

Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT)

Providing Opportunities

The Speech and Language service at Mapledown is provided at the discretion of Whittington Health NHS Trust, and Barnet Children's Integrated Therapy service.

A key goal at Mapledown is to help pupils develop their communication skills. Communication is an essential life skill that will help students grow up to be as independent as possible. We build opportunities for communication into every aspect of the pupil's lives. This involves:

- adapting the environment to ensure pupils have a need to communicate (for instance, placing motivating objects out of reach so the pupil has to ask for it)
- making sure that pupils have access to non-verbal means of communication, such as symbols, switches and communication aids (Aided Language Displays and PODD books)
- adapting how the staff interact with pupils to promote their ability to communicate. This may include waiting a bit longer for a pupil to respond to us or pausing to give them a chance to initiate and "get the ball rolling" in an interaction

Total Communication

The use of **Total Communication** is vital. Total Communication describes the use of all possible means in order to help someone communicate. We all use a variety of means to communicate e.g. talking + facial expression + body language + gesture. At Mapledown, students are supported to develop their communication skills using whatever means works for them. A number of different communication systems, approaches and resources are in place at Mapledown School to support Total Communication. These include:

- Information Communication Technology (ICT) resources
- Use of symbols, pictures, photos and objects in teaching and throughout the school
- Objects of Reference
- Makaton signing
- TEACCH
- Symbol books
- Communication passports
- Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCAs) e.g. switches, Go-Talks and so on
- Intensive Interaction
- PODD books (high and low tech)

- Eye gaze devices

The Speech and Language Therapist's (SLT) role in the school

The aim of Speech and Language Therapy is to promote communication and independence as much as possible. Therefore, it is vital that students are able to use communication skills developed in therapy in their everyday lives. Research shows us that therapy works best when it is integrated into students' everyday life at school. Therefore, an SaLT programme that is integrated into everyday teaching is often the best way to help students develop their communication skills.

SaLTs work with teaching staff to:

- Identify individual targets (KPLTs) for students to develop key communication skills
- Identify activities and resources that staff can use in class to work on therapy targets. Where needed, SLTs work with students in the classroom to demonstrate activities to staff.
- Deliver formal training to staff to teach them different therapy techniques
- Help staff integrate opportunities for communication in daily life at school
- Assess pupils on the most appropriate AAC tool: type of PODD book, devices (including eye gaze devices), types of symbols (high contrast, size, etc)

SaLTs work with pupils to:

- Provide review assessments to evaluate a student's skills in the areas of:
 - attention and listening
 - social interaction
 - understanding spoken language (including verbal and non-verbal communication e.g. signs, symbols etc.)
 - expressive language (including verbal and non-verbal communication e.g. body language, gesture, vocalisations, spoken words, signs, symbols etc.)
- Provide a **Speech and Language Therapy Review Report and Communication Profile** following a review assessment. This will outline:
 - What a student is doing now (i.e. the skills that they already have)
 - Suggested targets to help develop key areas and ways in which home and school can help students with these targets (i.e. an SaLT programme)
 - Information about what SaLT will do to support the student (this could be by providing support to staff to implement targets; monitoring the pupil's progress via another review or providing some therapy)
- Provide direct therapy to target particular areas needing additional work. Therapy can be in a pair, small group or 1:1 and may be carried out by an SaLT or an SaLT Assistant. Therapy is usually provided in blocks of half a term and parents will receive a short progress report at the end of the block. Therapy is provided where the pupil's needs cannot be met via a programme alone, which might be because:
 - The therapy requires SaLT-specific skills and resources

- The therapy needed requires a lot of time and staff resources, which cannot be reasonably fitted into the class timetable
- Where a number of students from different classes would benefit from being grouped together to work on a particular area

ICT and Communication

SaLTs work closely with ICT staff to help integrate the use of technology throughout the school to help students with communication.

There are a variety of software packages on computers at the school to help develop and enhance communication skills. These can be used to work on foundation skills that form the basis of communication, for example:

- Understanding cause and effect
- Increasing attention
- Listening skills
- Looking and tracking a stimulus (following an object with your eyes)
- Coordination (eye hand)
- Recognising symbols and text
- Using symbols and text
- Problem solving
- Memory

Some students may also use technology in the form of Communication Aids, such as switches, Go-Talks or dynamic systems such as a Communication Grid on an iPad or eye gaze device.

Contacting SLT:

Parents are always welcome to contact me to discuss their child's progress or to arrange a meeting. I am always happy to invite parents in to observe sessions (either review or therapy sessions), so that they can see what we are working on. Feedback about the service is also welcome, and I would love to hear from parents if there is something that they:

- Think is working well
- Could (or should!) be done differently
- Something new that parents would like to see
- email - anna.knight14@nhs.net