



TOTAL COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT

Chair of Governors:

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Total Communication Environment

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Introduction:

Ysgol Bryn Derw has Total Communication at the heart of the school

“Total Communication” describes an approach that strives to create a supportive means of communication to understand and be understood” (Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists). This means that pupils and staff are encouraged to use every available form of communication, with a particular emphasis on what is relevant to individuals. A Total Communication approach acknowledges that communication is not simply about talking and emphasises the importance of body language, gesture, photos, symbols, signs, objects and more creative mediums such as music.

Every pupil in our school has Autism and their communication is impacted in various ways and with a range of severities, therefore Total Communication is important to each pupil as it supports the learning and understanding by presenting information in a variety of ways. At Ysgol Bryn Derw we provide an enjoyable, structured, engaging and stimulating place for our pupils to learn. Each pupil is an individual and has their own preferred way of communicating either verbally or non-verbally. We believe that all children and young people have the right to understand and be understood in all aspects of life, therefore, it is the policy of the school to support the pupils with the following approaches.

Communication approaches

- a) **Verbally:** when interacting with the pupils try to position yourself at their level and face them as you speak (remember eye-contact can be challenging for some children so do not insist upon it). Reduce your spoken language and use open body language and increased facial expressions to support engagement and understanding. Use the ten second rule when waiting for the pupil to respond.
- b) **PECS:** the majority, 67%, of our pupil use PECS to help communicate their needs. It is important that we know the stages our pupils are at, to give them the correct support and remember that PECS is not just used at snack time but incorporate opportunities for its use throughout the school day. Pupils who use PECS also rely on staff to update their PECS cards as their interests change and language develops.
- c) **Intensive Interaction:** develops the “fundamentals of communication”. This is an approach that uses, eye contact, facial expression, body language and verbalisations through turn taking. A child gradually learns to communicate as they grow, develop and socialise. Intensive Interaction is delivered daily to some of the children across the school in a mixture of set intervention time in addition to being embedded into spontaneous communication during the course of the school day.
- d) **Attention Autism:** is an approach that delivers irresistible sensory learning experiences which develop early communication and social interaction skills. The Majority of classes in the school run this daily as a group activity which promotes shared attention and social communication skills such as eye contact, understanding of facial expressions, how to take turns and resilience. Most importantly, it shows that communication can be lots of fun!
- e) **Sensory supportive environment:** Many of the pupils experience sensory processing difficulty, therefore it is important that the school is sensitive to their needs. This is met through a distraction controlled environment with minimal décor, sensitive lighting and a reduction in background noise all of which support a communication friendly environment.
- f) **Visuals and TEACCH (inc. timetables/whiteboards/timers/lanyards/workstations):**
 - i) Visuals assist pupils understanding of routine/transitions made during their day. It also encourages anticipation of transitions whilst providing continuity and consistency in communication. Such visuals can also provide opportunities for pupils to make choices.
 - ii) As our pupils are visual learners the school’s structure and rules are presented visually and tailored to each pupil’s stage of symbolic understanding (objects/photos/symbols with the written word), to help pupils understand the daily routines. TEACCH schedules, workstations, timers and whiteboards are all visual strategies used to support pupils’ attention, engagement and comprehension. All staff have standard school symbols labelled with the written word on lanyards to support spoken directives.
- g) **Signing:** where appropriate staff use Signalong, a speech supported signing system. Only key words within a spoken sentence are signed to emphasise and provide clarity to the message, supporting a pupil’s comprehension.

- h) **Objects of Reference (OOR):** An OOR is any object which is used systematically to represent an item, activity, place, or person. Understanding real objects is the first stage of symbolic development. Therefore, using objects is considered the most concrete way of representing a word for pupils. Locations throughout the school are labelled with OOR and such door objects have been replicated for relevant classes to enable them to learn to anticipate events while moving around the school.
- i) **ELKLAN's Communication Stages and Blank Level questions:** are used across the school to plot communication stages of every pupil. This is to ensure that the right communication approach is used to support the development of each pupil's communication.
- j) **One-page profiles:** Classes have one page profiles displayed in each classroom to ensure that consistent support is given to each pupil, in regards of their communication, medicals and sensory needs.
- k) **Labelling:** clear and consistent labelling of rooms and equipment are used across the school with symbol and written word, where possible they are bilingual for English / Welsh.
- l) **Communication Forum:** Communication Forum is held once a term and is attended by the Headteacher, Total Communication HLTA and the Speech and Language Therapist. During the forum whole school communication approaches and communication training needs are discussed. Staff can refer pupils to be discussed at the Communication Forum with regards to being referred for specialist input from the NHS Speech and Language Therapy Department.
- m) **Parent involvement:** Communication Workshops and 1:1 discussion are offered to parents through the in-house Speech and Language Therapy service. Parents are offered advice, support and opportunities to share experiences.

