

**Highshore
School
Communication
Policy**



Introduction

Policy prepared by: Anthony Caldwell - Senior Speech and Language
Therapist
Becky Quinton - Speech and Language Therapist

Staff responsible for Implementation: All staff including teachers, teaching assistants & specialist staff

Staff responsible for Monitoring and review Of policy: Communication team

Date policy written: July 2014

Date of review: June 2016

Description of Policy Formation & Consultation Process

This policy has been written by the communication team. The policy is available on the staff shared area and the school website and was open to consultation by all staff. The policy has been approved by the Senior Leadership team and Governors.

Context of School

Highshore School is a special school for pupils with severe and / or complex needs and communication difficulties aged 11-19 years old.

Mission statement

Highshore School is committed to providing the highest standards of teaching and learning in a caring, and orderly environment to enable its pupils to

- communicate as fully as possible,
- develop as many self-help skills as possible
- learn to self-manage their behaviour as fully as possible

This focus aims to ensure the pupils at Highshore School develop their independence skills and participate in society as fully as possible.

Communication underpins this success and we strive to create an inclusive and supportive environment where the use of Total Communication approaches empowers pupils to take control and to be active in their own learning.

Definition of Total Communication / AAC

Total communication or Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) describes the ways an individual can supplement (augment) and / or replace (find an alternative for) spoken communication.

Total communication is used to create a means of accessing both educational and social situations in the most functional way.

It is appropriate for individuals with difficulties understanding (receptive) and using (expressive) language as a result of physical, sensory or learning difficulties.

Population at Highshore School

Most pupils attending Highshore School have an impairment in communication.

This may be the result of a generalised learning difficulty, specific physical or sensory issues or as part of a more specific condition e.g. Autism Spectrum Disorder, Downs Syndrome etc.

Due to the diversity of communication needs of the pupils, Highshore School promotes a Total Communication approach to ensure that all pupils are able to be understood, to express themselves and to access the curriculum to the best of their ability.

Total Communication encompasses a wide range of communication systems that may be used by the pupils to express themselves. These systems include visual methods (PECS, communication books), signing, low and high tech communication aids and non - verbal communication (pointing, gesture).

Aims of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils - all pupils will have access to an inclusive and adapted environment to facilitate their communication.

Aims of environment

- The environment should be adapted to facilitate a Total Communication approach.
- All pupils should have access to a range of Total Communication approaches to support their access to the curriculum and to facilitate social exchanges.

- The whole school environment is included in this policy e.g. lunch and break times, after school clubs, transitions between classes.
- Pupils must have access to their specific communication systems at all times.

Aims for the individual

The aim of this policy for individuals is to enable functional communication skills within the school setting and in the wider environment.

It is also essential to support the idea that at the heart of effective communication lies interaction i.e.

***“It is generally agreed that the language acquisition process in these children can be facilitated best by increasing their participation in natural contexts.”
(Bedrosian, 1997)^[1]***

This policy aims to ensure that all pupils have access to an inclusive curriculum which takes into account their individual communication needs.

It is essential that pupils have time built into their curriculum to focus on the training and development of their communication systems.

Opportunities for social interaction with peers and adults are also essential.

Objectives

Pupils are expected to:

- [1] Practise and use their communication systems at all times during the day.

All staff are expected to:

- [1] Develop successful communication environments
- [2] Recognise that they are also Total Communication users while in school
- [3] Ensure that pupils have access to their individual communication systems all the time and in all settings
- [4] Incorporate Total Communication strategies and visual support into lesson plans
- [5] Produce Total Communication resources for all lessons

- [6] Ensure that pupils have access to all necessary vocabulary in their communication system and are aware how to access it
- [7] Support understanding by using visual support
- [8] Provide materials in appropriate formats for individuals e.g. photos, symbols, objects
- [9] Provide opportunities for communication and interaction
- [10] Encourage pupils to use a Total Communication approach
- [11] Acknowledge all pupils' communicative attempts and respond to them appropriately
- [12] Encourage independence
- [13] Deliver a regular and discrete programme of intervention under the guidance of a SaLT (Communicating Quality 3 2006)^[2]
- [14] Liaise regularly with the Speech and Language Therapy team
- [15] Work in partnership with parents
- [16] Work in partnership with outside agencies
- [17] Support transitions to other educational or vocational settings
- [18] Access specialist training as required

