



Communication, Literacy & English Policy

Including professional development materials

Date of implementation: September 2015

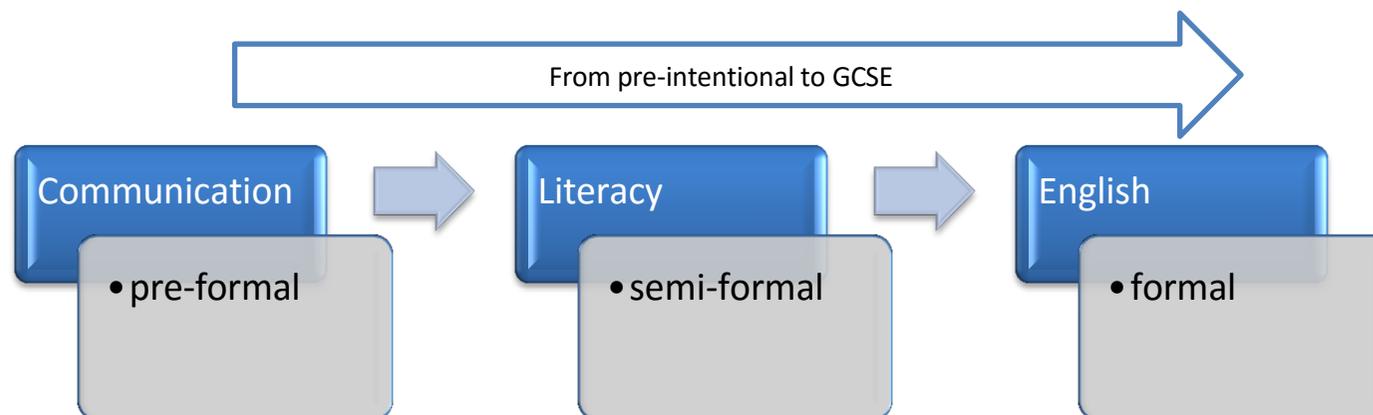
Reviewed 2016

Review date: September 2019

Introduction

Fountaindale's Communication, Literacy and English policy encompasses the fundamental principles that are the key to improving learning and enables pupils to make progress across all the strands.

Communication, Literacy and English underpins the school curriculum by developing pupils' ability to communicate/speak, listen, read and write for a range of purposes, using language to learn and communicate, to think, explore and organise. Helping pupils express themselves clearly, orally and in writing, enhances and enriches teaching and learning in all subjects.



Contents

Page Number(s)	Description
3	Overview
4 - 12	Communication in the pre-formal curriculum
13 - 19	Communication & Literacy in the semiformal curriculum
20 - 22	Communication, Literacy & English in the formal curriculum

Overview

The focus in the **pre-formal curriculum** is on the development of the **fundamentals of communication**. Every moment and situation is regarded as an opportunity to interact and communicate.

Communication is assessed through play, social communication time and in natural situations; with progress is monitored through **routes for learning**.

The approach used throughout the pre-formal curriculum to encourage the development of communication in our most profound and complex young people can be found in the principles and practice of **intensive interaction**.

The focus in the **semi-formal curriculum** is on the further development of communication skills and the broadening of literacy skills for learners with severe and complex learning difficulties.

Communication and literacy is assessed through **STEP**.

The approach used throughout the semi-formal curriculum is to develop communication and literacy skills through a **themed approach with focused learning opportunities**.

The **formal curriculum** builds upon and extends the knowledge, skills and understanding introduced in the semi-formal curriculum, and adheres to the requirements of the national curriculum. Formal learners also have opportunities to access accreditation to GCSE level.

The formal curriculum aims to develop learners' abilities within an integrated programme of speaking, listening, reading and writing by:

- deliver the National Curriculum in a fun and engaging way
- provide learners with meaningful, engaging contexts for reading and writing
- provide appropriate accreditation pathways and opportunities from key stage 4.

Communication in the pre-formal curriculum



All pre-formal learners at Fountainsdale have great difficulty in communicating which is a fundamental barrier to their development. The school's communication policy for pre-formal learners adheres to the fundamentals of communication (Hewitt & Nind)

This group of learners are likely to remain within developmentally early intellectual parameters for the whole of their school life.

