



Communication & Reading Strategy

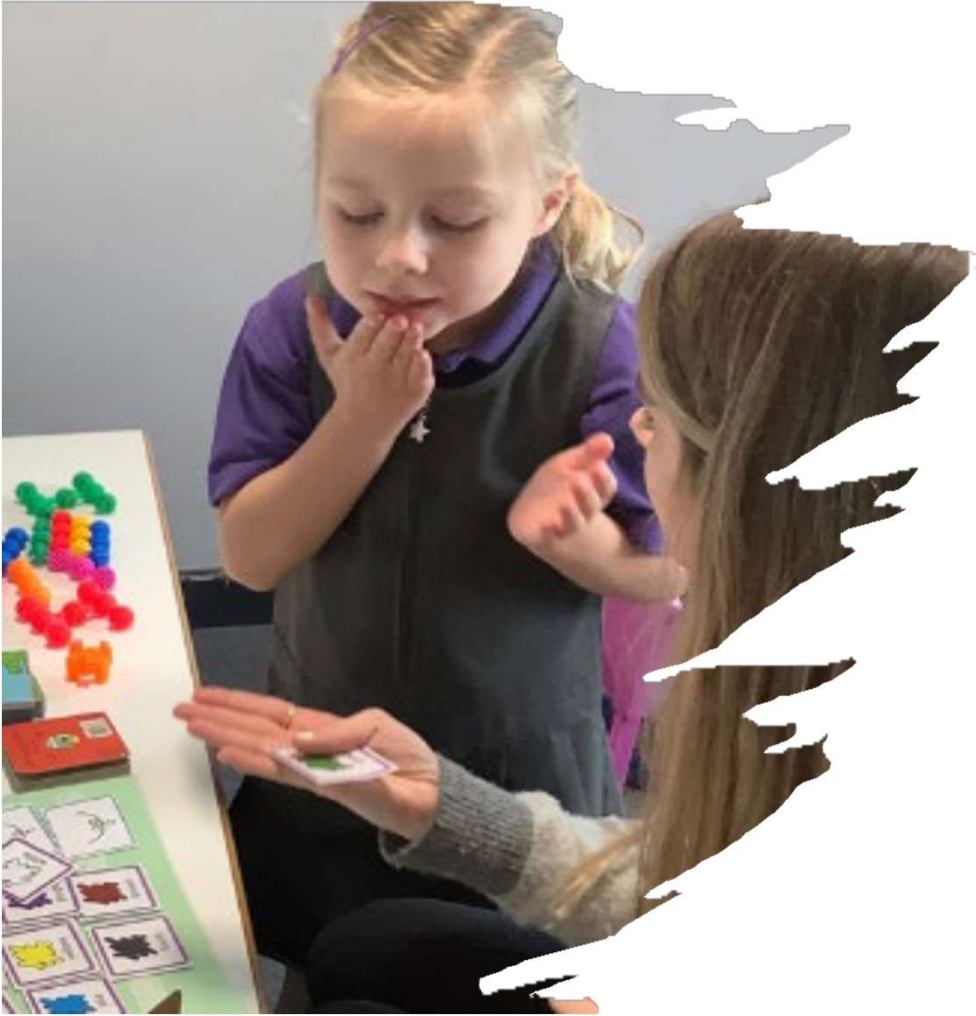
Approaches to Communication & Reading at MBA

At MBA we believe communication and reading are fundamental life skills that can develop engagement in learning. Through communication we develop a love of learning for all and we are committed to ensuring considered reading opportunities for every child, every day.



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 Extending the Boundaries of Learning





Everyone has the right to be heard.

As part of our safeguarding approach, we talk about hearing the messages, spoken or otherwise, that pupils share. An important part of this is ensuring pupils have the tools they need to be effective communicators. Being able to communicate is one of the most important skills we need in life. Almost everything we do involves communication; everyday tasks such as learning at school, asking for food and drink, sorting out problems, making friends and having fun. These all rely on our ability to communicate with each other.

At MBA we commit to being a total communication environment where staff will be trained in the skills needed to effectively support pupils in their chosen form of communication. We use a range of tools and approaches to ensure that communication skills are gained and developed by all pupils here at MBA. Approaches include Makaton and Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS).



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Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

PECS is a unique alternative/augmentative communication system developed in the USA in 1985 by Andy Bondy, PhD, and Lori Frost, MS, CCC-SLP.

PECS was first implemented with pre-school students diagnosed with autism at the Delaware Autism Program. Since then, PECS has successfully been implemented worldwide with thousands of learners of all ages who have various cognitive, physical and communication challenges.

PECS consists of six phases and begins by teaching an individual to give a single picture of a desired item or action to a “communicative partner” who immediately honors the exchange as a request. The system goes on to teach discrimination of pictures and how to put them together in sentences. In the more advanced phases, individuals are taught to use modifiers, answer questions and comment.

