



Brookfields School

**Social Understanding and Development
Policy**

Leadership Team

November 2017

Introduction

As a school we recognise that we have a responsibility to develop within each pupil a level of social understanding appropriate to their level of development and to this end all pupils at Brookfields are to be involved in a wide range of opportunities to develop their social understanding and ability.

At Brookfields School we acknowledge the centrality of social understanding and communication in the school's whole curriculum and that teaching social understanding skills as well as covered in lessons is not confined to timetabled sessions alone, but fully integrated into the life of the school. It is recognised that all staff are involved in the teaching of social understanding and communication skills, throughout the school day.

The school is committed to offering a wide range of experiences, situations and environments which enable interaction with peers and increase social inclusion.

Provision for the development of Social Understanding

- Specialist teaching both by class teaching teams and multiagency professionals such as Speech and Language professionals.
- Individual programmes and input plus small group and class work with clear objective to develop social skills. Led by class staff, speech and language professionals and OT. Groups such as SPOT, Lego Therapy and Girls Group provide valuable opportunities for pupils.
- Newly appointed staff have a thorough induction which includes knowledge of the Triad of Impairments and how this impacts on a pupils' social development
- A variety of programmes, systems and strategies that will aid and enhance the development of social understanding.
- Opportunities for identified pupils to experience mainstream inclusion opportunities or inclusion opportunities within school.
- A 'total communication' environment.
- All pupils have a communication / social target on their IEP's and as part of their EHCP.
- Understanding of the pupil's comprehension levels and reduced staff language to ensure that interactions and initiations are encouraged in a variety of situations.
- A secure and stimulating environment which will encourage each child to communicate and interact at their own level
- Weekly Educational Visits linked to curricular topics.

- The school council meet regularly to discuss relevant issues and to undergo project work. This offers a range of opportunities both within school and with pupils from other settings.
- After school clubs and lunchtime activities give pupils extended opportunities to develop Social Understanding.
- Staff training on pupil bereavement to enhance staff knowledge of how to address bereavement for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Disabilities.
- The school to maintain Healthy Schools Status and in relation to this places emphasis on sporting opportunities for pupils including inter school competitions which enhance social communication opportunities and skill development.
- School to continue to work through nationally accredited programmes such as National Nurturing Schools Award and UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award to ensure that the school maintains a holistic approach to pupil learning.
- The school employs a music and an art therapist to work on a weekly basis with individual pupils and a music specialist teacher to work on a weekly basis with classes. All of these provide a wealth of social skill development opportunities.
- Staff receive Intensive Interaction training.

Specific strategies to support the development of Social Understanding

PECS [Picture Exchange Communication System]

The school employs this symbol system which was developed with the needs of children with autism in mind by Bondi and Frost [1996]. It recognises that children require highly structured intervention to develop the language and social skills required for communication. The aim of PECS is for children to acquire key communication skills especially initiating communication in a social exchange.

The programme teaches children the two-way process of communication through a system of training covering six phases, from the initial exchange [Phase 1] to using sentence strips to comment, use attributes and to ask questions [Phases 5 and 6].

PECS is used with pupils who have impairments in social interaction and communication and who lack functional communication skills. The child is taught to initiate a communicative act for a concrete outcome within a social context. The only pre-requisite for a pupil to access the PECS programme is for staff to identify a pupils' motivator' or reinforcers at the start of the programme.

PECS has proved to be highly effective for pupils in providing an opportunity to quickly develop 'real' communication and thereby reduce frustration and to improve behaviour.

Intensive Interaction

This strategy is used by the school as one element in a package of intervention which makes a valuable contribution to the development of basic communication skills. The approach developed by Nind and Hewett [1994] is non-confrontational and follows the child's lead at his/her own pace. It aims to develop and extend social as well as communication skills.

It has been found to work particularly well with pupils with severe communication difficulties and those on the autistic spectrum. It is based on a model of caregiver—infant interaction. It begins by imitating the model of early learning in which the young child and caregiver builds up an interactive relationship which becomes the basis of mutual enjoyment.

The programme allows for regular and frequent interactions between the practitioner and the child in which there is no task or outcome focus, but in which the primary concern is for the interaction itself. The practitioner has the role of scaffolding the experience so that it is safe by being familiar but stimulating in that it extends the child's skills of communication and increases their level of sociability.

