



## Language and Protocols Policy

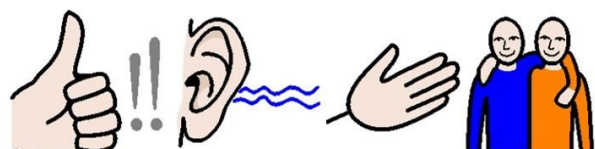
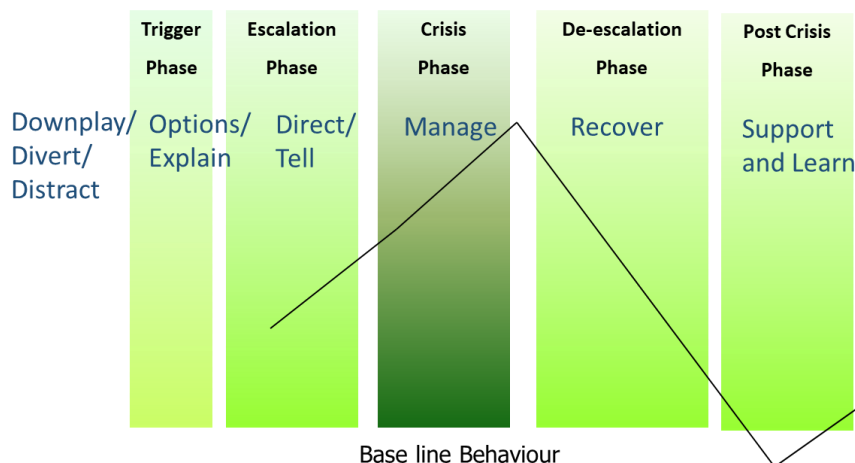
At Ash Lea our motto is “working together to be our best” and this principle should be reflected in the language and associated actions used towards each other and in particular our pupils, who, due to their special educational needs or disabilities may not be able to voice their objections to how they are spoken to, and about.

We have co-produced this policy to ensure that all our pupils are being spoken to and treated with respect and dignity and that the language used by all supports our equality and diversity policy. Staff, pupils, families and governors have contributed towards its production through discussions and consultation. Examples of words or actions that we collectively find disrespectful come from real examples from working within, with or being part of a special educational needs and disability community and wider reading and learning.

This policy is intended to offer support for us as a whole school community to respectfully challenge when language and actions do not meet these standards and expectations. As educators, we understand our responsibilities in promoting the perception of our pupils. Our language and actions are key in promoting our pupils as valued and valuable members of society.

Whilst this policy describes the principles of how we work, more detailed list of words, actions and phrases we prefer to use and hear at our school will be produced in conjunction with this policy and as a simple prompt for display in classrooms. There are also some sentence starters that could help when staff are working with pupils who may need help with their emotions and regulation (see appendix 1). There is also the Kaplan and Wheeler Assault cycle below to help illustrate preventing and managing challenging behaviour with our pupils.

### A Model for Intervention



Whilst we have sought to capture our community's view for now, we accept that innovating language to ensure that we represent our values, current thinking and responses to new challenges means that this policy and our language will continuously evolve.

## Respectful Language

“I may understand very little or a lot. Think about what you say to me and around me”

Whilst we ensure that we support pupils to understand from the earliest developmental levels upwards (with signing, gesture, objects of reference and communication devices) and we know that many pupils at Ash Lea don't all use speech, we ALWAYS assume that our conversations can or could be understood and this should influence how and what we talk about around pupils. Conversations about sensitive issues (health, personal care etc.) should be had away from pupils. We describe the communication used rather than what the person CAN'T do; signer, pre-verbal, alternative communicator, AAC user for example.

We direct our communication to the pupil, and / or use a communication device where this is appropriate, even when another adult may need to advocate or voice something for a pupil if they are unable to talk. For pupils who are wheelchair users, we should remember that *“My level is eye level”* and communicate to them, not about them, at eye level.

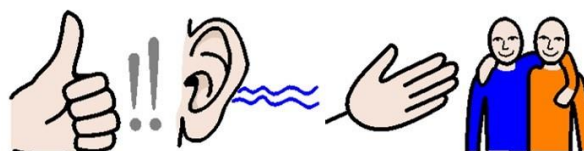
During consultation, it was felt that using the term ‘we’ when talking about an individual was not appropriate or accurate. For example, an adult using the phrase “We're not very happy today” when talking about another's emotional state is inaccurate and not respectful.

Many pupils need support with various aspects of their care, eating and drinking and moving and handling needs. We inform in a way that's most meaningful to that pupil what we are doing next.

