St Crispin's Inclusive Communication Policy

Context

This document is written in the context of St Crispin's and the principles that are addressed in our mission statement. The pupils at St Crispin's all have a severe learning disability (SLD) and most have an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), both of which have a significant impact on the development of functional and social communication. We aim to provide strategies and approaches that will enable our pupils to succeed and develop functional communication systems. Additional documentation can be found in the appendices and all information is available on the school server.

This policy highlights some of the communication difficulties our pupils face, the different ways our pupils learn to communicate and techniques and strategies that we use to enhance communication. It is for all staff working with pupils at St Crispin's and our partners (parents, carers and families of pupils; respite providers; other professionals working with our pupils).

What is communication?

Communication is a **two-way process** of reaching mutual understanding, in which participants not only exchange information, news, ideas and feelings but also create and share meaning. In general, communication is a means of connecting people or places. It supports and enhances social contact. It requires that the communicating people share an understanding of each other's signals. The communication process is complete once the receiver understands the sender's message.

Communication may be:
- intentional or unintentional,
- conventional or unconventional signals,
- verbal, non verbal or use other forms.

We use many forms of communication all the time, often giving each other important messages without even knowing it! This might be through facial expressions, gestures and body language; through tone of voice; through sounds or other vocalisations (yuk! Whee!); through singing or playing a happy or sad song; through writing and sending texts or emails; through sharing photographs; through recognising logos; through using social media; through speech.

What is necessary for successful communication to happen?

Most people learn to communicate as they grow from a baby to an adult. However, if that development is slowed down or interrupted a child may not learn about:-

- Watching people when they are talking
- Listening to people when they are talking
- The meaning of words
- How to have a conversation

To be able to communicate, pupils need:

1) A person to communicate with – a partner

There must be a partner. Many children with ASD and SLD often do not realise that they need to communicate their message to another person. They may find it difficult to respond to another person communicating with them.

We need to teach and set up opportunities for initiating with and responding to another person. The adults need to be ready to receive and respond to messages sent.

2) A way of communicating

This can be conventional or unconventional. It can be facial expressions and body language, gestures and signs, pictures and photographs, high tech devices, objects, vocalisations, speech, and behaviour. It will most likely be a mixture of several methods that are functional for the individual pupil.

3) A reason to communicate

It is important for the adults to create opportunities for pupils to communicate. This might be to make a request, to make choices, to protest, to express emotion or internal states, to draw attention to something, to give messages, to share information or to be sociable.

4) Understanding

It is important for our pupils to understand what is going on around them and what is being said. Many find spoken language very difficult to understand and process. It is up to us to support understanding in other ways:

- Use **visual aids** to support what you say e.g. objects, photos, pictures.
- Use **simple, single words** and short phrases. Emphasise **key words** and use key signs.
- Use **repetition** - the child needs to hear a new word lots of times and in lots of different situations before fully understanding its meaning.
- Most importantly, give the child enough **time to process** and respond.

Many other underlying skills need to be in place for communication to happen, such as awareness of other people and surroundings, ability to control attention and focus (and tune out other sensory information and distractions), joint attention (sharing of an object or idea between two people), an awareness of the purpose and fun of communicating, motivation to interact, turn taking, and the motor abilities and co-ordination to 'operate' a system (oromotor skills, physical skills, ability to imitate).

What happens when communication does not develop as expected?

If you can't understand what people are saying to you and you have no way of telling people what you want the world may feel like a very scary place.

Consider the following:

- You need something but can't tell anyone what it is
- You don't want to have or do something but you don't know how to tell anyone
- You don't know what is going to happen next
- You don't know where you are going
- You don't know where important people are going and you don't know if they're going to come back

In these circumstances you may react in the following ways:

- You can simply decide it is all too difficult and withdraw into your own world and become passive
- You can become very attached to routines because you do know what is going to happen next
- You may become distressed when predictable routines are disrupted
- Without an understandable communication system, you may become frightened or frustrated
- You may display your feelings through your behaviour
- The more frightened and frustrated you become, the more likely is it that the behaviour will be challenging

This behaviour is communication. Sometimes people close to the child or young person can anticipate their needs or recognise very subtle body language or noises but this may not always be the case. Sometimes it may be that the pupil does not know what it is they want – they just recognise a need. This can be very frustrating for all concerned. Sometimes we might know what a child or young person wants but we are unable to give it to them and we can't help them understand the reason why.