Parents are expected to:

- [1] Support agreed methods of communication
- [2] Provide opportunities for communication at home
- [3] Work collaboratively with teachers and specialist staff

The Speech and Language Therapy team is expected to:

***“The Speech and Language Therapist will work with others to adapt the physical, social, sensory and linguistic components of the environment, and to look at the demands being placed on the child in order to maximise successful communication and learning”
(Picard M & Bradley JS 2001)^[3]***

This is achieved by:

- [1] Working collaboratively with teaching staff, families and outside agencies to support the communication needs of pupils

- [2] Assessing and manage the communication skills and needs of the pupils
- [3] Identifying appropriate communication systems for individuals
- [4] Accessing training
- [5] Accessing external support for assessment and allocation of high tech AAC systems as required
- [6] Regularly reviewing progress of pupils in conjunction with school staff
- [7] Promoting the use of Total Communication and AAC throughout the school and at home
- [8] Liaising with all staff regarding incorporating Total Communication into the curriculum
- [9] Modelling the use of Total Communication systems in class with pupils and staff
- [10] Setting joint targets with staff and parents for delivery in class and at home
- [11] Providing communication training for staff and parents
- [12] Advise on resources and visual supports for the environment and to support the curriculum
- [13] Collaborate with the senior leadership team to ensure the implementation of the communication policy

The Senior Leadership team is expected to:

- [1] Promote a whole school culture which supports and enhances Total Communication
- [2] Support and provide access to specific training as required
- [3] Plan for Total communication as part of the school improvement plan
- [4] Support the policy through their use of Total Communication methods as well as by staffing and resource allocation promoting the cultural ethos
- [5] Liaise with the **LA** in terms of funding for some pieces of AAC equipment

Assessment, reporting and recording arrangements

- On entry to Highshore School a baseline assessment of pupils' communication skills will be completed by the Speech and Language therapy team and school staff. The Speech and Language therapist will provide a summary and / or attend the 6 week review as appropriate.
- The Speech and Language Therapy team in conjunction with school staff and members of the senior leadership team review the school caseload at least twice a year and set out an intervention plan. Parents are notified if their child is receiving input from the Speech and Language Therapy team.
- Specialist referrals e.g. assessment by the CENMAC team or referral to other agencies, will be carried out jointly by the Speech and Language Therapist, school staff and parents.
- The Speech and Language Therapy service will provide a report, where agreed in line with transitional / Person Centred Planning / EHC meeting procedures.
- The Speech and Language Therapist will write a report and/ or attend Person Centred Planning meetings / EHC meetings for those pupils who have had direct input with the SaLTs during the year.

Target setting

Communication targets are set in a variety of ways:

- [1] Teachers in conjunction with the Speech and Language Therapist, set and evaluate communication targets for each pupil.
- [2] New targets are identified and agreed as part of the Person Centred Planning meetings / EHC meeting process.
- [3] Where appropriate, individualised Communication targets are set jointly between Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy and reviewed jointly

Recording

- Progress data is formally recorded by the assessment coordinator onto the schools assessment tools e.g. B Squared and CASPA termly.
- Records of staff training are kept by the school and Speech and Language Therapy team.

- The Speech and Language Therapy team record interventions with individual pupils in the speech and language therapy case notes.
- Speech and Language Therapy target sheets are stored in a shared area, accessed by all school staff, and sent home to parents.
- Speech and Language Therapy reports are written for the Person Centred Planning / EHC meetings for pupils who are at a stage of transition e.g. Yr. 9, leaving school.

Monitoring & Review

- Progress is reviewed on an ongoing basis through regular liaison and joint working in class, with parents and other agencies.
- Termly reviews of IEP targets are carried out by teachers.
- Yearly targets are reviewed as part of the Person Centred Planning / EHC meeting.

Method of delivery within the context of the curriculum

Communication is supported in a variety of ways to support access to the curriculum.