Whilst we are always aspirational in what all our pupils can achieve, and that we always speak to pupils assuming they understand, we are careful that we don't apply motives that are not there. Examples given have been that a pupil who is doubly incontinent ‘deciding’ to urinate or defecate at a particular time, that an action when a child is in crisis is deliberate – as one parent told us “that a behaviour is consciously chosen by a child” or that a reflex action can be controlled or labelling pupils as ‘lazy’ for being unable to complete a task.

## Labels, Abbreviations, Initialisms & Acronyms

The world of special educational needs and disabilities is full of these, used to summarise long phrases, conditions, labels and processes. An abbreviation is a shortened word; an acronym is made up of parts of the phrase it stands for and is pronounced as a word (SEND,

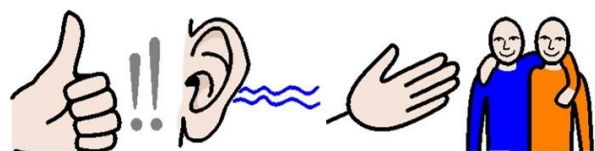


AIDS, FIFA); an initialism is an acronym that is pronounced as individual letters (DNA, PCR, EHCP). These can often lead to a complete misunderstanding of what is being spoken about. Many parents and their children have involvement with many different professionals where these are used frequently and we must ensure that we have a shared understanding of what these are when we talk to parents and carers, through shared and personalised communications and conversations.

Through consultation, our community tell us that we should choose 'person first' language; conditions, syndromes and disabilities may be useful to inform the needs of a pupil for a report or provision, but we must never forget the individual, their character and personality. Our pupils are, for example, wheelchair users, a person with Down's Syndrome, not 'the wheelchairs or 'Down's'. We also use labels with consideration; a parent described the label of 'profound and multiple learning difficulties' or PMLD as being a "heavy label to attach to a person". It is also common to describe the needs of people with a special educational need or disability as well as being neurodivergent as having degrees of such need that might be affected 'profound and multiply', 'severely' or 'moderately'. We choose to use language that describes the level of need within, for example, the spectrum of autism; we choose to describe someone as having low or high levels of support needs, rather than 'moderate' or 'severe' autism. We will seek to use labels where they help in a context where there is a shared understanding of these but will try to use clear illustrative language and describe and talk about the individual as much as possible. We also know that many people who are neurodivergent (autism, for example) prefer to be referred to as 'autistic' rather than a person with autism as some feel their neurodivergence defines who they are. We are aware of these different perspectives and will always seek to be sensitive, responsive and curious about how individuals seek to be addressed.

["Don't talk about my toileting needs out loud, unless you're happy for someone to talk about yours."](#)

Many of our pupils need support with personal and intimate care (full or some support when going to the toilet). When supporting pupils during toileting, dignity is vital. We communicate this to pupils discreetly and use signing and symbols or other means of preferred communication. We tell pupils what is going to happen before we do it to give them time to process what is happening and what is expected. Staff are to be discrete when discussing any personal or intimate care issues. Pupils may be praised for using the toilet especially if they are toilet training etc. however this is to be decided by the class team and in consultation with parents / carers how this is done appropriately and in a dignified way. At Ash Lea we choose to use the term "pad" not "nappy" for those who wear these.





“You don’t feed me, you help me eat”

Some pupils need full or some support to eat and drink. At Ash Lea we don’t ‘feed’ we help or support to eat or drink. When supporting pupils with eating and drinking, we talk to pupils about what it is they have got to eat or drink and to offer instructions to support. We describe the texture, the colour, the ingredients if appropriate and follow that pupil’s eating and drinking plan, if they have one. If pupils don’t, it is expected that the adult is given guidance (through a ‘working with me’ document’) on pupil preferences and that the adult gives processing time and allows them time to enjoy their food. Pupils may wear an apron or neckerchief during snack and meal times these are not to be referred to as “bibs” at Ash Lea. The aprons and neckerchiefs are sometimes used to wipe saliva from pupils’ faces, staff are again expected to do this in a dignified manner and not refer to it as slaver, dribble or spit for example, a simple ‘I’m just wiping your face’ will suffice.

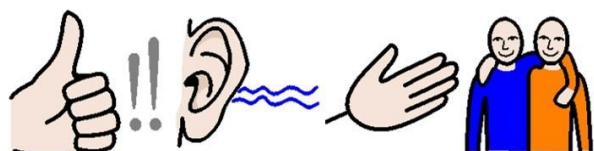
As well as respectful language around personal and sensitive matters, we use language that is appropriate for the pupil's age. Using the term ‘good boy / girl’ may be something that is appropriate for a 6 year old, but not a 16 year old. There are plenty of ways of responding positively without using infantilised language. Also using similar terms such as ‘darling’ and ‘sweetheart’ are mostly not appropriate within a school setting. ‘Baby talk’ is also discouraged. Learning should always be developmentally appropriate, however our language should always be age appropriate. We also expect staff to speak and write with a good standard of English and need to provide good models of this for ALL our pupils.

