

Woodfield School

2019



Total Communication Policy

Policy Review History

Date Adopted / Reviewed	Version	Author	Approved by Resources Committee	Approved by Full Governing Body	Review Date placed on FGB Agenda
December 2017	Version 1	D Maycock		October 2019	September 2019
December 2019	Version 2	D Maycock			September 2021

Total Communication Policy

Woodfield School is committed to:

providing a secure, enjoyable and stimulating learning environment which will enable pupils to realise their potential as individuals in society;

providing equal access to a broad and balanced curriculum which:

- meets statutory requirements;
- reflects the cultural diversity of society;
- meets the needs of all pupils;
- develops skills for independence and a pathway for an active role in society
- maintaining close contact with the home: making parents welcome in the school and to enable them to play a full part in the education of their children.
- consistently outstanding teaching, which enables all pupils whatever their background to demonstrate excellent progress.

Philosophy

Communication occurs all the time, throughout every aspect of school and home life. It is a basic human right. It is the way that we make friends and build relationships, express our needs and feelings, make choices, learn and achieve independence. For children and young people, communication is integral to healthy development.

The principles underpinning the SEN Code of Practice highlight the importance of the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person, and the child's parents; the child or young person, and the child's parents, participating as fully as possible in decisions, and being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions; the need to support the child or young person, and the child's parents, in order to facilitate the development of the child or young person and to help them achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes, preparing them effectively for adulthood.

The development of appropriate communication skills is therefore a priority for the pupils at Woodfield School, as a means of accessing the curriculum, participating in everyday life experiences and becoming confident decision makers.

What is Total Communication?

"Total Communication" describes an approach that seeks to create a supportive means of communication to understand and be understood' (Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists). This means that pupils and staff are encouraged to use every available form of communication, with a particular emphasis on what is relevant to individuals. A Total Communication approach acknowledges that communication is not simply about talking and emphasises the importance of body language, tone of voice, gesture, photos, symbols, signs, objects and more creative mediums such as music and art.

Total Communication is important for children and young people who may have difficulty speaking, reading, writing and understanding spoken words. However, Total Communication supports the learning and understanding of all children and young people by presenting information in a variety of ways. We believe

that all children and young people have the right to understand and be understood in all aspects of life. Aims of the Total Communication policy

Aims:

- To provide pupils with means of communicating that can be used in all areas of their lives.
- To provide consistent augmentative systems of communication accessible to all pupils.
- To provide an individual developmental and progressive scheme of communication throughout the school.
- To maximise independence, at and after Woodfield School, for all pupils.

Objectives

These aims will be achieved by:

- providing all staff and pupils with the necessary skills to communicate effectively, appropriately and confidently to the best of their ability. This includes the use of body movements, (e.g. whole body movements, eye gaze, facial expressions, or pointing), Intensive Interaction, Makaton signs, Widget symbols, symbol books and charts, communication software, communication passports, a wide variety of communication aids and tools (e.g. Shape Coding), vocalisation, and speech.
- using a consistent Widget symbol system, this has been elected to be Communicate in Print.
- providing staff with regular opportunities to discuss pupils needs in order to develop the ability to listen, to understand, and to respond, at the pupils' level.
- providing staff with regular professional development opportunities to expand their understanding and use of Total Communication
- have access to augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) aids, appropriate to the needs of individual pupils, including Makaton signing, Low Tech aids using Widget symbols, and electronic communication aids, such as The Grid.
- be supported outside school to ensure continuity.
- be provided with structured opportunities to develop spontaneous language
- where appropriate take part in Intensive Interaction Sessions.
- where appropriate onward referral to specialist services such as the AAC clinic at Great Ormond Street Hospital.

For further information about AAC, Intensive Interaction, Shape Coding and Colourful Semantics, see Appendices

Speech and Language Therapy (SALT)

The Speech and Language Therapists work in conjunction with the Speech and Language Therapy Assistant(s), school staff, and parents. Assessment may involve observation in the classroom, teacher discussion and individual assessments.

Following assessment, SALTs will support teachers in writing communication targets for pupils and provide in class support embedding these targets in the curriculum. General advice is also given to staff regarding the development of pupils' communication skills and whole staff training, as required. Additional direct therapy sessions with SALTs will be provided for those pupils who require more specialised intervention, such as articulation or new skills in AAC.

Teaching and Learning Styles

The teaching of communication skills takes place throughout the school day, and is addressed in all subject lessons, as all teachers are teachers of English. Communication skills can be developed through individual, paired, group or whole class activities. Pupils will be encouraged to communicate with each other through working collaboratively, and sharing their work and experiences, as appropriate. This communication may be verbal, using signs, symbols, or electronic communication aids.

Teaching staff use non-verbal communication, such as symbols, signing, and gesture, as appropriate, to aid pupil understanding. Speech is used at a level appropriate to individual understanding, ranging from the use of 1 or 2 key words to phrases and sentences. Pupils are exposed to Shape Coding or Colourful Semantics, depending on their expressive language skills, to support their verbal communication.

