

## Applebee Wood Communication



### Communication approaches

a) Verbally: when interacting with the pupils try to position yourself at their level and face them as you speak (remember eye-contact can be challenging for some children so do not insist upon it). Reduce your spoken language and use open body language and increased facial expressions to support engagement and understanding. Use the ten second rule when waiting for the pupil to respond.

b) PECS: a number, of our pupil use PECS to help communicate their needs. It is important that we know the stages our pupils are at, to give them the correct support and remember that PECS is not just used at snack time but incorporate opportunities for its use throughout the school day. Pupils who use PECS also rely on staff to update their PECS cards as their interests change and language develops.

c) Intensive Interaction: develops the “fundamentals of communication”. This is an approach that uses, eye contact, facial expression, body language and verbalisations through turn taking. A child gradually learns to communicate as they grow, develop and socialise. Intensive Interaction is delivered daily to some of the children across the school in a mixture of set intervention time in addition to being embedded into spontaneous communication during the course of the school day.

d) Attention Autism: is an approach that delivers irresistible sensory learning experiences which develop early communication and social interaction skills. The Majority of classes in the school run this daily as a group activity which promotes shared attention and social communication skills such as eye contact, understanding of facial expressions, how to take turns and resilience. Most importantly, it shows that communication can be lots of fun!

e) Sensory supportive environment: Many of the pupils experience sensory processing difficulty, therefore it is important that the school is sensitive to their needs. This is met through a distraction-controlled environment with minimal décor, sensitive lighting and a reduction in background noise all of which support a communication friendly environment.

f) Visuals and TEACCH (inc. timetables/whiteboards/timers/lanyards/workstations):

i) Visuals assist pupils understanding of routine/transitions made during their day. It also encourages anticipation of transitions whilst providing continuity and consistency in communication. Such visuals can also provide opportunities for pupils to make choices.

ii) As our pupils are visual learners the school's structure and rules are presented visually and tailored to each pupil's stage of symbolic understanding (objects/photos/symbols with the written word), to help pupils understand the daily routines. TEACCH schedules, workstations, timers and whiteboards are all visual strategies used to support pupils' attention, engagement and comprehension. All staff have standard school symbols labelled with the written word on lanyards to support spoken directives.

g) Signing: where appropriate staff use Makaton, a speech supported signing system. Only key words within a spoken sentence are signed to emphasise and provide clarity to the message, supporting a pupil's comprehension.

h) Objects of Reference (OOR): An OOR is any object which is used systematically to represent an item, activity, place, or person. Understanding real objects is the first stage of symbolic development. Therefore, using objects is considered the most concrete way of representing a word for pupils. Locations throughout the school are labelled with OOR and such door objects have been replicated for relevant classes to enable them to learn to anticipate events while moving around the school.

i) Labelling: clear and consistent labelling of rooms and equipment are used across the school with symbol and written word.

j) Communication Forum: Communication Forum is held once a term and is attended by the Intervention manager, and the Speech and Language Therapists. During the forum whole school communication approaches and communication training needs are discussed. Staff can refer pupils to be discussed at the Communication Forum with regards to being referred for specialist input from the NHS Speech and Language Therapy Department or from the school commissioned Speech and Language Therapists.

K) Parent involvement: Communication Workshops and 1:1 discussion are offered to parents through the in-house Speech and Language Therapy service. Parents are offered advice, support and opportunities to share experiences.

## Verbal Communication

### Five top tips for clear Communication

1. Positioning and body language Try to get down to the pupils' level and face them when to speak. Ensure that you have open body language and you want to listen and engage with them. This can be shown through exaggerated facial expressions and warm responses.

2. Say the pupil's name before you speak to them. This just clarifies that you are talking to them as this can be missed by people with Autism.

3. Reduces your language Too much information can be hard to possess so keep to single words or short sentences. If you want a pupil to come and sit for group time you may want to say: "Jim, group time, sit on the chair" or even tap the chair and just say "sitting" as opposed to: "It is time for group, come and sit down on a chair with your friends"

4. Ten second rule People with Autism can have a delayed processing time so give the pupil ten seconds to respond to you, stay quiet but show you are waiting for a response by looking at them. Remember that ten seconds can seem like a really long time so if it helps count it quietly in your head.