Policy review

This policy will be reviewed within a 3-year period of approval

APPENDIX A

Verbal Communication

Five top tips for clear Communication

1. Positioning and body language

Try to get down to the pupils' level and face them when to speak. Ensure that you have open body language and you want to listen and engage with them. This can be shown through exaggerated facial expressions and warm responses.

2. Say the pupil's name before you speak to them.

This just clarifies that you are talking to them as this can be missed by people with Autism.

3. Reduces your language

Too much information can be hard to possess so keep to single words or short sentences. If you want a pupil to come and sit for group time you may want to say:

“Jim, group time, sit on the chair” or even tap the chair and just say “sitting” as opposed to:

“It is time for group, come and sit down on a chair with your friends”

4. Ten second rule

People with Autism can have a delayed processing time so give the pupil ten seconds to respond to you, stay quiet but show you are waiting for a response by looking at them. Remember that ten seconds can seem like a really long time so if it helps count it quietly in your head.

5. Repeat the same instruction word for word

It helps the pupil to process the information if when repeating an instruction, you use the exact same words, for example:

“Jim, do you want banana or apple?” is repeated and not changed to a sentence meaning the same message:

“Which one would you like Jim - apple or banana?”



APPENDIX B

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

PECS teaches the pupil how to communicate or what the basic rules of communication are. Then the pupil learns to communicate specific messages. The pupil learns to communicate first with single pictures, but later learns to combine pictures to learn a variety of grammatical structures, and communicative functions.



PECS Phases

Phase I – Physical Exchange

Phase II - Distance and Persistence

Phase III Discrimination of Symbols

Phase IV Sentence Structure (I want)

**Then
Attributes**

Phase V Answering “what do you want?”

Phase VI Commenting in response to a question



APPENDIX C

Intensive Interaction

Intensive interaction teaches and develops the “fundamentals of communication”. This is an approach that uses eye contact, facial expression, body language and verbalisations through turn taking to exchange the patterns of conversation.

What is Intensive Interaction?

The pupil gradually learns to communicate as they grow, develop and socialise. Intensive Interaction builds on the existing communication skills your child already has.

It focuses on the interactions that happen naturally between adults and children throughout the course of any day. These are the light-hearted, fun, face-to-face exchanges of eye contact, facial expression, touch or sounds.

We need to communicate with pupils on their own level, so they can understand and relate to us. If we do this, they may be more responsive and sociable in a verbal or non-verbal way.



How can it benefit the child?

- Intensive Interaction sees the child as an individual - important for their self-esteem.
- It can help to strengthen the relationship you have with the child.
- It may help the child feel more relaxed and secure. This may have a positive effect on their behaviour.
- It may help children who feel isolated, anxious and who may head bang or rock to blank out confusion. Intensive Interaction can help them to develop early communication skills.

APPENDIX D

Attention Autism

Attention Autism is an intervention model designed by Gina Davies, Specialist Speech and Language Therapist. It aims to develop natural and spontaneous communication through the use of highly visually and sensory based and motivating activities. It is a group activity that develops shared attention and social communication skills such as eye contact, understanding of facial expressions, and how to take turns. It aims to prompt communication through fun and laughter, creating shared positive experiences.

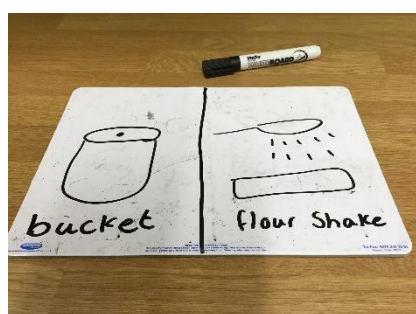


Although Attention Autism a lot of fun. It follows a structured routine which is made up of four stages:

- Stage 1 The bucket
- Stage 2 The attention builder
- Stage 3 The Interactive game
- Stage 4 The table activities



The use of a whiteboard help gives the pupils the understanding of what comes next and when an activity has finished.