Supporting Understanding of Spoken Language

All learning must be supported visually to maximise the understanding of language in all environments.

The following methods are used within the school:

- Sensory cues
- Object cues
- Objects of reference
- Photos and pictures
- Symbols (Widgit)^[4]
- Makaton signing^[5]

The use of the following visual support systems are also used to support understanding, motivation and attention and listening:

- Visual timetables/schedules
- First_then_ boards
- Lets make a deal boards
- Choice boards

For further strategies to support understanding see Appendix 1.

Supporting Use of Language

The development of the use of language focuses on promoting intentional and functional communication. This is supported by developing:

- Non verbal communication e.g. gesture, pointing, eye contact, vocalisations
- Total communication and AAC systems including;
 - ❖ Makaton signing
 - ❖ Picture Exchange Communication System
 - ❖ Communication books
 - ❖ Communication passports
 - ❖ Switches e.g. Big Mack
 - ❖ Voice output communication aids (VOCA's)

“Alternative methods of communication are much slower than natural speech e.g. an unaided speaker can use up to 150-200 words per minute. The equivalent for a pupil using an alternative method of communication is a maximum of 20 words”.
(Murphy J & Scott J, 1995)^[6]

For further strategies to support the use of language see Appendix 1.

Intervention strategies

It is essential to ensure that pupils have immediate access to all the systems they require to communicate and participate effectively in a range of environments.

The revised National Curriculum (1999) ^[7] states that teachers need to be mindful of *“potential barriers to learning and assessment”*.

It also states that, in order to support pupils to be successful in their learning, they must have “access to specialist equipment and approaches, or to alternative or adapted activities”.

Framework for training and support

Communication is important in all aspects of life and therefore it's essential that all significant people in the pupil's environment receive training. See appendix 2 for those involved.

Training is co-ordinated by the Senior Leadership Team and monitored via staff performance management

Current in-house training available at Highshore School:

Carried out by the Speech and Language Therapy team

- Language Levels
- Blank Levels of Questioning
- Colourful Semantics
- Pre-teaching Vocabulary
- ELKLAN Training Packages
- Communicate in Print
- Makaton signing
- Grid Player/Proloquo2Go
- Communication books/passports
- Parent workshops (Makaton, language development & strategies to support communication (ELKLAN), Colourful Semantics, AAC (Communication Books, Communication Passports, iPads)
- Talking Mats
- PECS Support

Access to external training funded by school:

- Elklan training packages
- Makaton
- Communicate in Print
- Clicker 6

Appendix 1: Strategies to Support Communication Development

- **To develop attention and listening skills:**
 - Use visual prompts to encourage good sitting, looking and listening.
 - Provide pupils with appropriate levels of structure and visual support, e.g. visual timetable, transition pictures, “first__then__” strip etc.
 - Prepare pupils, where necessary for any changes to their routine in advance using visual support.
 - Minimise distractions within the environment where possible

- **To develop play skills:**
 - Provide access to a range of stimulating, multi-sensory toys.
 - Adults to support and model the use of motivating toys.
 - Adults to support pupils access a wider range of activities by adapting them to incorporate their interests.
 - Adults to model pretend/ symbolic play with a range of toys, where pupils are provided with an identical set of toys.
 - Adults should expand pupils play sequences.

- **To develop social interaction skills:**
 - Support involvement in social and joint action routines if appropriate.
 - Adults to use Adult-Child Interaction principles frequently throughout the day, where appropriate.
 - Provide pupils with firm boundaries and visual support to encourage appropriate social behaviour.
 - Provide opportunities for pupils to participate in small group activities with support as necessary e.g. Friendship Terrace, SoCo lessons

