Communication Strategy

Kiora Hall School

north east
autism society

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Introduction:

Total Communication at the heart of the school

"Total Communication" describes an approach that strives to create a supportive means of communication to understand and be understood" (Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists). This means that learners and staff are encouraged to use every available form of communication, with a particular emphasis on what is relevant to individuals. A Total Communication approach acknowledges that communication is not simply about talking and emphasises the importance of body language, gesture, photos, symbols, signs, objects and more creative mediums such as music.

Every learner in our school is neurodivergent and their communication is impacted in various ways, therefore Total Communication is important to each learner as it supports the learning and understanding by presenting information in a variety of ways. At Kiora Hall School we provide an enjoyable, structured, engaging and stimulating place for our learners to learn. Each learner is an individual and has their own preferred way of communicating either verbally or non-verbally. We believe that all children and young people have the right to understand and be understood in all aspects of life, therefore, it is the policy of the school to support the learners with the following approaches.

Verbal Communication

What is it?

Why use it?

How to use it

Positioning and body language

Try to get down to the learners' 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.

Say the learner'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.

Reduce your language/stop verbal language

Too much information can be hard to process so keep to single words or short sentences. If you want a learner 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"

Ten second rule

People with Autism can have a delayed processing time so give the learner 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.

Repeat the same instruction word for word

It helps the learner 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?"

Makaton

What is it?

Makaton is a unique language programme that uses symbols, signs and speech to enable people to communicate. It supports the development of essential communication skills such as attention, listening, comprehension, memory, recall and organisation of language and expression. Being able to communicate is one of the most important skills we need in life.

Why use it?

Being able to communicate is one of the most important skills we need in life. Almost everything we do involves communication; everyday tasks such as learning, asking for food and drink, sorting out problems, making friends and having fun. These all rely on our ability to communicate with each other.

How to use it

With Makaton, signs are used, with speech, in spoken word order. This helps provide extra clues about what someone is saying. Using signs can help people who have no speech or whose speech is unclear. Using symbols can help people who have limited speech and those who cannot or prefer not to sign.

The complete Makaton Language Programme comprises two vocabularies:
A Core Vocabulary of essential words or concepts presented in stages of increasing complexity. The Core Vocabulary is taught first and is the foundation of the programme,

A much larger, open-ended, topic-based resource vocabulary providing an enormous bank of further signs and symbols covering broader life experiences and used in association with the Core Vocabulary as required.

Makaton symbols and signs are matched to all the concepts in the two vocabularies to be used with speech, the written word or on their own. They provide a visual representation of language which increases understanding and makes expressive communication easier.

This multi-modal approach, where one mode facilitates another, has been shown to increase opportunities for personal expression and development, participation in interaction and socialisation and to increase access to education, training and public information.

Makaton is extremely flexible as it can be personalised to an individual's needs and used at a level suitable for them.

Symbol Supported Communication

What is it?

Through the consistent use of Symbol Supported Communication, our learners are provided authentic and meaningful opportunities to communicate using a symbol-based system across learning and living environments.

Why use it?

The benefits of which can be seen in a multitude of ways including:

- development of language skills
- development of literacy skills
- having more to say to more people
- building relationships and connectedness and belonging
- decreasing frustration
- developing a better understanding of the world around them
- making personally meaningful requests, choices and decisions
- increasing participation across environments
- building creativity and self-expression

How to use it

We do this through:

- A consistent approach to and use of symbols within learning environments
- Classroom schedules and visuals
- Now and Next boards
- Symbol boards and books

Objects of Reference

What is it?

An object of reference is any object which is used systematically to represent an item, activity or place. Understanding real objects is the first stage of symbolic development. Objects of reference are used with learners who find it difficult to understand spoken words, signs, symbols or photographs.

Why use it?

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ome learners in the school will use OOR to help them transition or understand their routine. Show the OOR just before a learner is about to start a new activity or make a transition whilst using short simple language saying what will happen e.g. before going swimming, give the learner a 'towel' OOR and say "swimming".

How to use it

Encourage learners to take the OOR with them to the location. It is best if the learner keeps in contact with the OOR. If they do not want to hold it, the adult can do so, keeping the object in the learner's view throughout the transition.

Once a learner has been introduced to the OOR they need to make the transition immediately in order to help them understand the connection between the object and what happens next. It is very important that the same object is used consistently (i.e. every time you do that activity/ transition.

Intensive Interaction

What is it?

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.

The learner 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 learners 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.

Why use it?

- 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

What is it?