5. Repeat the same instruction word for word It helps the pupil to process the information if when repeating an instruction, you use the exact same words, for example: "Jim, do you want banana or apple?" is repeated and not changed to a sentence meaning the same message: "Which one would you like Jim - apple or banana?"

### Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

PECS teaches the pupil how to communicate or what the basic rules of communication are.

Then the pupil learns to communicate specific messages. The pupil learns to communicate first with single pictures, but later learns to combine pictures to learn a variety of grammatical structures, and communicative functions.

#### PECS Phases

Phase I - Physical Exchange

Phase II - Distance and Persistence

Phase III Discrimination of Symbols

Phase IV Sentence Structure (I want .....)

Then Attributes

Phase V Answering "what do you want?"

Phase VI Commenting in response to a question.

Intensive interaction teaches and develops the "fundamentals of communication". This is an approach that uses eye contact, facial expression, body language and verbalisations through turn taking to exchange the patterns of conversation.

What is Intensive Interaction?

The pupil gradually learns to communicate as they grow, develop and socialise. Intensive Interaction builds on the existing communication skills your child already has.

It focuses on the interactions that happen naturally between adults and children throughout the course of any day. These are the light-hearted, fun, face-to-face exchanges of eye contact, facial expression, touch or sounds.

We need to communicate with pupils on their own level, so they can understand and relate to us. If we do this, they may be more responsive and sociable in a verbal or non-verbal way.

How can it benefit the child?

Intensive Interaction sees the child as an individual - important for their self-esteem.

It can help to strengthen the relationship you have with the child.

It may help the child feel more relaxed and secure. This may have a positive effect on their behaviour.

It may help children who feel isolated, anxious and who may head bang or rock to blank out confusion. Intensive Interaction can help them to develop early communication skills.

### Attention Autism

Attention Autism is an intervention model designed by Gina Davies, Specialist Speech and Language Therapist. It aims to develop natural and spontaneous

communication through the use of highly visually and sensory based and motivating activities. It is a group activity that develops shared attention and social communication skills such as eye contact, understanding of facial expressions, and how to take turns. It aims to prompt communication through fun and laughter, creating shared positive experiences.

Although Attention Autism a lot of fun.

It follows a structured routine which is made up of four stages:

Stage 1 The bucket

Stage 2 The attention builder

Stage 3 The Interactive game

Stage 4 The table activities

The use of a whiteboard help gives the pupils the understanding of what comes next and when an activity has finished.

### The Sensory supportive environment

Many people with ASD have difficulty processing everyday sensory information. The individual's senses may be over or under-sensitive, or both, at different times. These sensory differences can affect the way our pupils experience the world around them. This can have effect on eating, physical activity, sleep, and behaviour. It is vital to our pupil's communication that we recognise this and help adapt the school environment accordingly.

As a school we archive this by ensuring the school is a calm environment, with minimal décor, sensitive lighting and a reduction in background noise. Pupils are offered ear defenders when needed. Quiet spaces available, offering time out of busy classrooms. Sensory rooms and activities are given value across the school to reflect the pupil's choices. Staff follow a policy for displays with ensures that they are not over stimulating. Contractors and gardeners do not do noisy work on site when the pupils are in school.

## TEACCH

The TEACCH approach has five basic principles: physical structure, scheduling, work system, routine, and visual structure. The use of visual structures to organise the environment and tasks is crucial when teaching skills. It focuses on the pupil and their skill, interests and needs. It gives structure to support transition and provides choices. TEACCH is implemented throughout the school in schedules, workstations, whole classroom layouts, and other strategies including working towards and now & next boards. Staff have a responsibility to continually assess the pupils to ensure they have the right TEACCH approach and support for their current needs.



## Whiteboards

Whiteboards are used with some pupils to support transitions, give routine and signal an end to an activity. They can be used with drawings or the written word.

## Timers

Timers are used throughout the school to give a visual understanding to how long an activity will last. This can give more time to processing a change and reducing anxiety. All classes have a range of timers for different situations from 30 seconds to 10 minutes.

## Lanyards

All staff have standardised visuals on lanyards to support transition and understand school rules. It is the school staff's responsibility to ensure they use the lanyards and keep them in good condition. Lanyards can be customised to support some individual pupils needs.