

**Ysgol Maes Hyfryd  
Flintshire  
Autism Spectrum (ASC)  
Communication Policy**



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This document is a policy statement for Communication approaches for pupils with ASC at Ysgol Maes Hyfryd. It identifies our aims, objectives and strategies used.

## **1. AIMS TAKEN FROM THE COMMUNICATION POLICY**

Our school communication aims are to:

- 1 Adopt a Total Communication approach throughout the school, where students have access to their own means of communication throughout the day.
- 2 To develop a means of communication appropriate to each students individual needs.
- 3 To create opportunities for communication throughout the curriculum to enable each student to communicate to the best of their ability.

## **2. OVERVIEW**

SALT (Speech and Language Therapy);

Ysgol Maes Hyfryd is supported by Speech and Language Therapists who set targets and support pupils to develop their Speech and Language skills. The therapists provide resources and support to help staff working with each individual pupil. The therapists provide drop in sessions where support staff can ask questions and seek advice for how they can further support the pupil. The speech Therapists return to school to assess the development of the pupil and set new targets.

Maes Hyfryd also employ a higher level teaching assistant to support and provide individual communication sessions. Each pupil with ASC in the sensory department has a Social Communication Individual Plan (SCIP) These support the HLTA and other staff working with the pupils to identify individual communication targets to work towards.

A wide range of language and communicative abilities are found within the population of people who have a recognised Autistic Spectrum Condition, (ASC).

Helping individuals with ASC and complex needs to become more effective communicators presents a unique challenge because generally there is a lack of, or difference in the way a person understands the purpose and processes involved in communication.

The impact of ASC on the development of communication skills can manifest itself in a wide variety of ways including:

- Differences and delay in the development of joint attention skills. The individual may for example be unable to use pointing as a means of communicating; they may not spontaneously show or give objects to others as part of a social exchange. A more able person with autism may have difficulty taking another person's needs into account when interacting with them.
- Verbal language may be delayed or absent and is without the spontaneous development of compensatory social strategies such as gesture.
- Verbal language may reflect semantic difficulties (problems understanding the meaning of words); it may be stereotyped and/or repetitive. There may be difficulties with sequencing ideas verbally.
- Echolalia persists beyond an age where this would have disappeared in typically developing Young People. Echolalia may be immediate, delayed or mitigated. Echolalia may serve a communicative function for some individuals.
- Understanding of verbal language may be significantly delayed so that augmentative means are needed for supporting the individual's ability to make sense of their experiences of the world and the people within it. Receptive language skills may be more well-developed for others but there are frequently difficulties in interpreting ambiguous and non-literal spoken (and written) language.
- Difficulties and delay in processing spoken language may be experienced across ability levels.
- The social use of language to communicate with others will be challenging for all individuals manifesting in many different ways including
  - failure or delay in responding to language spoken.
  - difficulties initiating and/or maintaining social interaction appropriately
  - differences in performance in different social contexts e.g. may appear skilled in one-to-one situations with adults but struggle in group situations with peers
  - inability to modify and adapt social communication skills according to the context
  - problems repairing communication breakdown when this occurs
  - may be unaware or unable to engage in interaction with others for purely social purposes and pleasure. Communicative acts may predominately be used to regulate the behaviour of others for example requesting and protesting for example
  - Non-verbal communication skills may be limited so that the individual may not use or understand facial expression; may not understand 'social rules' involving proximity and touch for example.

### **3. APPROACH TO ASC COMMUNICATION**

Communication may be defined as the exchange of information within a meaningful social context. At Ysgol Maes Hyfryd all methods of communication are seen as equally valid means for expression. A person centred approach is taken in that we expect to adapt to the needs of our young people rather than the reverse. We understand that each Young Person will need specific, individualised

help in developing their own effective communication system. We actively use and promote the use of different systems to facilitate communication including:

- spoken language
- writing
- signing (where this is beneficial for the individual)
- pictures
- symbols
- photographs
- symbol exchange including the use of PECS
- Object Signifiers
- Personal identifiers
- Communication books (PODD) – less so with ASC
- Assistive Communication devices
- Intensive interaction
- Objects of Reference.
- Blank levels
- Teacch programme
- Time to talk / social speaking
- Talk About
- Social stories
- Lego therapy
- Venturing into play
- SCERTS

For more information about the different systems used please read the Maes Hyfryd ASC policy.

Young People are encouraged to use and understand a range of different ways of communicating, in order to maximise opportunities for positive, interactive experiences with other people. Staff receive various training so that they are aware of, and able to respond appropriately to, a variety of means of communication.

Staff understand the necessity to create opportunities for individuals to communicate and the importance of the young people having a reason to communicate too. Staff are able to reinforce communicative behaviours positively.

Maes Hyfryd places a strong emphasis on the use of visual strategies to augment the Young People's understanding, expressive and social skills. The teaching and learning of functional communication skills is regarded as essential to each individual's development including their sense of self and emotional well-being.

The school actively encourages Young People to use their communication skills to make choices and decisions about all aspects of their education.

#### **4. WELSH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT**

Wherever possible, use the Welsh language as a natural part of all aspects discussed in this policy document.

## **5. EQUALITY**

In all areas of learning staff aim to promote equal opportunities in accordance with Maes Hyfryd Equality Policy. This recognises that each pupil should have access to the curriculum regardless of gender, sexuality, race, ethnic background, cultural heritage, social circumstance, disability or learning difficulty. Ysgol Maes Hyfryd will not unlawfully discriminate on grounds of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, race or ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity or on the grounds of Welsh language.

All pupils, their parents and guardians, volunteers, staff and school governors are valued and will be treated with dignity and respect. We will not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

We will work across our school community to ensure our commitment to equality and fairness is shared and take steps to ensure that our school is accessible, welcoming and inclusive.

**This policy must be read in conjunction with ;**

Ysgol Maes Hyfryd: ASC policy

Ysgol Maes Hyfryd : Communication Policy