It is really important that children and young people learn some form of expressive and receptive communication at a level that they can manage developmentally and cognitively:

- Expressive communication is the ability to communicate with others.
- Receptive communication is the ability to understand communication from others.

Our aim is to have a **functional system** for the individual pupil. This may be single or multi channeled. It may include speech but not necessarily. We need to respect **all forms** of communication and build on the **best method/s for the child**.

It is likely that in any circumstance, the pupil will use the easiest and quickest form of communication available to them. This means that even though in some situations a pupil may be developing a formal system of communication (e.g. signing, speech, picture exchange), this may not be the most useful **from their point of view** if they are frustrated, tired, upset, excited, frightened or in a hurry. The pupil may 'revert' to a more effective way of getting their message across, such as using vocalisations, body language and behaviour. This may also happen if the formal ways they are developing have already been tried and have not been responded to.

It is important for the adults to be vigilant to ways the pupils try to communicate their needs and feelings **before** this happens and accept their communicative attempts as valid. Learning new ways of communicating takes a lot of time and effort for the pupil and should happen at relaxed, calm times, not when the pupil is already in a higher emotive state.

It is also necessary for the adults to recognise the level of learning disability and communication impairment that the pupil has and not demand a higher level of functioning than they can manage.

The Inclusive Communication Environment

At St Crispin's we have an Inclusive Communication Environment which involves using many forms of communication. When arriving at school, the pupil will probably already use a variety of informal methods to convey different information rather than one system being used exclusively. *We all use a variety of different systems – this is normal.* The only difference is that his/her systems may stay at a

very early developmental level. It is crucial for these informal systems to be recognised, valued and maximised.

All methods of communication are given equal importance. Many of the pupils will use different combinations with different people or in different situations. Adults might use two or three different types of communication with a pupil to help them understand, but we don't expect them to use more than one back at a time.

Our Inclusive Communication Environment includes:-

- Gestures, facial expressions and body language
- Object signifiers
- Song signifiers
- Signing (Signalong is the recognised signing system across Lothian)
- Photos
- Symbols
- Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
- Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCA)
- Tone of voice and intonation
- Written words (text)
- All supported by simple speech

Why do we need an Inclusive Communication Environment?

All of the pupils at St Crispin's have some difficulties with communication. Some pupils do not understand that the noises we make when we are talking have meaning and consequently they do not understand the purpose of speech. Some pupils may understand that we mean something when we speak but they don't know what it is. Some pupils understand some words in context and may appear to have functional language however their comprehension is often limited. It is possible for our pupils to have stronger skills in expressive language than receptive language, or vice versa.

All of our pupils, whatever their level of understanding, find it much harder to communicate and to understand communication when they are under stress. At such times they will need more support from the people around them.

Listening to speech and working out what it means at the same time can be difficult for our pupils. Spoken words are said and then they disappear, you have to remember them and work out what they mean. This is not always easy. Some of our pupils process language very slowly and so may miss out on whole sections of communication.

Specific communication styles and deficits in ASD and Learning disability
The pupils at St Crispin's do not simply have a 'delay' to their communication. They have a different pattern of communication development with specific difficulties due to their communication disorder.
Autism spectrum conditions are characterised by impairments in language (verbal and non verbal), social interaction and social imagination (flexible thinking), often accompanied by sensory sensitivities and problems integrating sensory information.

Having a learning disability as well makes it even more difficult for pupils to make sense of both verbal and non-verbal cues. More dependence is placed on prompts from others or the environment, routine and context and they can rely on one action to cue the next.

People with ASD can experience difficulties with:

- Sending their message to another person intentionally and recognising that their signals can influence the behaviour of others.
- Joint attention (sharing an object or idea with another person)
- Expressive language – this may be context dependent (only used in specific circumstances), echolalic (repeating words heard without understanding their meaning) or idiosyncratic (used in a unique way to that person). Expressive language can often be learnt or repetitive and can mask difficulties with comprehension (using lots of words sometimes makes it appear that the pupil understands language at a higher level than they can).
- Noticing or understanding the non-verbal cues that accompany speech (gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice).
- Noticing the 'whole picture' not just the details.
- Processing speech and making sense of what they hear
- Matching a verbal label to the right thing – ("apple" means the fruit, not the shape or colour).
- Social imitation – less likely to notice and follow social behaviour of others, can easily forget what is 'expected' of them in a place (e.g. behaviour, rules).
- Flexible thinking and imagination (e.g. can't 'think ahead' to what happens in a place, even if it is familiar and have difficulty imagining what 'change' will look like).