## Behaviour that is challenging

Some of our pupils may at times show behaviour that challenges; damaging property, injuring themselves or others, or using abusive or offensive language. More detail on how we support pupils to maintain appropriate and respectful behaviour is in our Positive Behaviour Policy.

It is important we validate children’s emotions and feelings, but even more so when they are in such moments of crisis. “Get a grip, don’t be mardy, don’t be silly, you’re fine, that’s bad” are not helpful ways of supporting children to recognise and understand their emotions. Pupils need staff who can manage situations with a calm manner and be able to trust that staff will support them to get through what they are feeling until they return to their ‘baseline’, where they are calm and regulated. (Kaplan and Wheeler).

Examples of how we can talk to pupils may vary and this will be illustrated in pupil behaviour support plans. For most situations, as outlined in our physical intervention



training (CRB) we should stay calm and clearly instruct pupils to what we want them to do (let go, sit down etc.) Adults must always stay in control of their feelings and consider how they are modelling to pupils the way in which they manage their own emotions. When this becomes difficult it is the staff members' responsibility to step away if they can. Challenging behaviour *is* challenging, and we support each other during these moments without judgement. For any one observing incidents such as this, you may wish to check in to see if any support is needed but should not comment on what is happening or how the incident is being managed.

We use 'behaviour watch' to document, record and reflect on incidents of challenging behaviour. How we describe these incidents need to illustrate clearly what happened, be concise, and written with a good standard of English. They should also illustrate the calm, supportive and reflective approaches to managing the incident itself. We understand that such reports may be read by others; parents and carers, inspectors or other professionals. We must never use words such as "naughty, on one, bad, silly, kicking off" etc\_ when we are working with pupils who are in crisis or in post incident reports. The purpose of these reports is to document but also to learn from what happened.

As outlined in our 'Positive Behaviour Policy' we never shout at pupils unless there is immediate danger, and this is necessary. We never use humiliating language.

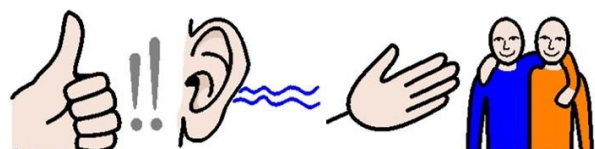
Pupils' equipment should not be used for compliance and control purposes, this is restrictive practice and completely unacceptable. Pupils may however have equipment that they use as a "safe space" and may indicate that they want to access it. It is up to the class team alongside senior leaders to decide with the pupil when it is and isn't appropriate to be used but this will need constant monitoring to ensure it is being used appropriately. Its use must be clearly and transparently communicated with parents and carers.

## Moving and Handling and Pupil Equipment

"If you're tired and need a rest, please don't lean on my chair or stander, it's part of ME!"

For pupils who use wheelchairs, standers or supportive seating equipment, this should never be used to lean on.

When hoisting pupils, we must talk to the pupil and not over them, letting them know what we are doing and what is happening. For pupils who need support in being taken anywhere, we must let pupils know where they are being taken to first and not after you have already started walking. If there is a change in plans or route, then this needs to be communicated to the pupil.



We must remember again that *“my level is eye level”* when communicating with pupils who are wheelchair users.

## Equality and Protected Characteristics

Any language used in school will ensure that it respects and reflects the diversity of identity within the school and community. All language used in school is respectful of the protected characteristics, which are defined as:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and Civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

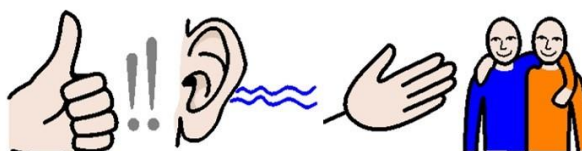
All staff and pupils should feel empowered and supported to challenge any language used that does not respect these characteristics or refers unnecessarily to them. All pupils should be given an understanding appropriate to their stage of learning of how to speak about protected characteristics and equality, diversity and inclusion.

We do encourage staff and pupils to ask questions so that, when they are unsure of the most respectful language possible, they are given answers that give them confidence to talk about individuals' protected characteristics respectfully and potentially explore why some words cause offence.