Many will rely on facial expressions, vocal sounds, body language and behaviour to communicate. Some may use a small range of formal communication; others may not have reached the stage of using intentional communication.

The development of communication takes place within the framework of social interactions. For a young person with profound and complex multiple learning difficulties the starting point may be engaging that young person in interactions so they become aware of the fact a world exists outside of them.

'Communicating intentionally is a very large step for students with profound general learning disabilities. It may take a long time to reach, and may not be achieved by all students.' National Council for Curriculum Assessment (2010)

All our pre-formal learners are treated as **intentional communicators**; their attempts at communication, whether it be through vocalising, making eye contact, using gestures or by laughing are responded to immediately. This may be by either verbalising or copying sounds – contingent responding (reinforcing intentional communication).

The fundamental principles of Intensive Interaction (Hewett and Nind, 1998; Nind and Hewett, 2001; Nind and Hewett 2005) are used throughout the day with all learners as a matter of course and as a 'way of being'.

To encourage communication adults working with our learners need to be anticipatory and positive – projecting a feeling of happiness and calmness. We need to be aware of the young person's moods and feelings. Non-symbolic communication requires the adult to follow the young person's lead; it should give control to the learner wherever possible; it requires the giving of eye contact; smiling; vocalising along with the student or in turn taking and requires the mirroring of body movements.

It is important to greet learners in the same way each time you greet them; using their name consistently. Our voice (tone, cadence) smell (scent, aftershave), touch (where you touch, how much pressure) and so forth must also be consistent; thus helping to ground the learner in familiar and comfortable relational experiences.

Our young people need to be informed about what is happening in their day and daily routines as they are happening.

Learners are not just passive but should be encouraged to participate in and know as much about their own routines as you do.

Whilst it is important not to use too much language, we should not assume the young person can't understand what we are saying and doing. **Language must of course be used with developmentally early learners**, but it must not be used without thought for the level the learners are at.

Language is an enormously powerful tool. At its worst, when it is used thoughtlessly, language can dominate and exclude those who do not have it or do not have access to it. It then stops becoming a communicative tool and becomes instead, a significant barrier to learning.

We must use:

- language carefully and in moderation
- language that is appropriate to the situation and the young person
- language repetitively so that learners have many opportunities to understand meanings in real and concrete ways.

We might do this by:

- (i) Reminding each other not to talk unless it's in relation to the learning session – social 'chit- chat' between adults needs to be kept to social times such as social interaction times and should include the young people.
- (ii) Using words like we would use signs and symbols with the more able – that is, selectively.
 - a. Use only the key words in a sentence so that: '*We are going to do some painting now and I want everyone to sit round the table and concentrate on the sensory feel of the paint, the primary colours and the effect they have on each other when mixed*' becomes, '*Now we're going to paintwet... ..dry.....redyelloworange.*'
- (iii) Using repeat phrases for stock occasions. It doesn't matter what these are as long as they are adopted by everyone.

Play has an important role in the development of communication and is the driver for learning in the pre-formal curriculum.

An interactive **learning environment** that stimulates the desire to communicate is important; though there is the need to be aware of the individual's needs and the levels of arousal they can tolerate at a given time within their development.

Learners are a priority. If you are talking to a member of staff and a pre-formal learner wants your attention you must respond immediately to their communication.

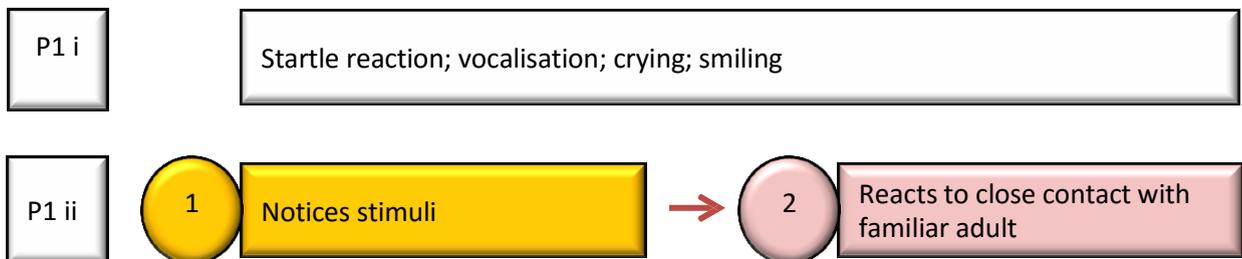
It is recognised that whilst exact equivalences between particular patterns of learning and development are not possible we make links between stages or phases of communicative development matched to the P scales to provide a reference point. We do not assess against the P scales for this group of learners – see assessment guidance.