In addition to this, people with ASD and learning disabilities often have co-occurring conditions:
- Motor co-ordination difficulties and poor imitation for socially-directed motor movements (such as gestures and facial expressions)
- Sensory sensitivities and sensory integration problems: May block out verbal messages and difficulty filtering out environmental stimuli
- Seizure disorders
- Verbal dyspraxia (disorder in making and co-ordinating the precise movements required for the production of clear speech)
- Anxiety
- Sleep disturbances
- Bowel disorders

All of which will affect ability to attend, focus on and develop communication.

Using an Inclusive Communication approach maximises opportunities for pupils to use and understand at least one form of communication. Language rich environments can be too overwhelming for our pupils to pull out the key information they need. The Inclusive Communication Environment provides a structured approach to help the children tune into and learn about communication and language. It also supports adults to **reduce** the amount of verbal language they use, **emphasise** key words, **slow down** their delivery and **visually** support spoken language**.** This is particularly helpful as people with ASD can have relative strength in *and preference for* processing visual information.

How to develop communication

A range of strategies and intervention approaches are used within the school.
Some approaches are used with all pupils. Some are used with specific pupils.
Some are used as a targeted piece of intervention or as short or long term approaches. Those working with our pupils should consider the following:-
- Find out which types of communication system are used with each child, learn them and make sure you use them. Look at profiles/information in classroom folders.
- Remember to communicate in a way that the pupil can understand and give them time and opportunities to communicate with you.

- Be consistent and remember that it takes time for the pupils to learn to understand and then use a communication system.

Please see the attached appendices for further details on our approaches to some of the following. Further details will be added as they are developed:
- **Routines and situational understanding**
- **Intensive interaction**
- **Song signifiers**
- **Object signifiers/objects of reference**
- **Schedules and timetables**
- **Evidence based strategies to facilitate early communication, interaction, language and speech**
- **Gestures, facial expression and body language**
- **Signalong (key word signing)**
- **PECS, Communication books and use of symbols and photos**
- **VOCA and medium tech communication aids**
- **Playboxes**
- **Additional information**

Appendix 1

ROUTINES AND SITUATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

Who is it for?

All pupils

Theory:

At St Crispin's we involve our pupils in routines and give a clear structure to their day. Every day we have a timetable of activities in a known order and we repeat activities in order to reinforce learning. Gradually the pupils begin to pick up clues about what is happening. When they see the table being set up for snack they might realise it is time for snack and they will hopefully sit down at the table when asked. They may not understand the words used but they may be able to respond to contextual cues and may eventually understand the words in context. Our pupils tend to find these routines very reassuring. They are able to understand and anticipate what is happening because the routine and structure is kept the same. Experiences are repeated over and over again, day after day and it is this repetition that helps the children to learn.

Aims:

To provide a predictable environment

To decrease anxiety by keeping things the same and introducing new skills in a safe environment

To increase understanding

Materials:

Classes are set up in a similar way with set areas for particular activities. Timetables and visual prompts are consistent throughout the school and the same photos and Boardmaker symbols are used in every class. Specialists use a similar structure to their lessons and use numbers to identify specific activities. Song signifiers are used where appropriate and consistent and simplified language is used if it is appropriate.

Method:

Pupils are introduced to the routines and structure of a day at St Crispin's when they begin at the school and these are reinforced through every class. Timetables and schedules are used to help structure each day and pupils are introduced to symbols, photos or objects depending on their level of understanding.

Appendix 2

INTENSIVE INTERACTION
Who is it for?

All pupils

Theory:

Intensive Interaction is an approach for teaching communication skills to children and adults who have autism, severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties who are still at early stages of development. The approach focuses on teaching the 'Fundamentals of Communication' – the communication concepts and performances that precede speech development, though it may include many people who have some speech and language development.

