

St Piers School

Literacy Policy

Intent:

The aims and objectives:

All students should be enabled to develop to their full potential the ability to use and understand English. This may include using any method which will enable the pupil to communicate effectively, and at an appropriate level. Communication is the key to gaining independence, life skills and accessing other parts of the curriculum.

Students at St Piers have a very wide range of abilities and needs and use a range of appropriate methods to communicate. Literacy comes under the heading of My Communication, Interaction and Language in the School Curriculum.

As the methods used will not be mutually exclusive, we use the term 'total communication approach' to encompass all forms of alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) which supplement spoken and written words. These will include songs, objects, touch cues, symbols, signing or gesture, as well as switches, eye gaze and electronic forms of AAC.




A personalised approach is taken to the teaching of Speaking and Listening, Reading and Writing and the curriculum delivery is adapted to ensure that it is accessible for all students on whatever learner journey they are following. Staff will use a range of methods and aids which challenge and extend their skills and give positive reinforcement of their efforts by praise/reward of participation in activities. These methods of providing feedback to our students forms the basis for progression (see feedback and marking guidelines). Students will learn better if they enjoy the activity and being praised for their participation will make it more likely that they will further engage in similar activities.

We aim to help students develop the ability to respond, to listen and to understand so that they can communicate effectively and become more independent as they move through life. Communication, Interaction, and Language forms the foundations of our curriculum and therefore requires a cross-curricular and functional delivery method in addition to discrete teaching so that it provides our students with opportunities for gaining an understanding of the world and their place in it.

IMPLEMENTATION

Teaching and Learning Intentions:

The teaching and learning intentions set by teachers are based on those in the School Curriculum and are differentiated as appropriate. They will use and build upon learning through a 3-tiered curriculum model following 'Learner Journey's as they grow through the phases from primary to sixth form. This curriculum takes account of the three areas of the National Curriculum that form the foundations of communication, Interaction and Language:

-  Speaking & Listening
-  Reading
-  Writing

It uses adaptations of these areas to ensure full coverage at the appropriate level within each phase and learner journey.

At St Piers we follow an outcome led approach to learning and we therefore try to build structured language acquisition into everyday functional situations. Many students will need daily repetition in order to maintain skills, establish good progress and learning.

At St Piers we know that students who are unable to communicate by speech may require other means to express themselves these could be `no-tech`, `low tech` or `high tech` forms of communication. Our curriculum therefore incorporates all effective means of communication through our total communication approach with regards to speaking and listening.

Reading and Writing are concerned with knowledge and understanding of language and the search for meaning and the ability to convey meaning. Students at St Piers are encouraged to develop and extend their awareness that information can be carried through a wide variety of published resources, for example photographs, pictures, symbols and words. Additionally, multi-sensory resources are used, such as tactile and ICT/sound books, to give students appropriate and realistic access to reading. Students are enabled to develop an awareness of print and script in appropriate contexts, for example stories, written messages, print in the environment.

Learning Intentions for each student are both structured and flexible, and incorporates their targets set in EHCP meetings. The school curriculum enables students to use varied cues in the form of objects of reference, photographs, symbols or the spoken word to develop their expressive and receptive communication. Students have opportunities to use language both functionally and creatively through our transdisciplinary education model.

Planning:

My Communication, Interaction & Language is taught both discreetly and through a range of cross-curricular lessons - it is incorporated in every area of the school curriculum and supported by our transdisciplinary education model. Appropriate planning and provision is made for students who need adaptation to the curriculum in order to access it. As all our students are working at different individual levels of progress and our planning reflects this through appropriate differentiation within the class, lesson, and timetabling. Students are taught in small or class groups, as well as individually.

Each pupil has targets which are set annually at the EHCP Review Meeting, and each teacher provides an annual report based on these targets. The teacher will differentiate the content of the lesson with reference to these targets. In addition, children may receive Speech and Language Therapy input as appropriate, and recommendations are incorporated into their individual programmes.

Medium term planning for My Communication interaction and language is based on the curriculum written by subject leaders which all teaching staff have been involved in writing. The Curriculum is reviewed annually.