These being:

- P1 (i) – P2 (ii)

pre-intentional stage

- This is where the behaviour does not have a communicative function for the young person.
- The young person's behaviour sends messages to others, but these messages are unintentional.
- The young person is not attempting to elicit a response.



The learning at this stage usually has the following distinctive features:

- **Social relationships and emotional development**

The young person acts upon their own needs and feelings, but without intention. They are aware of adults and are intermittently aware of the sight, sound, feel or smell of their peers.

- **Communication**

Communication is pre-intentional – reflexive or reactive.

- **Conceptual development**

The young person's behaviour is largely state-driven and highly repetitive.

- **Sensory responses**

The young person is aware of input from residual sight, hearing and/or other senses – they show reflexive responses.

- **Understanding of time and place**

The young person responds positively, negatively or passively to immediate sensations. They respond to rhythm through available sensory channels and their activity bursts and pauses.

- **Orientation, movement & mobility**

The young person's movements are not directed towards particular purposes. They are aware of some sensations from their environment but cannot organize or integrate these.

- **Ownership of learning**

They are pre-intentional in their actions.

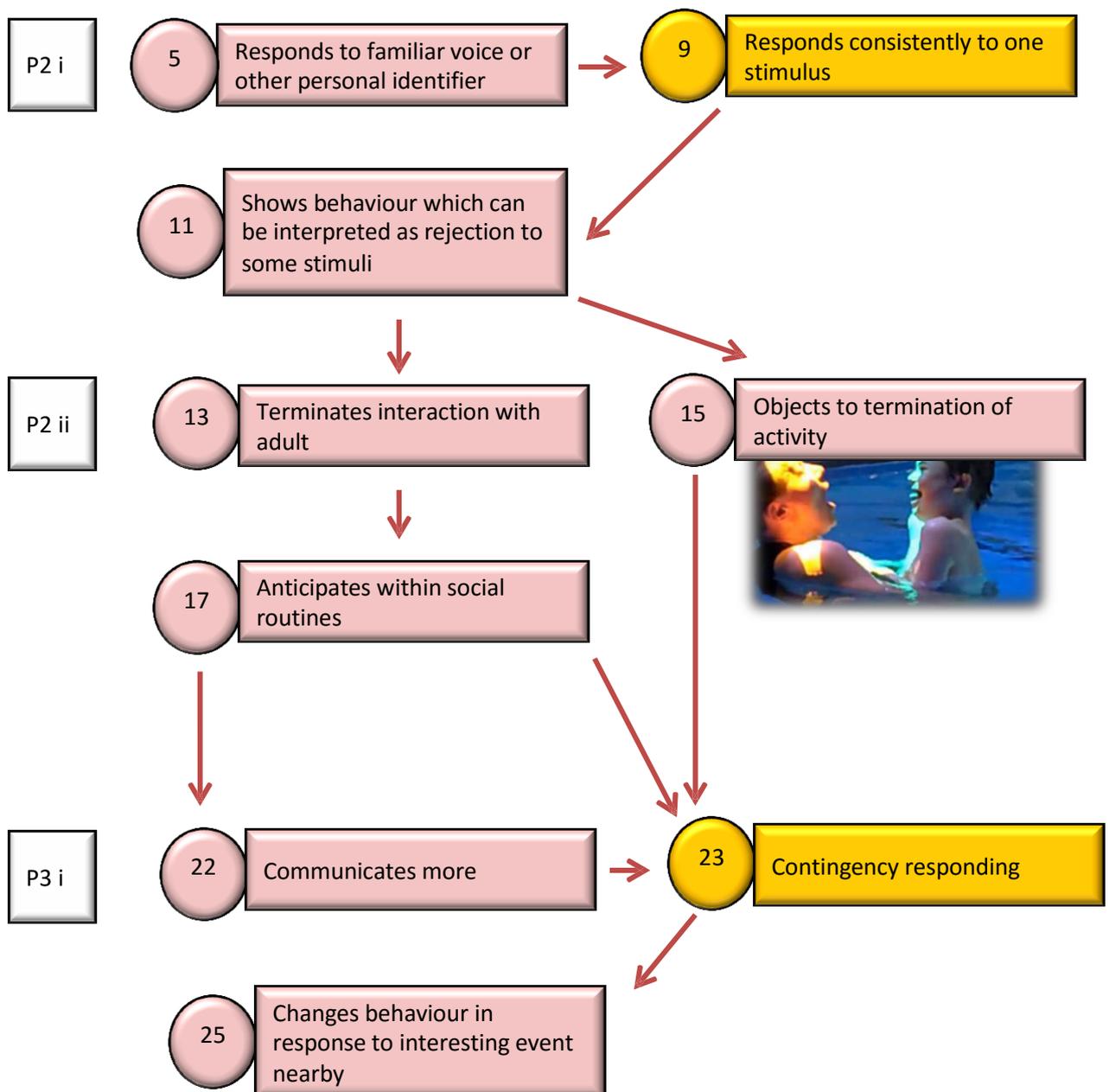
- **Responses to routines and changes**

The young person needs the security of familiar staff, routines and environments.

▪ P2 (i) – P3 (ii)

intentional non-symbolic stage

- The behaviour has a communicative function.
- The young person understands that their behaviours gain responses from others and that different behaviours elicit different responses.