The 'Fundamentals of Communication' are typically referred to as being attainments such as:

- enjoying being with another person
- developing the ability to attend to that person
- concentration and attention span
- learning to do sequences of activities with the other person
- taking turns in exchanges of behaviour
- sharing personal space
- using and understanding eye contact
- using and understanding facial expression
- using and understanding physical contact
- using and understanding non-verbal communication
- using vocalisations with meaning (for some, speech development)
- learning to regulate and control arousal levels

Aims:

To have the child at the centre

To share with others in a positive and fun way

To develop communication and social interaction

Materials:

The playroom and Playbox are set up with a variety of toys which may be of interest to our pupils. Class teams identify favourite toys for each of their pupils and cause and effect toys are generally well used throughout the school. Early learning toys and games are used where appropriate and sensory toys and objects are often used for intensive interaction. Intensive interaction often doesn't need anything other than a person who can interact with a child in a variety of ways.

Method:

Early interaction involves joining in with someone else and having fun. Through playing and having fun with somebody else a child learns to look at a person, to listen, to take turns, to copy and to join in with activities. Children learn to communicate through play. Some children may find 'typical play' difficult, however there is always something they enjoy doing. Many of our pupils tend to enjoy

rough and tumble play and this can be a really good starting point. Rough and tumble play can be used to encourage communication by:-

- Stopping the play and waiting for any sign that the child would like it to continue
- Imitating the child – joining in with the things they like doing
- Using simple repetitive language like 'ready…steady…go! See what happens if you don't say 'go' and just wait.
- It is important that you enjoy the playing and show that you are enjoying it by laughing and smiling. It is important that we communicate to our children that they are fun to play with.
- Use of Playboxes which encourages shared play and joint attention. (See the appendix for further details)

Appendix 3

SONG SIGNIFIERS

Who is it for?

Song signifiers may be used with any of our pupils but we tend to use them more in the Primary area of the school

Theory:

A signifier is anything that is used consistently to represent and introduce an activity, place or person. Signifiers can be objects, smells, songs, photographs, pictures or words.

Many children find transitions between activities difficult. They need time to prepare themselves. Songs and objects are used to let them understand what is happening and to give them time to adjust. Our pupils need to understand what is happening to enable them to feel secure.

Aims:

To influence pupils

To connect pupils

To help pupils with transitions

To comfort pupils

Materials:

Many different songs are used in St Crispin's and we often use well known nursery rhyme tunes with adapted words so that the pupils are already familiar with one element of the song. Songs are kept simple and we use the same songs and symbols throughout the school to ensure continuity.

Method:

Song signifiers are used at St Crispin's to help develop awareness and anticipation skills. They are used at the beginning of an activity to help pupils recognise what is coming next and at the end of activities to signify that it is finished. Our pupils generally love music and songs. Many of our pupils listen to and join in with Nursery Rhymes and action songs every day. They make choices about which song they would like to sing using symbols or object signifiers eg a toy bus for 'The Wheels on the Bus'.

The adult leads the song and sings it slowly and clearly. The will sign the key words and may use finger puppets to mime the song eg 'Two Little Dicky Birds'. The children may be encouraged to take turns using the finger puppets with support. With other songs the adult may pause and leave a gap for the child to fill in with an appropriate sound or action eg in '5 Fat Sausages' the child may say 'bang' or may clap in the appropriate pause. The pupils are supported to join in with actions and sounds and the songs are repeated regularly to encourage involvement.

This is a good time to introduce children to books with clear pictures and the simple repeated lines of well-known songs. We use commercially produced books which are easily available in book shops but we also make some of our own which can be personalised and have additional elements.

The following songs are the ones that we have agreed to use:-

Start song

Is everybody ready it's time for ……

Finish song (Frere Jacque)

……'s finished

……'s finished

Time to stop

Time to stop

……'s finished

……'s finished

Time to stop

Time to stop

Goodbye song (main goodbye song)

Goodbye everyone

Goodbye everyone

Goodbye everyone it's time for you to go

We'll see you on …….

We'll see you on …….

We'll see you on …….

It's time for you to go

Time to go home song (additional goodbye song)

Time to go home

Time to go home

Everyone's waving it's time to go home

Time to go home

Time to go home

Everyone's waving goodbye….

Goodbye

Good morning song

Good morning to …….

To ……

To ……

Good morning to …….