APPENDIX E

The Sensory supportive environment

Many people with ASD have difficulty processing everyday sensory information. The individual's senses may be over or under-sensitive, or both, at different times. These sensory differences can affect the way our pupils experience the world around them. This can have effect on eating, physical activity, sleep, and behaviour. It is vital to our pupil's communication that we recognise this and help adapt the school environment accordingly.



As a school we achieve this by ensuring the school is a calm environment, with minimal décor, sensitive lighting and a reduction in background noise. Pupils are offered ear defenders when needed. Quiet spaces available, offering time out of busy classrooms. Sensory rooms and activities are given value across the school to reflect the pupil's choices. Staff follow a policy for displays which ensures that they are not over stimulating. Contractors and gardeners do not do noisy work on site when the pupils are in school.



APPENDIX F

TEACCH

The TEACCH approach has five basic principles: physical structure, scheduling, work system, routine, and visual structure. The use of visual structures to organise the environment and tasks is crucial when teaching skills. It focuses on the pupil and their skill, interests and needs. It gives structure to support transition and provides choices. TEACCH is implemented throughout the school in schedules, workstations, whole classroom layouts, and other strategies including working towards and now & next boards. Staff have a responsibility to continually assess the pupils to ensure they have the right TEACCH approach and support for their current needs.

Workstation



Classroom Schedules



Working Towards Card



Whiteboards

Whiteboards are used with some pupils to support transitions, give routine and signal an end to an activity. They can be used with drawings or the written word.



Monday	School
Tuesday	School
Wednesday	School
Thursday	School
Friday	School
Saturday	Park
Sunday	Home

Timers

Timers are used throughout the school to give a visual understanding to how long an activity will last. This can give more time to processing a change and reducing anxiety. All classes have a range of timers for different situations from 30 seconds to 10 minutes.



Lanyards

All staff have standardised visuals on lanyards to support transition and understand school rules. It is the school staff's responsibility to ensure they use the lanyards and keep them in good condition. Lanyards can be customised to support some individual pupils needs.



APPENDIX G

Signing

Signalong is the school's speech supported signing system.

Five top tips for signing

1. The spoken words should always be used alongside the sign (never the sign on its own).
2. Used the **Signing Window** – this extends from the top of the head to the waist and just beyond each shoulder.



3. Position – ensure that the pupil can see you, ideally down at their level.
4. Only sign the **key words** in the sentence (one sign may be all that is needed – e.g. "It is time to go to the bus" can be signed with just 'bus')
5. Practise and practise with colleagues to ensure consistency.

APPENDIX H

Objects of Reference (OOR)

An object of reference is any object which is used systematically to represent an item, activity or place. Understanding real objects is the first stage of symbolic development. Objects of reference are used with pupils who find it difficult to understand spoken words, signs, symbols or photographs.

Some pupils in the school will use OOR to help them transition or understand their routine. Show the OOR just before a pupil is about to start a new activity or make a transition whilst using short simple language saying what will happen e.g. before going swimming, give the pupil a 'towel' OOR and say "swimming".



Encourage pupils to take the OOR with them to the location. It is best if the pupil keeps in contact with the OOR. If they do not want to hold it, the adult can do so, keeping the object in the pupil's view throughout the transition.

Once a pupil has been introduced to the OOR they need to make the transition immediately in order to help them understand the connection between the object and what happens next. It is very important that the same object is used consistently (i.e. every time you do that activity/ transition.)

APPENDIX I

ELKAN

Communication stages

All pupils will be plotted using ELKAN's communication stages if their communication stage is developing below Abstract Words and Reasoning. This ensures that each pupil is receiving targets communication support.

