CITY OF ROCHESTER SCHOOL
EASL, SCERTS, Sensory and Communication Policy

This policy, which applies to the whole school, and upon request a copy (which can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required) may be obtained from the School Office.

In the City of Rochester School, the term 'staff' is inclusive of all staff and it also applies to students on placement, contractors, agency staff, volunteers, the Trustees and Board of Trustees.

Monitoring and Review:

This policy is subject to continuous monitoring, refinement and audit by the Headteacher. The Headteacher will undertake a full annual review of this policy and procedures, inclusive of its implementation and the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged. Any deficiencies or weaknesses recognised in arrangements or procedures will be remedied immediately and without delay.

Signed:

Date Reviewed: March 2024
Date of Next Review: March 2025
Version No. 2

Alicja Emmett
Headteacher

This policy will be reviewed no later than March 2024, or earlier if changes in legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

At City of Rochester school, we employ a range of approaches and interventions to ensure that our offer meets the needs of individual children.

Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) benefit from a Total Communication Approach, to ensure that their communication development is maximised over time. The Therapy team are vital components at City of Rochester school, working in collaboration with classroom staff to select and use the most appropriate tools for each child.

We are very aware that a student's inability to communicate effectively can be a significant (possibly the most significant) barrier to learning. Therefore, we work collaboratively to ensure that we focus on communication friendly strategies and environment that remove these barriers.

What is SCERTS?

City of Rochester school values the diversity of its pupils, therefore, all pupils have their own SCERTS profile and range of transactional supports which work best for them. No one child is the same and so the support they require will not be the same either.

Many of our pupils require time set aside to allow for self-regulation in whichever way suits them best (this could be a purposeful movement break, time in a dark tent, time using Theraputty, time typing on their laptop, or making use of a sensory soothing room) Without this time set aside, the pupils would struggle to maintain a state of regulation and it would not be possible to meaningfully teach them.

SCERTS stands for:

Social Communication

Emotional Regulation

Transactional Supports

The SCERTS model is a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach to enhancing communication and socio-emotional needs of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and related disabilities. It is designed to target priority goals in social communication and emotional regulation through the implementation of transactional supports.

The SCERTS model is based on research in child development as well as research identifying the core challenges faced by children with ASD and is focussed on improving the quality of life of children with ASD and their families.

Emotional Regulation

The emotional regulation domain for pupils accessing SCERTS focusses on supporting the child's ability to regulate emotional arousal and be available for learning.

Children are most available for learning when they can: attend to the most relevant information in the activity or setting, remain socially engaged, process verbal and nonverbal information, initiate interactions using higher level abilities, respond to others in reciprocal interactions and actively participate in everyday activities.

Emotional regulation components include self-regulation (strategies a child has at his/her disposal to independently shift arousal and emotional state) and mutual regulation (how a child requests and responds to regulatory assistance offered by others.)

The SCERTS programme is used in cooperation with Parents, S.A.L.T, Occupational Therapist and outside agencies when required. We consider SCERTS an important part of our offer and it informs individual targets and PCAR outcomes.

Social Communication

The social communication domain for pupils accessing SCERTS is focussed on helping a child to be increasingly competent, confident and an active participant in social activities. The components of social communication include joint attention (the reasons why a child initiates and responds to communication bids) and symbol use (the means a child uses to communicate with others – not always necessarily symbols, it could be body language, behaviour, verbalisation, AAC devices, etc.)

Transactional Supports:

The transactional supports domain for pupils accessing SCERTS refers to supports put in place by partners (teachers/ teaching assistants/ parents/ etc.) to help facilitate a child's learning and development.

Transactional supports components include: Interpersonal supports(adjustments made by communicative partners in language use, emotional expression, and interactive style that are effective in helping a child with ASD process language, participate in social interaction, experience social activities as emotionally satisfying and maintain a well-regulated state), Learning support(includes environmental arrangement or other ways activities are set up or modified to foster social communication and emotional regulation), support to families and support to professionals.
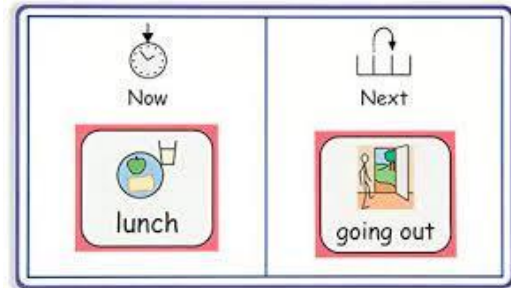
How is SCERTS implemented in City of Rochester school?