Good morning to you

Shake my hand (extension song for circle)

Shake my hand

Shake my hand

Hello ……

Shake my hand

What are we doing today (extension song for circle) (Hickory Dickory Dock)

What are we doing today? What are we doing today

Let's look and see, you and me, at what we are doing today

Hello song (Assembly)

Hello everybody

Hello, hello

Hello everybody

Hello, hello

Hello everybody

Hello, hello.

Hello everybody

Hello

It's nice to see you

Hello everybody

Hello, hello

It's nice to see you

Hello everybody

Hello

Days of the week (The Addams family)

Days of the week (clap, clap)

Days of the week (clap, clap)

Days of the week

Days of the week

Days of the week (clap, clap)

There's Monday and there's Tuesday

There's Wednesday and there's Thursday

There's Friday and there's Saturday

And there's Sunday too

Days of the week (clap, clap)

Days of the week (clap, clap)

Days of the week

Days of the week

Days of the week (clap, clap)

Monday song

Here we are it's Monday, Monday, Monday

Here we are it's Monday

All day long

Tuesday song

We're together and it's Tuesday

It's Tuesday, it's Tuesday

We're together and it's Tuesday

Be happy all day

Wednesday song

It's Wednesday today, it's Wednesday today

We will work and we will play

It's Wednesday today, Wednesday

Thursday song

Today is Thursday everybody, yes it's Thursday

From morning till night everybody

This is Thursday

Friday song

Friday, Friday, this is Friday

Are we ready to do our best?

Friday, Friday, this is Friday

And tomorrow we'll have a rest

12 Months song (Oh my darling Clementine)

There are 12 months, there are 12 months, there are 12 months in a year

January, February, March and April, May and June

July and August, then September, next comes fun October too

Then November and December, that's all 12 months now we're through

Teeth brushing (Mulberry Bush)

This is the way we brush our teeth

Brush our teeth, brush our teeth

This is the way we brush our teeth

On a …..day lunch time

Teeth brushing (alternative song) (The Farmer's in his Den)

….'s brushing his/her teeth

….'s brushing his/her teeth

E…I…my daddy oh

….'s brushing his/her teeth

He/she's brushing them up and down

He/she's brushing them up and down

E…I…my daddy oh

He/she's brushing them up and down

Lunch song (Quartermaster's Stores)

Lunch, lunch, it's time to get your lunch

Get your plate, get your spoon

Lunch, lunch, it's time to get your lunch

It's time to get your lunch

Swimming song (Conga)

We're all going swimming, we're all going swimming

We'll splash and play, have fun all day!

Music song (A-hunting we will go)

It's time for music class, it's time for music class

It's time to sing and dance and play, it's time for music class

Getting out of the pool song (Mulberry Bush)

This is the way we get out the pool, get out the pool, get out the pool

This is the way we get out the pool on a ….day morning/afternoon

Appendix 4

OBJECT SIGNIFIERS/OBJECTS OF REFERENCE

Who is it for?

Pupils who are cognitively unable to use photos and symbols as representations of objects or activities.

Theory:

A signifier is anything that is used consistently to represent and introduce an activity, place or person. Signifiers can be objects, smells, songs, photographs, pictures or words. They help pupils to identify the activities and routines of their day. They are used to signal what is about to happen and may be used to offer choices.

Many children find transitions between activities difficult. They need time to prepare themselves. Songs and objects are used to let them understand what is happening and to give them time to adjust. Our pupils need to understand what is happening to enable them to feel secure. They may not understand the spoken language and so will not get that security from just being told what is happening. Their signifiers are essential to their well-being and without them they can become distressed which may lead to challenging behaviours (see St Crispin's Behaviour Policy for further details on managing challenging behaviours).

Aims:

To assist with transitions

To help pupils make sense of their day

Materials:

Some objects of reference are being used at St Crispin's but this is an area that we would like to expand upon. We have begun to standardise the objects used and have started to use a consistent approach throughout the school. For example, giving a pupil the apron that they always wear at lunch can signal that lunch is about to happen. The next stage would be to use an object that has a concrete relationship to the event but is not intrinsically used itself – e.g. a piece of seatbelt strap for going on the bus. In this way, objects can support pupils in developing a representational understanding (that objects can 'represent' an activity).

