Ysgol Penmaes

Total Communication Policy

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Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed as detailed in the school's policy review cycle. It may also be necessary to review and amend it sooner to reflect both local and national changes.

Ratified by Governing Body	Signature	Date
Headteacher: Angharad Bryn-Jones		8.2.23
Chair of Governors: Clancy Brett		8.2.23
Next review date: February 2024		

Our Vision is: At Ysgol Penmaes we continually strive to do more than just educate, it is our aim to offer every learner the opportunity to achieve their full potential in a safe, secure and enriching environment. We offer a curriculum that promotes ambitious, capable and informed learners at a developmentally appropriate level. Penmaes places a strong focus on the well-being of all,

facilitated through highly effective communication processes. Learning is delivered in a way that facilitates an immersive multi-sensory curriculum that is fun and provides real life authentic experiences which help to build resilience; positively impacting development, whilst ensuring the promotion of collaboration and independence. As a special school, we ensure a common language for learning along with celebrating and embracing Cynefin/place whilst planning, teaching and learning ensures a broad, balanced and creative curriculum promoting the 4 purposes of the Curriculum for Wales and encouraging learners to be the best they can be.

Our Mission Statement is: Successful Healthy Individuals Nurturing Excellence

Our School Values are fundamental:

- Friendship and kindness

- Resilience and perseverance

- Empathy and trust

- Communication and respect

- Responsibility and teamwork

- Positivity and creativity

- Tolerance and trust

All of our values promote healthy, positive relationships. By modeling the values we aim to raise learners' self-esteem and confidence in learning, whilst creating a positive school community environment for all.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies

- Curriculum
- ALN
- Strategic Equality Plan
- Social Media and E-safety Policy

<u>Total Communication Policy</u>

Communication is a basic, fundamental human right. It is at the heart of who we are as social beings, our relationships are built and maintained through communication.

Total Communication at Ysgol Penmaes recognises that everyone has the right to be able to communicate. This involves using any or all of a variety of communication methods including all sensory elements: visual, gestural, postural, tactile, auditory and olfactory. It involves using speech whenever possible but where learners have severe communication difficulties they may need to use other methods known as Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). AAC adds to or replaces spoken communication with signing, photographs, pictures, symbols, communication aids, objects of reference and technology.

It is the intention that Total Communication is used by all Ysgol Penmaes learners and staff throughout the school day in all activities.

Aims

This policy aims to promote the New Curriculum for Wales 2022 by promoting the following 4 purposes:

- Ambitious, Capable Learners
- Ethical, Informed Citizens

- Healthy, Confident Individuals
- Enterprising, Creative Contributors

Providing opportunities for learners to be:

- Enabled to communicate by whatever method is appropriate.
- Given the opportunity to develop functional communication skills.
- Encouraged to develop confidence in using their communication skills in a wide range of situations.

And to support the development of:

- Social interaction skills.
- Attention and listening skills.
- Understanding of language.
- Expressive language.

A Total Communication approach is used at Ysgol Penmaes to develop the functional, receptive and expressive language and communication skills of our children. Our aim is towards creating a Total Communication environment for all of our learners. A Total Communication approach means that we support every pupil in communicating by ensuring that their 'voices' are heard. This is done by supporting them in using multiple ways to make their needs known and to help them to express their feelings, through the following means of communication:

- Through the use of objects.
- Low tech/paper based- communication boards, core boards, communication books, PECS
- Photographs.
- Symbols.
- Written text/print.
- Use of voice, including pitch and tone.
- Verbal skills, including speech.
- No tech - Makaton signing.
- Gesture and body language skills.
- Low Tech Augmentative Communication Devices e.g. the use of communication books, PODD books.
- Mid tech- battery-operated, usually has a static display (includes Go talk, big mack etc)
- High Tech Augmentative Communication Devices (requires mains charging, has a dynamic display) e.g. iPads, LAMP, words for life, Proloquo2go, Grid for iPad etc and dedicated communication devices including those using alternative access such as switching and eye gaze
- Use of communication partners (someone who knows a person well and recognises communication cues)
- Programs such as Attention Autism, which support the development of spontaneous communication.

Principles of Developing Communication

- Activities and materials should relate to learners' learning styles, engagement and strengths.
- Individualised teaching programmes directly target specific difficulties.
- learners demonstrate a wide spectrum of levels of understanding of others' attempts to communicate.
- A wide range of strategies is essential to respond to diverse learning needs.

Methods of Communication used at Ysgol Penmaes

The following methods are rarely used in isolation and that in order to develop language and communication a combination of systems is often more effective.

Objects of Reference
These are objects or parts of objects or items that directly relate to an activity in a way that is meaningful to the pupil e.g. armbands - swimming; cup - breaktime; apron/bib - dinner; piece of vinyl mat - PE; etc. Music/sound, lighting and aromas may also be used in preparing learners for an activity. The purpose of the objects is to enhance the pupil's understanding and anticipation of the activity and may be used to help the pupil to express choice when presented with a range of objects.

Signing
Makaton Sign Language is used throughout the school in two-way communication to support speech. Signs are used at the same time as and in the same order as the spoken word to develop learners' comprehension skills. Learners are taught to use signs to help the development of speech and language and to enable speech to be more easily understood. learners may use signs in place of speech where it has not yet developed or where speech is unlikely to develop.
Where Makaton signs are not available then other signs such as British Sign Language (BSL) may be used.

Photographs, Pictures and Symbols
Photographs, pictures and symbols are all visual forms of communication and can be used in a variety of ways to develop expressive and receptive language. They can be used on a simple personal portable communication board or in a book, on a classroom timetable. Symbols may also be used in supporting the written word for learners who have difficulty reading print. The symbols used at Penmaes are produced using Widgit Online software. Symbols may be provided in colour or black and white depending on the needs of the individual.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
Hardware and software for synthesised and reproduced speech is made available where it is assessed to be the most appropriate means of communication.
Hardware in the form of technological aids ranges from simple single message devices to more complex aids, and these aids are generally known as VOCA – Voice Output Communication Aids (mid or high tech) that speaks when you activate it. They can be used for communicating needs, enabling participation in class activities and accessing the curriculum. Switch access and software on computers provide access to the curriculum. All classrooms and the school hall are equipped with Soundfield systems that enhance hearing.

The use of technology may require multi-agency assessment to ensure that the most appropriate equipment is provided and that it meets the pupil's communication and physical needs.

Speech and Language
The Speech and Language Therapy Service works closely with the school. Therapists assess learners and then provide and monitor progress on activities that are carried out by school staff. This is supported by a designated TA who supports the implementation of the SaLT programmes, use of communication aids and works collaboratively with both the SaLT team and school staff ensuring consistency. These approaches include Attention Autism, Curiosity Approach, ELKLAN, Intensive interaction and Colorful Semantics

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