Key features are:

- Vocal – sounds and utterances.
- Affect – display feelings and emotion. May involve aggressive and self-injurious behaviour; hitting, pinching or biting.
- Tactual – using touch.
- Body movement – leaning, pulling away.
- Gestural – movement of limbs or body parts. Facial expressions.
- Physiological – alertness, muscle tone.
- Visual – using sight

The learning at this stage usually has the following distinctive features:

- **Social relationships and emotional development**

They are egocentric and act in response to their immediate feelings and wants. The young person is aware of familiar adults and peers, and may interact with familiar adults.

- **Communication**

The young people use intentional, non-symbolic communication. They may begin to understand some symbols for familiar activities and people.

- **Conceptual development**

The young person discriminates between self and environment. They use repetitive strategies to explore objects and familiar adults and understand simple, context-specific cause and effect.

- **Sensory Responses**

In familiar, quiet environments, pupils can discriminate motivating familiar stimuli from others and identify meaning using their sight, hearing and/or other senses.

- **Understanding of time and place**

The young person's understanding is generally limited to the immediate here-and-now.

- **Orientation, movement and mobility**

The young person is able to orientate themselves within their familiar learning environment and respond to landmarks on familiar routes.

- **Ownership of learning**

The young people have a sense of agency. They engage cooperatively with key staff on familiar, motivating activities.

- **Responses to routines and changes**

The young person needs the security of familiar key staff, routines and environments for most activities.