The Attention Autism approach is intended to support learners to start to focus their attention towards an activity led by another. It is designed for learners who can only pay attention to things of their own choosing. Using the Attention Autism Strategy provides many opportunities for pupils to extend their communication skills. It is a highly stimulating and multi-sensory activity, which can provide sensory experiences relating to touch, sight, taste and smell.

The approach is based on the idea that successful communication and learning in autistic people should be 'dynamic, engaging and joyful', because they learn best when they are enthusiastic and motivated to create.

Why use it?

Following this approach can support pupils to participate in-group activities and can lead to pupils participating in independent learning activities.

While lots of learners sometimes find it difficult to pay attention for a variety of reasons, autistic learners may find it particularly difficult to focus on things that do not interest them, such as watching a film, walking safely across a road, doing a jigsaw puzzle, or something else. However, when something does interest an autistic learner, they may be able to focus on that thing for a long time without shifting their attention.

The Attention Autism approach is designed to create a learning experience for autistic learners that they will be excited to communicate about, in order to:

-Develop both natural and spontaneous communication skills and interaction

-Engage attention and improve joint attention

-Share enjoyment during group activities

-Increase attention during adult-led activities

-Increase verbal/non-verbal communication via commentary and building vocabulary

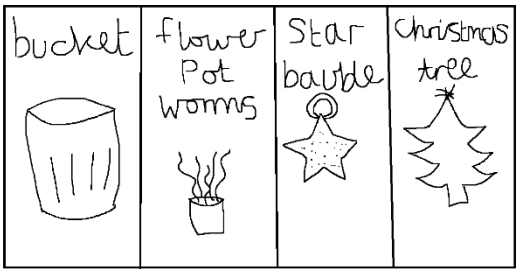
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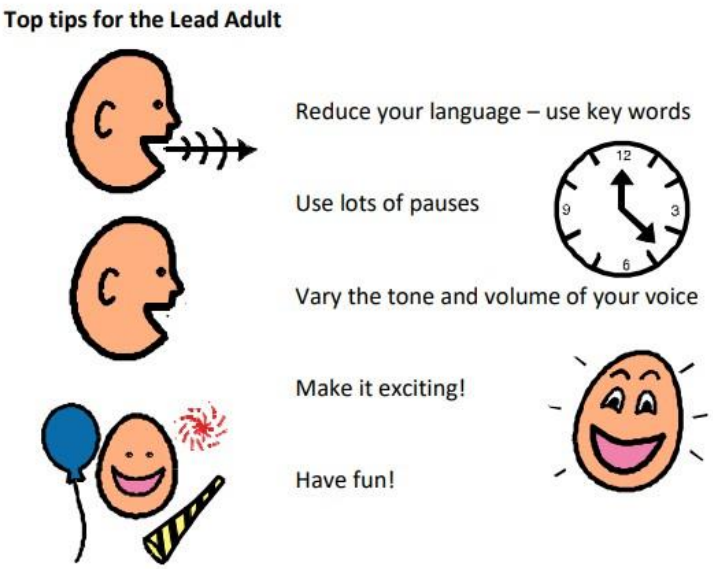
Attention Autism follows the following 4 stages;

- Stage 1: Attention bucket (to focus attention)
- Stage 2: Attention builder (to sustain attention)
- Stage 3: Interactive game (to shift attention)
- Stage 4: Individual activities – (tabletop task)

The leading adult should model it first then transition to their tables to complete the activity independently before refocusing back to join in the group.

You should use a visual timetable – draw your plan on a white board, place in front of the learners and after each activity cross it off the timetable.





Further Support

Booklet saved on shared drive


Attention Autism Training.pptx


Attention Autism.docx

TACPAC

What is it?

Tacpac draws together touch and music to create a structured sensory and communication activity between two people.

Tacpac music is composed specifically to reflect the texture of each object so that the receiver experiences total sensory alignment. The objects are used to create touch by 'copying' what the music is doing in terms of rhythm, tempo, type of pressure i.e. gentle, more forceful.

Tacpac can be used in any setting – at home, in school/ college, in hospital, in residential care or even outside. The music matches the touch in every aspect

Why use it?

It is intended to create sensory alignment and support sensory impairment, developmental delay, complex learning difficulties, tactile defensiveness, and limited or pre-verbal levels of communication.

Tacpac builds communication skills

Tacpac enables progress to be measured and recorded.

This means that the receiver of the Tacpac session experiences complete sensory alignment – what they see, is what they hear, is what they feel.

Over time, this enables your receivers to develop trust with you as their partner, the giver. Your partner can then begin to express themselves by showing what they feel or what they want.

How to use it

Each Tacpac set contains an instruction sheet and the appropriate resources.

Each set is divided into 6 activities, each of which uses an everyday object and specially composed music that reflects the texture of that particular object.

Tacpac is half hour structured sessions.

Learners may display a preference to particular sets, which links to their sensory profile

The session facilitator should follow the learners lead; the learners ISP will indicate their preferences and specific information on delivery

- The activity and object is announced on the CD before each piece of music starts.
- The receiving partner 'hears' what they 'see' and what they 'feel' on their skin.
- You need a disturbance free zone, a CD player, the Tacpac CD, the specific objects and the A4 laminate that describes the 6 activities.
- So that the focus is on the touch and music, it is important that the giving partners do not talk amongst themselves during Tacpac sessions.

Colourful Semantics

What is it?

Colourful Semantics is an approach aimed at helping learners to develop their language and vocabulary. Colourful semantics reassembles sentences by cutting them up into their thematic roles and then colour coding them. The approach has 4 key colour coded stages. There are further stages for adverbs, adjectives, conjunctions and negatives.

- WHO – Orange
- WHAT DOING – Yellow
- WHAT – Green
- WHERE – Blue

At NEAS, we use this approach to support pupils to develop their communication skills within their comprehension of spoken language and as a visual aid to support their expressive communication. It is also used to develop pupils English skills in writing sentences by supporting them to develop the grammatical content of their sentences as well as their reading skills.

Planning for using Colourful Semantics will be within individual English and communication schemes of work as well as through individualised targets. Within expressive communication, Colourful Semantics can be used alongside teaching pupils to communicate using objects or visuals and/ or PECS. Colourful Semantics can be transferred into a wide range of environments and learning activities, meaning that the pupil will have many opportunities to consolidate and transfer their skills.

Why use it?

Colourful semantics may be useful for anyone who has difficulties with structuring sentences. This could include learners with developmental language disorder (DLD) (sometimes known as specific language impairment), learners with Down's Syndrome and/or Autistic learners, or any other special educational need. It is also frequently used in

services for learners who do not have any special educational needs, as it supports all learners in the development of their speaking and listening skills, and early reading and writing development. It can be an effective way of supporting learners with English as an additional language to become more familiar with English sentence structure. Using colourful semantics is a great way to make your teaching inclusive, as it supports the needs of a wide range of students.

- Helping learners to expand their vocabulary.
- Helping learners to learn how to answer questions.
- Develop a learners use of nouns, verbs, prepositions, and adjectives.
- Improving their story-telling skills, as it helps them to form a narrative.
- Ultimately help learners with sentence writing and language comprehension skills.

How to use it

When introducing colourful semantics to a learner, a limited number of these should be used initially

Using colours for question structures has two clear benefits:

Colours are fantastic visual aids which are useful when encouraging learners to make connections. It is also easy to integrate colours into learning across the curriculum. For example, you could show a learner an orange prompt card while reading with them and ask who has been mentioned, and they will begin to associate orange with 'who.'

As they become confident in the colours, they will be able to start constructing their own sentences by following the pattern.

Getting Started with Colourful Semantics:

The starting point for colourful semantics can change and will vary depending on a learner's speech and language skills before the approach begins. If a learner can talk in small phrases

like "he eating," then you can start by looking at 'who' and 'what doing' together in order to build the other questions in as their confidence grows.

TEACCH

What is it?

The TEACCH approach can help learners who are autistic and or neurodiverse understand their surroundings by providing visual structures. This can help:

-Reduce anxieties by providing predictability

-Reduce dependency on verbal prompts

-Increase independence

-Reducing anxieties caused by visual sensory over-load

Different ways we can use the TEACCH system:

-Providing personal schedules or planners

-Providing visual structure in the learning environment

-Providing individual work stems

-Using visual strategies to represent time

-Using visual motivators

-Visual work instructions

-TEACCH tasks

Why use it?

TEACCH Approach can support with;

-Reducing anxieties by providing predictability

-Reducing dependency on verbal prompts

-Increasing independence

-Reducing anxieties caused by visual sensory over-load

How to use it

We should differentiate each aspect of the TEACCH approach just as we do every other area of the curriculum. We should use it along with other strategies to create personalised

learning programmes. See the PowerPoint for recommendations on how to use the approach.

BLANK Language Levels

What is it?

Blank's Levels of Questioning are a framework developed to help children develop key oral language comprehension skills. The framework is built around four stages of questioning, which become progressively more complex, moving from relatively simple, concrete questions to more complicated, abstract queries.

Why use it?

These are used across the school to plot communication stages of every learner. This is to ensure that the right communication approach is used to support the development of each learner's communication.

How to use it

Blank level 1-Naming

Blank Level 2-Describing

Blank Level 3 Re-Telling

Blank Level 4 Justifying

