



# Phoenix School Sylhet

## Communication Policy

Agreed:

Written May 2019

APPROVED

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Capacity: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **1.1 Introduction**

Communication is the transmission of a message from one person to at least one other. It can take a number of different forms ranging from early communicative behaviours such as eye gaze, vocalisations and body movements to the more sophisticated communication methods of speech and writing.

Communication is a social interaction fundamental to human relationships, which underpins all aspects of school life.

Phoenix School Sylhet promotes a 'communication friendly' environment which:

- enables each pupil to develop their understanding in order to access information about the world around them
- allows all students to make decisions
- enables each pupil to communicate their needs, comment and interact effectively with others
- supports and promotes independent learning and problem solving strategies

### **1.2 Aims**

The aims of the Communication Policy and Handbook are:

- To promote consistency in the use of communication systems at school To promote the most effective communication system available for each student
- To outline procedures for communication assessment from Baseline – upon entering the School – to more formal speech and language assessments as individual's progress through the School.

### **1.3 Statement of Equal Opportunities**

All students at Phoenix School Sylhet are given equal access to experiences, resources and opportunities to fully achieve their communication potential. Resources are carefully selected to reflect the School's Policy on Equal Opportunities and should at all times promote a positive image of ethnicity

## **2. Classification of Communication Skills**

Staff plan for developing the needs of each individual pupil. ~~approach~~, Pupils at Phoenix School with communication difficulties fall into three stages:

- a) Social Partner Stage (Before words)** – pupils at this stage often do not find social interaction immediately rewarding and adults are not necessarily seen as a source of help. These students are in the early stages of communication development and understanding of spoken language is reduced. They need help to communicate spontaneously and interact with others.
- b) Language Partner Stage (Language is emerging)** – Pupils at this stage are developing understanding and use of object words and action words and expanding their spoken expressive language or by using systems such as PECS, Pupils should have access to their communication systems throughout the school day.

- c) Conversational Partner Stage (Language is extensive, spontaneous and flexible)**  
 Pupils at this stage understand most things that are said to them but continue to show difficulty with predicting the intentions and feelings of others, topic maintenance and conversation, collaborating and negotiating with others. They need help to communicate socially with peers,.

**3. Strategies used to promote Communication**

1. SCERTS framework – supporting emotional regulation through a modified environment to achieve social communication and learning.
2. Visual supports
3. Intensive Interaction, Music Interaction and Attention Autism.
4. Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) Minimal language approach.
5. Social Stories.
6. Comic Strip Conversation Approach.

More detailed information of these strategies is included in the document, ‘Communication Handbook’.

**4. Resources**

**In school**

- The Communication Policy & Handbook Communicate in Print or Board Maker Software
- Social Stories
- Transition packs including timetables, ‘I am working for’ and motivators to be used when on offsite trips or when on school site
- Laminated sheets indicating the stages of PECS

**5. Assessment and Record Keeping**

**5.1 Assessment**

Pupils are baselined at the start of their time in school using the Observation Checklist/Profile. PECS are also assessed using the PECS Checklist

•		

**6. Target-setting**

**6.1 Personal Education Plans (PEPs)**

Most pupils will have a communication target included on their PEPs to try and improve skills in social interaction and social communication.

When setting Communication targets the following issues need to be considered:

- a) Is the pupil actively involved in learning communication skills?

- b) Is the pupil able to initiate communication?
- c) Has the pupil got real, motivating opportunities to communicate spontaneously with mature language users?

Communication targets should consider:

- The role of the adult;
- Verbal, visual and or physical prompts that may be required;
- Equipment used or needed;
- Social setting; and
- Receptive or expressive language skills.

## **Appendix 1**

## Appendix 2

### Guidelines for use of Core Boards

Phoenix School promotes an inclusive 'communication friendly' environment which enables pupils to develop their receptive and expressive communication skills through a range of different strategies. Please see the Communication Policy for further information.

#### What are core boards and how will they support communication at Phoenix School?

Core boards are a visual aid used to support pupils' understanding and expressive communication within specific contexts. It contains a small set of commonly used words ('core' vocabulary) along with vocabulary and phrases linked to a specific topic or context ('fringe' vocabulary).