## Language around learning disabilities / difficulties

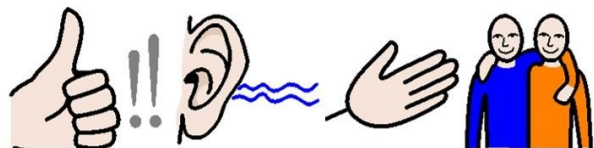
We are also aware that many words that are, to differing degrees, commonplace, come from a dark history where individuals with an intellectual disability were categorised, particularly in legal and psychiatric contexts (to exclude from inheritance, or to justify genocide or sterilisation, for example). On a scale, people would be categorised as 'idiots', 'imbeciles', or 'morons'. 'Retard' is more prevalent in the United States.

As we understand where these words have come from, we choose to not use negative words such as this at Ash Lea and model this with our pupils, immediate and wider school



community. We understand that these words are used casually within our community, but we have a responsibility to respectfully challenge the use of such words and model describing the behaviour that a word such as 'idiot' might be trying to describe.

We know that many of the words, phrases may be commonly used, and we know that they are often used carelessly rather than deliberately to offend. We accept that we will all make mistakes in trying to improve. That is why a shared responsibility to challenge each other and accept this challenge is vital. We encourage conversation about these matters and curiosity to learn about another's perspective and lived experience and hope that our protocols will constantly evolve through our openness.





### Appendix 1 - Emotion Coaching Scripts

#### Step 1: Recognising your own and the other person's feelings and empathising with them.

What are the feeling(s) you might experience in this situation?  
What are the feelings for the other person?

#### Step 2: Labelling the feelings and validating them

##### Labelling:

Use words to reflect back the person's emotions

##### Possible sentence starters

*I wonder if you feel.....*  
*It seems that you are.....*  
*That sounds as though it was .....*  
*That must have been scary.....*  
*I wonder if you are feeling nervous....*

##### Validating with Empathy:

Empathise with the emotion by paying attention to what you are feeling and trying to see things from the perspective of the other person

Look for physical as well as verbal signs of the emotion being felt

Affirm

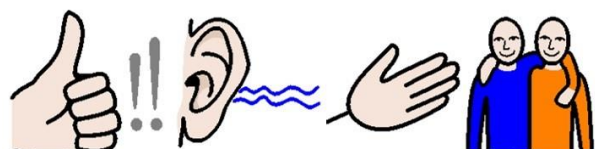
Allow time to calm down. Watch for physical signs of calming

##### Possible sentence starters

*I'm sorry that happened to you, that must feel .....*  
*How hurtful, for you*  
*That sounds (or feels) like it is a big feeling.*  
*I would feel .... if that happened to me.*  
*It's normal to feel ..... about .....*  
*It's OK to feel angry about ..... when ... happens to you*  
*No wonder you were....., I imagine you were looking forward to...*  
*I can see you feel .....when that happens/when I do(say).....*

#### Step 3: Limit Setting (if needed)

Give guidance and positively explain boundaries by outlining what is acceptable behaviour







*I understand that you might have not felt listened to, we need to stay safe in the classroom, we need to be kind.*

*Remember we try to use words to tell people when something is not right for us  
When you told Amber to go away, it made it difficult for everyone to keep playing,  
everyone likes to play in a group.*

*In school, we have guidelines to follow that keep us all safe.*

*When it is raining we need to wear our jackets to play outside*

#### **Step 4: Problem Solving with the child or young person**

##### **Exploring**

You might talk with the C/YP's about the feelings and needs that gave rise to the problem/ behaviour/situation – be specific.

C&YP might need help to think about what they were trying to achieve with their behaviour, what did they want to stop or start?

*“What were you wanting to happen?”*

*“How were you feeling when that happened?” or “What did it make you feel like?”*

*“Have you felt that way before?”*

##### **Sharing Ideas**

Identify alternative, more appropriate and more productive ways of expressing and/or managing feelings and behaviour/actions, through scaffolding

Empower the C&YP to recognise feelings, behaviour and take ownership/responsibility of actions and finding ways to self-regulate in the future.

*“Let’s think of what you could have done instead”*

*“Can you think of a different way to deal with your feelings at this time?”*

*“What about if you.....”*

*“Let’s put some ideas on paper of what you could do if you felt ..... in the future”*

##### **Agreeing Solutions**

*“Let’s look at the list and see what we think together?”*

*“What ideas and suggestions do you like?”*

*“You could ..... or ....., which one sounds good to you?”*

*“What ideas don’t you like?”*

*“Let’s decide what you will do next time you feel like this”*

*“How do you think doing..... would be more helpful for you and others?”*

*“What will help you to remember to do this?”*

*“How can you practice to .... ?”*