Teaching and learning takes place in a variety of settings, including educational visits, break and lunch times. During whole school activities, e.g. assembly, Makaton signing and Widget symbols are used to support communication. Symbols and communication aids are also used as part of displays in corridors and classrooms.

Specific teaching of Total Communication

Speaking and Listening - communication at Woodfield School may take place through vocal sounds, speech, Makaton signs, Widget symbols, facial expressions, body language, individual communication aids and as relevant to the needs of the individual pupil. Shape Coding and Colourful Semantics also used to further develop pupils' verbal communication and grammar skills.

Writing – writing skills are developed through the use of computer programmes, tactile, traditional writing materials and Shape Coding, Colourful Semantics.

Reading – reading skills are encouraged through recognition of photographs, pictures, Widget symbols, in addition to traditional reading methods. In addition to this, the SALT team may run reading comprehension groups to support learners differing levels of need.

The Shape Coding tool is used to support pupils with their reading comprehension. These alternative means of acquiring reading skills can be seen as identified by S McCall and M McLinden, through the various stages in the development of literacy:

- a) Recognition of concrete symbols or alternatively Objects of Reference
- b) Representational systems including photographs and pictures of real objects or alternatively, recognition of parts of objects of reference
- c) Abstract symbols or alternatively, recognition of Widget symbols
- d) Symbolic language codes including the ability to recognise and understand the significance of letters or words.

Planning

Total Communication Group comprising of staff plus a SALT, meet regularly, to discuss and decide upon the Total Communication needs of individuals and the implications of these for the school. At these meetings, uniformity of signs and symbols are agreed upon and transferred back into the classroom situation.

Meetings are chaired by the coordinator (teacher) with responsibility for Total Communication throughout the school. Minutes are taken of these meetings, which are then passed on to class or department representatives, and a copy passed on to the senior leadership team.

Each class teacher is responsible for detailing the communication needs and strategies, which are relevant to the needs of individuals, on each pupil's EHCP. Advice and support is available from the Total Communication Group if required.

Please see Appendix for information regarding Total Communication Group

Assessment and Recording

The EHCP is at the heart of each pupil's curriculum; teachers base assessments on the EHCP Communication and Interaction long and short term outcomes. This takes the form of baselining at the start of the year and reviewing progress on a termly basis in conjunction with the Speech and Language Therapist.

Direct teacher observation evidenced through photographs, video, taped recordings and student work, recorded on Evidence for Learning.

Interventions are recorded on School Pod by Speech and Language Therapists or SALTAs, these notes are shared with relevant staff, e.g. class teacher or class team.

Reporting

1. Student experiences in all aspects of the curriculum are reported to parents/carers yearly in the Annual Review and termly on PLP Day.
2. Parents/Carers have the opportunity to discuss each subject with the pupil's teacher at the Annual Review meeting, as well as on Parents Evenings.

Inset and Support

All staff are welcome to attend Total Communication meetings, as mentioned under Planning and to evaluate and review the Total Communication Policy and advise on the support and development of Total Communication throughout the school.

The Total Communication Group and coordinator are available to give help and support to all staff on related issues. The Total Communication Coordinator works alongside Speech & Language Therapists to give regular support on an individual basis to pupils with specific communication and speech difficulties.

A six-week in-service training programme is run by the SALT team for all new staff, the programme covers Makaton, Shape Coding, Blanks Levels of Questioning and The Communication Chain (McLachlan & Elks, 2012; Language Builders). Further six week programmes are offered to existing staff who would like to refresh their knowledge and skills and discuss specific pupil communication needs.

Fortnightly Makaton 'refresher' sessions are offered on a voluntary basis for staff to review their signing, after school on a Thursday.

The SALT team are available to give individualized support and training to the classes they work with, based on their pupils needs. This may take the form of reinforcing knowledge and skills previously learned, personalized resources, advice and support in talking to parents etc.

Parents/Carers

Parents/carers may be involved in the pupil's total communication needs and developed through the following:

1. Meetings on Target Setting Day to look at pupil's work and progress
2. Encouraging continuity of total communication skills by working with the pupil at home, e.g., encouraging the use of signing, reading, use of etc to reinforce learning.
3. Parents/carers are invited into school at least annually for an individual meeting to discuss their child's needs and progress with the SALT and Total Communication Coordinator.
4. Introductory workshops have taken place to introduce parents/carers of new children or support parents/carers with pupils already at school. These have included workshops on Makaton signs and symbols and Eating and Drinking workshops.
5. Coffee Mornings run by the SALT team are scheduled to take place twice a year. The team present information about a communication based topic and leave time for questions or a practical activity to support parents/carers.

Cross Curricular Links

Communication skills are used and developed in all areas of the curriculum which allows for individual communication and interaction outcomes to be addressed in a number of contexts throughout the week. Motivating situations, in which children can enjoy developing their communication skills in a meaningful, functional and enjoyable way, are facilitated throughout the day.