- Pre-Intentional
- Antiphony
- Intentional
- Word and Ideas
- Joining Word and Ideas
- Abstract Words and Reasoning

Communication Stages					
Level of Communication	What is communicated?	How is it communicated?	Interaction Skills	Play skills	Approaches to use
Pre-Intentional (0-5 months) P level 1 P1(H) Essential RFL 1-4 Communicator	Basic and usually automatic responses to changes either in the body or immediate surroundings. Responses include: like, dislike, wanting.	Simple noises or movements e.g. crying, vocalising, smiling, becoming still.	Can focus on a person or an object. May respond to adults by smiling and watching.	Exploration of objects e.g. by mouthing, looking, touching. Sensory and exploratory play.	A multi-sensory approach, baby sign, actual objects, intensive interaction and Attention Autism (stage 1)
Anticipatory (5-8 months) P level 2 P2(H) Attentive & Responsive P2(H) Essential RFL 5-21 Communicator	Behaviour shows an understanding of routine and can anticipate what will happen. The child will signal what he likes and dislikes.	Vocalising and use of a range of speech sounds. Use of a narrow range of non-verbal communication.	Starts to anticipate and may initiate interaction or the child recognises routine.	Begin to recognise everyday objects. Develop object permanence.	A multi-sensory approach, baby sign, actual objects, intensive interaction & objects of reference. People games. Encouraging exploratory play. Ready, steady...go! Games.
Intentional (8-12 months) P level 3 P3(H) Participative P3(H) Essential RFL 22-43 Communicator	Purposeful 'moozque' without words to convey meaning like "It's gone", "more", "stop", "I want it", or "It's nice/harsh".	Wide range of non-verbal communication e.g. vocalisation, facial expressions, hand gestures, whole body movements.	Is dependent on the other person responding to his moozque as if it has real meaning. Likes turn taking and repetitive games. Develops joint-attention.	Further exploration of objects understanding of and playing with everyday objects.	Cause and effect activities; switching. Encouraging awareness of object function in play. Ready, steady...go! Games. Sign, objects, photographs of reference.
Words and Ideas (12-18 months) P level 4 P4(H) Initiated interaction RFL 40-42 First words used	Simple words, signs or pictures to request things, ask for more, and expand on the 'moozque' above.	Initially use non-verbal communication but gradually learn words, or use pictures, symbols or signs to communicate a specific moozque. Can initiate.	Needs the adult to respond to their communication and provide models of language, sign or picture support. Interactions have one or two turns.	Can use several objects at once. Enjoys sorting. Can play with toy objects and can relate these to self/father person.	Total communication approach which may include sign, photographs, or symbols. TEACCH visual support, timetable and classroom layout. PECS or communication books.
Joining words and ideas (18-24 months) P level 5-6 P5(H) Combining	Words & phrases to: Comment and describe. Ask "what", "where" and "where" questions. Talk about "here and now".	Use words, signs, pictures or symbols to communicate in short phrases and sentences.	Still learning the rules of interaction and needs other children and adults as models to learn from.	Can use toys to act out simple daily routines. Begin to use miniature toys. Begin to play with others.	Total communication approach which may include sign, photographs, or symbols. TEACCH visual support, timetable and classroom layout. PECS or communication books.
Abstract words and reasoning (2-5 years) P level 7-9 P7(H) Combining	Abstract ideas: emerging ability to understand and use language to talk about things beyond immediate situation. Can plan, question, negotiate, predict, reason.	Use increasingly complex sentences. By 5 years can use simple but grammatically correct sentences.	Increasingly able to interact appropriately with a range of people. Starts to change the style of interaction depending on the situation.	Enjoys imaginative play. Increasingly enjoys cooperative play. Can eventually take on role of another person.	Total communication approach which may include sign, photographs, or symbols.

Blank level Questioning

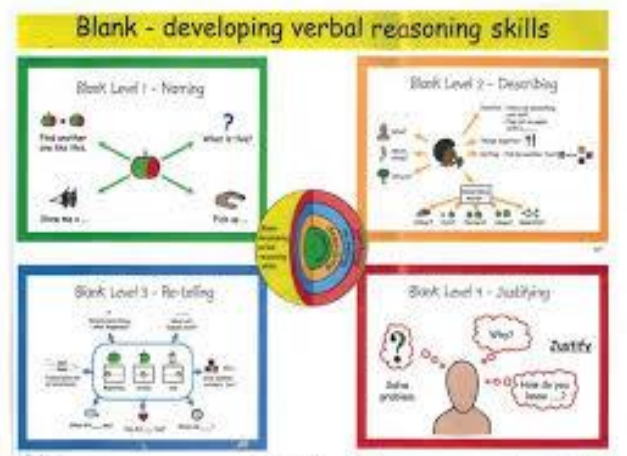
Blank level questioning will be accessed once a pupil has progressed beyond the Communication Stages. This will support our pupils understanding of spoken language and ensure that they are accessing targeted support for their verbal communication.

