



Regency High School Total Communication Policy

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Total Communication Policy

At Regency High School we use lots of ways of “talking”. We believe that communication is more than speaking words, so pupils use gesture, speech, symbols and electronic communication aids to give information in different situations. A Total Communication approach is used to develop the functional communication of pupils attending Regency High School.

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

- Verbal skills including speaking and listening
- Signing including gesture and body language
- Written text
- Colourful Semantics
- Picture symbols accompanied by written word(s)
- Photographs
- Objects of reference
- TaSSeLs (Tactile Signing for Sensory Learners)
- High-Tech communication aids
- Low-Tech Aids e.g. symbolic/pictorial representation

Our aims:

- To help pupils find a way of expressing themselves using good functional communication
- To enable pupils to develop their receptive and expressive communication skills
- To ensure pupils’ individual communication system(s) are used consistently across the school
- For all staff to contribute to the maintenance of the individual's communication system(s)
- For teachers and teaching assistants (TA) to ensure the ‘Speech and Language Therapy’ Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) targets are addressed
- To ensure staff understand and work with all aspects of Total Communication
- To offer regular training to staff

Regency High School Principles of Communication:

Communication through the spoken or written word and through sign, picture symbols, photographs, objects of reference, Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCA) as appropriate. We aim to do this through the following principles:

1. Regency High School provides a communication friendly learning environment. Classroom staff consistently support communication and learning through use of visual resources
2. Regency High School staff consistently use language that matches the learning, language and emotional literacy level of individual learners.
3. Regency High School classroom staff consistently use the mode of communication that matches the primary means of communication of the individual learners.
4. Regency High School teaching staff and Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT) will work collaboratively to develop and monitor appropriate communication targets.

The Communication Team:

The Communication Team comprises:

- A member of the Senior Leadership Team
- Subject Leader for English
- Speech and Language Therapists
- Communication TA
- Class staff

Class staff are offered a 15 hour Signalong Level 1 course over 10 weeks within the first term and then staff are provided with a weekly 'sign of the week' and Signalong updates. There is a 'sign of the week' board in the staffroom and on our school website. Signalong tutors are awarded the opportunity to attend the annual conference. Staff are also provided a range of access and communication approaches such as: Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS); Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication handicapped Children (T.E.A.C.C.H).; Communicate in Print 3 (CiP 3); Clicker 6; EyeGaze; switch technology; use of Access to Communication Technology (ACT) devices; and iPad communication apps and Low-Tech Aids.

How the team works:

- Meet and talk with class teams
- Work in class e.g. observation, offering advice, demonstration and modelling of strategies.
- SaLT carry out individual assessment of communication skills for referred pupils
- Attend ACT and other meetings relating to communication.
- Prepare, share and loan out communication and interaction resources (stored in Communication and Literacy Resource room)

Standards and Procedures:

Prior to term commencing staff will:

- Gather information from EHCP
- Prepare any communication supports that have been successfully used previously - e.g. visual timetables, home/school communication books, PECS files for class.

During the pupil's first term at Regency High School the Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT) will:

- Observe in class
- Discuss with the Teacher, TAs
- Conduct ongoing monitoring of approaches so that rapid progress can be made towards establishing an effective communication system for the pupil.

Communication Targets:

A full set of communication targets is taken directly from the pupil's EHCP and addressed and reviewed during the course of the year.

Resources to Develop Communication:

- Resources are available in the 'Communication and Literacy Resource' room to support the development and maintenance of an individual's communication

- Any other resources needed will be discussed with the Speech and Language Therapists and an SLT member responsible for Communication
- Class staff have the responsibility of maintaining the equipment

Functional Communication:

All pupils, verbal and non-verbal, are working towards good functional communication. The school uses the Talkabout approach, covering: active listening; appropriateness; turn taking and organisation. Verbal children may be working on one or two areas at one time.

The PECS is used extensively across Regency High School in all situations and teaching contexts.

For some pupils, PECS will augment other communication systems in use. For other pupils, PECS may be their main or only means of establishing effective functional communication.

- PECS is a communication system
- PECS encourages functional verbal communication.
- PECS encourages the child to initiate a request or comment and develops other social and functional communication skills such as eye contact, making contact with others, turn taking, humour and organisation.

The PECS principles can be put into practice using 2cm to 10cm (1-4 inches) picture symbols (with text underneath), photos and, to a lesser degree, objects of reference.

