



Character - Preparation - Achievement



Communication and Interaction Policy for Cambridge Park Academy

Created By:	V McGuire
Approved by;	Full Governing Body
Version:	4
Created on:	June 2026 Agreed by governors on 29.6.26
Next Review Date;	June 2028

Introduction

This document is a statement of the aims, principles and strategies for communication at Cambridge Park Academy School. All new staff are given a copy of the policy to highlight the communication ethos at the school.

Cambridge Park Academy School is an all-aged special school that caters for pupils with special educational needs and associated learning difficulties. Many pupils have communication and social interaction difficulties. Communication underpins all learning and therefore we are committed to providing a Total Communication environment. The Academy adopts principles from the SCERTS Framework and The Autism Education Trust.

Aims

Our school aims are to:

1. Adopt a Total Communication approach throughout the school, where pupils have access to their own means of communication throughout the day.
2. Develop means of communication appropriate to each pupil's individual developmental needs.
3. Create opportunities for communication throughout the curriculum to enable each pupil to communicate to the best of their ability.

Pupils starting school

On entry to school, some of the pupils are already known to the NHS Speech and Language Therapy service. If a pupil is not known or does not meet NHS therapy criteria, then the school may refer to their own independent speech and language therapist, via parental or guardian permission. Some pupils may access both NHS and independent therapy provisions. This is determined working co-productively with the Academy's Communication Lead and the Therapists'

Pupils will be identified for speech and language intervention via school staff. Referrals to the school speech and language therapist will require a signed permission form, from the pupils' parent /guardian. NHS referrals are via the outlined NHS pathways. A pupil's communication needs will be assessed within the school setting, using a combination of individual assessments, classroom observations and liaison between staff and family (where possible).

Pupils' needs are best met when education and speech and language therapy work closely together in the following ways:

- 1) Observation in classes to share good practice and negotiate further communication targets within classroom setting.
- 2) Shared delivery of communication targets
- 3) Education staff to be supported in generalisation of new communication skills being taught.
- 4) Training for staff and specific training according to individual needs.
- 5) Communication targets are embedded across all areas of the curriculum and within the pupil's Personalised Learning Plans (PLPs)

- 6) Keeping other professionals updated on the communication styles for pupils they work with.
- 7) Close liaison with the Communication Lead in the Academy

Monitoring and evaluation

The importance of monitoring and evaluating a pupil's progress is central to their development. As with all communication methods, regular opportunities to use these are vital for the pupil to achieve success.

Signs, symbols, photographs, objects of reference and communication aids must always be available to the pupils, with appropriate support from staff:

- 1) Within the class
- 2) Around school
- 3) In the community

The school uses Widigt Online for symbol design and operates a colour coded system for symbol use and communication transactional supports. This is to help language development as well as consistency throughout the school, ensuring progress is continued and expanded

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------|--|
| 1. Schedules | - Blue | Symbols are specific to activities and Consistent across the school Zones of regulation – specific boards used |
| 2. Emotions | - Purple | |
| 3. Personal / independence | - Orange | |
| 4. Objects/ labels | - Yellow | |
| 5. Actions /transition strips | - Green | |
| 6. People | - Red | |

The colour coding system is carried across into the school's low tech AACs to develop person centered requesting. PECS folders, sentence strips and communication books work towards SVO phrases (subject – people, verb – action, Object) with red, green, yellow background prompts.

The therapist will monitor pupil's progress. The class teacher is to continually monitor and evaluate pupils' progress in the area of communication. Support will be given as needed and/or requested.

Communication methods

At Cambridge Park Academy School, we adopt a Total Communication approach, using a range of alternative augmentative communication (AAC) methods to support and encourage two-way *interactions*, communication and speech and language development. These are not used in isolation and a pupil may use several of these methods.

Gesture

Non-verbal skills are the foundation to communication. There is a strong link between gestures and spoken words in communication development. Therefore, staff use natural gestures alongside their words e.g., “come,” “give,” “go”. Pupils are encouraged to develop gestures through opportunities to point, give items, develop shared eye gaze, participate in action songs.

Signing

Signing is a system used alongside speech, to develop a pupil's understanding of language and their ability to express themselves. The use of signing by staff, enhances a pupil's ability to develop communication skills. Signing within the school is *an ongoing* area of development. Specific staff have completed formal signing courses with certificates.

