North Lanarkshire Council

WE ARE A COMMUNICATION FRIENDLY ESTABLISHMENT

OUR POLICY

Including and supporting learners who experience barriers with their speech, language and/or communication development.

Mavisbank School

This policy is implemented within the context of our vision, values and aims as a Rights Respecting School

UNCRC Links:

Article 3 (the best interests of the child) – In all decisions and actions that concern children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

Article 12 (respect for children's views) – Every child has the right to express their views on matters that affect them and for these views to be taken into consideration.

Article 13 (freedom of expression) – Every child has the right to find out and distribute information and to express their ideas –through talking, writing, art or any other form of expression.

Article 23 (disabled children) – Disabled children have the right to enjoy a full life, with dignity, and to participate as far as possible in their community. The government should support disabled children and their families.

Article 29 (education and children's development) – Education should help develop every child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to the full. It should develop children's respect for their own rights and those of others, for their parents, for their own culture and the culture of others, and for the natural environment.

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    o UNCRC (1992)

    o A Right to Speak 2013

    o Scottish Strategy for Autism

    o Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Acts 2004 &2009

    o Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

    o GIRFEC (Getting it Right for Every Child) (2006)

    o Promoting Relationships at the Core of Learning and Teaching

    o Curriculum for Excellence Milestones (2019)

- Moderation cycle https://education.gov.scot/improvement /assess33-the-moderation-cycle-
- National Improvement Framework (Improvement in attainment in literacy, improving health and wellbeing) (2015)
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Mavisbank School is a communication friendly school; we aim to meet the needs of all learners including those who experience difficulties with their speech, language and / or communication. We recognise and value the individual learner and their preferred means of communication. We carry out an annual audit using the audit tool to reflect on our practice and progress.

Rationale

'Communication is a basic human need. It lets people form and maintain relationships through the sharing of thoughts, feelings, wants and intentions. People who have difficulty in communicating may therefore be excluded accidentally or deliberately from the social exchanges of everyday life. This is why communication has an important place in the curriculum of all school pupils irrespective of their age

and ability. Nowhere is its place more important than in the curriculum of pupils who have difficulty in learning.' "Early Communication Skills" G. Mackay and W. Dunn

Communication establishes relationships. It is a two way process which allows learners to express themselves in terms of their wants, needs, feelings and allows them to make choices and decisions about their lives. It is important that all learners are able to communicate effectively as ability to communicate contributes to a learner's wellbeing. In order for effective communication to take place a communication partner, (e.g. family member, friend, education staff, Speech and Language Therapist), is essential as communication is a two way process. All learners at Mavisbank require a communication partner who is familiar with their individual methods of communication. Communication partners should use the learner's preferred method of communication and have an understanding of the function of the learner's communication.

Legislation and policy frameworks

There are various legislative and policy frameworks including the Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Act 2004/2009, Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC), Curriculum for Excellence, A Right to Speak, Scottish Strategy for Autism, Promoting Relationships at the Core of Learning and Teaching , UNCRC (1992) all of which promote the rights of all children and young people to have their voices heard and valued. These include learners who experience difficulties with their speech, language and/or communication, those who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), and those whose social, emotional and behavioural needs are a barrier to their communication.

In our establishment we promote A Total Communication Approach. Children and young people's voices and views are evident across all aspects of learning and within the wider school community.

In promoting positive behaviour in our establishment we recognise that behaviour is a means of communication and we use a variety of communication methods to support learners.

Introduction

Communication
Communication is not all about speech. Non-verbal communication can represent over two thirds of all communication. This may include facial expressions, eye contact, body movements, gestures, use of intonation, pattern of the voice, sounds and volume of voice. All learners at Mavisbank find communication difficult. There are a variety of reasons why this might be the case. We are also very aware that it may be the quiet pupil, who is easily overlooked, who has the most difficulty with communication. We work hard to develop communication by recognising and repeating gestures or vocalisations in order to help the child to attribute meaning to actions.

Staff make use of the Hanen's 4xS Strategy:

SAY LESS, STRESS, GO SLOW AND SHOW

Staff also make use of the ALLOW principle.
Always
Look
Listen
Observe
Wait

This will maximise every opportunity for the student's communication attempts to be understood.

Our School recognises that everyone has the right to

- express how they feel
- be provided with choices
- be able to say 'no' to things
- be with other people and communicate with them
- be listened to
- have access to their communication tools whenever they need them
- be told what is happening around them
- be included when people talk about them
- to use the method of communication that is right for them.

Recently new methods of communication have emerged with the introduction of the internet and email, texting, the development of Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites. Our means of communicating are increasing as technology changes. For some this is advantageous: for others this may be an additional barrier to communication.

