the activities of the day – including changes to what normally happens.

Pupils working below level 9 in reading would have access to an individual timetable, located at or near their desk or workstation. This will have photos, pictures or symbols to support their understanding.

At level 10-11, pupils would have access to an individual timetable and all symbols will be supported by words.

Pupils working at level 12-13+ would follow a classroom, teacher led timetable but may still benefit from an individual timetable. Often these would just consist of the words for their lessons.

Where applicable, symbols should be available in the classroom to enable communication of need. Portable symbols should be used outside of the classroom. Pupils who use PECs system to communicate should have access to their PECs book at all times throughout the school day.

All staff should carry with them a selection of symbols throughout the day and use these to guide pupils appropriately. Spare sets of symbols are available for visitors and temporary staff.

A selection of symbols, reflecting the menu options, is available for choosing at lunchtime.

### 4. De-escalation techniques:

**To communicate with a child** who has been over-stimulated and is anxious the following applies:

- Withdraw to a safe place.
- Remain calm and speak in a low, consistent tone
- Use positive language, e.g. focus on what you want the child to do, not the behaviour the child is exhibiting.
- Reduce verbal communication to minimum - 1 or 2 word phrases to redirect the pupil. For some pupils no language should be used – only visual prompts
- Use symbols to reinforce important messages
- Follow pupils' consistent handling plans/risk assessments.

# Ravenswood School

## Communication Policy



### Expectations of pupils

Communicating with pupils' with communication difficulties in a meaningful way often elicits a similar response and helps increase their confidence in making communication attempts.

We expect all pupils to show tolerance and an interest in engaging appropriately with those pupils with communication needs. All pupils are encouraged to develop basic signing skills. Some of our older pupils choose to support pupils with communication difficulties in assemblies and on the playground.

### Recording:

Pupils' communication needs are recorded in their Care Plan Provision Map. Their progress in communication development is reported through: Learning targets, Annual Reviews, End of Year Reports (Speaking and Listening), and SALT reports. These are all available to parents.

### Communication devices

Where a communication device has been provided for an individual pupil following SALT advice, the device will be locked onto the recommended communication app e.g. predictable or proloquo2go. This is following SALT advice that it should be used exclusively for communicating to ensure that all pupils reach their full communicative potential. This will support the pupil as the communicator, and those they wish to communicate with to understand that they wish to exchange a message and not use the ipad for leisure.

### History of Document

Previous versions now deleted from system. New issue:

New Issue No.	Author/Owner	Date Reviewed	Approved by Governors on	Comments
3	School	April 2015	Pupil Committee 6/5/15	Minor changes
4	School	May 2016	11/5/16 Pupil Committee	
5	School	April 2017	10/5/17	
6	School	April 2018	9/5/18	

### References:

English / Literacy Policy. Ravenswood School. Date tbc.

Behaviour Policy