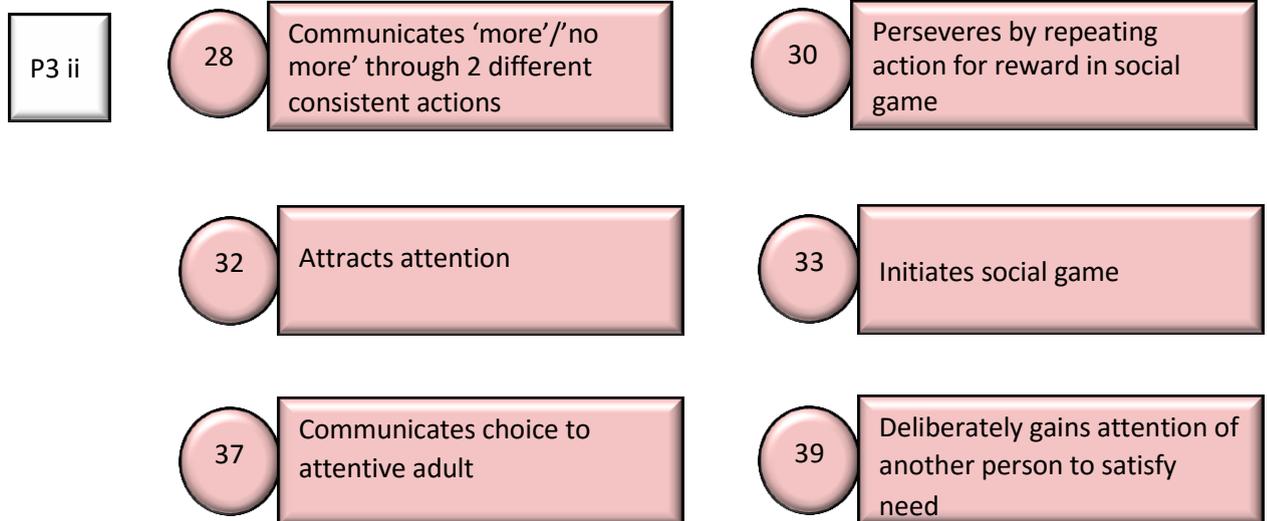
Transition from pre-formal to semi-formal communicators

- P3 (ii) – P6

early symbolic – symbolic

- The behaviour has a communicative function
- The young person understands that their behaviours gain responses from others and that different behaviours elicit different responses

ACCURACY



Key features are:

- Verbal – using words
- Sign language – system of gestures
- Photographs or pictures
- Objects of reference – miniatures or parts of real objects
- Graphic system – method of symbols to communicate :
 - **early symbolic (concrete)** beginning to use pictures or other symbols to communicate with limited vocabulary;
 - **symbolic (abstract)** speaks or has vocabulary of signs, pictures to communicate. Recognises some sight words, numbers and so forth.

The learning at this stage usually has the following distinctive features:

- **Social relationships and emotional development**

Young people remain egocentric, but are increasingly conscious of their feelings and desires and sometimes are able to moderate their emotional responses. They interact with familiar adults. They are aware of their peers and interact with them in structured situations.

- **Communication**

The young people understand and use some symbolic communication (speech, signs, symbols, pictures or objects of reference; accessed directly or through ICT).

- **Conceptual development**

They use a range of strategies to explore and manipulate objects, and understand the function of many familiar items.

- **Sensory responses**

The young person can discriminate and recognize stimuli using sight, hearing and/or other senses, but will comprehend (understand the implications of) only very familiar sights and sounds.

- **Understanding of time and place**

They are beginning to move beyond the immediate here-and-now in their understanding of the world.

- **Orientation, movement and mobility**

The young people (As far as their physical abilities allow) recognise and remember familiar routes and environments and navigate them in the presence of key staff. They have the orientation and mobility skills needed to explore new environments, but need support to travel within them.

- **Ownership of learning**

The young person begins to differentiate between actions they can complete independently and those they need help with.

- **Responses to routines and changes**

They generally adapt to single changes in routines, but withdraw or become distressed if there are multiple changes.

OUR APPROACH

Intensive Interaction & the fundamentals of communication

At its simplest level Intensive Interaction is a process that aims to enable communication and sociable interactivity.



Intensive Interaction is designed for those learners who are at the earliest stages of communication. It is designed to facilitate the learners in their learning of the most basic, non-symbolic communication skills and concepts that are generally learned before the developmental of representational speech that is, before we learn to use abstract words and phrases.

