

Torfield and Saxon Mount Academy Trust



Social Communication Skills Policy

May 2020

Social Communication skills

The Social Communication Skills program is used primarily at Saxon Mount School, due to the nature of the SEN of Torfield pupils, who now access primary based SEN models of language acquisition and development.

Social communication skills are how we use the language skills that we have to communicate with other people.

There are 3 areas:

- 1) Functions (requesting, commenting, protesting, relating news etc.)
- 2) Skills of Conversation/Interaction (looking, listening, turn-taking etc.)
- 3) Awareness of self and others (appearance, interests, feelings etc.)

Each child has access to methods that enhance their social communication skills whether 1:1 with an adult, in a small group or in a large group setting. These methods may include:

- **Proximal Communication** – a parent-child interaction approach (*Potter & Whittaker 01*).
- **Structured Play** sessions (*Sherratt & Peter 02*).
- **Communication through Singing** groups (*Wendy Prevezer*).
- **Social Use of Language Programme** (*S.U.L.P. Wendy Rinaldi*).
- **Social Stories & Comic Strip Conversations** (*Carol Grey*)
- **'Teaching Children with Autism to Mind Read'** (*Howlin, Baron-Cohen & Hadwin '98*)

Speech and Language Therapy helps children improve 3 areas of communication:

- 1) Receptive Language (understanding of language)
- 2) Expressive Language (speaking)
- 3) Social Use of Language - which is divided into:

Some students in the school have age appropriate Receptive Language and Expressive Language skills. On the assessments they score well within normal limits for their age. Some exceptions may be limited vocabulary development (receptive and expressive), difficulties with semantics (word definitions, synonyms and antonyms, both receptive and expressive), and with higher-level understanding (cause/effect relationships, inferences and deductions, understanding of non-literal language such as idioms and metaphors). These students usually demonstrate difficulties with aspects of Social Use of Language. Many pupils with Autism will have difficulty with Social Use of Language.

Examples of skills in this area are given below:

- 3a) Communicative Functions** e.g. using language to give news clearly, to tell a story, to take messages, to instruct effectively, to describe people and to talk about feelings.
- 3b) Conversational Skills** e.g. listening to someone else, taking turns to talk, looking at the person talking, pausing to allow others to follow what you are saying, interrupting appropriately and keeping on the same topic in a discussion.
- 3c) Awareness of Self and Others** e.g. knowing your interests, feelings, strengths, weaknesses and needs (the basis of self-esteem), AND demonstrating an interest in others' interests, feelings, strengths, weaknesses and needs (the basis of friendship strategies/empathy).

At Saxon Mount twice-weekly Social Communication Skills sessions are delivered in the class to work on the areas described above, in addition the Additional Support team and the Additional Support Facility will deliver bespoke sessions for identified groups and individuals. At Torfield School in KS1 and KS2 these sessions are delivered through Talking Together sessions.

The following are some examples of activities used in the group. The targets relate to the Social Communication Skills areas listed:

- a) Communicative Functions**
- b) Conversational Skills**
- c) Awareness of Self and Others**

ACTIVITY	SKILL TARGETED
News	Narrative skills.
Manners	Awareness of self and impact on others.
Multiple Meanings	Higher-level understanding of language; Awareness of others' intentions.
Idioms	Higher-level understanding of language; Awareness of others' intentions.
Group Sort	Teamwork - seeing yourself as part of a group.

Blindfold Games	Giving instructions and listening to instructions; Turn-taking; Awareness of others' needs - can't see what you see etc.
Charades	Conveying a message non-verbally; Looking and turn-taking; Awareness of listeners' needs.
Compliments	Social functions of giving compliments Awareness of others' feelings;
Wink Murder	Looking and following eye gaze and acting on it.

This policy is monitored on a day-to-day basis by the Head of School, who reports to Governors about the effectiveness of the policy on request.

Review date: May 2020

Next review: May 2023