An inability to communicate with and understand other people creates many challenges for learners in areas such as:
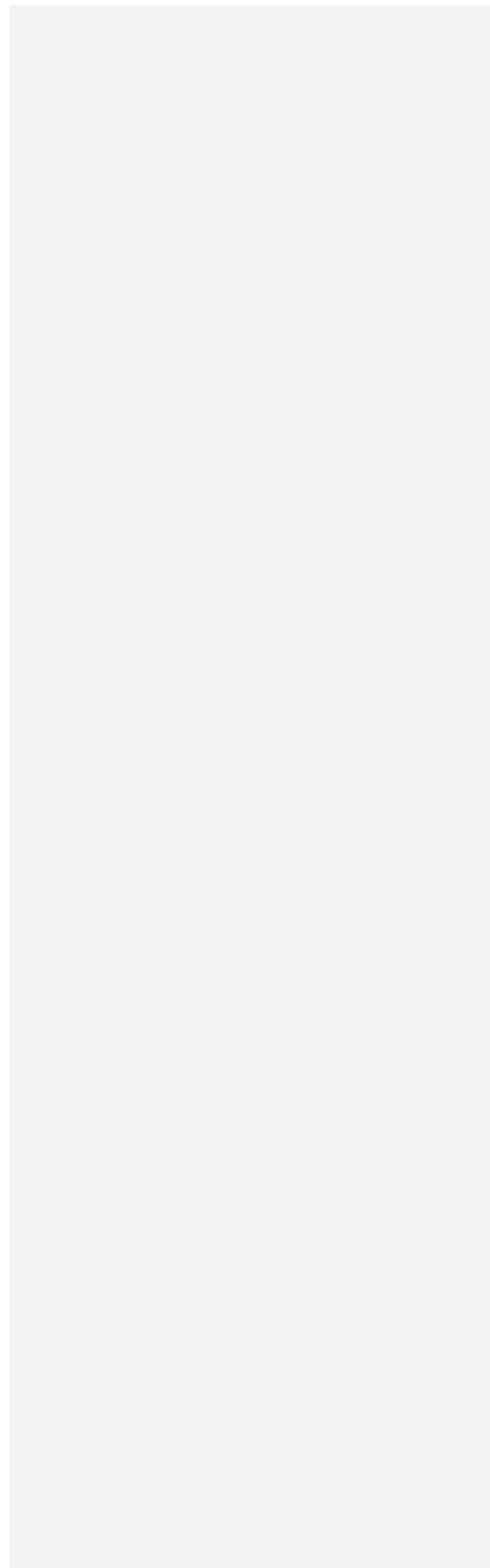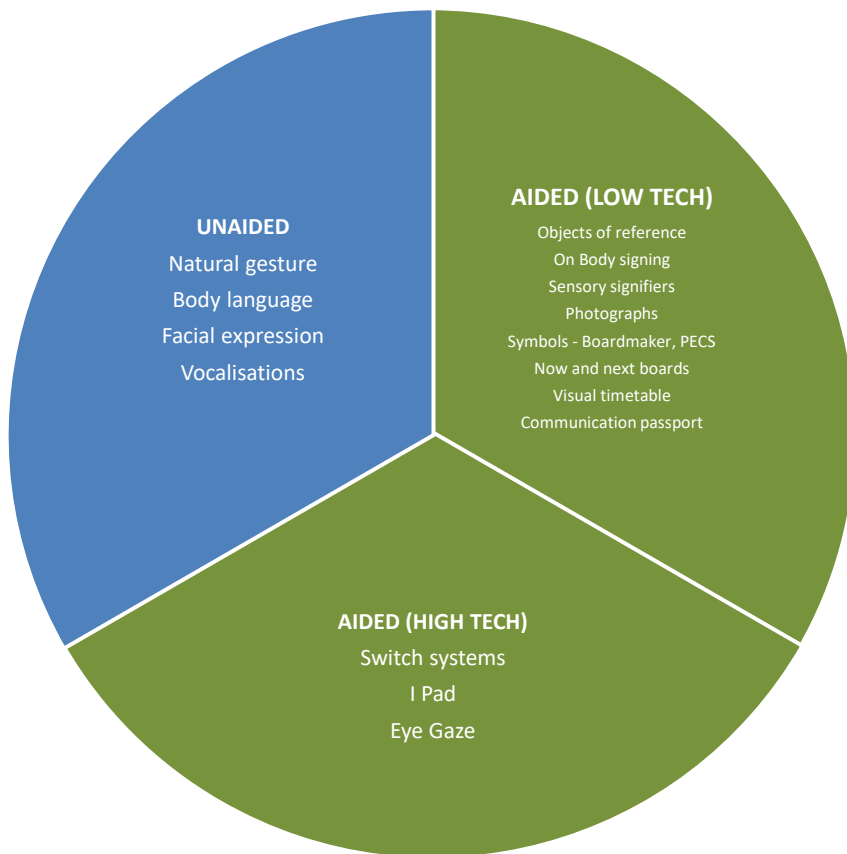
- developing independence
- making choices
- playing and learning
- communicating with families and friends
- watching televisual entertainment
- building relationships
- socialising
- buying items at the shops