Blank level 1-Naming

Blank Level 2-Describing

Blank Level 3 Re-Telling

Blank Level 4 Justifying



APPENDIX J

One Page Profile

Every pupil in the school has a One Page Profile detailing personal information such as individual communication uses (e.g. PECS), likes and dislikes, and personal care. These One Page Profiles are displayed in each classroom to ensure that they are supported in their preferred manner. It provides information to supply staff giving consistent support to each pupil.

Mickey Mouse

Important things to know about me

I like to use PECS to help with communicating

I will cover my ears if it gets too loud, I may want my ear defenders

I like different foods but may also put toys in my mouth so please encourage me to keep toys in my hands

I may get worried and ask lots of questions, often repeating questions

What makes me happy

I am very active so love to run and jump

Rebound therapy

Sensory activities like blowing bubbles with giant straws

Soft play

Playing with Lego

How I want to be supported...

I like clear instructions and use of a schedule

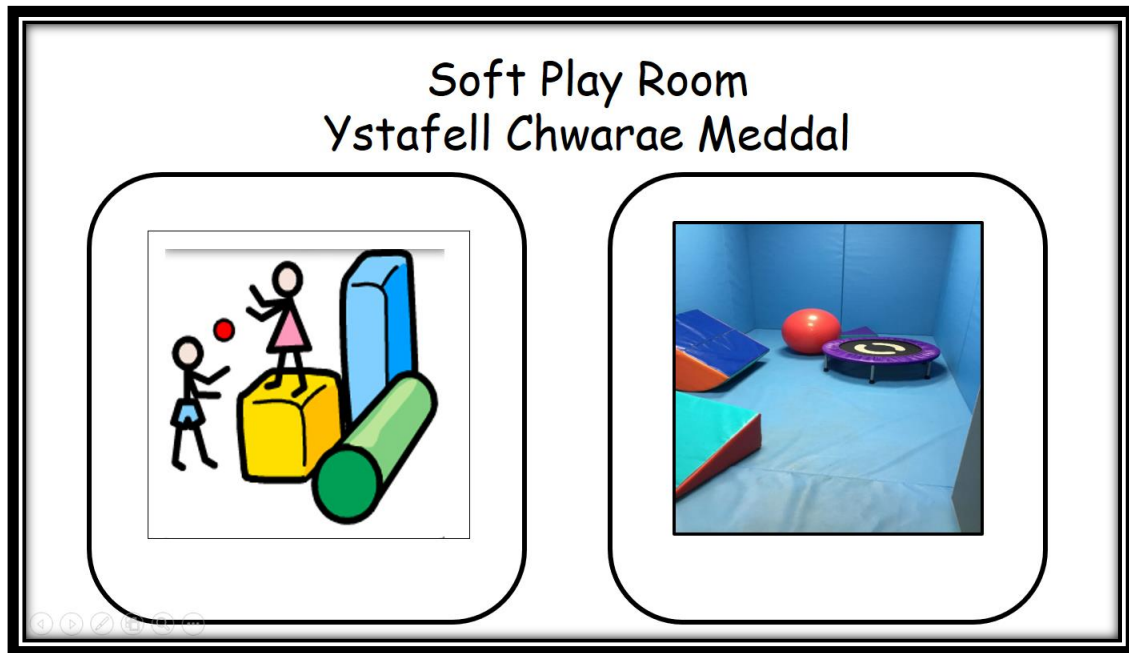
I like high fives

I like to use a workstation

APPENDIX K

Labelling

To support understanding of routine and transitions, every classroom and activity room is clearly labelled with a photo, symbol and the written word in both English and Welsh.