Students are given the opportunity to take part in sensory stories, shared reading, interactive music sessions etc.. to develop their listening skills and to work both individually and in group situations. The group and individual work concentrates on each student's individual targets whilst also linking them to the vocabulary and content of the shared text/resource. Staff ensure that an intensive interaction approach is used and that they model key vocabulary through signs, symbols and objects in addition to the conversational modelling of 'now and next' boards, symbol exchange/picture trading and visual timetables which allows students to have access to a wider range of core vocabulary.

Staff are expected to use dynamic assessment to move students on and develop further learning opportunities throughout their lesson.

Speaking & Listening

Our goal for many of our students will be to develop vocalisations and to widen their range of vocabulary so that they can express their needs and wants appropriately and meaningfully, to understand social communication and respond intentionally, functionally and respectfully in a range of situations and contexts. Teaching this across phases includes participation in social routines, using or interpreting non-verbal cues such as; facial expressions, body language and gesture and developing more formal oral motor and verbal skills. Our DfE validated Systemic Synthetic Phonics (SSP) Programme is Twinkl Phonics. This offers a large range of appropriate activities and resources at Levels 1-6

Reading

For students with complex learning needs, reading can be interpreted as any activity that derives meaning from visual or tactile means. Students will begin by developing the ability to locate and track sounds and begin to recognise that these may relate to people or objects. In order to discriminate between sounds, words and pictures we work with items that our students find most motivating. We know that children with ASD only learn what has relevance or meaning to them.

The Rose report says that 'high quality phonics work' should be taught systematically but we know that this does not work for many of our students who are not yet at the appropriate level of learning. It should also be noted that research suggests that students with severe autism do not learn by phonics as the English language has too many deviations from standard phonemes. If students have the pre-requisite skills then phonics will be taught. If they are working at a much younger level then pre-reading skills will be put in place first.

Synthetic phonics will be used, if appropriate for students. There are 40+ sounds in English but only 26 letters of the alphabet and this proves difficult to understand for students with learning difficulties. The DfE validated Twinkl Phonics programme enables us to use their mnemonic resources that are accompanied by songs and actions, this provides a total communication approach to teaching phonemes. Teachers can select their activities as appropriate to the levels and needs of individual students. In addition to phonics, children are also encouraged to gain an understanding of rhythm, rhyme, and syllables. Children are encouraged to recognise words by sight, through the use of environmental print, flashcards, reading books, matching games and active teaching approaches etc...

Literacy is fundamentally about finding meaning in spoken, visual and symbolic language. We teach this by putting pre-reading tasks into every day, relevant and functional situations. We use a range of attractive and lively Reading Schemes in a variety of formats and students have access to a range of fiction and non-fiction texts. Students are encouraged to attend to a familiar voice reading aloud through shared reading activities and where appropriate to engage in private reading time, this should be an age-appropriate text where possible. (See CIL Schemes of Work)

All students have access to the school library, and are either encouraged to take a reading book home on a weekly basis or online phonics activities/eBooks are assigned as home learning tasks.

Writing

Fine and gross motor skills are practiced through all the phases and learner journeys to develop muscle tone, coordination and control. Students are encouraged to produce writing or symbols with a sense of purpose, to communicate news, greetings, thoughts, or information. Therefore, writing is taught across the school using a variety of methods and with a wide range of resources for example, pre-writing skills including mark making and messy play, the use of laptop computers and iPads and through active sessions such as write dance, teach active and imoves in addition to more traditional methods of mark making and pencil work. Our Occupational Therapists support this area of the curriculum in a variety of ways for example providing adapted/assistive writing equipment and seating etc...

Our curriculum Schemes reflect the importance of providing students with the tools to compose work, record events or reflect personal interests and to record for different purposes i.e. they may make shopping lists, invite friends for lunch or fill out forms etc...

Further, since special emphasis is given to phonics as a means of gaining reading skills, the formation of letters is taught where it is considered appropriate and relevant, and a range of writing materials and activities are available.

Assessment, Recording and Reporting:

Assessment, reporting, and recording are in line with St Piers Assessment, Feedback and marking policy. Please refer to this document. All students will be assessed according to the school’s bespoke frameworks for Literacy and EHCP’s on the Earwig Academic platform reporting and recording evidence against outcomes in an ipsative manner. Where appropriate the GL Assessment YARK reading tests are also carried out annually. Other online subscriptions also provide diagnostic tools that inform our assessment for learning process.