Class teachers and their teams work alongside the SENCo to assess all pupils in their class. Following the assessments, appropriate goals will be selected from the SCERTS assessment framework. These goals are highly personalised toward the individual and their needs.

Once personal targets have been identified, the staff team around the child will develop Transactional Supports to help pupils achieve their SCERTS goals, creating opportunities and activities that are motivating and appropriate to the child's interests and needs. These activities may be delivered 1:1 or in small groups, they can also be seemingly incidental tasks that occur throughout the school day. As pupils begin to achieve their goals, activities are revised so that they can develop their skills in different contexts and with a wider range of partners.

Impact on the individual

Through progression of the SCERTS model pupils are able to communicate functionally and appropriately according to their ability; this could be verbally, using symbols or a communication aid. They will be able to regulate their own emotions which will allow them to access learning opportunities, transition around school and different environments with reduced stress and anxiety. They accept support from others and share attention. They will be able to transfer these skills to other contexts. Re-assessment is completed annually to track pupil progress or as progress is made.

The ZONES of Regulation

The Zones of Regulation supports the SCERTS Model of practice as it works to build skills and strategies that address needs in emotional regulation and executive functioning. It helps pupils to recognise how they are feeling and learn how to communicate this. It develops understanding of facial expressions, perspective about how others react to their behaviours, insight into what triggers their behaviours, calming and alerting strategies and problem-solving skills. It also works on developing a 'tool kit' of strategies to help pupils move between zones or get into the expected zone for a certain situation. It is important to recognise that everyone experiences all of the zones and that the red and yellow zones are not the 'bad' zones. All of the zones are expected in different situations.

Approaches to communication

At City of Rochester school we use a range of different communication methods to interact with the pupils, we do not follow one approach as the needs of the students vary between classes and age groups. However, many of

these approaches are specific to learners with autism. The important thing to remember is that whatever approaches are assessed as being appropriate for the individual students, they should be consistently followed by all staff and carers working with the student, to ensure that maximum communicative function is achieved. This means that if a student is more able to communicate and understand photographs, they should always have access to them, and all staff should know how to use them with the student. They should be moved on to the next stage after structured discussion and planning between SENCo and school staff. We continue to support this through collaborative ongoing CPD.

Intensive Interaction

'Intensive Interaction is a practical approach to interacting with people with learning difficulties who do not find it easy communicating or being social. This approach helps the person with learning difficulties and their communication partner to relate better to each other and enjoy each other's company more. It helps them develop their communication abilities. In Intensive Interaction the carer, support worker, teacher or SENCo works on being a better communication partner and so supports the person with learning difficulties to develop confidence and competence as a communicator. Intensive Interaction is a fun process. The communication partner is guided by what we know about how communication ordinarily develops for young students. S/he applies this knowledge in a way that is sensitive and respectful to the person with learning disability whatever their age." (British Institute of Learning Disabilities).

Photographs

Photographs can help people begin to develop their symbolic understanding of the world around them. A photograph supports the students to develop a link between the visual representation of an object or event and the real thing. Photographs not only develop understanding but can also be used to establish expressive communication e.g. choice making or requesting.

Symbols

As symbolic understanding develops students are more able to understand the abstract qualities of symbols in relation to objects and events. At City of Rochester school we use a combination Widget Symbols in colour with the students. Symbols are used throughout the environment e.g. timetables as well as directly during and outside of classroom sessions. Symbols can range from the easily recognisable 'cat' to the more arbitrary connecting words e.g. 'to' and 'but'. Once the symbols are established by the student it is imperative that the same size and the same symbol picture are used consistently. Symbols can be used with the written word underneath which can support students with their reading and pattern matching skills. Students who use symbols as a means of expressive communication must have access to their symbols at all times so they can initiate interactions. However, some students will not naturally progress to using symbols as it can be too abstract for them if this is the case their communication needs should be met through the use of objects and photographs as appropriate.