We aim to support progression by finding the appropriate medium for each child. Those pupils that are unable to use PECS will be transferred to alternative systems to develop their skills.

Intensive Interaction:

Intensive Interaction is used primarily with hard-to-reach pupils. It encourages social interaction and is led by the pupil. No demands are put on the pupil; it is up to the staff member to follow the pupil's lead and to help them build on it. It encourages eye contact, smiling, turn taking and vocalisation.

Intensive Interaction is used on a 1-1 basis:

- It is usually carried out in a quiet environment
- It may be part of a pupil's timetable of activities, as part of their communication syllabus.
- It may be carried out by the Speech and Language Therapist or assistant, Teacher or TA (once received specialist training)

T.E.A.C.C.H. Approach:

The T.E.A.C.C.H. Approach (structured TEACCHing, see Appendix A) is based on knowledge and understanding of Autism. However, many of its features are applicable to pupils with other learning / processing of information problems, particularly where communication difficulties are present. It provides a practical approach by using structures and systems, which enable the pupil to understand: What is expected of me? Where do I start? How long will this take? How will I know when it's finished? What will I be doing next?

T.E.A.C.C.H. is used with pupils with ASD to provide a structure through which the pupil can gain information reliably and a secure framework to operate confidently. Often pupils with ASD have difficulty putting information together to understand the whole situation. T.E.A.C.C.H. is a proactive approach and reduces the likelihood of challenging behaviour. This approach can be tailored to meet the individual needs in different areas of development:

PUPIL	T.E.A.C.C.H.
Where?	Structure of Class
When?	Timetables
What?	Work System
How?	Visual Clarification and Instruction
Reward?	Finish Box / Routines and 'On Work' Timetable

Employing the T.E.A.C.C.H. Approach for pupils who have a difficulty in processing, organising and retrieving information provides a structure to their environment. There can be natural progression and application of the approach from the initial introduction through to adult life providing a tool for independence.

Signing:

Regency High School supports the use of signing across the school. Signing is seen as a valuable support to verbal language for all pupils, both in providing a visual focus and supporting verbal understanding and as an expressive form of communication for some pupils.

Signing Systems used:

Signalong

Supporting the Development and Maintenance of Signing:

All staff are encouraged to use signing across the school when communicating with pupils.

- Pupils are encouraged to sign, whether they are able to use 1 or 200 signs.
- Pupils' EHCP's may well contain signing targets
- New staff are introduced to signing through the core signing booklet of 50 signs at their Signalong training
- Weekly signing practice is provided during term time for all staff.
- Weekly 'sign of the week' uploaded onto our school website.

Symbols:

The use of symbols in communication at Regency High School is wide ranging. Although the spoken and written word is used throughout the school, many pupils need to use symbols in other forms to access and support expressive and receptive language.

Symbol Forms:

Three forms of symbols at Regency High School

1. Objects of reference: used with those pupils whose communication is predominantly at the pre-intentional and intentional level but who have yet to consistently manage the use of 2 dimensional symbols in a formal communication system.
2. Photographs: used with those pupils who can recognise 2 dimensional representations of an object but are unable to recognise colour or black and white line drawings consistently.

3. **Picture symbols:** Widget picture symbols are used with children who have the ability to recognise black and white or colour picture symbols. Photographs and picture symbols will be of varying sizes, depending on the ability of the child. They range in size from 2 cm (1 inch) up to A4. Different sizes may be used for different purposes (e.g. a Teacher may use an A4 size symbol to the whole class when setting up the daily timetable, whilst the children may be using 2cm, 5cm, 10cm symbols or photos). A copy of these is kept in the resources room for reference and updated every 6 months by the Communication TA.

Pupils may be encouraged to use more than one form of symbol - e.g. photographs for transition and picture symbols on their timetable. The ultimate aim is to move pupils from one form of symbol to the next level for example: objects of reference to photographs.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication:

What is AAC?

AAC describes methods of communication which can be used by pupils, who find communication difficult because they have little or no clear speech. It ranges from gestures and pictures to using computer technology. It adds to (*augments*) or replaces (*is an alternative for*) spoken communication. AAC can also help the user's understanding, as well as provide a means of expression.