Impact

Monitoring and Evaluation:

The My Communication, Interaction and Language Team carry out learning walks and peer reviews where they observe how My Communication, interaction and language is taught throughout the school. The Phase Coordinator with overall responsibility for Communication, Interaction and language along with the Quality of Practice Leader holds termly meetings with teachers to review assessment and planning (RAP). These observations and review meetings inform the basis of feedback to school staff through CPD sessions, to the head and governors which forms part of the School Action Plan.

The policy will be updated every two years.

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Version table			
Creation:- Ginnie Batten-Evatt			
Approved by:- Richard Gargon			
<u>Version No.</u>	<u>Date of changes</u>	<u>Reason for change</u>	<u>Changes made by</u>

Appendix 1:

Communication Interaction and Language are the foundation of all learning at St Piers School. The transdisciplinary approach to our education model is embedded in our practice ensuring that it provides the building blocks for our students progress across all areas of the curriculum. Communication, interaction, and language is taught through discreet lessons where the underpinning skills and knowledge are delivered in a class-based environment but are extended into cross curricular learning, applied and functional situations through specialist lessons, and a multi-sensory and total communication approach. Our student's learning is highly personalised to ensure that their individual and complex learning needs are met. By applying this personalised learning where the students' needs are at the centre of their learning, we can help our students to overcome many barriers such as delayed cognitive development, physical and emotional limitations which affect many aspects of their lives. Our aim is to empower and inspire our learners to achieve and to have fun whilst doing it.

Speaking and Communicating:

Being able to communicate in an expressive manner is a vital part of life, survival, and independence. It is a key part of engagement and participation in any community. To be able to express our wants and needs effectively to others it is necessary to form a system or method of communicating. At St Piers School we follow a `total communication` approach. Utilising a combination of communication methods that empower our students to communicate and express themselves – be it through speech, sign, touch, movement, gesture, sound and high or low tech AAC.

Our education and residential staff work with Speech and Language Therapists, to devise individual programmes working consistently with our students throughout the waking day curriculum to aid their communication skills. This combination of methods reinforces and supports each other and strengthens the opportunities for meaningful interactions by our students to others.

Listening, Attention & Understanding:

Receptive language forms the core of language development. This includes the ability of a child to understand the spoken language, the gestures, and the rules of a language. It involves how well a child can identify objects around them, their skill to follow commands and comprehend questions.

We use a total communication approach to encourage a two way `dialogue/interaction`. Teachers work closely with our speech and language therapy team, and support staff in order to identify and implement the most appropriate resource is for each individual pupil. The interaction sequences that we use are repeated frequently and gradually increase in duration, complexity and sophistication to ensure that the fundamentals of communication are formed.

Writing:

Pupils are encouraged to engage in movement activities associated with the development of skills for writing and carrying out everyday functions. These include the fine and gross motor skills which require coordination, control and muscle tone that enables our students to become more independent and to develop self-help and life skills. For example, actions required for washing and dressing, eating, and drinking in addition to forming marks that can convey meaning or preference.

Through the transdisciplinary approach we can utilise specialist knowledge and inform the consistent and functional use of therapy guidelines related to many of the areas referred to above and to integrate/embed these into the classroom, residential settings, and local/wider community where they are practiced and applied.

Phonics & Reading:

Students at early stages of development need assistance to interpret their environment and to explore the world around them. Reading at this stage is about the search for meaning by interpreting environmental print, signs, and symbols.

We support our students through consistent routines that help them begin to distinguish between activities and people meaning they can begin to learn to anticipate what is going to happen to them and their environment. Through our Level 1 phonics programme we assist our students to gradually extend their focus in a range of situations and engage with sounds, language, and environmental cues.

Appendix 2:

Communication Interaction and Language are central to all learning at St Piers School. It is taught through both discreet lessons, where the underpinning skills and knowledge are delivered in a class-based environment, and through cross curricular learning where applied and functional learning situations are facilitated in specialist led lessons. Our transdisciplinary approach to education provides the foundations for our students progress across all areas of the curriculum. Personalised learning and individual access arrangements are a priority, and our aim is to make all aspects of communication enjoyable and motivating so that students are actively engaged and have a positive attitude to learning thus empowering them to become more independent as they grow.