TEACCH

(Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication needs Children) All City of Rochester students benefit from some of the approaches that are used within the TEACCH approach like concepts such as 'finished', first and next, being taught how to transfer learnt skills to everyday activities, starting work independently, and using clear concise language. Every class in the school has a daily timetable and/or individual timetables displaying what lessons the students will be having that morning, afternoon, day or week depending on the ability of the student. These timetables can take the form of objects, photos, or symbols depending on the level of the students using them. These schedules help to facilitate the smooth running of the classroom day and can help reduce some student's anxieties about what may be happening throughout the day.

Makaton

Makaton is a language programme that uses signs and symbols to help people to communicate. Signs and symbols are used along with speech and gesture, facial expression, eye contact and body language. Makaton is designed to support spoken language and the signs and symbols are used with speech in spoken word order. Makaton helps to simplify language as only the keywords in a sentence are signed. At City of Rochester school we use Makaton signs to support and develop receptive, expressive, and functional communication skills. It is used by staff as part of a total communication approach to support students understanding of language and facilitate and encourage their expressive communication even if that student does not use signed Makaton expressively. For more information about Makaton see www.makaton.org

Colourful semantics

Colourful semantics is an approach created by Alison Bryan. It is aimed at helping children to develop their grammar, but it is routed in the meaning of words (semantics). Some students use colourful semantics to support their understanding of language.

Social Communication Skills

Social communication skills are skills in interacting with other people. E.g. eye contact, turn taking, personal space, volume of voice, negotiating and resolving conflict. We regard these as an essential part of participation in society. Staff use good models of social communication in their interactions with each other and students within the school. At City of Rochester school, we facilitate the use of social communication skills through direct targeted work and also reinforcing and generalising these throughout the school day. We practice these skills in real life situations such as going to the shops and buying what is needed for snack time, ordering a drink in a café etc.

Welfare Provision for Pupils for Whom English is an Additional Language

Ensuring the welfare and academic success of pupils for whom English is an additional language is a key priority. To effectively support these students City of Rochester applies a comprehensive holistic approach to meet the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language.

Initial Assessment: During integration each pupil has an initial assessment to gauge their English proficiency level. This assessment helps in identifying individual needs and tailor support accordingly. It forms the basis for the creation of personalised learning plans for students.

Ongoing Monitoring: Continuous monitoring of pupil's progress to track their language development and academic growth. Regular assessments and progress checks take place to ensure necessary adjustments are made to support strategies.

Inclusive Atmosphere: City of Rochester ensures an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere to foster a sense of belonging for all pupils. Embracing diversity and celebrating different cultures contribute to a harmonious learning environment.

Buddy System: City of Rochester implements a buddy system by pairing students proficient in English with those who require additional support. This promotes peer learning, encourages friendships, and provides a reliable support network for students.

City of Rochester School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. It is our aim that all pupils fulfil their potential.

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Targeted Language Support: Pupils who English is an additional language have targeted language support programmes tailored to the specific needs of each pupil to enhance their language acquisition skills. These programmes focus on improving vocabulary, grammar, and communication skills.

Adapted Instruction: We adapt instruction to accommodate diverse learning styles and language abilities. We use differentiated instruction to ensure that all students can access the curriculum at their level of proficiency.

Modified Materials: We provide modified materials that are suitable for students with varying English proficiency levels aids in their comprehension and participation in lessons. Visual aids, simplified texts, and bilingual resources are invaluable in this regard.

Language-Rich Environment: We create a language-rich environment both inside and outside the classroom to immerse pupils in English language usage. Opportunities for language practice through conversations, reading materials, and group activities are integrated into daily routines.

Parental Involvement: We involve parents in the educational process. Building partnerships with parents through regular communication, workshops, and resources to empower them to support their child's learning at home.

Collaborative Planning and Training for staff: We support collaborative planning involving teachers, support staff, and external agencies to ensure a holistic approach to supporting EAL pupils. Sharing expertise, resources, and best practices optimises the effectiveness of interventions. We provide continuous professional development opportunities for staff to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to support EAL students effectively. Training on language acquisition strategies, cultural awareness, and inclusive practices to enhance the quality of support provided.

Pastoral Care: We offering pastoral care and emotional support to EAL students promotes their overall well-being and academic success. Counselling services, mentorship programmes, and a nurturing environment in order to help students navigate challenges and thrive.

In conclusion, by implementing a holistic welfare provision that encompasses initial assessment, ongoing monitoring, targeted support, and a supportive environment, we aim to effectively meet the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language. This multi-faceted approach ensures that every student has the opportunity to excel academically and feel valued within the educational community.

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