Use of Social and Joint Attention Routines

At Brookfields it is recognised that the Triad of Impairments associated with autism poses a massive challenge in the development of social and communication skills and the emphasis on using both social and joint attention routines to encourage social interactions is important. Using this approach, the actions of the child are incorporated into turn taking routines with the teacher. Thus, a repertoire of routines are developed which are based on activities that the pupil finds enjoyable. These activities take place within the classroom and within the wider school; soft play, light room, multisensory hall and outside in the school grounds. An adult /pupil relationship can be built up that can be used to assist learning in all areas e.g. turn taking when reading a book or with a jigsaw, building with blocks or Lego. In this way of following the child's lead and giving him/her time to respond is crucial in the encouragement of initiation and response to interaction

Makaton

The school employs this signing system for pupils who develop speech more slowly than the need to express themselves and it can be used for pupils with additional needs alongside symbols as part of a "total communication approach". Several staff have undertaken accredited Makaton courses and the school works closely with Halton HI team.

Makaton is a developmentally based structured signing programme based on British Sign Language. Signs are divided into nine stages and if additional signs are required the school uses the *LINK* signing book which is also based on BSL.

When using the system only the key words are signed, and **they should always be accompanied with speech.**

Language Programmes

The assessment of comprehension levels is of particular importance at Brookfields because many pupils have problems understanding language, a problem compounded by adults using too many words, speaking too quickly, or giving directions involving two or more ideas. Staff must ascertain the pupils' comprehension levels and adjust their communication accordingly by **reducing language** to key words. The school works closely with the Speech and Language team to develop programmes both for use in school and at home. Each child has a communication target chart on the classroom wall as well as a communication passport which provides this information to visitors / lunchtime staff etc.

Pragmatics Skills /Personal Communication Plan

In formulating an individual communication programme for a pupil it is highly relevant that teaching teams take into account the pupils' use of communication and language in its context of use (pragmatics). This pragmatic approach offers a perspective on child language that emphasises how communication is achieved. To assess and plan an intervention programme the team must consider a pupils' communication in terms of the following areas;

- * communicative intentions;
- * response to communication;
- * interaction and conversation;
- * contextual variation

Assessment work will be undertaken by the Speech and Language team. Both school and parents can make referrals into the team. Programmes will be implemented by the staff team, SaLT team and assistant and families.

Music Therapy

The aim of music therapy is to engage each child in the process of interaction and to build up a desire to communicate. This approach is based on the caregiver– child interaction and focuses on what the child can do. In this way it shares the same root as Intensive Interaction but with the additional factor of music to facilitate and reinforce communication and the child's role in the process.

Brookfields employs a qualified music therapist for 7 hours a week to work with identified pupils on a one to one or a small group basis.

Social Stories

Social Stories are used at Brookfields for helping individuals with autism learn appropriate ways to interact in social situations. For example, 'theory of mind' describes the difficulty individuals with autism have in assuming the perspective of another person. This can be addressed by the Social Story technique which is used to help

individuals 'read' and understand situations and it also helps them answer the 'who,' 'what', 'when', 'where' and 'why' of social settings.

Carol Gray developed the Social Story and defines the four types of sentences used to make up a social story. They are descriptive, directive, perspective and control sentences and these are individualised to incorporate the specific needs of the person for whom the story is written. They can be used to teach;

- Routines;

- How to do an activity;

- How to ask for help;

- How to respond appropriately to feelings like anger and frustration;

The use of Social Stories has proved to be highly effective method of improving the social behaviours of autistic pupils.

Communication Passports

Communication passports are written for pupils at Brookfields to aid transition between classes and settings. Members of the teaching team, parents, carers and multi-disciplinary staff contribute to the Communication Passport. Information is gathered under the following headings; All about me; Things you should know!; My family; My friends; Special people and special things; How I communicate with you; You can help me to communicate; Things I can do; Things I need help with; Things I enjoy; Things I don't like; At home; Out and About.

The headings can be changed to individualise the passport to more effectively meet the needs of individual pupils.

The school strongly supports all pupils having their own personal communication passports that outline the optimum way they communicate, their likes and dislikes, and how to maintain an exchange etc.

The passports are updated in the Summer Term each year to support transition to new classes / school. The passports are completed by pupils, parents, staff and other professionals involved with the pupils.

Communication passports can be provided to other agencies and settings to support the pupil e.g. to respite and short breaks providers.

Training

Good practice is shared and encouraged throughout school and new staff receive information regarding social development issues as part of their induction. Training within school is provided by Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language Therapists. Staff also attend external training which is then disseminated across the body of staff. Annually staff have access to relevant training as part of the Merseyside INSET and there are regular staff meetings / INSET at Brookfields for all staff to maintain skills and knowledge.

Resources

Resources for social development will be needs-led and identified by teaching area team in conjunction with parents and other professionals.

Equal Opportunities

In all areas of learning staff aim to promote equal opportunities in accordance with school policy.

Dissemination of Policy

The policy will be disseminated widely. The school and Governors should ensure that they have knowledge of the policy and its implications for the school. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to inform the Governors of any amendments.

Review Date

This policy will be reviewed in November 2020.