Successful Communication with a Child or Young Person Who Has Pragmatic Difficulties

Children or young people with pragmatic difficulties can find social interaction difficult and may interact differently to peers. Due to these differences, they sometimes can be perceived as cheeky, rude or naughty. Spend time with the child or young person to get to know them and their way of communicating.

Children or young people with pragmatic difficulties may make some non-speech vocalisations or may have some repetitive movements or hand mannerisms. These are often responses to certain situations or coping mechanisms. To ask a child or young person to stop these responses will add more stress to the situation for them. The student may have some insight and be able to tell you what situations they find difficult and what helps and what does not help. Help peers to understand these communicative differences.

General advice for successful communication:

- Gain the child or young person's attention before speaking

- Encourage them to look at you or give some eye contact, but if they find this hard then do not persist, it's not essential

- Keep language simple – break into manageable chunks, be precise and specific

- The order of the language you use should reflect the order that tasks should be carried out in e.g. '*first run around the pitch one time and then pick up a tennis ball'* <u>not</u> '*before you pick up a tennis ball run around the pitch one time'*

- Avoid use of polite questions e.g. *'Would you like to..?'* Tell the child or young person what to do e.g. *'I want you to….'.*

- Use direct language, avoiding idioms and sarcasm

- Use the child or young person's interests and experiences to help them understand. Relate the curriculum to real life situations

- Model appropriate conversational rules and responses. For example, asking for help, starting and ending a conversation appropriately, greeting others etc.

- Encourage and facilitate interaction with peers

- Adapt the environment, keeping it calm, predictable and safe. Offer extra support when needed e.g. lesson changing time, lunchtime, when there are lots of people. Ensure there is somewhere the child or young person can go to if they need some 'down time'

- Give clear structure and set routines and provide prior warning if there is a change to the normal routine

- Use visuals to support verbal language e.g. visual timetable / now and next board for transitions

- Give breaks in lessons where necessary

- Some children and young people respond well to a rewards / motivator system. If this is implemented, be consistent with it

- Develop good links between school and home to help to provide consistency for strategies and approaches across both settings