Core boards aim to support and promote independent and spontaneous communication within a range of contexts and environments. They aim to support pupils to communicate their needs, make comments, and interact effectively with others (including unfamiliar people).

#### Who are core boards suitable for?

- Verbal pupils: Pupils who demonstrate an ability to express 2-3 part phrases/sentences verbally in at least 2 settings. These pupils will have access to core boards to extend their vocabulary, facilitate more spontaneous communication and scaffold language within a range of contexts.
- Pupils within the satellite classes at Bow or Marner, or those pupils who are beginning a transition to satellite classes.

#### Who are core boards not suitable for?

- All pupils who use PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) to communicate.

#### Where will core boards be used?

- Phoenix School Café: An A4 core board will be used in the café to support pupil's decision making and their ability to make requests.
- Bow and Marner Satellite classes: Core boards will be used with pupils during lessons or activities to extend their vocabulary, scaffold language and enable more spontaneous communication.
- Classrooms: Core boards may be used in the classroom to facilitate and scaffold spontaneous requesting and commenting with adults and with peers.
- Specialist subject areas: Core boards can be used in specialist subject lessons where appropriate, e.g. art, drama, PE
- Community environments, e.g. farm, park, post office, shop.
- Templates of the 'core' vocabulary on a core board will be created for teachers to use within different environments, along with some examples of 'fringe' vocabulary, and a template for creating additional 'fringe' vocabulary. Teachers/SLTTAs are to create/adapt additional 'fringe' vocabulary appropriate to specific environments and activities.

#### **Use of the core boards:**

- Core boards are to be used in a range of environments.
- Adults working with pupils are to use the core boards to model their own language by pointing to the symbols on the board while they speak to a pupil. This is in order that pupils can become familiar with the vocabulary available to them; to experience novel ways of combining words to make phrases and sentences, and to support pupil's understanding.
- The 'core' vocabulary on a core board is available in several formats to support pupils at a range of language levels. More advanced core boards will have a wider range of vocabulary available and are suited to pupils with stronger receptive vocabulary and visual scanning skills. The Speech and Language Therapy Department is available to help teachers and SLTTAs to determine which core board is most suited to their pupil/s.
- Staff are not to adapt the 'core' vocabulary on a board. This is to ensure that pupils have access to consistent vocabulary across settings within the school. Any additional vocabulary required can be added to the 'fringe' vocabulary. The SLT team will liaise and consult with staff and seek feedback regarding the vocabulary contained in the 'core' sections, and may make changes universally if deemed appropriate.

#### **Evaluation of the use of core boards:**

The use of core boards should be evaluated termly to measure:

- Any increase in spontaneous communication
- Any increase in sentence length and vocabulary
- Any increase in pupils' rate of initiation of communication
- Reliability of the core board as a functional means of communication, *i.e.* are the pupils using the core boards effectively within different environments?
- Ease of use

- Effectiveness in supporting pupils to make requests and comments, and interact with others

Evaluation may be completed by taking of a baseline video to measure the above skills without access to a core board, and then while using core boards at a midpoint and end of term.

A staff questionnaire will be created to qualitatively measure the effectiveness of core boards and their use within specific contexts.

This policy is intended to be a working policy, annually reviewed by the SMT, Speech and Language Therapists and the whole staff. It is intended to promote a consistent and coherent whole school approach to support and extend verbal student's communication skills.

## **Appendix 3**

# **Guidelines for the Use of Objects Of Reference (OORs)**

Phoenix School promotes an inclusive 'communication friendly' environment which enables pupils to develop their receptive and expressive communication through a range of different strategies. One strategy to support the development of both receptive and expressive communication skills can include the use of Objects Of Reference (OOR).

### **What are OORs and how will they support communication at Phoenix School?**

An Object Of Reference is an object or part of an object used to refer to a person, place, object or activity. They can assist in the understanding of spoken language and support the understanding of daily routines, thereby reducing confusion or apprehension. OORs can also support the development of:

- anticipatory skills;
- early communication skills;
- cognitive or early thinking skills;
- awareness and understanding of the environment; and
- independence skills.