The aim is that staff will use a core vocabulary of signs *and symbols*, to aid pupils' understanding within specific classrooms. Our core signs are

1. Hello
2. School
3. Home
4. Help
5. Drink
6. Food
7. Toilet
8. More
9. Finish
10. Play

Pupils who develop a preference to signing will be supported by developing the use of simple single word signing.

Objects of Reference

Some pupils will need to use objects of reference to aid their communication and understanding of the language. An object of reference will be a real object that represents an activity or a place. e.g., Dinner tray or plate for "lunch".

Nappy for "toilet".

Coat for "outside".

Bag for "home time".

Classroom equipment is used for scheduled activities e.g., pencils for mark making. Often the activity resources are the object of reference, such as a book for story time.

Symbols / Photographs

The use of symbols/photographs provides valuable support and is encouraged even if pupils are not using PECS. It is the responsibility of class staff to provide symbol/photo vocabulary as appropriate. Photos are the simplest picture to understand for an object, followed by coloured symbols, then black and white symbols. Line drawing is seen as the most complex form of pictorial representation.

Pupils use symbols for a variety of purposes:

Picture Exchange Communication System – PECS (Frost and Bondy) PECS is where pupils learn to exchange symbols/photographs to COMMUNICATE. It is to support the pupil's expressive language system. Symbols have a white background and are in colour. PECS begins with a single symbol exchange, moving up to a choice of symbols.

Pupils that have a growing symbol vocabulary will keep symbols on a page or within a personalised PECS folder. Children using PECS will be encouraged to exchange sentence strips to make requests, using "I want", moving on to commenting, using "I see".

Visual Schedules

This is the use of symbols and photos to help pupils' UNDERSTANDING. The visual schedules help pupils anticipate their day and routines. At the simplest form, the pupil is

shown a single symbol. (Symbols may be held on staff key rings). Pupils then move to a “now and next” schedule. working towards a morning schedule and then to a day schedule.

These schedules will work top to bottom and are blue in line with the whole school colour coding system. Secondary age pupils will be encouraged to move to a weekly timetable, where possible, and the pupils will make their own timetable. Written/printed schedules work from left to right.

Symbol/ communication books

Pupils with an ability to formulate a range of sentences using symbols will be assessed for communication books. Core vocabulary will exist on the *top of* each page, with topic-based vocabulary pages being placed below core vocabulary is an essential skill and staff model a range of core words (e.g., Actions, descriptive) alongside fringe vocabulary (labels). This is a low-tech aid and can act as a “stepping stone” to Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCAs) such as Proloquo2go or Snap Core on an iPad

Communication Aids

Voice output communication aids are being introduced into the school. These include iPads, Big Macs and VOCA’s. There are paper copies of proloquo2go quick access core word boards. The NHS speech and language department signpost to the below service provider for pupils which require assistive technology assessments e.g. (high tech AAC’s).

<http://www.barnsleyhospital.nhs.uk/assistive-technology/>

Emotional regulation

Staff support awareness of emotional vocabulary with a core emotions key ring. Staff teach the emotion they think the pupil is experiencing and then offer a solution, using visual cues. The aim is to promote the development of personal strategies for self-regulation. Pupils with more advanced communication skills are encouraged to choose their own emotions and solutions. The zones of regulation are being developed across the school.

Home/School Communication

In our school, we aim to have clear and effective communications with all parents/carers and with the wider community. Effective communication enables us to share our aims and values, through keeping parents well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting the school.

Good communication between the school and the home is essential, and pupils achieve more when schools and parents/carers work together. Parents are provided with reports and activities to use with their child. Pupils in all classes have a home-school diary. This enables parents to record a wide range of information that they wish to share regularly. Parents are able to meet therapists.

Parents can access Autism and communication training provided by school staff and therapists.

Outside agencies / School Communication

In our school we aim to have clear and effective communication with outside professionals working with our pupils. This ensures that information is accurately shared and updated.

Within the school, the pupils with complex communication needs and / or are non-verbal, **have** Communication Passports. The Communication Passport is an important aspect of safeguarding our vulnerable pupils. It must be kept up to date and this is the responsibility

of the school. It was initially devised by the speech and language therapist. It holds information relating to the pupils' means of communication, communication strategies and communication difficulties. Its aim is to provide consistency in approaches across all environments. It helps new staff work effectively with unfamiliar children and provides parents with written information to share with others.