AAC systems may involve combinations of the following methods:

- Objects of reference
- Signing and gesture, including use of Signalong
- PECS
- Symbol systems such as Widgit /Communicate in Print
- Communication books and Charts
- Speech Output Devices, from single message switches to Complex Dynamic Screen devices.

Inclusion:

- AAC supports access to the curriculum
- AAC supports pupil's ability to achieve success
- It promotes independence, provides choices and ensures social integration at all levels

AAC at Regency High School:

Many of the pupils at Regency High School use combinations of different communication methods to support their difficulties with speech and language.

Pupils who find producing speech really difficult or have difficulty combining words into sentences or may know what they want to say but struggle to think of the exact word are assessed. Depending upon the outcome depends upon the method given to them to enable speech. Some considerations in devising a system are:

1. What are the individual's cognitive abilities?
2. What are the individual's physical abilities?
3. What is the most important vocabulary relevant to the individual?
4. Consider the individual's motivation to use AAC and select the AAC system that will match.

Regency High School categorises AAC as Low-Tech and High-Tech methods. Low-Tech methods (see Appendix B) involve using pictures and symbols and communication books. High-Tech comprises of anything using a power source. For example a device that speaks when a pupil touches an image. These are called Communication Aids / VOCA (a grid made up of 'cells')

containing a symbol or picture along with a word). Technology enables many pupils at Regency High School to communicate.

Literacy: Reading, Writing and Speaking and Listening:

Pupils are exposed to a wide variety of techniques and approaches to learning to progress pupils' literacy skills. For example with some groups a multi-sensory approach is used to build communication, pre-reading and writing skills, with a focus on increasing confidence, social skills and enjoyment of telling and sharing stories. Additionally, this approach includes Signalong signing and symbols, tactile resources, the use of music, and contexts that are relevant and understood by the pupils. Some groups, with emerging readers and writers, progress to Guided Reading, Phonics, Signalong and symbols as a bridge towards independent reading and spelling. Our broad range of fantastic resources support the progression of reading and writing, including: Letters and Sounds, to support phonics learning; Signalong signs to support sight word reading; a rich ICT bank of resources including iPads and laptops; and many physical resources, such as pre-reading 'Band activities', phonic games, board games and puppets, to enrich learning activities. Colourful Semantics has been introduced. It is aimed at helping pupils to develop their grammar, by linking the structure of a sentence (syntax) and its meaning (**semantics**). **Colourful semantics** reassembles sentences by cutting them up into their thematic roles and then **colour** codes them.

Pupils with a secure knowledge of reading and writing are encouraged to broaden their range and use of both written and articulate vocabulary, and to expand their depth of comprehension skills through exploring a wide range of high-quality works from English literature, both pre-1914 and contemporary, including prose, poetry and drama, Shakespeare plays and seminal world literature. A focus on writing skills, grammar, vocabulary, punctuation and spelling is differentiated to meet the needs of all, as well as the development of understanding spoken English through listening to and taking part in discussions, presentations and role play (see English Long-Term Plan).

Appendix A:

This well-known American approach is used extensively in schools in the UK. Regency High School implements many of its principles albeit in a modified form e.g.:

- Visual timetables whether pictorial or written – individual and for the whole class – are embedded practice throughout the school. These evolve into diaries, electronic calendars and use of smart phones etc.
- We use visual communication support extensively through Picture for Object Trading augmentative communication method and communication 'strips'
- Our classrooms and work spaces have clearly defined areas for different activities and purposes
- Work tasks are clearly organised both in the amount of work and what constitutes the actual tasks
- 'Start' and 'finished' trays help pupils to work through series of activities as appropriate
- Individual work tasks are also clearly presented and defined

Appendix B:

Some Low-Tech Examples:

All forms of symbols will be used across the school. Symbols may be used as a means of expression - e.g. the PECS, T.E.A.A.C.H., pointing boards - and as a support to verbal understanding - e.g. social stories, timetables and calendars. Each pupil will have access to one or more of these visual supports using symbols relevant to their communication ability:

Expression:

- The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
- A pointing file/board

Verbal understanding:

- Visual timetable
- 'Working towards' system
- Feelings board, body parts board
- Social stories
- Wait card
- Don't touch card
- Chew and swallow card
- Chat book
- Finished card
- Sequencing board

All these visual support systems are personalised to meet the need of individual pupil.