The fundamentals of communication are typically characterised as:

- Using and understanding eye contacts
 - Using and understanding facial expressions
- ⇒
- Face & mind reading
- learning about the significance of proximity and sharing personal space
 - learning to give, extend and share attention with another person – then developing such shared attention into and across sociable or joint ‘activities’
 - learning how to have fun with other people – learning how to play
 - learning how to take turns in exchanges of behaviour
 - learning to use and understand physical contact within social interactions
 - learning about non-verbal communication such as gesture and body language
 - learning to use and understand vocalisations, developing more varied and extensive vocalisations that gradually become more precise and meaningful
 - learning to regulate and control emotional responses and arousal levels

Communication & literacy in the semi-formal curriculum

An overview:

Fountaindale School's approach to Communication and Literacy provides those learners with severe and complex learning difficulties opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding through:

- developing the ability to respond, to listen and to understand
- acquiring an increasing range of vocabulary
- interacting and communicating effectively with others in a range of social situations
- being active participants in their communities (including school communities)
- building and maintaining communicative relationships with others

and by providing opportunities to:

- develop communicate thoughts, feelings and ideas
- make choices, obtain information, question and be actively involved in decision making
- develop creativity and imagination
- have access to a wide range of literature to enrich and increasingly broaden their experience
- develop an enjoyment of reading and develop early reading skills
- take turns in a range of situations and for a variety of purposes, for example, cooperating with others in a shared task, actively contributing to interactions, and maintaining interaction through more than one turn
- initiate communication, for example, through speech, signing, AAC or what is the preferred method for that individual.

Spoken language (speaking and listening)

In the broadest interpretation, speaking and listening encompasses all forms of communicative responses and intent.

Speaking

Speaking is concerned with encouraging our learners to express their likes and dislikes, feelings, emotions and preferences for different audiences.

The policy aims to provide opportunities for our learners to develop their speaking skills by enabling them to:

- participate in social routines and communicate in a widening range of situations
- develop their communicative skills
- use a widening range of vocabulary
- use an appropriate form of communication for a range of purposes; for example, to request, instruct, question or share information
- develop the use of communicative functions such as facial expressions, tone and volume of their voices, eye contact and positioning

Listening

The policy aims to provide opportunities for our learners to develop their listening and responding skills by enabling them to:

- listen and develop auditory memory; for example, responding appropriately to specific sounds, words and phrases and exploring language in different contexts.
- Maintain and develop concentration; for example, listening and responding to stories and simple recounts, sustaining attention in different activities, and responding to instructions.

Reading

The development of reading of our learners with severe and complex needs is also a sensory and physical activity.

The development of reading skills relies on the progressive acquisition of skills, together with a broadening and reinforcing of acquired reading skills. An important aspect of reading skills is access to a rich and varied range of engaging and motivating high quality texts.

The policy aims to provide opportunities for our learners to develop their reading skills by enabling them to:

- encounter and enjoy sounds, letters and words
- become aware that different combinations of letters create different sounds, including patterns and blends of sounds

- develop an awareness and understanding of the linkage between sounds and letters
- derive meaning from visual and tactile representations
- encounter and enjoy printed media
- become aware that words (and pictures or other representations) convey meaning and that these can be combined to convey meaning
- become aware and use supportive reading and writing systems such as braille or Makaton symbols
- read (and listen) with an adult to printed media – letters to simple sentences
- read (and listen) with by self to printed media - letters to simple sentences

While reading schemes have their place in the development of reading, what is more important is the selection of appropriate texts (at individual, small group and class levels) to support the acquisition of reading skills and sustain progress in reading.

Developing phonemic and phonic knowledge

The policy aims to provide opportunities for our learners to develop their phonemic and phonic knowledge by enabling them to:

- sustain attention in a listening activity
- recognize that sounds and words can relate to people, situations, actions and objects
- blend sounds for reading and segment them for spelling
- develop a knowledge of grapheme and phoneme correspondences

Developing word recognition and symbolic knowledge

It is important to develop the ability to attend to objects, patterns, pictures, symbols and words. Learners can be encouraged to link these to people, situations, objects and actions and to learn how they can provide cues to an activity and to make choices.

The policy aims to provide opportunities for our learners to develop their word recognition and symbolic knowledge by enabling them to:

- discriminate between different representations
- distinguish between text and illustrations
- match and identify a range of familiar representations; for example, signs and symbols and words of personal importance, content words or phrases from familiar books, high frequency words, social and environmental vocabulary, cross-curricular or subject-specific vocabulary.