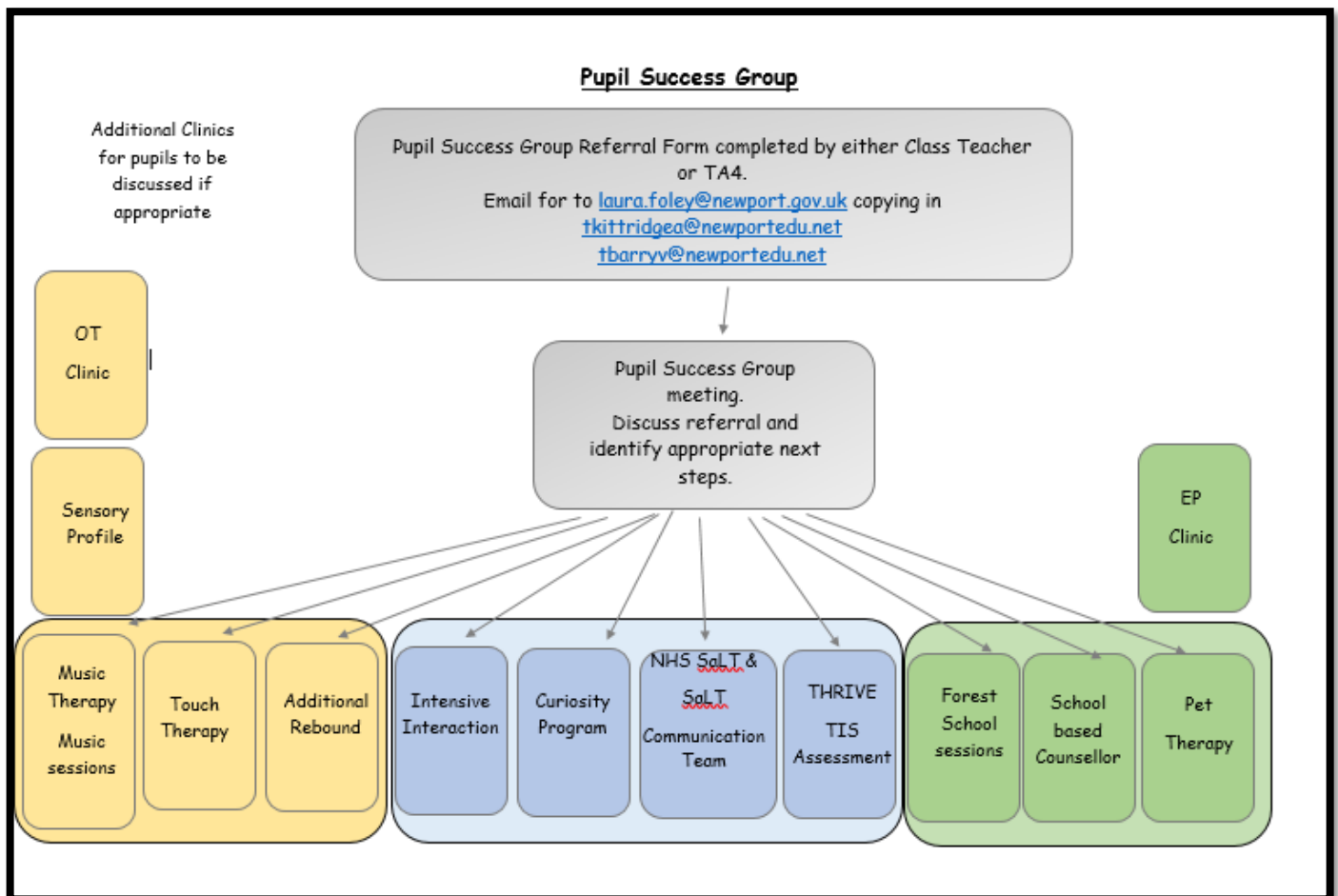
Classrooms and the Independent Living Skills room have clear labels on cupboards. This enables pupils to be independent and supports communication choices.



APPENDIX L

Pupil Success Group

To support our pupils to reach their full potential and enable our staff members to get bespoke individual advice and interventions, the Pupil Success Group has been set up.



Teachers or TA4s can refer individual pupils or whole classes to the pupil Success Group to receive support with communication needs.

The Pupil Success Group Referral Form can be found in Teacher Shared under Pupil Intervention Referral. (see example on the next page)

Pupil Success Group Referral Form

Date of Referral:
Name of Individual Pupil or Whole Class Referred:
Pupil DOB:
Referred by:
IEP TARGETS
1.
2.
3.
Current attainment (P levels/ NC levels)
Main Reasons for Referral- Current Challenges.
Does the pupil receive any additional therapies /interventions? If so what therapy/intervention, how often and how is this going?
What are you hoping for from this referral?
For the Pupil Success Group to complete
Pupil Success Group Feedback:
Date of meeting:
Next Steps:
By who:
Signed: