
Report To:	Education and Lifelong Learning Committee	Date:	13 March 2012
Report By:	Corporate Director Education & Communities	Report to:	EDUC/18/12/AE
Contact Officer:	Angela Edwards	Contact No:	(01475) 712828
Subject:	Communication Friendly Schools		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform the Committee about the Education Service's plan to gradually develop Communication Friendly educational establishments throughout Inverclyde.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 Through monitoring of need at the ASN Monitoring Forum and a range of discussions with schools, parents, psychologists and speech and language therapists it has been decided to begin a project to take forward the development of Communication Friendly Establishments across the authority.
- 2.2 Curriculum for Excellence aims to enable all learners to be successful learners, effective contributors, confident individuals and responsible citizens. Language and communication is a fundamental competence underpinning all four capacities.
- 2.3 Inverclyde educational establishments are committed to developing communication skills in the best environment possible for all learners.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That the Committee note the information contained in this report.

Albert Henderson
Corporate Director Education & Communities

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Communication is much more than just pupil performance with speech or writing and it impacts on all aspects of learning. It impacts on skills development through literacy, numeracy and health and well-being. Communication skills are often an indicator of successful outcomes throughout life (Law 2007). It is therefore at the core of teaching and learning.
- 4.2 Up to 60% of children on the Autism Spectrum have significant difficulties with communication. I CAN recently reported that 50% of all children entering schools in the UK have some kind of difficulty with speech, language and communication. Around 10% of learners will have communication difficulties which persist beyond primary school.
- 4.3 Communication is a whole school responsibility. It is not just the responsibility of a specialist teacher, speech and language therapist or support assistant. How schools communicate with learners and their families is important. The more universal support a school has the less need there will be for targeted interventions.
- 4.4 In a communication friendly school all barriers to communication are removed to provide a safe and accessible learning environment for everyone. Supports are provided so that every learner can make sense of their environment, be as independent as possible and express themselves and participate actively in the life of the learning community.
- 4.5 Communication friendly supports are not just for children who e.g. are on the Autism Spectrum or have a specific difficulty but are also for children who: *are new or are in transition, may have attention deficits, find change difficult and require consistent structures, have English as an additional language, process information slowly, have recall difficulties or are visual learners.* In short, communication friendly supports help all young people to learn and access the curriculum more effectively.

The Communication friendly project will be led by a core multi-agency steering group. This group has received initial training and one secondary school has asked to become involved as a pilot school.

The programme will consist of different 'Communication Friendly' levels:

Level 1 : Awareness

Level 2 : Project Planning

Level 3 : Project Implementation

Level 4 : Communication Friendly supports embedded across establishment.

- 4.6 In a communication friendly establishment staff might use visual signposts effectively through e.g. a colour coded map of school or setting , colour coded directions, photographs of staff members, photographs/ symbols used to support routines, visual timetables used for daily / weekly activities, objects, pictures and symbols used to teach vocabulary, to make stories more active and support engagement in other lessons and displays used throughout school or setting to support learning and understanding.
- 4.7 Adults who can prioritise communication, may include adults who have knowledge of language development, understand the language levels of children and the language demands in the environment, can adapt their language so it is not a barrier to learning or communication and give children strategies to say when they don't understand. High and low tech communication supports may also be used.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications at present

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 6.1 The Head of Children & Families and Criminal Justice has been consulted on this project.

7.0 EQUALITIES

7.1 Equality and diversity procedures have been embedded in this process.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 The goal of this project is that Inverclyde becomes a place where children are able communicators, who can take advantage of health, education and employment. To achieve this goal it is vital that all environments which our children and young people come into contact with fulfil their role in nurturing communication development. This project will start this process.