Elm Tree
Primary Academy

Communication and Interaction Policy

Intent

We believe that all pupils are individuals, have the potential to learn and have a unique contribution to make to the life of the school, their family and the community. The ability to both understand messages that are being conveyed and to be able to communicate needs, wants, likes, dislikes and broader opinions are key to being a part of any community so language and communication skills are essential for all of our pupils. We recognise that in a predominantly verbal world, that other forms of communication are available and valid. Elm Tree take a wholistic approach to communication that is multimodal and shared.

To this end these skills are taught discretely as well as generalised across all of the other curriculum areas. In enhancing our pupils' skills within Language and Communication we are enabling them to intentionally relate to another person, in order to:

- Make connections
- Build a relationship
- Share experiences
- Give or obtain information
- Express thoughts and emotions in order to feel safe and secure
- Express wants and needs, likes and dislikes
- Enjoy social experiences that they choose
- Participate in their community

The key concept in all our language and communication teaching is that it should be useful for the child, their families and others within their world.

In order to do this we must offer a stimulating and communicatively rich environment in which pupils have a means to communicate appropriate to their sensory, motor and processing differences, the reasons to communicate; and the opportunities and situations in which to do so.

We aim to support the local community to develop their knowledge and understanding of communication differences and ability to provide accessible provision

Our over all aim at Elm Tree is to enable our pupils to be their authentic autistic selves and communication plays a central role in this.

Implementation

All children will have a personalised communication and interaction plan that links to their long term EHCP outcomes. Each child's plan will reflect their individual needs and interests and be fully integrated with their sensory, emotional regulation and learning needs.

We will provide a total communication environment which can include approaches such as intensive interaction, use of symbols, Makaton, aided language displays and communication books and the children familiar/chosen methods of communication.

Relationships are at the heart of the Elm Tree approach and key to our children feeling safe and secure within school. Adults will accept and validate all forms of communication to enable children to self-advocate and have autonomy. This includes a focus on pupil voice.

All teaching staff alongside the speech and language therapist have a duty to assess the language and communication skills and develop appropriate approaches for the children in their class.

The communication approaches will be coproduced with families and care givers to ensure the child can communicate effectively in every aspect of their world.

Staff will be provided with an ongoing program of training and support to ensure a team that have highly specialised skills and knowledge in supporting autistic children.

SCERTS

Elm Tree Academy will develop a personalised curriculum incorporating the SCERTS model.

SCERTS is a multidisciplinary framework that is based upon research in child development as well as research identifying the core challenges faced by children with autism and social emotional learning differences. There is a recognition that learning in childhood occurs in the social context of daily activities and experiences. It can be adapted to meet the unique demands of different social settings for younger and older individuals including home, school, community and vocational settings

Social Communication

Functional and Social Communication is a key area for development for our children as the aspirational goal for all pupils is to become confident and competent communicators so that they are able to actively participate in social activities. Pupils who are able to communicate effectively, whether this be verbal or non-speaking have access to increased opportunities for play and learning and are able to participate more fully in enjoyable social relationships. In SCERTS, social communication is addressed in two areas; Joint Attention and Symbol Use. As individuals progress through this pathway they will develop from social partners to language partners to conversational partners.

Emotional Regulation

Emotional regulation is key areas for development for our children. Children will be developing skills to actively engage and be able to adapt to different situations. The child's ability to regulate emotional arousal so they are more able to adapt to and manage environmental and sensory information is a key focus for development. This will be supported in two areas; Mutual-Regulation and Self-Regulation.

Transactional Supports

Transactional supports provide details of adjustments to communication styles and environmental modifications designed to meet an individual's needs. This incorporates 2 elements. Learning Supports describe how we modify the environment and Interpersonal Support describes how we change our communication style and adapt our own interactions, to support communication, interaction and regulation and meet individual needs.

Impact

Progress will be measured through a range of methods including, progress towards EHCP outcomes and progress towards short term targets derived from the Elm Tree curriculum assessment systems such as SCERTS, Tapestry, Towards Independence Hierarchy and engagement profiles.

Progress will ensure that skills are generalised and embedded within routines, other curriculum areas and the child's world.

Policy Reviewed

Date 13.3.23

Head Teacher B P Beaudesy

Academy Council W Plant 22.10.24