

Speech and Language

At North Ridge Community School, many pupils have speech, language and communication difficulties. To support these pupils, we employ our own Speech and Language Therapist to work in school every day. This is in addition to our weekly input from the Doncaster NHS Speech and Language Therapy Team.

Both teams work closely together with school staff to identify communication support strategies and support the development of communication across the curriculum, ensuring that pupils are able to effectively make their needs known both within the school and home environments as well as in the wider community. We work closely together to make sure that our pupils are able to be as independent as possible, e.g. ask for a drink in school/ at home as well as in a local café.

A Total Communication Approach is expected to be used throughout school. This enables our pupils to access a variety of communication methods. Across school, you should expect to see the use of **sign supported speech**, **symbols** and **Objects of Reference**. Using a range of communication methods allows our pupils a variety of ways of requesting items, for example, if they are unable to verbalise a want, they can sign it, exchange a symbol or even bring an associated item. Some of our pupils may also use a Communication Aid to support their expressive language skills.



We use sign supported speech to communicate our needs, wants, ideas.

We offer school staff training opportunities and are also looking into further training opportunities for our parents and carers – more information to follow.

Why is speech and language therapy so important?

Many pupils at North Ridge have speech, language and communication difficulties.

The differences are as follows:

- Speech: This refers to the accuracy of how words are pronounced e.g. “dun” instead of “sun”;

- Language: This refers to the meaning of words and sentences;
- Communication: Comes in many formats from writing and typing to the use of Makaton sign, body language and facial expression. Think about the different types of communication you see and use on a daily basis – it can be you using a telephone, or even recognising a road sign or signal!

Difficulties within any of these areas can have an impact upon a pupil's:

- Participation in lessons and access to the curriculum. For example, a child with speech sound difficulties may not be able to pronounce certain words whilst reading – however, this does not necessarily mean that they cannot read. The Therapy Team and school staff will work closely to identify and implement support strategies to enable all pupils access to reading/ stories; Similarly, a pupil may only be able to follow instructions with 1 key word e.g. “dog”, however with symbol supports they may be able to identify “big dog” or “dog drinking”;
- Ability to form friendships. At North Ridge, we recognise the importance of developing friendships and being socially aware. Therefore, the SALT Team work closely with staff to support social communication amongst our pupils;
- Communicating wants and ideas. We strongly believe in the Means, Reasons and Opportunities Model at North Ridge (Money, 1997). This model suggests that for good communication a person needs a way of communicating (speech, symbol exchange, Makaton sign, facial expression, etc.) – this is the *means*. We also need a *reason* to communicate – this could be requesting, directing, commenting, greeting, etc. Lastly, we also need *opportunities* to communicate. This refers to time, places and people with whom we can communicate.

We use symbol exchange to communicate.



Without means, reasons and opportunities, communication can break down;

- Pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties can have difficulties managing their feelings and emotions. For example, they may become frustrated, if

unable to convey their basic needs, such as: drink, food and toilet; Like-wise, a pupil with unclear speech may become upset if they have to frequently repeat utterances to express their needs and ideas.

Access to Speech and Language Therapy in School

The school Speech and Language Therapist accesses every class across the school. If you have any particular concerns about your child, please contact us at school to discuss your concerns.

Parents and Carers are requested to sign a letter of consent for the school Therapist to work with their child during targeted Intervention sessions.

The school Therapist offers:

- 1:1 sessions with pupils;
- Participation in small language or narrative groups;
- Participation in sensory communication groups, Intensive Interaction sessions or TacPac sessions;
- Social Skills and/ or Lego Therapy groups;
- In-class support sessions;
- Assessment of understanding, expressive language use, etc.

We play games to help develop our listening and understanding skills.



If you have concerns regarding your child's eating and swallowing. Please contact us at school and we can help to make a referral as necessary, or alternatively, contact the Doncaster NHS Speech and Language Therapy Team.

Pupils to have direct input from the school Speech and Language Therapist will have a Speech and Language Therapy Cross-Curricular Impacts & Support Plan. These set out how communication approaches can be used across the curriculum, for example: the use of symbols to support reading and writing skills in Literacy/ English.

Some whole class support sessions are also held by the school speech and language therapist. These are sessions, in which the Therapist will observe the needs of pupils and discuss with class staff support strategies as necessary – however the need for regular intervention may not be needed, e.g. the use of a Communication Pocketbook to support expressive language when in the community and a pupil is unable to make themselves clearly understood.

We use symbols to write sentences and talk about pictures and what we're learning.



Promoting your child's speech and language development at home

It is important that development is reinforced within the home environment as well as at school in order to ensure that your child is communicating to the best of their ability and are able to express their needs to different people in various settings.

Promoting Communication:

Offer Choice! – It seems really simple but is effective as it encourages your child to communicate. Use either symbols or objects (if you're unsure, contact the Therapist), present them to your child and observe their behaviour. It may be that they reach for the preferred item or look at it for longer than the other, either way a choice has been made. You should then reward your child by giving them the chosen item, even if you think they won't like it. This encourages choice-making.

Box it Up! – Put preferred toys into either clear boxes or stick a photo of the toy to the front of the box, thus stopping them from accessing the toy. This will encourage your child to communicate that they need help accessing the toy. Again, observe their behaviour, their communication could be as simple as them looking toward you, then at the box; vocalising or crying; or bringing the box to you or vice versa.

It is important that no attempts at communication be ignored. Just because your child has said 'please' one day using speech does not mean they will do it every day. They may use the Makaton sign instead – don't ignore the attempt as this may lead your child to avoid communicating at all! Instead, accept the attempt at communication and model the language used e.g. if signing 'please' to the offer of a drink, model "drink please" using sign-supported speech.

Promoting Speech and Language:

When supporting the development of speech and language skills at home, it is important to understand the difference between 'understanding' and 'use'. If a target is to help understanding, you should not be encouraging your child to say words, but rather encouraging them to identify words/ match words to objects or pictures.

Simple ways to promote speech and language:

- Offer choice: "would you like an apple or orange?"
- Model appropriate sentences and concepts: "orange" - "I want orange"; "mum dinner" - "mum cooking dinner" or "mum's dinner" (promoting understanding of possession)
- During structured activities, use sequential language "first, next, last":- examples include: getting in the bath, getting dressed, brushing teeth;

We use Visual Timetables, and look at sequencing familiar activities to help with our understanding of sequences.



- Ask “wh” questions: “we are going to see Nannan. – who are we going to see? / where are we going?” etc.

Aiding Understanding:

The Speech and Language Therapist can offer information on what your child’s level of understanding is and the best ways you can help but below are some ideas:

- Use Makaton sign, objects, photos or symbols to show what is going to happen/ where you are going;
- Use visual timetables such as now/ next boards to help your child understand what is happening throughout the day;
- Use egg-timers to help children understand that an activity is coming to a stop.

Please keep referring back to the website as we will be adding further information on topics such as:

- Symbol Exchanges;
- The use of Visual Aids;

- Social Skills;
- Key Word Understanding and Expression;
- Lego Therapy

If there is something, you would like further information about please don't hesitate to contact us at school, either by telephone, email or via your child's Home-School Diary.