Method:

We are currently working on developing the use of object signifiers in the first 2 classes. In conjunction with our speech and language therapists the staff will devise a system that is effective for a range of children. It will then be rolled out throughout the school for use with suitable children. We have regular communication meetings and this is an area that we would like the meetings to focus on in the future.

Objects of Reference how to sheet

Here is a list of the OOR to use for specific activities, and how to use them. This must be consistent throughout the school so please follow these steps:

Activity	Item	What to do with it	All pieces required
Playtime/break	Coloured disc (blue-junior, green-mid, red-senior)	Post into the letter box	Coloured discs Postbox
Brush teeth	White toothbrush	Put into orange plastic cup	White toothbrushes Orange plastic cup
Hilly play	Astro turf	Place on to Velcro strip on hilly play gate	Astro turf
Lunch	Dycem square	Place into basket at table	Dycem square Green half size basket
Snack	White plate	Use plate at snack	White plate
Class gym (primary)	Cd	Place on to Velcro strip on wall	Cd each
PE	Green bean bag	Put beanbag into basket	Bean bag each Basket to put into
Art	Black whiteboard pen	Make a mark on piece of paper	Whiteboard marker each Basket
Music	Wristband with bell	Shake bell then post into basket	Wristband each Basket
Soft play	Ball	Post into box	Ball each Box
Toilet	Glove	Post into box	Gloves Basket
Choosing time	Blue choosing box	Choose toy/item/photo/symbol from box	Blue choosing box each with items inside that are specifically motivating. Photo on each box

Swimming	St Crispin's logo swimming bag	Take to swimming	Swimming bag each
Cooking	Wooden spoon	Place wooden spoon into metal bowl. Can stir as well.	Wooden spoon each One metal bowl

If you misplace items come and get new ones from Natasha as we have spares and again it needs to be consistent all the way through the school.

Appendix 5

SCHEDULES AND TIMETABLES

Who is it for?

All pupils who have been assessed as having representational understanding at the level of photographs or pictures.

Theory:

Creating a visual environment is an evidence based intervention for people with ASD and SLD and it has a large supportive research base. As our pupils learn the different routines of the day they are also introduced to timetables. Our pupils can become very anxious when they do not know what is happening or what is going to happen. It is therefore important to give them very clear cues as to what they are going to do next.

The use of visual timetables means that the message is permanent – it can be checked and re-checked and provides a trustworthy source of what will happen. It can be used effectively at times of high auditory sensitivity and can be a positive re-direction strategy to support behaviour strategies. Use of timetables can effectively reduce pupils' anxiety and uncertainty, leading to a reduction of extreme behaviours and refusals.

Timetables continue to be used even when the pupil appears to understand and recognise the routines of their day, as this shows they are working! It also allows a method of introducing change to the routine and new or one-off events. Removing visual supports may simply see a return to previous difficulties.

Aims:

To reduce anxiety and make the sequence of daily activities predictable and understandable

To help pupils to prepare for the day's activities

To develop clearer understanding of expectations

To support transitions

To teach about flexibility and change, and explain when change will happen

To introduce new activities or situations

To develop independence: pupils can work through tasks or common routines independently and organise themselves and materials or resources, reducing the likelihood of confusion or frustration.

Materials:

Timetables are visual and the format has been standardised so that pupils will become accustomed to a large class timetable that goes from left to right and an individualised timetable that goes from the top to the bottom.

Photographs: We have standardised our activity photographs with some individualisation per class for specific children and activities. The written words are printed above the symbol for consistency of vocabulary used by the adults.

Pictures: Standardised Boardmaker symbols are available in each class and on the server. Standard colour pictures and sizes are used for both individual and class timetables. These symbols are used throughout the school, at respite and in some other settings. The written words are printed above the symbol for consistency of vocabulary used by the adults.

Note to staff: If the required photograph/picture is not available (it has been missed out/you think you need a different symbol) please speak to a member of the communication working party who will create it for you.