Learners can use various methods to support their communication. These can include: speech, behaviours, symbols, written word and low and high tech communication aids.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)
Augmentative and Alternative Communication is simply everything a person uses to communicate other than speech. In our establishment we promote the use of a wide range of communication tools and methods to support learners. We recognise that the use of AAC is specific to each individual's needs, preferences and abilities. We know that learners with speech, language and communication difficulties including those with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) benefit from visual supports to aid their communication and learning.

Within our school learners who require access to AAC use some of the following resources to express themselves:

UNAIDED
Natural gesture
Body language
Facial expression
Vocalisations

AIDED (LOW TECH)
Objects of reference
On Body signing
Sensory signifiers
Photographs
Symbols - Boardmaker, PECS
Now and next boards
Visual timetable
Communication passport

AIDED (HIGH TECH)
Switch systems
I Pad
Eye Gaze

Aims

Our establishment aims to:

- Support learners by engaging with a Total Communication approach

- provide the learner with a communication friendly environment, where all adults understand their role as a communication partner
- develop the use of symbols within the whole school environment to support wellbeing and attainment for those learners as this being the most appropriate method of communication
- provide all learners with the means, reasons and opportunities to communicate
- provide learners with a curriculum and environment which maximise opportunities to become pro-active or intentional communicators
- develop learner's independent communication skills
- provide a wide variety of contexts, and opportunities for learners to communicate.
- ensure consistency of approach from all communication partners to meet individual communication needs of learners
- work in partnership with Allied Health Professionals (Speech and Language Therapist, Physiotherapist and Occupational Therapist) (AHP) to support effective assessment and planning for our learners
- regularly audit the communication environment, identifying strengths and focusing on areas of improvement. The adapted classroom audit tool used by the Communication Trust in 2012 is employed for this purpose

Supporting Inclusion through the use of AAC

Symbols and signifiers

This project is being partly funded by the Scottish Government, Scottish Strategy for Autism Fund. Consistent use of symbols sets across the whole learning environment supports communication, understanding, independence and participation, which increases involvement, provides meaningful choice and improves confidence in learners.
Their use to structure the school day can help to prepare for all transitional changes. Symbols can be used to develop literacy skills and support creativity and self-expression

Other forms of AAC
Other learners benefit best from forms of low level AAC such as objects of reference, signifiers and movement, gesture and sign (MGS)
Communications aims are promoted via the school Communication Charter.

Assessment, Planning and Review

All our learners will have their needs assessed and planned for by following the revised staged intervention process within GIRFEC Pathway for Planning and Support for Education and Families (NLC). All planning is carried out in partnership with parents and carers and the learners' network of support. There is an ongoing cycle of assessment and quality assurance
New pupils will be baselined using Curriculum literacy milestones at pre early level or foundation level milestones as appropriate
SLT will assess pupils using the most appropriate and available assessment resources

Roles and responsibilities

Senior Management Team
- Designate a member of staff to take on the role of Communication Champion within the establishment
- Promote the work of Communication Champion and ensure there is consistency of approach towards learners with communication needs within the establishment
- Monitor assessment and planning via a quality assurance calendar which will include moderation activities
- Support symbolisation of the environment by providing access to resources and time and key staff to produce visual supports
- Ensure relevant CPD opportunities are available
- Link with relevant Allied Health Professionals (e.g. Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy etc.) including a Joint partnership agreement and involvement in school improvement planning
- Follow guidelines set out by the authority and other agencies (Allied Health Professionals)

Communication Champion
- Have knowledge of the learners in the establishment who have speech, language and/or communication needs.
- Support implementation of Visual OR AAC of the environment
- Maintain resource file, books, handy hints and web links etc.
- Maintain a register of all AAC resources in the school
- Be aware of new technologies
- Be given the opportunity to attend relevant CPD courses/events and keep abreast of training opportunities and new developments
- Support and advise other staff members

- Provide induction training to new members of staff in consultation with Speech and Language Therapy as appropriate

Class Teacher
- Identify the communication needs of each pupil using relevant assessment tools
- Liaise with relevant AHP to plan jointly for the learner
- Provide an appropriate curriculum and inclusive environment, including consistent and meaningful use of symbols, signifiers (if required) and appropriate use of AAC to meet the needs of all learners
- Be aware of and be able to identify their own training needs

