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## Riverside Community Special School English and Communication Policy

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To be reviewed annually.

*Admin/current Policies/2024*

This policy is available on our school website and is available on request from each school office.

## ENGLISH AND COMMUNICATION (E&C) POLICY

*"We provide a wide ranging and meaningful curriculum with an emphasis on Communication and Language skills." (School vision statement).*

### Intent

We believe that English & Communication is integral to everything pupils do and builds a foundation from which they can develop and progress. Working in partnership with parents and carers, we aim to help pupils develop key communication, language, reading and writing skills. Enabling them to move into the next stage of their life equipped with the skills for day-to-day, offering them enriched opportunities and enabling them to communicate, understand and use language in a functional way.

Communicating and being with others helps pupils to build relationships which provide opportunities for friendship, empathy and sharing emotions. The ability to communicate helps pupils to participate more fully in society.

At Riverside School, we aim to provide structured learning opportunities in accordance with the National Curriculum (NC), the Hampshire SEND documents and Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum (EYFS) to ensure a broad and balanced coverage of teaching and learning. There are four aspects to English and Communication (E&C): Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing.

In these four areas we:

- Enable pupils to become confident communicators using a varied vocabulary and multiple ways of expressing themselves.
- Provide dedicated teaching time and space for communication, listening, reading and writing (including mark making).
- Provide a rich environment where an understanding of the purposes and pleasures of communication is nurtured.
- Encourage a love for books and share various texts for enjoyment - including comics, annuals and news pages
- Enable pupils to read, write and communicate with confidence according to their ability.
- Encourage an interest in words, their meanings; developing a growing vocabulary in spoken and written forms.
- Promote the means to communicate effectively according to their individual ability - including through the use of ACC, PECs, Makaton and communication boards.
- Use role play to develop the use of imagination, language and storytelling.

Pupils will be given opportunities to use and develop their English & Communication skills across the curriculum, with opportunities to consolidate and reinforce taught skills in different contexts.

## Diversity

English and Communication lessons provide a vehicle for promoting an awareness of cultural diversity. Books and teaching resources refer to ethnic minority experiences, include ethnic minority role models and are non-stereotypical. These resources are used to highlight similarities in common human experiences while being respectful of difference.

## Implementation

At Riverside School we ensure that English and Communication is an intrinsic part of the pupil's experiences. We consider Communication as the 'golden thread' that runs throughout all parts of the curriculum. There are opportunities for pupils to communicate, read and write throughout the school day in both planned E&C activities and other subjects.

Alongside this cross-curricular approach, we also ensure coverage of skills through;

- Teaching literacy and communication skills in context as part of purposeful topics, themes and play activities.
- Follow a daily synthetic phonic scheme that develops pupils route to reading and reading awareness
- Providing daily experiences in a rich and interesting environment that promotes Communication.
- Supporting particular pupils through targeted intervention groups, individual support sessions, Speech and Language therapy (SALT) and Individual Education Plan (IEP).
- Providing suitable and accessible resources that will allow pupils to develop their skills in speaking, communication, listening, reading and writing
- Developing and extending opportunities for communicating via first hand experiences and the pupil's own interests, making communicating in various forms both enjoyable and functional.
- Consolidating English & Communication learning through games and role-play
- Teaching and using new vocabulary through Topic based learning and the 'Word Aware' scheme
- Working in collaboration with parents and carers to promote different contextual learning - especially in reading and communication.
- Monitoring and assessing pupil's language and literacy development, then planning accordingly.

Planning and delivery for this subject is via a Half-Term Plan and Weekly plans focusing on Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing and Phonics. This will include elements from the National Curriculum, the Early Years Foundation Stage and the Hampshire SEND curriculum as appropriate to the learning needs of the class. We provide pupils with four different learning pathways; EYFS, Curiosity, Discovery and Builder. Within these pathways, there is a cycle of half termly fiction or non-fiction themes for texts that are appropriate to the pupils and ensure a breadth of text. A variety of programmes and specialist approaches are used throughout this subject, particularly focusing on developing the pupils' communication skills and the specific daily teaching of phonics. Outdoor learning enhances the pupils' experiences and develops their ability to use their emerging knowledge and skills in different contexts.

Pupil provision is related to attainment and pupils are assessed using the Riverside Learning Steps, the Engagement Model or Early Years Foundation Stage profile (please see the EYFS policy). Teaching staff assess weekly progress and adjust their planning accordingly, making sure pupils are not moved on before they have consolidated learning in each area.

English & Communication planning, teaching and learning includes:

- Rhymes, songs and stories
- Gross and fine motor activities aimed at preparing pupils for writing
- Regular story times and access to class and school libraries with opportunities to take books home.
- Topic books provided for each class, linked to their topic for a half term.
- A range of phonic activities, aimed at developing letter sound and letter shape recognition through the Anima Phonics validated scheme
- Personal sight vocabulary in order to promote communication and reading skills for pupils that are 'pre-readers'.
- The use of Makaton signing throughout the school community.
- Pupils having an appropriate target on their Individual Education Plan (Early learning target sheet in EYFS) to enhance their Communication, Language and Literacy skills.