Mastery

Communication targets and termly objectives for speaking and listening are differentiated to meet the specific needs of individual pupils. Activities are planned that allow for the inclusion of all pupils as active participants within lessons, whilst remaining challenging for all pupils.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Quality assurance is ensured by following the procedures outlined in the Teaching and Learning, and Monitoring and Evaluation policies, by means of moderation meetings, scrutiny of lesson plans, evaluation of EHCP targets, monitoring of SALT programmes, etc. This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis. Any suggested amendments will be presented to the governors for discussion, and shared with staff.

Appendix

Alternative and Augmentative Communication

Introduction

The term AAC (Alternative and Augmentative Communication) is used to describe the different methods that can be used to help people with disabilities communicate with others. As the term suggests these methods can be used as an alternative to speech or to supplement it.

No matter what their difficulties few people can be said to have no method of communication. However, many people will have difficulty in getting their message across and it must always be remembered that this will require effort on the part of the listener (communication partner) as well.

Communication is essentially a two way process which must involve some degree of mutual understanding and a commonly agreed method. Even when two people can talk and understand the same language easily there can be misunderstanding and failed communication.

Symbol systems

The main symbol system used at Woodfield School is **Widgets** (Communicate in Print). Systems are often combined with individually designed symbols, objects and photographs if required. They are presented in different ways including using a computer screen, a paper chart or communication book.

They are produced by photocopying or using a computer programme to print out charts. Symbols are widely used throughout the school for timetables, diaries, dinner menus, warnings and explanation. They are used in conjunction with communication aids.

Signing and gesture

Manual signing systems have been in use for some time, especially in the deaf community. Different systems have been developed to meet the needs of individuals with learning and motor disabilities. Signing systems have the major advantage of not requiring any additional equipment or materials, but can be harder to learn. The school uses the **Makaton Language Programme**. Pupils are individually assessed for this.

Communication Aids

Electronic aids are used alongside, or instead of, other systems, such as paper based charts, signing systems, and other low tech methods of communication.

Few people with communication difficulties will use only one particular method of communication. In most cases somebody using an electronic aid will reinforce its messages with gesture, head movement etc.

The main complex aid at Woodfield School is The Grid. It has the ability to hold a large number of messages. The user is usually able to combine key presses or selections to produce different messages.

Many users of electronic aids use a symbol of pictorial system to associate the images with larger messages.

Intensive Interaction

Intensive interaction is an approach to teaching the pre-speech fundamentals of communication to children and adults who have severe learning difficulties and/or autism and who are still at an early stage of communication development. The approach was developed during the nineteen-eighties by the team of staff working at Harperbury Hospital School Herefordshire. Harperbury was a school for people who have severe learning difficulties on the campus of a large long-stay hospital in southern England. The developments followed the work of the late Geraint Ephraim Ph.D, a psychologist who worked in the Hertfordshire long-stay hospitals.

Dave Hewett Ph.D and Melanie Nind Ph.D, were teachers at Harperbury School, and they carried out Intensive Interaction research projects at the school as part of the development work. They have published three books on the approach (e.g. 'Access to Communication' London: David Fulton 1994) and extensive other publications.

Shape Coding

The "Shape Coding" system is a resource used by Speech & Language Therapists at Moor House and across the UK. It was designed by Speech & Language Therapist Dr Susan Ebbels at Moor House to teach spoken and written grammar to school-aged children with SLI. It has been developed and progressed since 1999 mainly for use with children in Key Stages 2 and 3 (aged 7-14 years) although it has also been used with younger and older pupils. The system uses a visual coding system to show a child the rules for how words are put together in sentences, to develop the child's understanding of spoken and written grammar and to develop their ability to use grammar successfully to express themselves. The system includes use of colours (parts of speech), arrows (tense and aspect) and shapes (syntactic and argument structure). The approach was based on Colourful Semantics.

Colourful Semantics

The "Colourful Semantics" system is an evidence-based resource (Bryan, 1997). It was developed for use with children who have reduced vocabularies, struggle with word order, have speech difficulties, have English as an Additional Language and/or are visual learner. The approach is aimed at helping children to develop their grammar, by linking the structure of a sentence (syntax) and its meaning (semantics). The approach has 4 key colour coded stages to 'show' the structure of a sentence. There are further stages for adverbs, adjectives, conjunctions and negatives

Total Communication Group

Co-ordinator to be a teacher. Other members from: ASC Lead, Positive Behaviour Support team, Semi-formal curriculum, KS3 Form Tutor, KS4 Form Tutor, KS5 Tutor.

Total Communication Group to be key drivers of communication in and around school including:

- the provision of resources
- standardised key signage
- Makaton signs of the week
- training of the use of Communicate in Print (CiP) and other communication software

- specific pupil needs in communication - how could communication be affecting behaviour and learning
- Shape Coding
- involve pupils – KS5 and Student Council in their opinions and what they think will help with communication around the school.