



COMMUNICATION

Reintegreat School Toolkit

Positive Communication with Pupils

1. Introduction

Effective communication is the foundation of positive relationships in school. The way adults interact with pupils directly influences behaviour, engagement, and emotional wellbeing.

At Reintegreat, we expect communication to:

- Show respect and empathy.
- Model calm, solution-focused interactions.
- Support children to feel **safe, valued, and understood**.
- Reinforce consistency across classrooms and staff.

 *Remember: The message is not just in the words – tone of voice, facial expression, body language, and presence matter just as much.*

2. The Do's and Don'ts of Communication

DON'T

- Blame or shame pupils.
- Highlight failings or weaknesses.
- Challenge their judgements or choices aggressively.
- Threaten or give ultimatums.
- Undermine confidence or self-esteem.

DO

- Stay calm and show empathy.
- Share responsibility and avoid blame language.
- Provide clear, firm direction.
- Give space and time for pupils to process.
- Support emotional wellbeing alongside academic learning.

3. Strategies for Positive Communication

A. Building Relationships

- Ensure trusted adults meet and greet pupils at the start of the day and after lunch – this provides a quick emotional wellbeing check.

- Use home-school communication positively: liaison books, postcards, phone calls home for good news.
- Celebrate small successes for each child, personalised to their needs.

B. Using Praise Effectively

- Use **specific praise**: “*Mary, you sat beautifully on the carpet.*”
- Employ **proximity praise** – highlight good behaviour near a pupil who is struggling, instead of spotlighting negative behaviour.
- Remember some children may distrust praise – pitch it appropriately to avoid embarrassment.
- Aim for a **4:1 ratio of positives to negatives**.

C. Giving Feedback

- Use descriptive language: explain *what* was done well and *why* it matters.
- Apply the “**feedback sandwich**”: Positive → Constructive → Positive.
- Choose carefully between 1:1 and whole-class feedback – personalise where needed.

D. Language Choices

Replace negative or blaming statements with constructive alternatives:

- Instead of “*Weren’t you listening? I told you this already.*” → “*Let me explain this another way.*”
- Instead of “*It’s too noisy – be quiet.*” → “*Let’s use our softer voices.*”
- Instead of “*Stop crying.*” → “*I can see you’re upset – let’s work out how to make this better.*”

💡 Use humour appropriately to defuse tension.

E. Tone & Body Language

- Stay calm, even if pupils escalate – adults set the emotional tone.
- Avoid intimidating stances (hands on hips, wagging fingers, folded arms).
- Get down to the pupil’s level to communicate safety and connection.

4. Structured Communication Approaches

A. Assertive Responses

- Use the **Broken Record Technique**: repeat calm, clear instructions without escalating.
 - “*Mary, it’s time for maths now, please get your book and sit down.*” (repeat as needed, consistently and calmly).

B. Language of Choice

- Frame behaviour as a choice, linking actions to consequences:
 - *“Mary, you can choose to sit and complete your work and earn a sticker, or you can choose not to, which means finishing it later in free choice – it’s your decision.”*

C. Wondering Language (WIN – Wonder, Imagine, Notice)

- *“I wonder if you’re feeling worried right now.”*
- *“I’m imagining that was hard for you.”*
- *“I’m noticing you seem upset – I’m here if you want to talk.”*

This avoids blame and invites solution-focused conversations.

5. Repairing Relationships

- If communication breaks down, prioritise **restoration before the end of the day**.
- Use restorative questions:
 - What happened?
 - How were you feeling?
 - Who has been affected?
 - What needs to happen next?
- Keep language non-pressurised: *“Help me understand.”*, *“Take your time – there’s no rush.”*

6. Supporting Vulnerable Pupils

- Ensure **frequent, brief contact** throughout the day with vulnerable pupils – quick check-ins reassure them they are “held in mind.”
- Example: Leave your pen with a pupil and say, *“Please look after this for me, I’ll be back for it in a few minutes.”*
- Provide a **trusted adult key worker** if needed.
- Celebrate successes – these may look different for each child (e.g. sitting for 5 minutes, contributing one idea, managing a transition calmly).

7. Key Reminders for Staff

- Communication is about connection, not control.
- Stay calm and consistent – children match your tone.
- Praise and reinforce positives more often than you challenge negatives.
- Use tactical ignoring where appropriate – don’t spotlight misbehaviour.
- Give choices, not ultimatums.
- Repair relationships promptly if ruptured.

8. Useful Guidance & Resources

- **DfE: Behaviour in Schools** – expectations and routines.

- **DfE: Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools.**
- **Restorative Practice Networks** – approaches to repairing relationships.
- **Trauma-Informed Schools UK** – guidance on relational communication.
- **Young Minds:** www.youngminds.org.uk