GOSBERTON HOUSE ACADEMY and WTT OUTREACH SERVICE COMMUNICATION POLICY

The staff at Gosberton House Academy and WTT understand and acknowledge that children on the autism spectrum find spoken communication the most difficult form of information to process and understand. For most of our pupils, information and instructions conveyed through visual means are easier to understand. Staff are aware of the importance of visually supported teaching and learning and consequently accept the need to modify and adapt their style of communication to enable pupils to respond and to learn. Visual communication may include the context in which the activity takes place, observable routines, objects of reference, photographs, pictures, symbols and written words. All of these forms of communication are in evidence throughout the Academy.

The following pointers for communicating with pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are in accordance with the National Autistic Society *SPELL* approach: *Structure, Positive, Empathy, Low Arousal, Links* (NAS, 2015).

1. Staff routinely use <u>visual</u> forms of communication to support teaching and learning. Visual communication is used for timetables/schedules, work systems, activities within tasks, self organisation, requesting assistance, rewards and sanctions.
2. Staff use visual structure, clarity and predictability to explain the plan, content, aims and expected outcomes of the lesson, and to link the content with previous lessons.
3. Staff use a quiet speaking voice and calm, slow movements.
4. Staff gain a pupil's attention by stating his/her name before asking questions or giving instructions.
5. Staff ensure that pupils on the autism spectrum are aware that group instructions include them.
6. Staff use spoken language that is appropriate to the comprehension levels of the pupils.
7. Staff consistently use specific, unambiguous language to reduce confusion and anxiety. Pupils are given information about who, what, where and when, for example "*John will work in the computer room after dinner*" not "*Let's do that later.*"
8. Staff use '*Stop*' instead of '*No*' when they want a pupil to stop doing something, and then direct the pupil to what he/she is supposed to do. At these times, staff should use little or no speech to reduce confusion and anxiety.
9. Staff ensure that every pupil has a <u>means</u> of communicating and make this known to those within the child's Academy and home environment.
10. Staff recognise that all behaviour communicates something and work together to try to establish the meaning of challenging behaviour before attempting to change/eliminate it.
11. Staff include pupils' social communication targets within IEPs.
12. Staff use modelling and rehearsal to teach social communication skills in everyday contexts.
13. Staff choose prompts carefully, use verbal prompts sparingly and gradually fade prompts out. This encourages pupils to initiate communication and avoid prompt dependence.

14. Staff make explicit the rules for communicating within the classroom and around the Academy and directly teach the rules. This includes communication between staff and pupils, between pupils, between staff, with non-teaching staff and with visitors.
15. Staff encourage pupils' social communication with peers by providing opportunities for supported play.
16. Staff make functional assessment of communication skills and needs an ongoing process.

To ensure consistency, the good practice strategies for communication will be audited by the Strategic Leadership Team. Staff are also encouraged to monitor their use of good practice through Team liaison meetings and discussion with the in-reach specialist teacher and the speech and language therapist. Specific training and support for staff on how to communicate with pupils with an AS is available through ongoing advice, in-service training and external accredited courses.

AUDIT for GHA COMMUNICATION POLICY

Class/Team: Date of audit:

STRUCTURE	To give predictability and security; this aids independence and flexibility and helps to reduce reliance on rigid routines. (NAS SPELL Approach 2015).	
	COMMENTS	ACTION POINTS
1. Staff routinely use <u>visual</u> forms of communication to support teaching and learning. Visual communication is used for timetables/schedules, work systems, activities within tasks, self organisation, requesting assistance, rewards and sanctions.		
2. Staff use visual structure, clarity and predictability to explain the plan, content, aims and expected outcomes of the lesson, and to link the content with previous lessons.		
3. Staff choose prompts carefully, use verbal prompts sparingly and gradually fade prompts out. This encourages pupils to initiate communication and avoid prompt dependence.		

4. Staff make explicit the rules for communicating within the classroom and around the Academy and directly teach the rules. This includes communication between staff and pupils, between pupils, between staff, with non-teaching staff and with visitors.		
POSITIVE	Positive approaches and expectations which recognise and develop individual strengths and abilities and allow confidence and self esteem to grow. (NAS SPELL Approach 2015).	
	COMMENTS	ACTION POINTS
5. Staff make functional assessment of communication skills and needs an ongoing process.		
6. Staff include pupils' social communication targets within IEPs.		
7. Staff gain a pupil's attention by stating his/her name before asking questions or giving instructions.		
8. Staff ensure that pupils on the autism spectrum are aware that group instructions include them.		

EMPATHY	Approaches which understand the experiences and views of the individual and their unique stresses and motivators. (NAS SPELL Approach 2015).	
	COMMENTS	ACTION POINTS
9. Staff recognise that all behaviour communicates something and work together to try to establish the meaning of challenging behaviour before attempting to change/eliminate it.		
10. Staff consistently use specific, unambiguous language to reduce confusion and anxiety. Pupils are given information about who, what, where and when, for example "*John will work in the computer room after dinner*" not "*Let's do that later.*"		
11. Staff encourage pupils' social communication with peers by providing opportunities for supported play.		
LOW AROUSAL	Managing surroundings to accommodate sensory sensitivities and reduce hyper/ hypo stimulation, reducing anxiety and aiding concentration. (NAS SPELL Approach 2015)	
	COMMENTS	ACTION POINTS

