



# Communication Policy

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What the pupils need to know:

- We will help you to talk.

What every other member of staff needs to know:

- We will we strive to give all of our pupils a voice.

What every adult (including parents) needs to know:

- Cromwell High School will we strive to give all of our pupils a voice.

## **Communication Policy**

### **Aims**

- To ensure that all pupils at Cromwell High School have an effective communication system that supports their individual needs, promotes independence and offers choices.
- To create an environment and ethos that supports pupils to achieve their maximum understanding e.g. staff strategies.
- To provide training and development to motivate staff to implement and deliver communication systems with energy, enthusiasm and expertise.

### **Introduction**

Communication is at the centre of everything we do at Cromwell High School. It affects behaviour, motivation, social interaction, independence and self-esteem. Communication is integral to every part of the school day and school will ensure communication becomes part of everyday life e.g. home, trips, clubs. Our aim at Cromwell High School is that each pupil will be as independent as possible when using their preferred communication system. This policy links very closely with the Reading and Writing Policy and together, makes up the English strategy for Cromwell High School.

### **Individual Education Plans and Annual Reviews – Communication Targets**

Every year each pupil is set three Annual Review targets based on communication and English. These are linked to the individual pupil's **priority** needs and can be based around comprehension, expression or reading and writing. Each term these targets are taught through English lessons and Personal, Social and Developmental (PSD) sessions. When a pupil has shown they have achieved part of their targets they are then delivered by all of the staff in different situations and generalised to ensure that pupils have fully mastered each skill.

1. Communication 1 target is set by the form tutor in liaison with the Speech Therapist and should be based on the individual's priority communication need and is usually based on expressive language, receptive language or social skills.
2. Communication 2 target is set by the English teacher and is usually based on comprehension skills. Although it may be linked to reading for some pupils in the Conceptual Department.
3. Communication 3 target is set by the English teacher and is usually based on fine motor skills or mark-making.

### **Planning and Assessment**

All teachers use the same systems to identify next steps for our pupils. These steps will be recorded together using Onwards and Upwards. Onwards and Upwards includes the most important parts of many different developmental assessments. Teachers plan pathways for individual pupils or pupil groups as we are only too aware that many pupils, due to their individual difficulties have barriers in different areas.

## **Delivery Across School**

There are three departments at Cromwell High School and they operate differently but there may be some overlap, for example some of the Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) friendly strategies may be used throughout the school and some pupils in the Structured Department may still need early communication skills e.g. via Intensive Interaction. All classes throughout the school use a total communication approach therefore staff use signs and symbols whilst modelling clear spoken English and non-verbal language. Staff are also very aware that, in many cases, fewer words leads to a better understanding by our pupils.

## **Sensory Department**

In the Sensory Department, communication is taught from a very basic level and may include developing some of the very early communication skills such as eye contact, turn taking, listening, responding and joint attention. Staff may use the Affective Communication Assessment to identify responses, Intensive Interaction or Jabadao and choice making using photographs, and switches.

Objects of reference are used to help pupils understand their day and what is going to happen next. Low tech voice output devices are often used to help non-verbal pupils contribute in lessons. Some pupils in the Sensory Department will work on single or two word level understanding. Pupils with physical difficulties or articulation difficulties in any department may benefit from a Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD) book or high tech communication system.

## **Structured Department**

In this department, many pupils are diagnosed with ASC. Teaching is very structured and pupils use symbols, signs, schedules and visual timetables to understand what is expected of them. All pupils follow the TEACCH structure, which means they complete work and earn a reward, known as a 'Purposeful Choose'. Classrooms are planned to be low distraction environments so that pupils can concentrate on the things that are important for them to understand.

Within this department, there are a range of communication systems in place, planned to meet the individual needs of our pupils. Most of these systems prioritise requesting behaviours, such as their Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), use of True Object Based Images (TOBI), Objects of Reference and Pro-Loquo To Go.

Comprehension is often very difficult for pupils in this department. We teach elements of language taken from the Derbyshire Language Scheme (DLS), ranging from basic vocabulary to following instructions of increasing length and complexity. In addition, we use other visual systems such as Colourful Semantics, Narrative Therapy and Clicker 4 to help pupils to compose simple sentences, short stories and recounts. Pupils may also have targets based on the Blanks Questions assessment.

## **Conceptual Department**

In the Conceptual Department there are a wide range of pupil needs. Some pupils use strategies linked to the Structured Department. Many other pupils have social communication needs and need to develop their ability to make and maintain friendships, change their language based on their audience and develop their vocabulary.

Many pupils in the Conceptual Department benefit from following social speaking language interventions such as Talkabout or Socially Speaking. Some pupils work on comprehension targets that are identified through DLS assessments or using Blanks Level Questions. When learning to develop their expressive language pupils use Colourful Semantics or Narrative Therapy often linked to shared writing work. Some of the ASC pupils work at a higher level and need to work on prediction and inferencing skills, which need to be taught as they do not come naturally.

## **Organisations of Support**

Cromwell High School employs a Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) who works in the best interests of the current pupil population. Teachers can request to have support for a period of time to help them develop an initiative in their class. It is important that ultimately teachers lead the speaking and listening activities for their form groups and classes as this is the best way to ensure that communication is integral to the school day.

Speech and Language Therapists from the NHS also work in school on a regular basis and they write programmes for the pupils on their case load. Often they will lead interventions or help to develop the practical aspects of delivering speaking and listening targets. Therapists will also support with assessing and recommending communication aids.

## **Training**

Cromwell High School is dedicated to promoting communication and keeping abreast of new developments. We strive to find the correct system or strategy for each individual pupil. Staff are trained within the school through INSET and also externally e.g. through PECS courses. A record of training is kept in the English Co-ordinators file. In addition training is offered to parents, for example PECS training.

## **Partnerships with Parents/Carers**

Parents are all given a voice at the pupil's Annual Review when they are asked to comment on targets set and if they would like anything else addressing. The SALTs will do home visits and support if requested. School often makes PECS files, schedules, symbols and other resources for families to use at home. Within the last two years we have started encouraging PECS users to develop an ownership of their files and carry them between home and school. In addition training is offered to parents in different areas of communication.

### **Monitoring**

Formal lesson observations and drop-ins are carried out by the senior managers at school and these always take communication into account. In addition the English Co-ordinator monitors different aspects of English as part of the monitoring cycle and the school's own SALT monitors informally and offers on the spot advice and support.

**Review** This policy will be reviewed annually by the English Co-ordinator in liaison with the school SALT & English Teachers.