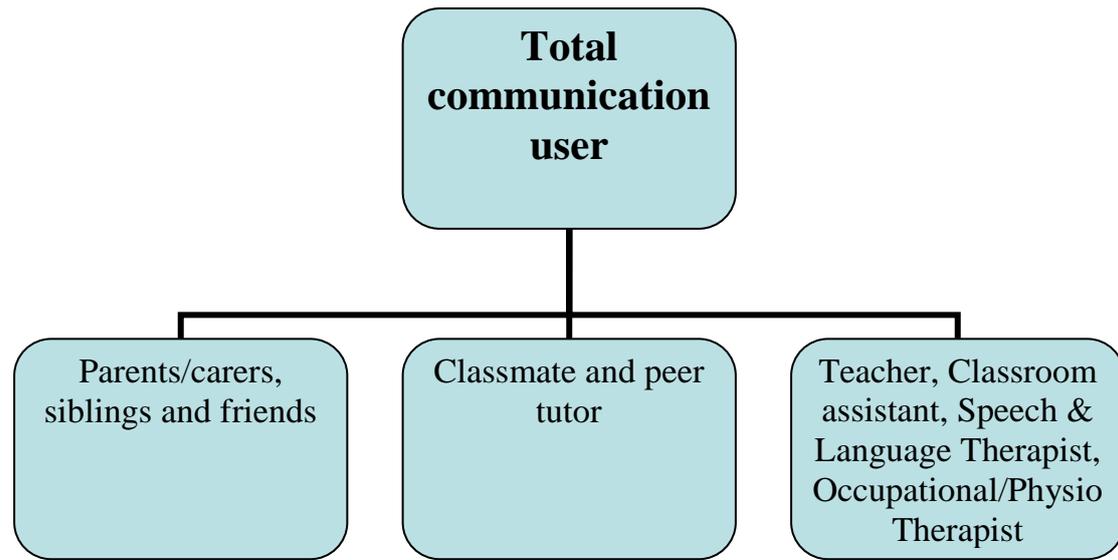
- **To develop understanding of spoken language:**
 - Obtain the pupils full attention before giving an instruction, e.g. by calling their name and touching them on the shoulder.
 - Ensure the language used (length of instruction and vocabulary used) with each pupil matches their language level e.g. if the pupil uses 2 word phrases ensure any instructions are no longer than 2 words at a time.
 - Instructions should be broken down and given in sequential order and accompanied by visual support as appropriate.
 - Instructions should be given to certain pupils on an individual level.
 - Use comprehension checking questions to ensure pupils have understood instructions

- **To develop use of spoken language, including AAC:**
 - Follow the pupils lead in play and comment on what they are doing using appropriate language levels

- Provide pupils with opportunities to over-learn new vocabulary. Repeat new words over and over and use them in as many contexts as possible, supported by visual methods to help pupils generalise them.
 - Where appropriate develop word books and mind maps with pupils to support vocabulary development
 - WAIT- any pupil using an alternative form of communication will take longer to initiate communication^[6]
 - Don't always stick to safe topics. Where appropriate ask questions about something you genuinely don't know about^[6]
 - Explore a topic as fully as you can before moving on. Don't flit between topics^[6]
 - Check with the pupil that you have understood their message
- **To develop functional communication skills**
 - Provide access to a total communication approach for all pupils at all times.
 - Ensure that all pupils have access to their individualised communication systems at all times.
 - Ensure that all staff working with pupils are familiar with the specific communication systems individual children are using.

Appendix 2: An AAC user's 'Circle of friends' (Adapted from Blackstone, 1991)^[8]

People Involved in Supporting a Pupils Communication



References

- [1] **Bedrosian J L**, 1997 *Language Acquisition in Young AAC System Users: Issues and Directions for Future Research*. AAC Vol 13 pp179-185
- [2] **Communicating Quality 3** 2006 RCSLT
- [3] **Picard M & Bradley JS** 2001 *Revisiting speech interference in classrooms*. Audiology 40 (5): 221-44 cited in RCSLT Clinical Guidelines, 2005
- [4] www.widgit.com
- [5] www.makaton.org
- [6] **Murphy J & Scott J**, 1995 *Attitudes and Strategies Towards AAC-A Training Package for AAC Users and Carers*. Department of Psychology, University of Stirling Stirling
- [7] **Department of Education and Employment (DfEE)**, 1999 *Revised National Curriculum*
- [8] **Blackstone S**, 1991 *Augmentative Communication News*. Vol 4 No2

Policy:

Signed:

For review:

Reviewed: April 2016