12. Staff use a quiet speaking voice and calm, slow movements.		
13. Staff use spoken language that is appropriate to the comprehension levels of the pupils.		
14. Staff use 'Stop' instead of 'No' when they want a pupil to stop doing something, and then direct the pupil to what he/she is supposed to do. At these times, staff should use little or no speech to reduce confusion and anxiety.		
LINKS	Developing a consistent approach between all supporters and settings and ensuring smooth transitions session to session and day to day. (NAS SPELL Approach 2015).	
	COMMENTS	ACTION POINTS
15. Staff ensure that every pupil has a <u>means</u> of communicating and make this known to those within the child's Academy and home environment.		
16. Staff use modelling and rehearsal to teach		

social communication skills in everyday contexts.		
Any other issues:		

Signed: Date:

Designation:

Autism Progress COMMUNICATION DESCRIPTORS
 Level 1 The individual encounters activities and experiences involving communication. • They may show minor physiological responses. • They may be passive or resistant. • They are fully prompted in any participation.
 Level 2 The individual shows an emerging awareness of experiences involving communication. • They may have periods when they appear alert and ready to focus their attention on certain people, voices or gesture. • They may give intermittent reactions.
 Level 3 The individual begins to respond consistently to well-cued communication in familiar situations. • They react to new activities and experiences. • They accept and engage in co-active exploration.
 Level 4 The individual demonstrates an awareness of the direction of others' attention and begins to be proactive with their communication. • They tolerate shared exploration and supported participation. • They recognise some people and may respond in specific ways to familiar individuals. • They perform actions by trial and improvement remembering learned responses over short periods of time. • They communicate consistent preferences and affective responses through vocalisation or gesturing.

Level 5 The individual begins to communicate intentionally. • They seek attention through gesture or action and request events or activities. • They remember learned responses over more extended periods. • They participate in shared activities with less support and sustain concentration for short periods. • They observe the results of their own actions with interest, remembering learned responses over more extended periods. • They explore materials in increasingly complex ways.

Level 6 The individual uses emerging conventional communication. • They respond to options and choices with actions or gestures. • They remember learned responses over increasing periods and may anticipate known events. • They greet known people and may initiate interactions and activities. • They apply potential solutions systematically to problems. • They actively explore objects and events for more extended periods.

Level 7 The individual repeats, copies and imitates the communication of others and demonstrates an understanding of a wider vocabulary. • They use single words, signs and symbols for familiar objects and can communicate about events and feelings. • They respond appropriately to simple requests which contain one key word, sign or symbol in familiar situations. • They begin to understand that marks and symbols convey meaning.

Level 8 The individual combines two key ideas or concepts and can respond to questions about familiar or immediate events or experiences. • They respond to simple questions by vocalising, using gestures, symbols or signing. • They make attempts to repair misunderstandings without changing the words used. • They follow requests and instructions containing at least two key words, signs or symbols. • They develop their expressive vocabulary. • They combine single words, signs or symbols to communicate meaning to a range of listeners.

Level 9 The individual initiates and maintains short spontaneous interactions and responds to others in group situations. • They use prepositions and pronouns correctly. • They follow requests and instructions with three key words, signs or symbols. • They ask simple questions to obtain information.

Level 10 The individual spontaneously communicates phrases with up to three key words, signs or symbols and follows the spontaneous communication of others for short stretches of time. • They link ideas or add new information beyond what is asked. • They follow requests and instructions with four key words, signs or symbols. • They contribute appropriately one-to-one and in small group discussions. • They communicate ideas about temporal events and experiences, using simple phrases and statements and respond to questions about them. • They attend to, and respond to, questions from adults and their peers about experiences, events and stories.

Level 11 The individual spontaneously communicates phrases by linking up to four key words, signs or symbols and responds confidently to others both in groups and one-to-one. • They use conjunctions that suggest cause. • They listen attentively and respond appropriately to questions about why or how. • They follow multi-step instructions. • They communicate about their own experiences using an extensive vocabulary to convey meaning to the listener. • They can use possessives.

Level 12 The individual spontaneously communicates about matters of immediate interest. • They receive information from others and usually respond appropriately. • They convey simple meanings clearly to a range of listeners and begin to extend their ideas or accounts by providing some detail.

Level 13 The individual begins to show confidence when producing and responding to spontaneous communication particularly where the topics interest them. • They usually attend to others carefully and respond with increasing appropriateness to what others say. • They show awareness that a more formal vocabulary and tone of voice are used in some situations. • They communicate clearly with a growing vocabulary showing awareness of the needs of the listener by including relevant detail to develop and explain their ideas.

Level 14 The individual confidently produces spontaneous communication and responds to others when exploring and communicating ideas. • They begin to adapt what they say to the needs of the listener, varying the use of vocabulary and the level of detail. • They attend to the spontaneous communication of others carefully and show understanding of the main points through relevant comments and questions.

Level 15 The individual produces and responds to spontaneous communication with confidence in an increasing range of contexts. • They attend carefully to the communication of others, making contributions and asking questions that are responsive to others' ideas and views. • They adapt their spontaneous communication to its purpose by developing ideas thoughtfully, describing events and conveying their opinions clearly.

Level 16 The individual produces and responds to spontaneous communication in a range of formal and informal contexts. • They pay close attention to what others say, ask questions to develop ideas and make contributions that take account of others' views. • They follow Standard English rules in formal situations. • They engage the interest of the 'listener' by occasionally varying their expression and vocabulary.

Level 17 The individual spontaneously adapts their communication to the demands of different contexts with increasing confidence. • They take an active part in discussions, taking different roles and showing understanding of ideas and sensitivity to others. • They engage the interest of the listener through the variety and liveliness of both their vocabulary and expression. • They demonstrate their knowledge of language variety and usage effectively and use Standard English fluently in formal situations. • They naturally adapt elements of their speech or actions to keep an audience from losing interest.