

## **GLYNE GAP SCHOOL**

### **Guidelines No. 22**

#### **Supporting the development of Communication & Language**

A policy with teaching guidelines and advice.

#### **Contents:**

1. Introduction
2. Philosophy, beliefs and values
3. Aims of this policy
4. The Communication Team
  - i) The Role of the Team (Roles & Responsibilities)
  - ii) Development Work
  - iii) CPD
5. Definitions & Descriptions
6. Pupils
7. Delivery & Development of Language & Communication
8. Tracking, monitoring and evaluating progress
9. Resources
10. References & Appendices

#### **1. Introduction- The Bridge to Literacy**

Literacy and particularly reading and writing is rightly at the very centre of education, both in curriculum and accountability terms. “Communication and Language” (along with personal and social development) is at the very centre of SLD/PMLD education.

It should not be seen as a separate subject but as an integral pre-cursor to “literacy”. Although no pupil in the school is attaining National Curriculum Level 1 in reading and writing, the revised National Literacy Strategy Framework makes explicit: “.....the centrality of speaking and listening”. The Framework goes on to say “speaking and listening is not only a communication skill in its own right, but the bedrock of literacy development”.

Speaking and listening, communication and language is fundamental to children’s development. It is central for them to be able to meet their basic needs and to progress nearly all other learning. It is vital to children so they are able to progress their social, emotional and cognitive development. Particularly in the SLD/PMLD school context, the ability to communicate, as effectively as an individual’s disability will allow, is the fundamental human right.

## 2. Philosophy

The School has adopted a Total Communication Approach:

*'Total Communication is a communication philosophy- not a communication method and not at all a teaching method.....Total Communication is an approach to create a successful and equal communication between human beings with different language perception and/or production.....To use Total Communication amounts to a willingness to use all available means in order to understand and be understood'.*

*(Hansen)*

We strongly believe that *"Real communication is motivated by real life situations and the opportunity that pupils have to control elements of their environment."*

### Beliefs and Values

We believe that the individual child is at the centre of all that we do.....that every child is an individual and is to be respected, valued and nurtured..... every pupil has a 'voice' and we believe this voice should be listened to and encouraged.

## 3. Aims of this policy

1. To increase understanding of how communication and language develop
2. To consolidate and improve our whole school approach to supporting the development of communication and language using low, light and high tech forms of AAC (Alternative and Augmentative Communication. E.g. Gesture, objects cues and objects of reference, on body signs, photos, symbols, signs, voice output communication aids (VOCAs) and so on).
3. To encourage and empower all staff to use a range of communication strategies and understand that these should not be used in isolation.....a pupil may use several methods/strategies to communicate and so should we. **All staff are responsible for implementing this policy.**
4. To promote a strong and productive interdisciplinary\* approach involving Parents/Carers/Respite, Specialist Teachers, SALTs, OTs, Physios, TA's and other relevant people to the pupil. This is essential, with the pupils 'voice' being at the heart of this work and the Class Teacher being the co-ordinator of this.
5. **To ensure that every pupil reaches their full communicative potential as fundamental to building relationships, finding happiness and living fulfilled lives.**

### **\* Definition of Interdisciplinary Team**

- team may carry out own assessments
- team meeting devises collaborative recommendations
- delegation of implementation to one team member

#### **4. The Communication Team**

##### *i ) Role of the Team (Roles and Responsibilities)*

The Communication Team is an interdisciplinary team which is led by the Communication Team's Lead Teacher. It also comprises of Speech and Language Therapists and Assistants, the Assistant Head Teacher/CPD Coordinator, Specialist TA's, the ICT Technician, a Resource Assistant, Occupational Therapist, and the Communication Lead Teacher at FE.

**The role of the team is to lead, promote and develop a whole school** (including nursery and FE) **approach to communication** by working in an interdisciplinary way, endeavouring to empower both professionals, parents/carers and the pupils and students we are teaching by providing them with a structure for the development of communication and language through a range of methods.