Developing grammatical awareness

Grammatical awareness will develop from, and support, learners' ability to use and understand different elements of speech.

Reading may provide a visual prompt to support learners who have difficulty with syntax or who use telegraphic speech in appropriate language structures.

To develop learners' reading comprehension, it is important to develop their understanding of words, sentences and whole texts and the ways in which these are selected, combined and sequenced.

The policy aims to provide opportunities for our learners to develop their grammatical awareness by enabling them to:

- recognise patterns and continue a pattern of objects or symbols
- sequence objects, symbols and words left to right, and understand that they need to be accessed in that way to make sense
- develop the concept of beginnings and ends; for example, of a story, an information text, a sentence or word
- recognise when the order of an object, picture, symbol or word sequence has been changed and how such changes can alter meanings.

Developing reading for information

The policy aims to provide opportunities for our learners to develop their reading for information skills by enabling them to:

- access information from a wide variety of sources; for example, pictures, photographs, symbols, books
- choose, select and handle books with care and to use the library
- understand terms about books and print and use them correctly; for example, cover, page, beginning, end, title

Developing a love of literature

A response to, and an understanding of, literature will initially be accessed through attending to a familiar voice reading aloud and to objects, pictures and varied sensory stimuli linked to a story.

The policy aims to provide opportunities for our learners to develop their love of literature by enabling them to:

- attend and respond to the sound, rhythm and mood of a variety of literary texts
- respond in different ways to what they have read or heard; for example, through movement, art, music, shared writing activities
- develop a wide understanding and use vocabulary linked to text, supported where appropriate by objects, pictures, symbols and multi-sensory resources

- respond to, identify, and describe characters, events, settings and emotions in fiction texts
- respond to, and be aware of, the different uses of language and subject matter from different traditions

Writing

Writing may be interpreted as any activity that communicates and records events, experiences, information, thoughts and feelings. This may be in stories, poetry, personal writing or functional writing; for example lists.

Writing presents a considerable challenge for many of our learners with severe and complex difficulties. The most appropriate form of recording should be selected according to learners' needs; for example, using objects, pictures, photographs, symbols and text; own name, picture, letter, word stamps; working with an adult as a scribe or a combination of these. All relevant ICT and communication aids should be used to support and foster writing.

The policy aims to provide opportunities for our learners to develop their writing skills by enabling them, for example, to:

- make marks
- develop fine motor skills
- become aware that symbols and pictures can be used to convey meaning
- play with letter shapes
- match symbols and pictures to letter forms
- form letter shapes in a variety of ways and representations
- form letter shapes with writing materials
- form combinations of letters
- match symbols and pictures to simple words
- produce simple words to convey meaning
- produce a simple sentence to convey meaning
- produce linked sentences to convey meaning

Composition

It is important to provide learners with the tools to develop the skills to record information in a variety of ways.

The policy aims to provide opportunities for our learners to develop their composition skills by enabling them to:

- link objects, pictures, words and symbols to convey meaning
- record events, experiences and information; for example, making simple books that reflect personal interests
- use the experience of stories, poems and simple recounts as a basis for shared and independent writing

Spelling and punctuation

Work on punctuation will be supported by activities that highlight the importance of making sense of what is read and the needs of the reader. It needs to be closely allied to the development of grammatical awareness.

Work on spelling will be supported by activities that highlight the similarities and differences between sounds, words and letters. The latter will need to be closely allied to phonemic awareness and phonic knowledge.

Handwriting and presentation

Learners can experiment with different media, and should be encouraged to use a range of writing materials to make marks and to develop pencil control and handwriting skills. For many presentation skills will be best supported by the use of ICT.

The policy aims to provide opportunities for our learners to develop their handwriting skills by enabling them to:

- be aware of, attend to and manipulate switches
- develop hand/eye coordination, for example, through left to right tracking activities; a range of fine motor activities; exploring patterns, circular movements and letter shapes and tracing, overwriting, copying and/or forming shapes and letters; coloring within a defined outline; developing and practicing handwriting
- take pride in their work

Developing ideas and making things happen

For learners, developing and making things happen starts by being aware of how they themselves can affect the environment. This includes how they can use sounds and images to communicate ideas and make choices about what happens to them in their world.