Additional Support Needs Assistant
- Support the production of symbols for use in the establishment and by learners (identified staff)
- Support communication of all learners using their preferred communication methods
- Be responsible for the daily maintenance and set up of communication aids and resources, ensuring they are working (e.g. fully charged) and are safely stored.
- Inform class teacher of any communication issues within the wider environment
- Contribute to planning for individual learners
- Be aware of and be able to identify their own training needs

<u>Information Technology</u>

The development of skills which support access to technology is a high priority at Mavisbank School. The core skills in the CfE Foundation Milestones (Communication -Attention skills/ Preference and Choice,/Interaction and Making Connections) form the basis of all learning opportunities and promote engagement with technology.
Attention skills are developed with the support of SALT and VI specialist teachers, switch access is developed with multi agency support and regular opportunities are planned to maximise opportunities to develop cause and effect skills, to make choices and to interact with others.

We promote engagement with a range of technology including eye gaze, touch screen, Promethean, OHM projector, I-pad, and pupils use personalised switches to activate lights, kitchen equipment, music and toys.

Assistive Information Technology (SAM Group)
The Support by Assistive Media team is a service at the additional level of the refreshed GIRFEC pathway which supports learning outcomes for individual learners. The group works across a wide spectrum of needs. The SAM Group's focus is on ICT and assistive technology requirements as outlined in the learner's planning. Additionally the group provides Continuous Professionals Development (CPD) opportunities for teachers in all aspects of ASN and ICT. This includes training in relation to communication needs. In particular training and support refers to using Boardmaker

(symbol set) and to high tech interventions as listed in the pie-chart above. These resources provide various means of alternative access and specialist software to develop skills which enable the use of computers or communicators to enhance communication.

Consideration needs to be made with regard to access and use of software:

Access methods
Switch Access, Eye Gaze, Touch Technology, Unique Access Devices (e.g. Head switch Motion Sensors)

Use of software
Cognitive demands for communication are generally supported by the use of symbol sets, Boardmaker can be used to develop teaching and learner resources in relation to symbolisation of learning materials such as schedules, worksheets, written work and personal data (i.e. Digital Communication Passports).
In recent years an abundance of iPad apps has increasingly been used by learners. These too have been employed as an effective resource in the development of communication skills. The SAM team engages in CPD events which help the staff team to keep abreast of current developments to make sure that our learners, teachers and support staff will be well informed and better supported.

Seeking the Views of the Learner

Adults seek the views of children and young people on a daily basis, both informally and formally. Approaches will require to be different in line with the learner's particular communication needs. Preferred communication methods should always be used and where possible the views should be sought by people who are familiar and proficient in the learner's communication methods. At Mavisbank the pupils have significant cognitive impairments and will require support from a parent or carer to make decisions about important aspects of their lives. (see appendix 5, A Framework for Seeking Views of children and young people who have difficulties with their speech, language and/or communication development.)

Partnership with parents and carers

Our establishment works in partnership with parents and carers to support the communication needs of their child.

Communication methods, strategies and approaches are shared with parents and carers to ensure partnership working and promote a holistic approach to communication in all settings. Their views are sought and valued.

Parental views will be sought on pre intentional communication based on Elklan's Acquisition of Language in Getting to Know Me Proforma which will ultimately inform digital communication passports

Our establishment can provide information sessions in partnership with Speech and Language Therapists for parents and carers e.g. Means, Reasons and Opportunities for Communication, Objects of Reference, Communication strategies such as Social Stories, Information Leaflets for new parents on the role of SLT and communication.

<u>Professional development</u>

To support the learning and development of staff who work with learners who have speech, language and/or communication needs our establishment has access to the *Speech, Language and Communication Framework*, the *Information and Profiling Augmentative and Alternative Communication Knowledge and Skills (IPAACKS)* and *HGIOP (How good is our provision at supporting learners with additional support needs? language and communication needs).* This allows us to identify professional development needs of our staff. Opportunities are sought to support staff's identified development needs in collaboration with Speech and Language Therapy and the SAM group.

Reference 4 S

NICE Guidelines in the under 25s with cerebral palsy
Overview | Cerebral palsy in under 25s: assessment and management | Guidance | NICE

Communication and people with the most complex needs: What works and why this is essential
July 2010
Goldbart and Caton Mencap

Approaches to communication assessment with children and adults with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities Chadwick et al J Appl Res Intell Disabil 2019; 32: 336-358

"The Four S's" Strategy: - The Hanen Program, It Takes Two to Talk, Ian Pepper and Elaine Weitzman, 2004