##### Communication Planning Meetings

Communication Planning Meetings are the most important part of the team's model of work. Class Teachers meet with the Communication Team Leader and other appropriate persons working with the pupil/student, in terms 2, 4 and 6. **Every pupil** is discussed and their progress is evaluated against their current communication programme and a new programme is created for the following 2 terms. This forms part of the pupils' IEP and termly goals. There will be at least 2 goals set which are P-level referenced for each pupil unless exceptional circumstances apply. In school and nursery all pupils who have made outstanding progress are identified and receive a certificate in assembly for their achievement. Pupils who would benefit from additional input from the team are identified at this meeting. Additional input includes, 1:1 work/support in class, group sessions, contact with families, assessment by one or more of the team dependent on the needs of the pupil, resource/equipment requests and referrals to other services (for example OT). This information is gathered by the Communication Team Leader/Communication Lead at FE and informs a discussion with the team. It is then decided who will deliver the requested input over the following two terms. There is a commitment that pupils identified for additional input will then receive regular sessions, and these will be negotiated, timetabled and circulated in advance to Class Teachers by the Communication Team Leader/Communication Lead at FE. (See Appendix 3) A copy of the communication programmes are circulated to Class Teachers and a copy goes to each pupils Speech and Language File.

Copies of any communication assessments carried out by the team will be discussed with Teachers, and added to the pupil's assessment file. Any pupil who has received individual support by the communication team will have a report written by the Communication Teacher/ Therapist/Specialist TA for their annual review.

### Requesting additional input

School has access to a number of services. Referral may happen in a number of ways, and the Specialist Communication Teacher will coordinate the process with the Class Teacher having gained agreement from the parents/carers to progress with this.

Additional input includes:-

- Dysphagia
- SCAMP Clinic
- Sensory Needs Service – visual & hearing impairment
- Occupational Therapy

As well as weekly team briefings, the whole communication team meets in terms 1, 3 and 5 to discuss regular agenda items, including an update of the 3 year communication development plan, budget and resources, celebration of pupil achievement and a negotiated agenda item usually linked to the 3 year plan. The communication team has a budget in the region of £5,000 (£2,000 is kept back in case it is required to purchase a specific piece of equipment as part of a pupils statement), which is allocated to resources requested by team members/class teams. These requests are discussed and agreed by the team. The minutes of this meeting are circulated to all members of the team, a copy goes in the briefing file, and they are posted on the intranet.

### ii Development Work

Alongside the schools 3 year strategic development plan and the CPD plan, every 3 years following consultation between the communication team members, a 3 year communication development plan is drawn up. The team identifies individuals to lead on specific aspects of the development work at the beginning of each academic year. Money from the communication team budget is used to facilitate this work and members of the communication team commit their time to ensure the goals in the communication development plan are achieved. The plan is evaluated every 2 terms by the Communication Team Leader with each item rated for impact on pupils and value for money.

### iii Continued Professional Development (CPD)

As communication is essential to all aspects of pupils lives it is important that staff receive the appropriate training and opportunities to experience and see examples of good practice. There are opportunities for all staff to develop their knowledge & skills. Please see School Procedure 20.

Staff training is also identified as part of the Communication Teams 3 year development plan. This may include whole school closure days designated to training in an area of communication, twilight sessions and department meetings. There are regular refresher/revision sessions for essential skills such as signing, symbol use and AAC.

Targetted training may be planned and delivered to class teams as a result of communication planning meetings to meet the needs of individual pupils.

## **5. Definitions & Descriptions**

### Speech

The sounds used to produce words. This includes how people speak, the fluency, volume, intonation and pitch used to support meaning.

### Language

The comprehension of words (receptive language) & how they are used (expressive language). It's knowing the right words to explain what you mean and make sense of what people say.

### Communication

Refers to how we interact with others, using language or gestures in different ways, for example to have a conversation or give directions. It's also being able to understand other people's points of view and understanding and using body language and facial expressions.

### AAC

Alternative and Augmentative communication refers to any approach designed to support, enhance or augment (increase) the communication of individuals who are not independent verbal communicators in **all situations**. (Beukelman, Yorkston & Dowden, 1985 as quoted by the ACE centre).

**Most of our pupils will need to use some form of AAC to gain information, support their understanding and/or express themselves.**

### Types of AAC

- Unaided systems of communication (requires nothing external to the body to represent meaning e.g. signing, gesture, vocalization, etc.)
- Aided systems of communication (communication that requires something external to the body to represent meaning e.g. communication books, boards, voice output communication aids (VOCA))

### Aided AAC is further divided into 3 categories –

- i. Low tech AAC – any non technical aid/support e.g. objects of reference, communication books/boards
- ii. Light tech AAC – simple voice output communication aids that are battery operated e.g. big macks, step by steps
- iii. High tech AAC – complex electronic voice output communication aids

See appendix 1 for descriptions of low, light and high tech communication aids.

## **6. Pupils**

Before pupils can become purposeful in their communication they must become 'switched on' to their environment - they must be interested and attend to what's in it before they can learn to take control over elements of it. If a pupil becomes curious his level of motivation will increase. The degree of alertness and curiosity determines in large part how motivated a pupil will be to deliberately control his immediate environment - will a pupil want to operate a switch toy if he hasn't first learnt to look, watch and appreciate what the toy will do?

Within school, the pupil population falls within various categories i.e. ASC (Autistic Spectrum Condition), SLD (Severe Learning Disability) and PMLD (Profound and Multiple Learning Disability). Within these groups pupils could be described as different types of communicators:

- **Pre-verbal** pupils communicate in a very basic way, without using formal language skills (speech, sign, and symbols). Pupils may move through a simple progression of skills, and it is important to recognize the wide spectrum of ability that this group represents – from pupils whose reactions are reflex responses to stimuli and situations e.g. crying when hungry or uncomfortable (pre-intentional) to pupils who clearly want to communicate meaning and are purposeful in their intent to control aspects of their environment e.g. reaching towards cup when thirsty (purposeful). (See Curriculum Guideline 2 Pre verbal Pupils)
- **Non-verbal** pupils show clear intent and motivation to initiate an interaction i.e. they have some form of purposeful or intentional communication\*, but due to various reasons (physical impairment, oro-motor issues, echolalic speech, etc.) have a receptive language level in advance of their ability to express themselves. These pupils are likely to require a symbol system in some form or another e.g. objects bag, simple choosing book, photo/symbol book, etc. Pupils at this stage will expect a response to their attempt to communicate.

\* Intentional communication can be defined as using vocalization, gestures, facial expression, eye contact, eye pointing, body language, signs or symbols to interact with other people.

- **Verbal pupils** use speech as their primary means of expressive communication, but will still benefit greatly from being immersed in a Total Communication environment. This will not only support their communication and language development, but will also enhance friendships and relationships through a mutual understanding and use of all communication methods.

## **7. Delivery & Development of Communication, Language & Literacy**

The Glyne Gap curriculum is designed to be both incisively relevant to the needs of individual pupils and ensure an entitlement to curricular breadth and balance. To

provide a short hand Glyne Gap School uses the term tier 1 to address the former and tier 2 to address the latter. A full explanation of this is found in Curriculum Guidelines 6- Design & Delivery.

Teaching at Tier 1 is characterised by the Essential Skills for Learning and Life through communication and PSHE and Core skills for building functionality, through literacy, numeracy and ICT.

The link between communication and literacy - in order to understand the link between communication and literacy it is important to have clear definitions of both terms.

Communication is 'fundamental to children's development; children need to be able to understand and be understood; it's the foundation of relationships and is essential for learning, play and social interaction.' (Hello Campaign)

Literacy is 'explicitly defined as the 4 areas of language – reading, writing, speaking and listening' (Rose Report)

There is a complex link between communication and literacy. In this setting, all pupils have difficulties with their Speech, Language and Communication due to the nature of their learning disabilities. The development of formal literacy requires a certain level of language skills. All pupils need to establish the pre requisite skills of communication (Essential Skills for Learning and Life) before progressing to early literacy skills (Core Skills for Functionality).

Communication is planned and assessed according to individual pupil needs at communication planning meetings. Incisively relevant communication targets will be set for each pupil using the expanded p-scales for speaking and listening. The skills and knowledge addressed will often impact directly on the quality of pupils lives now and/or later.

When working with pupils in the area of communication there are some simple but fundamental principles that all should endeavour to employ:

- A Total Communication approach is essential. Communication partners should use a mixture of speech, sign and visual supports (using the appropriate form of representation e.g, objects, photos, symbols, text) to give pupils information and allow them to express themselves using their own method(s)
- consider and respect how the pupil wants to communicate
- the communication partner should try to get on the same face to face level as the pupil they are talking to
- the communication partner should be aware of the age and language level of the pupil and give clear simple messages using a Total Communication approach
- communication partners should respond to pupils' communications, and give them time to respond
- staff working with pupils should have consistently high expectations

- provide a breadth of communication and language experiences throughout the day
- all those working with pupils should understand the importance of the use of language and communication and the primacy of its social function and links with behaviour
- no one working with pupils in Glyne Gap School should ever underestimate the central importance of strong relationships in empowering and facilitating pupils– particularly in this area.

The Communication Charter devised and agreed by all staff is a vitally important part of the school's ethos and values. Its principles are to be followed by all staff, and it is prominently displayed for all staff, students, and visitors to access. See Appendix 2.

For further information on teaching strategies for pupils with ASC please refer to Curriculum Guideline 20.

### **8. Tracking, monitoring and evaluating progress**

There is a great deal of information and literature on how the normally developing child progresses through language development. This understanding usually focuses on the acquisition and development of verbal skills. In our school context, the expanded speaking and listening p-scales provides a clear assessment of the progression of communication skills.

The Speaking p-scale has been sub divided into the areas of expressive language, social communication, speech and advocacy. The listening p-scale has been sub divided into the areas of comprehension, attention and listening and imaginative play.

There are 7 assessment instruments we use in school to show achievement and can be used to track progress for pupils- see CG 7 Assessment, Recording, Reporting.

For communication the 5 most compelling assessment instruments are:

1. Pupil IEP's which include communication goals that are written and evaluated on a termly basis and are p-level referenced.
2. Pupil Assessment Files- contain a summative assessment using the speaking and listening QCA performance descriptors and have the expanded speaking and listening p-scale assessments which are updated at least annually.
3. Annual Review Reports- which provide summative description of communication progress during the past year which is p-level referenced and goes to parents.
4. Zig Zag Books – which are cumulative pupil records of achievements that describe attainment and progress that are p-level referenced and are completed on a termly basis.
5. Liaison Meetings – judgements on communication, attainment and progress are made in terms 1 & 2 liaison meetings using the previous year's caspa data and teacher assessment for every pupil.

Aspects of the expanded P-scales in ICT and PSHE are also used to assess elements of a pupil's communication skills. Within ICT – everyday technology, the area of communication and information skills could be used to inform a pupil's level of communication. Within PSHE – personal autonomy, self advocacy, relationships, sex education and personal learning strands would all be used to inform a pupil's communication skills.

In addition communication is one of the key areas discussed at the annual data analysis meeting, in terms of whole school progress, key stages, classes and specific groups such as free school meals.

### **9. Resources**

The Communication Team has a large resource bank which is shared with classes across the school. Requests for communication materials and resources can be made at the communication planning meetings and during the term by completing the relevant form and giving it to the Communication Teacher. The Resource Assistant makes these resources which support the development of pupils communication skills across the school.

## Appendix 1

### A Description of AAC Systems used at Glyne Gap School

This appendix provides information about Alternative and Augmentative forms of Communication (AAC). It is important to note that even when pupils use an AAC System, vocalization and speech are always encouraged. The school aims for all pupils to reach their communicative potential, therefore if pupils are not independent verbal communicators in all situations, forms of AAC may be used to enable pupils to be as independent as possible.

AAC can be used for a variety of communicative functions, for example gaining information, expressing opinions, choice making and commenting. There are many many more! Pupils may use a range of the systems listed below. It may be appropriate for a pupil to use one system in one situation and a different system in another situation. For example, a pupil may use a communication board in the classroom, but if they can't access this whilst in the swimming pool they may need to make choices by auditory scanning. It's important to be creative when using AAC to maximize the potential for communication.

#### Unaided Systems:

These systems require nothing external to the body. We all use a range of non verbal communication, facial expression, body language, gesture, mime, vocalization, eye contact etc. For pupils with communication difficulties, this type of communication is essential. In school pupils are encouraged to use these methods to enhance the meaning of their expressive communication.

Signing is a more formal type of unaided AAC.

The school uses 2 main signing systems:

- Makaton – The Makaton System was designed specifically for people with a learning disability and is our main signing system in school. Staff are encouraged to sign all the time and provide pupils with good signing models. If Makaton do not have a required sign, Communication Link is used, if no sign can be found there, a BSL sign maybe used. To ensure consistency across school, a list is kept of non Makaton signs used in school by the Specialist Communication Teacher.
- Canaan Barrie On Body Signs – this system was designed for people who have complex sensory needs, i.e. a visual and hearing impairment. The signs can be done on the pupils body, hand under hand with the pupil or near the pupils body. Pupils who use this system are introduced to key signs gradually.

## Aided Systems:

Aided systems require something external to the body in order to communicate. In school, aided systems are tailored to the pupils individual needs and wherever possible their personal wishes are taken into account.

## Low Tech Systems:

Low Tech Systems can be made with various forms of representation, for example objects, sounds, photographs, symbols and words (For more information on Objects of Reference see CG 2),. The type of representation used very much depends on a pupils preference, level of understanding, physical skills and sensory needs. It is ESSENTIAL to remember that whatever form is used, it must be TAUGHT.

The school uses Widgit Literacy Symbols as a main symbol system. However when Widgit do not have a symbol that is required or it is not clear enough Makaton Symbols are used. The symbol wordlist is updated annually by the ICT Technician and the Specialist Communication Teacher. (See appendix 4 for the schools guidance on symbol use).

Here is a brief description of the types of low tech systems used in school:

- Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) – PECS can be used with a range of people with communication difficulties. This system is taught in a very specific way. It is used to teach initiation, persistence, discrimination of pictures/symbols, building simple sentences, widening vocabulary to include adjectives, verbs, questions etc, spontaneous communication and commenting. For further information see Curriculum Guideline 20.
- Choice Boards/Charts – these can be used with any form of representation, the size of the board/chart, content, number of items and access method (see below) will be determined by the users needs.
- Timetables – all classes have a timetable and, again, objects, photographs and symbols can be used to make them. Some pupils have their own timetable to give them information about what is going to happen. For further information on timetables see Curriculum Guideline 20.
- Communication Books- for guidance the school bases all communication books on ‘Developing a Communication Book’ and ‘Developing Eye Pointing’ both by Clare Latham of The Ace Centre. A core vocabulary is always used so that pupils can develop a variety of communicative functions (see page 5). Each communication book is tailored to individual needs. The books need to be motivating and include vocabulary that is meaningful and fun for the pupil. When collating all the information needed to create a communication book, parents, class teams, relevant others and, when appropriate, pupils are consulted. The content, layout, size and form of representation etc. is decided with input from all those described above. The books are regularly reviewed at communication planning meetings and updated when required.

### Access Methods:

Choice Boards/Charts and Communication Books can be accessed by the pupil in a number of ways:

- Directly – by finger or fist pointing
- Eye pointing – pupils may eye point directly to objects/photographs/symbols in their book or on their board, or they may need photographs/symbols removed from the book/board and presented on an e-tran frame in order for them to make a choice.
- Partner Assisted Scanning – if a pupil cannot directly access the book or board or use eye pointing, the adult can scan the objects/photographs/symbols for the pupil. The adult waits for the pupil to say ‘yes’ (the pupil may say ‘yes’, use vocalization, sign or movement or a simple voice output communication aid such as a Big Mack) when they see/hear the option they want. There are 2 main ways adults can use this form of scanning:
  1. The adult scans the options, verbally labeling them whilst pointing or using a red frame to highlight each option. When the pupil sees the option they want they say ‘yes’ to make the choice. If a pupil is scanning a large number of photographs/symbols, the adult may scan the options in a particular order. For example row/column scanning.
  2. If the pupil has a visual impairment the adult will read the categories or options in a certain order and at an appropriate pace for the pupil. The content is read from the pupil’s auditory scanning chart or book. When the pupil hears the option they require they will say ‘yes’.
  3. If a pupil has a visual and hearing impairment or requires sensory cues, the adult will label the options whilst either using an on body sign or enabling the pupil to explore an object or tactile cue. When the pupil hears/feels the option they want they will say ‘yes’.

### Light Tec Communication Aids:

These aids are defined as ‘communication systems needing limited technology to operate in practice, often defined as needing simply a battery’. (Ace Centre). In school the most commonly used light tec aids are Big Macks and Step by Steps.

Single Message devices can be used in a variety of ways, for example to gain attention, give news, take a message and controlling games. These devices can promote an understanding of cause and effect, enable a pupil to initiate conversations, control their environment and so on.

Pupils can move on to use step by step devices which extend the skills learned using a single message device. For example, pupils can practice simple turn taking skills, timing skills – activating the device at the appropriate time during a story.

It is important that these aids have the appropriate labeling clearly displayed on them so the pupil knows what they are using them for.

### High Tec Communication Aids:

'These communication systems are based upon a greater degree of technology' (The Ace Centre) both light and high tec aids are often referred to as VOCAs – voice output communication aids.

There are many factors to consider when thinking about high tec AAC for pupils with a severe or profound learning disability. For example, current skills and readiness for an aid, the pupils preference and level of motivation to communicate and use an aid, how the pupil would access the aid, how language would be organized, portability, who would update the device, funding, training for those around the pupil, the low tech systems already in use or needed in case the device fails, how the aid could be used as part of the pupils Total Communication, future considerations for the pupil...these are just a few. Currently the school would seek specialist support if it was felt a pupil may need a high tec aid. A team assessment would also take place to gather all the required information in readiness for specialist assessment, advice and input.

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### For AAC Systems to be successful....

Essential skills of a communication partner

- Motivation – start with activities a pupil likes
- Modelling – point to some of the symbols while you chat
- Pause – see if the pupil points/looks/responds
- Extend – add to what the pupil says
- Use open ended questions
- Take the pressure off – don't test!
- Be super responsive
- Be patient
- Have fun

The following factors must be considered when using AAC:

- The purpose of a communication system is to arrange language in a space so an individual can say what they wish to say as quickly as possible, and can do this with minimal effort.
- Have the pupil's communication system available at all times
- Use the communication system for a range of functions\*
- Provide motivating situations in which pupils can develop their language skills using total communication in meaningful, functional and enjoyable ways
- Provide communicative opportunities for pupils both in social and curricular settings
- Make sure the pupil and the communication system are positioned well in all situations

- Give AAC users opportunities to see others using the same methods of communication as themselves
- During times of transition everyone working/involved with the pupil must be aware of and understand the pupil's communication system
- Ensure continuity of provision throughout all classes and departments within the school.

