



Early Years, Year 1

Communication and Language



What does Communication and Language look like in Early Years at Castle School?

Intent

At Castle school communication is at the core to learning. We deliver a curriculum that focuses on three main areas of communication including – a motivation (reason) for communication, a means (method) of communication and someone (peer or person) to communicate with. Our aim is for all pupils to be confident communicators at a level which is appropriate to them, aiming for them to be able to express their wants and needs through different communication tools. We base teaching and learning on every individual child and offer communication through intensive interaction, spoken word, signs and symbols including Makaton, symbolic communication including objects of reference, picture exchange communication system (PECS) and written communication.

We read and share stories and rhymes with pupils on a daily basis, engaging them in topic themed books and 5 core rhymes which we focus on over the year. This enables our pupils to become familiar with the language and the structure of familiar stories and rhymes. Communication and language development involves giving each pupil the opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop confidence and skills that lead them to express themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations. Staff support pupils by introducing everyday words, developing two-way communications and helping all children to engage. We also focus on specific skills such as following and understanding everyday routines through the use of AAC, sign and symbols.

At Castle school pupils have the opportunity to explore quality sound and picture books. Joining in with key phrases, acting out different parts of the story, exploring pictures, as well as learning new vocabulary. We bring stories to life through the use of props, visuals and different sensory experiences. We have rhyme and song bags with picture and object links, which are used daily with repetition so when pupils progress through school they are familiar with our focus books and rhymes.

Staff support pupils in their play, modelling appropriate vocabulary, naming objects and commenting on what they are interested in or doing and extending their engagement and interaction skills. We also use basic Makaton signs alongside routines to help pupils with their understanding. We listen to pupils and give them time to respond, building up their confidence with lots of self-esteem and praise. We use non-fiction books to develop opportunities for pupils to find out about the wider world as well as nurturing individual interests and preferences. We want them to become confident communicators in lots of different situations and be able to transfer skills in a range of areas.

Skills, knowledge and core vocabulary will be differentiated according to need. The identified 'leading to headings' are extended opportunities for pupils to access further literacy development indicative of staff's high expectations. The leading to comments related to ensuring we prepare children for the next stage in their education.

Pupils will access the Cherry Garden programme, commensurate to ability and planned progressive steps will be mapped and assessed against individual targets.

Implementation – Click on learning map to see implementation

Impact

Communication and Language is crucial to a child's development as these skills underpin all learning. There is a diverse range of needs within EYs and Year 1 including non-verbal children who require augmentative and alternative approaches. 100% of the learners within EYs and Year 1 have communication difficulties as a consequence of their SEND diagnosis. These include an inability to understand the needs of the listener, expressive and receptive language difficulties, auditory and visual processing difficulties and attention and listening delayed development. As a consequence, we value the input from SaLT to assess need and provide support to implement programmes for improvement within the Cherry Garden approach. All progress is recorded to enable staff to optimise pupil's ability. Evidence of learning is shared with parents/carers who work with school to set challenging targets for improvement within the EHCP process.

The Cherry Garden system of assessment provides Castle with a child centred, flexible approach to assessing children with learning differences, which is proven to enhance parental engagement. We ensure all children make measurable progress which we build upon across the school year. Those children at risk of not achieving targets access highly structured interventions to boost learning potential.

Our approach:

- Provides teachers/support staff with key milestones in typically developing young children, we use this information to establish developmental stages of the children we work with in order to plan highly structured steps to learning. As such, we establish a child's developmental stage in order to plan a progressive and sequential approach to learning from their starting points. We measure progress and provide updates on achievement in line with the whole school's approach. Every child makes progress and for those with 'splinter skills' in areas of learning, usually linked to autistic strengths and motivations, we measure progress using the EYFS framework as well as Cherry Garden.
- Demonstrates not only linear but also lateral progress – this is highly supportive of children with complex needs. 100% of learners within EYs, Y1 have complex needs associated with their diagnosis of SEND. As a result, it is important to provide a broad and balanced curriculum offer commensurate to ability. If a child makes linear progress by generalising taught skills in functional situations this is an achievement we celebrate. This is linked to the whole school curriculum approach 'spiralised learning model'.
- Enables parents to explore and understand their child's learning through the unique Cherry Orchard approach. We value parental partnerships which are invaluable in achieving success for our learners. The impact of our work is shared with parents who are involved in joint target setting activities in school.