The policy aims to provide opportunities for our learners to develop their own ideas and make things happen by enabling them to:

- combine pictures, sounds, symbols and words to communicate meaning in a variety of contexts; for example, a mode of communication to make a choice about an activity in class

Exchanging and sharing information

Exchanging and sharing information starts with early interaction and communication skills, an awareness that actions, sounds, text, symbols and pictures can convey meaning, and such information can be shared.

The policy aims to provide opportunities for our learners to develop their abilities to exchange and share information by enabling them to:

- communicate information in a variety of forms using sound, text and graphic for a range of audiences; for example, use speech output device to choose an activity, write a simple sentence using Clicker
- share and exchange information in a variety of forms; for example, gesture, speech output devices

Reviewing, modifying and evaluating work as it progresses

For learners with severe and complex difficulties, reviewing, modifying and evaluating work starts by recognizing that their work is their own and communicating what they like and dislike about it.

Communication, literacy & English in the formal curriculum

Overview

At key stages 1 – 3 formal learners will follow the national curriculum adapted to meet the needs of learners with complex learning difficulties and disabilities. At key stages 4 – 5 they will follow personalised accreditation routes.

Many formal learners also have more than one difficulty or disability impacting on their learning; for example autism and cerebral palsy. These multi-layered difficulties may mean that in **some areas approaches outlined in the semi-formal curriculum are still appropriate.**

The formal curriculum is designed to enable learners achieve their full potential in the key areas of:

- spoken language
- reading
- writing
- spelling, vocabulary, grammar, punctuation and glossary

Key stages 1 - 3

Spoken language

The policy aims to provide opportunities for our learners to develop their confidence and competence to:

- ask relevant questions to extend their understanding and knowledge
- use relevant strategies to build their vocabulary
- articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions
- give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including for expressing feelings
- maintain attention and participate actively in collaborative conversations, staying on topic and initiating and responding to comments
- use spoken language to develop understanding through speculating, hypothesising, imagining and exploring ideas
- speak audibly and fluently with an increasing command of Standard English
- participate in discussions, presentations, performances, role play/improvisations and debates
- gain, maintain and monitor the interest of the listener(s)
- consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others
- select and use appropriate registers for effective communication

and further develop to:

- speak confidently and effectively, including through:
- using Standard English confidently in a range of formal and informal contexts, including classroom discussion
 - giving short speeches and presentations, expressing their own ideas and keeping to the point
 - participating in formal debates and structured discussions, summarising and/or building on what has been said
 - improvising, rehearsing and performing play scripts and poetry in order to generate languages and discuss language use and meaning, using role, intonation, tone, volume, mood, silence, stillness and action to add impact

The content should be taught at a level appropriate to the individual.

Learners should be taught to develop their competence in spoken language and listening to enhance the effectiveness of their communication across a range of contexts and to a range of audiences. They should therefore have opportunities to work in groups of different sizes – in pairs, small groups, large groups and as a whole class. Learners should understand how to take turns and when and how to participate constructively in conversations

Reading

The policy aims to develop reading skills so our learners are able to:

- read fluently, accurately and with understanding
- become independent and critical readers and make informed and appropriate choices
- select information from a wide range of sources and texts including print, media and ICT to evaluate those sources

In addition the policy ensures, as is appropriate to individual learners, the national curriculum requirements are met at the developmental level they have reached.

Writing

The policy aims to develop writing skills so our learners are able to:

- write in a widening variety of forms for different purpose; for example, to interpret, evaluate, explain, analyse and explore
- develop their ability to use and organize and structure sentences grammatically and whole texts coherently
- present their writing clearly using accurate punctuation, correct spelling

In addition the policy ensures, as is appropriate to individual learners, the national curriculum requirements are met at the developmental level they have reached.

The formal curriculum is assessed through STEPS below year 1 expectations and Learning Ladders for year 1+ expectations at KS1 – KS3

At KS4 & KS5 assessment is in accordance with the accredited course being followed by the learner.