### **Pupils with severe and complex needs**

Riverside school aims to meet the needs of pupils with severe and complex needs in English and Communication through:

- Giving pupils resources to communicate effectively including through the use of ACC, PECs, Makaton and communication boards.
- Providing access, at an appropriate level, to a curriculum that takes account of developments in provision for pupils progressing through Early Learning Goals (ELGs), Birth to 5 Matters, Riverside Learning steps or the national Curriculum.
- Using sensory activities or resources to enthuse and motivate our pupils with severe needs
- Using 'I hear' & 'I see' activities and making good use of personalised vocabulary for communication.
- Staff being trained in how to use the Blank Level Programme so that they adjust their questioning to meet pupils' needs
- Providing activities in varying contexts to repeat, over learn and rehearse knowledge and skills taught
- Communicating with parents in order to suggest appropriate activities and skills at home for example, turning pages, holding books, parents reading to them or looking at pictures.

### **Speaking and Listening**

All strands of Speaking and Listening permeate the whole curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to develop effective communication skills in readiness for later life. Pupils at Riverside can develop these skills through:

- planned opportunities to assess and develop listening, speaking/ communicating and responding skills
- class and group discussions to encourage pupils to communicate their needs, thoughts, ideas and feelings
- having appropriate communication systems in place in order to allow pupils to respond appropriately e.g. Makaton sign language, the use of gesture and facial expression, PECS or visual symbols to complement the spoken and written word and Communication aids e.g. QuickTalker, Proloquo2go, Communication boards
- liaising with specialist teaching services to support medical needs of pupils that impact their progress e.g. Visual impairment team.
- Planned opportunities to develop their social communication skills through the use of Social Use of Language Programme (SULP) and other social communication groups.
- Using role play to explore imagined situations
- Using a range of ICT resources to support the pupil and extend their skills and learning e.g. Clicker 8, Dictaphones, or InPrint widget software
- Participating in school assemblies and school productions
- Working in partnership with parents and other agencies e.g. Speech and Language Therapist, including those employed by parents, in order to support and assess the pupil's progress, write new objectives and delivery of programmes of work.

### **Speech & Language Therapy**

Riverside School has a number of Speech and Language therapists who offer training and support to staff to extend their knowledge of speaking, listening and communication skills. This includes training to support implementation of programmes such as; Blank language scheme, Attention Autism, narrative skills groups and social skills groups. As well as this, staff are supported to deliver 1:1 speech and language targets which may include: speech sound development, use of AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) including PECS and Makaton and development of language and social skills. Teachers liaise with specialist Speech Therapists whom are employed by parents to ensure pupils receive a continued and consistent approach.

### **Reading**

Reading is developed through enabling pupils to have a whole word recognition vocabulary, decoding skills and a good comprehension of what they have read. (see Appendix 'Reading and phonics protocols').

We do this by:

*Phonics:* all pupils have access to discrete and high-quality daily phonics sessions using the Anima Phonics validated scheme, objectives and resources at a stage that is appropriate for individual pupils or the learning pathway of each class. Pupils are assessed every term to determine their progress and inform future planning.

*Shared reading:* as a class using a common text, focusing on comprehension, specific features and the development of a wide range of reading strategies. Class texts are given one- or two-weeks' focus depending on the nature and needs of the learners

*Guided reading:* a carefully structured group activity using graded texts carefully matched

to ability and involving teacher interaction.

*1:1 reading:* individual reading to a parent, teacher or other adult - particularly for pupils who need considerable practice and for those not reading at home.

*Independent reading:* where pupils extend and practice their reading skills.

*National Curriculum word lists:* the pupils are encouraged to read/recognise the words using words and/or symbols

*Social Sight:* words that a learner recognises on sight without having to decode them or work them out

*Personal vocabulary:* often using photographs of personal belongings to support our cohort of 'pre-readers' with their communication needs

*Word Aware:* Designed to increase use of varied language which is taught through a multi-strategy approach according to the needs of learners.

At Riverside we aim to ensure that:

- Pupil are able to recognise and interpret photographs / pictures / signs and symbols.
- Pupil are encouraged to share books and 'read' for enjoyment.
- Pupil are taught to value books and reading materials, including computer-based programs and the internet.
- ICT is used as a means of enabling pupils to access the curriculum and to reinforce and extend their skills and learning.
- there is access to a wide range of high-quality reading resources
- structured individual reading objectives are used to inform the daily teaching of literacy at individual and group levels.
- sufficient daily time is allowed for developing and extending reading skills and comprehension.
- pupils experience a balanced range of teaching approaches
- Opportunities are provided for Pupils to functionally apply their reading in a variety of contexts
- progress in acquiring reading skills, including the development of comprehension, are continually monitored to support the generalisation of these across situations.
- Pupil and parents are encouraged to take part in the home-school reading programme.