### **Who will have access to OORs?**

Students who are at the social partner stage within the SCERTS framework and who find it difficult to understand spoken words, signs, symbols or photographs will benefit from the use of OORs. Understanding real objects is the first stage in symbolic development and the use of OORs can provide a concrete means of supporting understanding and developing communication.

### **Who will not have access to OORs?**

- Students who are verbal or use PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) will not need to use OOR, as they are able to gain understanding through the use of photographs, pictures and symbols.

### **What will my student's OOR look like?**

Your student's OOR will be individualised and meaningful to them. Individual objects will be used to represent the POLE (Person, Object, Location, and Event). In some instances all students can use the same OOR to represent a particular POLE or may have individualised objects based on their understanding and ability. Objects of reference are chosen to have a specific meaning and there are currently no fixed objects which should be used. Most importantly the object of reference is an object to which the student attaches a special meaning and therefore should be something the individual directly experiences and associates with the particular place, person, event, activity or experience. Please consult with your SLT to determine the right type of OOR for your student.

### **How to use OOR:**

- Initially we will only use 3 – 5 objects when we are introducing OOR to our students. These can include objects to represent key locations and events that are frequently visited, e.g. seatbelt to indicate home time, plate to indicate meal time, toilet roll to indicate toilet etc.
- As your student becomes more familiar with the objects and the POLE they represent, more objects can be introduced.
- OORs can be stored in a special bag / drawer in the classroom (ensure it is accessible).

### **Support transitions and understanding:**

- A staff member should present the student with the OOR immediately prior to the change of POLE (Person, Object, Location, Event).
- Staff members should accompany the presentation of the OOR with simple language.
- Upon presentation, the student should hold and carry the OOR, alongside the staff member, to the new location/activity.
- Once the student has reached the new location, they can match the OOR with a corresponding OOR at the location, e.g. place the toilet roll on a toilet roll holder, hang their plate on a hook in the dining hall etc.
- Students will require maximum opportunities to use the OOR to enable them to make associations between different locations and the OOR that represents those locations or activities.
- Make sure the same OOR is presented every time; it is presented immediately before the transition; it is used every time it is needed; it is presented in the same manner every time.

### **Expressive language:**

- When a student is familiar with specific objects and demonstrates an increased understanding of their purpose, the objects can be used to support their expressive language.
- Students are taught to exchange an object with an adult to make a request, e.g. toilet roll to go to toilet, plate to get something to eat, mouse to play on the computer.
- Students will need to learn to differentiate between different objects in their bags.
- OORs need to be stored in an accessible location, so that the student is able to access them at all times.



### **Problem solving: What do I do if...?**

The student drops the OOR on the floor or ignores it?

-Staff members are to pick up the OOR and repeat the activity. If after three attempts the student does still not want to hold the OOR, the staff member should carry the OOR alongside the student to the location.

### **Staff responsibilities:**

- Staff should be responsible for checking all OORs are available and stored in a OOR bag before the day begins.
- Staff should present the OOR consistently at every appropriate opportunity.
- If students indicate a need for their OOR bag, or present an OOR to a member of staff, staff should immediately respond to the exchange and move to the requested location.

### **Stages of OOR development:**

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Descriptors</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Stage 1	Does not tolerate OOR Dependent on adult support Meaningless	Student ignores or drops the OOR
Stage 2	Tolerant of OOR Dependent on adult support Meaningless	Student holds or carries the OOR but does not demonstrate an understanding of the object
Stage 3	Tolerates OOR Receptive use of OOR More meaningful	Students begins to demonstrate an understanding of one or more OOR
Stage 4	Tolerates OOR Expressive use of OOR Dependent	Student will gradually use OOR to express a need with adult support
Stage 5	Independent meaningful	Student is able to independently select and use the appropriate OOR to express a need

### **Evaluation of the use of core boards:**

Use of the OORs will be evaluated termly to measure:

- An increase in student's understanding.
- Any increase in effective transition.
- Any increase in pupil's independence.
- Ease of use.

A staff questionnaire will be created to qualitatively measure the effectiveness of OORs and their use within specific contexts.

This policy is intended to be a working policy, annually reviewed by the SMT, Speech and Language Therapists and the whole staff. It is intended to promote a consistent and coherent whole school approach to support and extend verbal student's communication needs.