Method:

The actual timetables take a variety of forms:-

- Vertical timetable with a pocket at the bottom to put finished activities in. The photos or symbols are fixed to the timetable with Velcro to make it easy to put them on and take them off. Two Velcro strips are used: one for the main activity (bus/walk) and one next to it for supporting information (park/shop/woods/place). These timetables are generally used as individual timetables and the current activity is the one at the top, giving a clear message of what is 'now'.
- Horizontal timetable usually with larger photos or symbols. These timetables are generally used as whole class timetables and work from left to right. They support a literacy rich environment and provide a reference for staff.
- 'Now and Next' timetables for a pupil who has difficulty coping with too much information or as an introduction to using a timetable.
- Portable timetables can also be used if appropriate

All timetables are consistent across the school, and the details are as follows:
- Timetables use the thickest borders around the edges
- Timetables are cut right to the edge of the borders, with no white showing on the edges
- Photographs will leave a white border between the photo and the black border (this is easiest if the photo has been imported into Boardmaker rather than dragged and dropped or copied and pasted into it)
- The font used is Comic Sans
- The large timetable size is 12.5x12.5cm, font size 36
- The individual timetable size is 6x6cm, font size 14

When learning to use a timetable, pupils take the photo/picture with them to the activity to reinforce the meaning of the photo/picture and spoken word. Timetables are checked after each activity and reinforced with a 'Check your timetable' picture. Consistent vocabulary is used by adults (for each activity, as written on the photograph/picture and for time/sequence e.g. '_____ is finished, time for _____ ' 'Now it's _____ then _____... Now___). 'Backward chaining' is used to develop independent use: hand-over-hand and guiding to the activity/place is used initially, then prompts are reduced over time until the pupil can manipulate the timetable themselves and go to the correct place for the activity.

These timetables are used consistently at school and can also be successfully used in the home. Children who do not have their own individual timetable use a general class timetable that is usually in the circle area of the classroom. This timetable sometimes includes individualisation eg photos of the pupils added to particular activities.

Appendix 6

GESTURES, FACIAL EXPRESSION AND BODY LANGUAGE

Who is it for?

All pupils

Theory:

Using gesture, facial expression and body language are natural ways of communicating which people on the Autistic spectrum don't always recognise or find easy to replicate.

Aims:

To help pupils recognise well used and appropriate gestures, facial expressions and body language

To help pupils to become more socially aware

Materials:

Adults modelling appropriate gestures, facial expressions and body language. Use of photographs, symbols and games to identify feelings and emotions through visuals.

Method:

Everybody naturally uses gestures, facial expressions and body language as ways of communication. At St Crispin's the adults deliberately exaggerate gestures and facial expressions to emphasise and direct attention to the adult and the adult's message.

We have to observe our pupils very carefully in order to work out what they are feeling from sometimes very slight and sometimes slightly unusual body language. It can take a long time for us to learn to understand what some of our pupils mean.

First attempts at communication by our pupils are frequently physically moving an adult to whatever they want eg opening a door. The child may lead an adult to a door and push their hand towards the handle.

Typically, many of our pupils have not learnt to point. Pointing is a very useful gesture and it has two clear purposes: -

- 'I want that' – this is the easier purpose to teach
- 'Look at that' – this is not as easy to teach. This can be encouraged when going out into the local community and can also be used when looking at books or toys.

Pointing can be done with a finger, an arm or even with the eyes. We must observe our children very carefully to see if they are giving us any messages.

Appendix 7

SIGNALONG (KEY WORD SIGNING)

Who is it for?

Understanding: all pupils. Expression: pupils who are able to imitate and use gestures and signs.

Note: some children have difficulty imitating motor movements and recognising the communicative function of gestures and signs.

Theory:

Signalong is sign-supported communication for people with learning difficulties, autism and other additional needs. It is the agreed signing system used within Edinburgh and the Lothian's schools. Signalong is a key word signing system where only the most important words in a sentence are signed and it has a large range of vocabulary. It is used in addition to speech – not in place of speech. The spoken word should accompany every sign. It is *not* British Sign Language (BSL), the language used by people who are deaf or hearing impaired. However, Signalong is based on BSL and so many of the signs are similar or the same.

Aims:

To enhance the meaning of spoken words and provide a visual reference

To give an alternative method of expressive communication for pupils

To support adults to reduce length of sentences - making them easier to understand, and to slow down the rate of speech - aiding clarity and giving the child time to process the information.

Materials:

Signs are produced by Signalong (a charity). Books and other materials are available which provide a detailed description plus a picture of how the sign is formed. The resources are subject to copyright but the school has purchased some signs and the Signalong website is also used in school. Signs can be used to make posters or supporting materials for staff and parents to learn the signs.