*Resources used to support the development of reading*

- A wide range of texts to stimulate and motivate.
- Individual reading books which are banded according to their level.
- Guided reading packs.
- National Curriculum word lists and symbols
- Enlarged texts for use with the Interactive boards
- Sensory stories and story sacks.
- Reading websites and programmes which support a multisensory approach to embed skills taught e.g. - Education city, Letters and Sounds, Phonics play, Oxford Owl and 2simple
- Support materials for independent learning including ICT resources
- Home/school reading records
- A school library where Pupil have access to a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books

- Computer software and materials from the Internet
- Home/School book with curriculum information for parents to follow up at home.

Each child has a specific reading target on their Individual Education Plan or Early Learning Sheet in the foundation stage. For some pupils this will be a list of high frequency words to learn, for others who are more fluent readers this will be a comprehension target. Pupil's word scores, reading and comprehension ages are also assessed three times a year.

## Writing

We aim to promote a positive writing culture within school where pupils understand the purpose and audience for their work: writing wherever possible for a real purpose. All pupils have opportunities to compose using a system appropriate to their needs e.g. photographs, symbol, written word or computer-generated print/symbols.

Writing & Spelling is developed through:

- The teaching of phonemic, visual and graphic knowledge strategies and the principles of spelling using a structured approach appropriate to pupils needs.
- Using the **Look, Say, Cover, Write, Check** method as a learning strategy
- Regular learning and monitoring of high frequency words appropriate to ability
- Encouraging independent spelling through the use of word books, word banks, dictionaries and ICT resources.
- The development of the phonics programmes which teaches common spelling patterns through varied activities.
- Making use of resources such as magnetic letters and Velcro letters for Pupils whom find writing difficult.
- Spelling is assessed three times a year in conjunction with reading data.
- 'Colourful semantics': supporting pupils to develop their grammar and meaning of words through colour coding

*Handwriting:* we teach pupils to form legible letters to ensure that pupils can write efficiently and neatly. A handwriting assessment is carried out each term to ensure pupils are taught the appropriate skills. Hand gym exercises and activities form part of the curriculum, My Own Work and IEP targets. Pupils are taught letter formation via a set of letter patterns (see appendix for handwriting information and letter families).

At Riverside School pupils will be encouraged and supported to:

- know that the process of writing may be presented in different ways e.g. pictorially and using a variety of writing styles (printing, cursive, computer generated print/symbols, using programs like Communication in Print, Clicker 8, Word and widget software i.e. Communicate In Print).
- develop their gross motor skills as a precursor to the development of fine motor skills as preparation for letter formation e.g. 'Write Dance' Programme and 'Jump start Johnny'.
- recognise that writing has many purposes
- write for different audiences.
- explore and use a developing vocabulary.
- sequence and relate events with increasing detail.

- put their ideas into pictorial representations, words, phrases and sentences (Play and drama are used to enable Pupil to link ideas and develop the concept of sequencing)
- use a clear structure to organise their thoughts into writing representations (This may be supported through the use of writing frame, mind maps, etc)
- use different types of texts and other sources (role play, drama, video, artefacts, internet, etc) to stimulate the production of written work.
- use a variety of features, layout, presentation and organisation.
- produce narratives, poems, notes, lists, captions, records, messages and instructions.
- plan, review and revise their pictorial / symbol / written representations to improve the organisation of their thoughts.
- discuss and evaluate their own and others' written' representations, showing respect for the work of others
- develop an awareness and understand that punctuation enables the reader to understand what has been written
- develop the hand -eye coordination, pincer grip and hand strength to form letters and words.

### **Parental Involvement**

We actively encourage parents to be involved in the development of their Pupil's English and Communication skills. They can do this in many ways including:

- listening to their pupil read regularly at home
- reading to their pupil at home
- encouraging conversation
- Attending reading or writing workshops
- Attending parents' meetings where progress and targets are discussed
- Contributing to their child's Annual Review meeting, ensuring that the determined progress is appropriate and proportionate to their child's needs

### **Impact**

Alongside the senior leadership team, the E&C curriculum leader is responsible for improving the standards of teaching and learning in Literacy through:

- monitoring and evaluating pupil progress and reporting outcomes and improvements to the Governing Body
- monitoring and improving the quality of the Learning Environment
- supporting colleagues and delivering training
- purchasing and organising resources
- keeping up to date with recent developments in English and Communication policy and practice

Pupil progress in E&C is monitored through pupil progress moderation, EHCP reviews, IEP reviews and target setting and by use of outside professional targets setting e.g. SALT.

Pupils are enabled to listen, communicate and read at an appropriate level (depending on

developmental ability), use their skills within given contexts and transfer skills into their next stages of education.

The impact on our pupils is clear; progress, sustained learning and transferrable skills that are embedded ensures that pupils are supported for their next stages of education and development. Monitoring and evaluating the impact in English and Communication ensures teaching is of a high quality, pupils make progress in line with or better than set targets and learning is appropriate, motivating and meaningful for all learners.

*Appendices;*

*Riverside Reading and phonics protocol*

*Riverside Handwriting information*

*Riverside Handwriting assessment*

*Word Aware information*

*Blank Language Scheme information*

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