The primary goal of PECS is to teach functional communication. Research has shown that some learners using PECS also develop speech. Others may transition to a speech generating device (SGD). The body of research supporting the effectiveness of PECS as an evidence-based practice is substantial and continues to expand.





Makaton

Makaton is a unique language programme that uses symbols, signs and speech to enable people to communicate. It supports the development of essential communication skills such as attention and listening, comprehension, memory, recall and organisation of language and expression.

With Makaton, signs are used, with speech, in spoken word order. This helps provide extra clues about what someone is saying. Using signs can help people who have no speech or whose speech is unclear, as well as helping those who cannot or prefer not to sign.

For those who have experienced the frustration of being unable to communicate meaningfully or effectively, Makaton really can help. Makaton takes away that frustration and enables individuals to connect with other people and the world around them. This opens up all kinds of possibilities.

Staff have been learning Makaton since the school opened in April 2020. We learn new signs as a team everyday and share these, where appropriate, with our pupils. We also learn signs linked to our topics to support written word.

The Journey of Reading

At MBA we believe communication and reading are fundamental life skills that can develop engagement in learning and are essential for our Pupils to progress to future pathways and being able to negotiate the adult world. Through communication, our English curriculum strives to develop a love of learning for all our Pupils, and we are committed to ensuring reading opportunities (at the appropriate level) for every child, every day.

Pupils embark upon a reading journey; for some pupils this will be the opportunity to enjoy sensory stories and for others this will be sharing books with an adult or peer, listening to stories, or reading.

Our pupils have daily opportunities to engage with reading in a multisensory way, to become familiar with stories, revisit language and most of all, foster enjoyment in reading so that one day, they may be able to get lost in a book and all it holds.



Little Wandle Letters and Sounds



We follow the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised Reading and Phonics Scheme, which is a DfE approved systematic, synthetic phonics scheme (SSP). Little Wandle SEND programme has been created to help children read with the right level of challenge for each child using a graduated approach.

Little Wandle Letters and Sounds draws on the latest research into how children learn best, how to ensure learning stays in children's long-term memory and how best to enable children to apply their learning to become highly competent readers.

Little Wandle Letters and Sounds underpins the way that learning is sequenced, so that pupils can regularly consolidate their phonic understanding, and build on their prior learning. Pupils learn new phonemes in structured phonics sessions at a pace that is appropriate. All classes use the same resources to ensure consistency, and lesson pace is bespoke for each pupil / group of pupils.

During reading sessions across the week pupils follow a *three reads structure* which ensures pupils are taught to decode, read with prosody and comprehension. Little Wandle is followed with fidelity to reduce cognitive load of our pupils.



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Love of Reading

Library

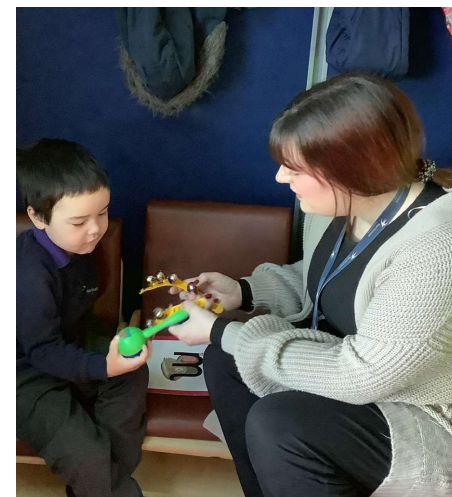
We have a library well stocked with a range of reading material including wordless picture books, picture books, chapter books, fiction and non-fiction, comics, graphic novels and newspapers. It has been carefully designed to be a welcoming and calm space featuring artwork by a local artist. Pupils have regular timetabled sessions to visit the library and borrow books. There is a weekly lunchtime reading club and classes visit as part of English lessons to share books.

Reading at Home

Pupils in the Primary classes take home a reading practice book from the Little Wandle library. This will be book that the pupil can read with 95% fluency. The aim is for parents and carers to share a book, celebrate the reading and talk about the story. Re-reading builds fluency.

Remote Audio Books

At MBA we believe that it is important for stories and books to be shared with pupils. We have our own remote library on our website, where staff share books and read aloud. Parents are supplied with the password to this area and lots of our pupils love listening to these stories at home.



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Reading Opportunities at MBA

Daily Reading

All of our pupils have a reading session each day and read either independently or with an adult. Some children experience this as sensory stories which link themes, words and letters to the senses.

Class Reader

Across the week all children are read to by an adult. These stories are carefully selected to be age appropriate and engaging. The books are all either written by neurodivergent authors, published by a Neurodivergent publishing house or feature neurodivergent characters. The stories link in with specific needs our children have relating to their diagnosis. They are linked to our pillars and promote cultural capital as they feature authors from different backgrounds. We aim to provide our pupils the ability to accumulate knowledge, behaviours and skills to enable them to be confident and 'happy in their skin.'

Reading as communication

We use social stories and comic strip conversations with widget symbols to help our pupils with things that they find tricky such as transitions, social situations and emotional regulation.

