



# 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](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)