

Springside School

Area of Learning -  
My Communication



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Area of Learning Lead –  
Olivia Brougham-Robinson

## Intent

We believe that communication is at the centre of successful education. Communication can be defined as a meaningful interaction between two or more individuals to request, resist, choose, comment and develop social relationships. Our ultimate vision for all learners is that they will establish a system of, expressive and receptive communication in whatever form is appropriate to them. The method of communication can take many forms and can include one or a combination of the following:

- Body language
- Facial expressions
- Eye contact
- Gestures and pointing
- Sign language (using Signalong)
- PODD (Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display)
- PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System)
- Vocalisations
- Use of objects of reference and body cues
- Use of photographs
- Use of symbols/drawings
- Use of High-Tech AAC
- Speech (with some learners using more than one language)
- Reading
- Writing

At Springside we adopt a 'total communication approach'. This means that all methods of communication are recognised and valued equally as forms of interaction. Communication underpins all areas of the curriculum and allows learners to access learning and develop social relationships. Communication is central to the entire curriculum and an individual's autonomy. Learners are therefore presented with opportunities to develop their communication skills throughout the school day using both planned and spontaneous situations. At Springside we recognise that it is everybody's responsibility to have an understanding of the different methods of communication and to encourage learners. To be effective communicators staff must be effective listeners and observers.

Communication is a holistic process; if we can constantly tap into motivation and consistently provide someone to communicate to, all learners will have many more opportunities to practice and perfect the means that are best suited to them.

The Equals Communication SoW argues that we only need three essentials in order to communicate: 1. A motivation (a reason) for communicating 2. A means (a method) of communicating 3. Someone (a partner or partners) to communicate to. [known as the 3Ms – motivation, means and mate: It's all you need to communicate].

This area of learning is taught as a discrete, timetabled session in both the Experiential and Exploratory phases and through My English in the Investigative Phase. As My Communication is at the centre of a successful education, communication learning opportunities are woven across all areas of learning, as relevant.

## **Coverage**

This provides an overview of how we teach our learners to communicate at Springside School, it should be read in conjunction with the 'Curriculum', 'EYFS', 'PSHE', 'RSE'; 'SMSC and Learner Voice' and 'Behaviour' policies. Whilst this provides an overview of how we teach the Area of Learning relating to communication, due to the nature of communication skills, these are also reinforced and taught within all learning areas and every aspect of school life.

Further information can be found within the brochures specific to each phase. This document is written to provide an overview of the overarching aims of the My Communication Area of Learning. It should be read in conjunction with the phase brochures and policies for EYFS and each individual area of learning.

## **Context**

Learners at Springside School have a diverse range of learning difficulties and associated special educational needs. The scheme of work utilised EQUALS - 'My Communication' is not intended to be taught in a linear manner with each area covered. The scheme is utilised as appropriate to the age, developmental stage, approach to learning required, the individual's prior knowledge and specific areas required as per the Learner's EHC Plan.

Our curriculum is set in the context of Equals multi-tiered curriculum approach, recognising that differentiation from England's (or indeed any) National Curriculum, including the EYFS framework, is not sufficient to meet the needs of learners with profound, complex, severe or global learning difficulties. For these learners, who are all working consistently and over time below or very near the start of their national curriculum, curricula need to be different rather than differentiated, because the way such learners learn is different, and often very, very different from neuro-typical, conventional developing learners for whom the national curriculum was designed.

The overarching aims are to support the holistic development of all learners in a manner, which is appropriate to their individual needs and abilities and provide a sensitive response to the challenges they face. At its core it is designed to ensure all learners are happy, healthy and safe whilst ensuring they reach their full potential having access to a broad and balanced curriculum promoting communication throughout.

Springside School is a non-denominational school that aims to celebrate festivals and religious events from many cultures. Whole school and phase worship, beliefs and celebrations (e.g. Birthdays, Achievements, Eid, Christmas) reflect this. Learners are taught to embrace all celebrations, cultures as well as respect each other, their beliefs and differences; these are detailed on our curriculum theme mapping.

## **Implementation**

The My Communication Area of Learning has ten areas of communicative learning. These are detailed within the Equals scheme of work (differentiated for each phase). Whilst there are Learning Intentions and suggested activities, by the nature of the Area of Learning and the Learners at Springside, it may be required to set individualised activities and learning intentions.

Class timetables will detail: Area of learning -> Vehicle to teach the area [Location]

Within classes, this will look different, however the area of learning may be the same, examples of this are:

*EXAMPLE 1 - My Communication -> Imperative Communication (TAC PAC session in Butterflies Class)  
Learning intention – to make show early initiation of wanting ‘more’ through eye contact/gesture.*

*EXAMPLE 2 - My Communication -> Following instructions (Food Technology Room)  
Learning intention – to follow 2 key word instructions within a recipe.*

*EXAMPLE 3 - My Communication -> Narratives (My English in Giraffes Class)  
Learning intention - to learn the sequences of a short story through talk for writing approach*

*EXAMPLE 4 - My Communication -> Personalised reading and writing (Snack time Ducklings Class)  
Learning intention - to use PECs to request a preferred food item to eat for snack.*

Learning Intentions for the lesson are taken from the scheme of work used, these include Equals, the Northern Ireland Curriculum and Birth to 5 Matters - *Beyond this, each individual learner will then have an individual target/ sequence of learning to achieve.*

## **Objectives**

Within all phases EHC Outcomes, through the Personal Learning Plan, annual objectives and termly targets will be considered, referenced and evidenced as appropriate throughout.

## **Impact**

EHC Plans are reviewed at least once annually. These outcomes are broken into smaller, manageable steps on the Personal Learning Plans. These are assessed on an ongoing basis but formally reviewed at least once a term with parents. The progress of learners is also reviewed at least once a term in progress meetings with the Deputy Headteacher (Assessment Lead). There are a vast number of skills, concepts and knowledge covered within this area of learning. These include functional English skills linking to reading and writing which are assessed using a Personal Learning Plan assessment tool on the SOLAR platform.

## **Progression**

Progression within each area focuses on developing the thinking and problem-solving skills of our learners. This is supported through a reducing level of support in a 5-tiered system (further information on this can be found under ‘Progression Principles’).

The 5-tiered system of progression is:

- 1) Memory building
- 2) Sabotage and recognition of a problem;
- 3) Independent solutions
- 4) Generalisations;
- 5) Self-belief and confidence

These are referred to as sequences of learning on a PLP and in planning. Successfully achieving these will ensure learners meet their EHC Outcome and the learning intention for the session/ medium term plan.

### **Parents**

Parents are involved in the designing of the curriculum and outcomes for their child at EHC Reviews and at least termly during parent progress meetings.

### **Learner Voice**

A representation of learners from across school are taking part in learner council.