

What speech, language and communication difficulties are associated with ASD?

Children with an ASD can experience a number of difficulties with communication:

- communicating with others (expressive language)
- understanding what's being said to them (receptive language)
- understanding social communication and interaction

Within communication are the language areas of:

- attention and listening skills
- understanding the meaning of words (semantics)
- structure and rules (syntax)
- structure and rules phonology (sounds)
- social communication skills (pragmatics)
- working auditory memory
- speech (production of sound)

Because of these difficulties pupils can find it hard to communicate their needs or to understand what other people are saying to them, or asking them to do. This can cause considerable frustration and anxiety which, if it can't be expressed any other way may result in challenging behaviour.

We are a communication-supportive school and the whole school ethos promotes the inclusion of pupils with language and communication needs. In our school the learning environment makes good learning behaviours explicit: in early years good listening, looking and sitting are promoted as the foundations for good learning.

Strategies we offer in our provision at COPASS

- Pupils are given time to process and respond to directions and questions.
- A pupil's name is used before an utterance to gain attention and to cue them in
- Language is simplified and differentiated for particular pupils, eg: instructions 'chunked' into short sections, delivered in the order of the activity and repeated
- Pupils are taught how to monitor their understanding and strategies to use when they don't understand.
- Staff model good listening, communication and interaction skills, the correct utterance and grammar
- Instructions are given one at a time and in sequential order – kept short and simple and supported with visual aids: visual timetables, objects of reference, task chains, symbols, etc.
- Questions are at an appropriate level of understanding
- Vocabulary is explained and we pre-teach to ensure comprehension– eg: topic bank words to help with vocabulary
- We avoid idioms and words that have more than one meaning, irony and sarcasm
- Consideration is given to the ratio of pupil/adult talking time
- Social skills groups and creating social interaction opportunities around pupil's interests, eg: LEGO therapy
- Talk partners to share and rehearse ideas
- Using ICT, switches, voice recorders and mini microphones as an aide-memoire

- Full range of media, eg: visual and hands-on materials such as symbol/vocabulary charts, working walls, written questions, learning objectives and success criteria clearly displayed, concept maps, writing frames
- Quiet spaces for pair and group work
- Pupils have individual language and communication or support targets on their table, eg: reminder of good listening
- Role play and drama activities

Specialist interventions we use at COPASS

- **VB-MAPP (Verbal Behaviour Milestones Assessment and Placement program)** provides an effective means of assessing the learning, language and social skills of children with ASD. Based on B.F. Skinner's analysis of language, he principles of Behaviour Analysis and developmental milestones which can help identify barriers that impede learning and language and assist in providing direction in developing and individualised intervention programme. This tool is used with reception pupils and he milestones linked to the 'Development Matters' bands from the EYFS guidance.
- **PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System)** refer to PECS page
- **Southfields Pack.** Consists of two books: '*Language for Learning: A Practical Guide for Supporting Pupils with Language and Communication Difficulties across the Curriculum (David Fulton / Nasen)*' and '*Achieving Speech and Language targets: A resource for Individual Education planning*'
- **Social skills programmes** – Lego Therapy, social skills - story groups, early intervention games, action songs and rhymes,
- **Sensory stories and story props** - 'The attention box', Language Boxes
- **Individual speech and language therapy** – programmes are delivered and monitored by speech and language therapist for pupils who have this provision specified in their EHC plans and are funded accordingly.
- **Intensive interaction** - an approach to teaching the pre-speech fundamentals of communication to children and adults who have severe learning difficulties and/or autism and who are still at an early stage of communication development. The approach works by progressively developing enjoyable and relaxed interaction sequences between the interaction partner and the person doing the learning. These interaction sequences are repeated frequently and gradually grow in duration, complexity and sophistication. As this happens, the fundamentals of communication are gradually rehearsed and learnt in a free-flowing manner.