\*Examples of communicative functions:

- Social exchanges
  - Initiating and interaction
  - Gaining attention
  - Requesting
  - Responding
  - Express feelings and opinions
  - Problem solving
  - Reject
  - Communication repair
  - Comment
  - Give information/transfer information
  - Negotiation
  - Asking questions
  - Humour
-

## Glyne Gap School

### Communication charter

I may not use speech, but I will communicate with you.

Take time to recognise and understand my methods or signals of communication.

Have patience and allow me plenty of time - it may take me a while to listen, think and respond to you.

Position yourself where I can see you, and give me your full attention whilst talking to me.

Use clear, simple language.

Speak to me in a way that is appropriate to my age and assume I can understand you.

Encourage, value, and respond to my spontaneous attempts at communicating.

Try to use the appropriate means that help me communicate effectively and confidently.

Provide me with a secure, supportive, and stimulating environment, which encourages communication.

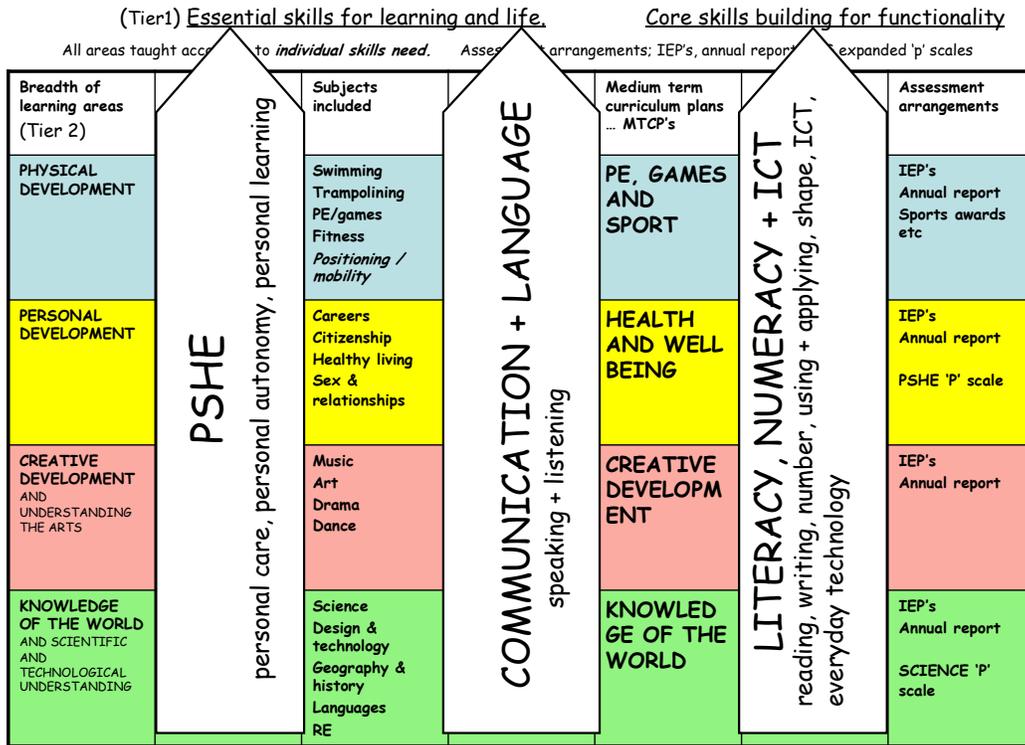
There may be times I do not wish to communicate - please respect this.

When I am present, talk to me not about me.

Appendix 3 & 4 are saved separately.

Appendix 5

**Glyne Gap School Curriculum Model**



## **Appendix 6**

### **Links to Other Policies**

- Curriculum Guideline 20 – Communication & ASC
- Curriculum Guideline 6 – Designing & Delivering the Curriculum
- Curriculum Guideline 2 – Pre Verbal Pupils
- Curriculum Guideline 19 – Working with Families

**Appendix 7 saved separately**