Signalong course are available (Phase I and II) and staff are supported by speech and language therapy colleagues.

At St Crispin's we hold regular Signalong practice sessions and have two 'signs of the week' for regular staff practice and development.

Method:

Signalong is used across the day and in all situations. The key words or key information in a sentence is signed (not every word). For example:

"Do you want banana for snack today?" → sign **'you' 'want'** and **'banana'.**

"It's time to play. Get your coat on." → sign **'time' play'** and **'coat'**.

Speech is always used as well as signs.

Working and supporting hands are chosen. Some signs only require one hand, and in others one hand takes the lead. Signalong says that it doesn't matter which hand you choose, but you must be consistent and uniform:

Consistent – the sign is always formed in the same way (*e.g. the dominant hand stays the same with the same direction of movement*). Uniform – there is no variation between adults.

We do not expect consistent accuracy from the pupil – please treat any attempt at the sign like an attempt to say a word. When teaching signs to pupils, hand-over-hand methods may be necessary to support the pupil in creating the motor patterns necessary for making the sign. Signs should be taught in context, as you would the spoken word.

Appendix 8

PECS, COMMUNICATION BOOKS AND USE OF SYMBOLS AND PHOTOS

Who is it for?

Pupils who are able to understand that a visual image represents something.

Theory:

The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is a form of augmentative and alternative communication produced by Pyramid Educational Consultants, Inc. While the system is commonly used as a communication aid for children with (ASD), it has been used with a wide variety of learners, from preschoolers to adults, who have various communicative, cognitive, and physical impairments

Aims:

To teach functional communication skills

To encourage spontaneous communication

To encourage communication within a social context

Materials:

Some PECS merchandise is used within the school including PECS folders which pupils are encouraged to carry with them at all times in order to facilitate their communication. Standardised photos and symbols are used in the folders and are easily accessible using Velcro and a PECS strip.

Method:

Initially motivators are found for each child and these are then used to help a pupil to make an exchange. This exchange involves the pupil exchanging a picture of a desired object for the actual object. At this stage the pupil is prompted and taught to initiate social interaction. This is followed by the pupil learning to be persistent and also making a request over some distance. The next stage is for the pupil to discriminate between symbols to obtain the desired object. The pupil is then encouraged to use the sentence structure 'I want....' And to ask for objects even if they are not present. From this stage it is possible to move on to commenting on items, people or activities.

Appendix 9

VOCA AND MEDIUM TECH COMMUNICATION AIDS

Who is it for?

Pupils who are unable to express themselves through speech.

Theory:

VOCA's (Voice Output Communication Aid), Big Macs, switches and step by steps are all used to supplement or replace speech for individuals with severe speech impediments, enabling them to verbally communicate their needs.

Aims:

To provide a means of communication

To give pupils a voice

Materials:

VOCA's, Big Macs, switches, step by steps and iPad Apps.

Method:

Referrals are made via our speech and language therapists to provide pupils with appropriate VOCA's that will help facilitate a pupil's communication needs.

Appendix 10

PLAYBOXES

Who is it for?

Children or young people on the autism spectrum or those with associated additional support needs

Theory:

The Joint Play Intersubjectivity Assessment Method (J.P.I.A.M.), was developed by Dr Helen Marwick of the University of Strathclyde. Now known as Playboxes, it is based on theories of typical development and theories of play development in autism.

Aim:

To support the development of joint attention and play

Materials:

- 2 decorated boxes

- toys consistent with Playboxes methodology selected to suit each individual

Method:

An enjoyable and fun-filled 1:1 intervention carried out over a minimum of 10 weeks. In order to use the method, practitioner group training can be requested by contacting the Playboxes Team or by attending a CEC training session in the CPD directory.

Appendix 11

Additional Information

Colourful Semantics – www.integratedtreatments.co.uk Integrated Treatment Services

This approach was founded by Alison Byron – aimed at helping children develop their grammar but the approach is routed in semantics (meaning of words.) It reassembles sentences, cutting them up into their thematic roles and colour coding them.

Alex Kelly – Talkabout Activities provides practical activities for social skills training

Numeracy – Use basic language

Communication Profiles

Visual supports – timetables

Parent/carer involvement and home environment

Transferable skills

Concrete/practical supports