Speaking and Communicating:

Using a transdisciplinary approach, we encourage our students to develop their expressive communication skills through the use of AAC, or the spoken word. We encourage activities that present opportunities for our students to practise their speaking and listening skills, emotional literacy, and social communication skills.

Students are provided with contextual situations and learning opportunities to help them develop their self-esteem and the skills of turn taking, cooperative and respectful working, tolerance, and group communication through the help of social cues/rules and routines.

Listening, Attention & Responding:

The `Total communication` approach continues through the Skills for Life Learner Journey and forms the platform upon which we build communication. It enables our students to process, understand and respond to information and provides them with the opportunity to extend and establish their vocabulary meaning that they can interact with purpose and to indicate their needs effectively.

Using a combination of communication approaches including `intensive interaction` and `shared attention` techniques our students are motivated to participate in two-way communication. Through these interaction opportunities they can make choices, demonstrate preference, consent, and become an integrated member of the community.

Writing & Recording:

Through the continued focus and practice of gross and fine motor skills the student's coordination, control and muscle tone begins to become more refined and intricate enabling them to participate in more considered writing activities where their marks convey meaning.

Students are encouraged to express opinions and be able to share these with others through physical gestures and marks. Following on from this early stage of mark making by using supportive strategies students begin to refine the marks they make to form simple shapes, patterns and some letters.

Phonics & Reading:

In order to function in society, we need a degree of understanding that print and signs have meaning. This helps our students to recognise shops and social sight signs such as which aisle in the supermarket they need. Which bus stop to wait at and where to find the toilets. Reading can take the form of photos, pictures, symbols, or words.

Reading for pleasure is also an aim where pupils follow a pastime or hobby by looking at pictures and simple text, reading a newspaper, magazine or some quiet time to relax during their leisure time. Students may access reading through a variety of means, both in hard copy and through the internet.

Appendix 3:

In the Specialist Skills learner journey our focus for communication has a heavy emphasis on functionality, contextualisation of learning, independence, and self-help skills. Our student's ability spans a wide range and requires a highly personalised approach to teaching and learning coupled with state-of-the-art facilities where their skills can be applied in a variety of settings. We utilise our transdisciplinary team to inform and guide our practice and use this therapeutic model to support our student's emotional literacy and social thinking skills that are crucial for them to regulate their feelings and behaviour and to succeed and communicate effectively and appropriately in everyday life. Communication in this learner journey includes the use of web-based technology such as social media

Speaking and Communicating:

Communicating confidently and fluently to convey meaning in a way that the listener can understand is a key priority whether that is through spoken language or using technology i.e., messaging, emails or social networking sites. Our staff facilitate opportunities through discrete class-based sessions, cross curricular sessions and through individualised support aimed to promote emotional literacy and assist with navigating the social aspects of communication safely. Sessions are focussed to ensure that students learn to communicate in a respectful and appropriate manner with both familiar and unfamiliar people in a range of settings and as independently as possible.

Listening & Responding:

At St Piers we ensure that the students are exposed to a language-rich environment, where they can practice their responses and skills of articulating what they know and understand, and develop their knowledge across all areas of learning, using the vocabulary they need communicate effectively. Through the support and guidance at St Piers students can understand, act upon information and follow directions with increasing levels of independence. The ability to make informed decisions and to respond to information in real life situations is a key focus. Our teaching supports our students to understand their environment, social routines and to adapt to changes when they occur in various settings.

Writing:

Students are encouraged to learn how to express opinions through thoughts and be able to share these with others. It helps them to record their experiences as well as their learning and to participate in social activities. Writing extends to digital text, so online and electronic forms of writing are also taught i.e. using a keyboard on a laptop or smart device. The ability to write enables those that can to create a signature, to fill in forms such as a CV or Passport form and to send greetings cards etc.. to become more independent in adult life.

Phonics & Reading:

The school values at St Piers; Be Kind, Be Empowered and Be Inspired are demonstrated in our practice they aim to create a supportive environment which encourages reading and develops core phonics skills enabling students to reach their potential in reading. We ensure that students have frequent and regular opportunities to participate in shared and guided reading activities to help extend our students vocabulary and improve their understanding. We are ambitious about our student's progress and place great importance on reading as it is a critical skill in preparing our students for experiences in the wider community and for adulthood.