

Sheringham Woodfields School



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COMMUNICATION POLICY

Approved by SMT: 21 st November 2024	Approved by Staff: 28 th November 2024	Approved by Governors: 12 th December 2024
Next Review date: Autumn 2025	Person(s) responsible for review: Communication Lead / HT	

Introduction

This document is a statement of the aims, principles and strategies for communication at Sheringham Woodfields School. All new members of staff are given a copy of the policy to highlight the communication ethos at Sheringham Woodfields School.

Sheringham Woodfields School is an all aged special school that caters for pupils with severe and profound/multiple learning difficulties as well as complex needs. Many pupils have communication and interaction difficulties. Communication underpins all learning and therefore we are committed to providing a total communication environment.

Aims

Our school aims are to:

1. To provide consistent alternative and augmentative systems of communication (ACC) accessible to all pupils.
2. Adopt a total communication approach throughout school, where pupils have access to their own means of communication throughout the day and to provide support to parents to enable the same at home.
3. Develop means of communication appropriate to each pupil's individual needs, that can be used in all areas of his/her lives.
4. Create opportunities for communication throughout the curriculum to enable each pupil to communicate to the best of their ability.
5. To maximise independence, at, and after Woodfield School, for all pupils.

Objectives

These aims will be achieved by:

1. 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, Signalong, Body Signing signs, Widget symbols, symbol books and charts, communication software, communication passports, a wide variety of communication aids and tools, vocalisation, and speech.

2. 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.
3. Providing staff with regular professional development opportunities to expand their understanding and use of Total Communication.
4. Have access to augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) aids, appropriate to the needs of individual pupils', including Singalong, Low Tech aids using Widget symbols, and electronic communication aids.
5. To be supported outside school to ensure continuity.
6. To be provided with structured opportunities to develop spontaneous language.
7. Where appropriate take part in Intensive Interaction Sessions.

In support of pupils' communication, the school benefits from regular visits from specialist Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT) - Susan McKemie and a team supporting her, employed by NHS and Norfolk County Council.

Therapist (SaLT) work in partnership with class teachers, parents and school staff to ensure that the communication needs of all pupils are being met and that the speech and language requirements as detailed on their statement or EHC plan are being fulfilled.

SaLT assesses individual students. Assessment may involve observation in the classroom, teacher discussion and individual assessments. Following assessment, the SaLTs provide goals and plans which are carried out throughout the day by school staff and parents/carers. A pupil may also receive group or individual direct therapy sessions with the SaLT. In-class support can also be provided targeting specific Total Communication areas and/or specific pupils. General advice is also given to staff regarding the development of pupils' communication skills and whole staff training, as required. The SaLT has a termly link meeting with the SENCo to discuss pupils, any new referrals and to look at training opportunities.

Communication Methods in School

At Sheringham Woodfields School we adopt a Total Communication approach using a range of alternative methods to support and encourage two-way communication and speech and language development. These are not used in isolation and a pupil may use several of these methods.

Signing- Signalong

This is a signing system used alongside speech to develop a pupil's understanding of language and their ability to express themselves. The use of signing throughout the school day by staff greatly enhances a pupil's ability to be an effective communicator. At Sheringham Woodfields School we have three certificated Signalong tutors: Catherine Holyland, Iwona Litwiniec, Samantha Webster.

Body Signs-Based on Canaan Barrie On Body Signing from The Royal National Institute for the Blind.

Objects of Reference / Tactile Cues

Some pupils will need to use objects of reference or tactile cues to aid their communication and understanding of language. An object of reference will be a 3D object that represents an activity or a place.

Symbols / Photographs

The use of symbols/photographs provides valuable support and is encouraged even if pupils are not using PECS. It is the responsibility of class staff to provide symbol/photo vocabulary as

appropriate. Some pupils use elements of Picture Exchange Communication System - PECS. PECS is where pupils learn to exchange symbols/photographs to communicate.

Communication Books.

These are indexed books of symbols that can be used to aid a pupil's communication. Initially these are produced by the SaLT/Class Teacher and are then the responsibility of the class staff and they require updating regularly.

Use of Social Stories™ and Comic Strip Conversations to develop social understanding and communication.

Communication Aids

A range of voice output communication aids are used throughout the school.

These include iPads and/or Switches. They can be operated directly by touch or indirectly by mouse, pointer controlled by mouse, joystick or eye gaze. Auditory screening is available for children with visual impairment

Pupils on a Page

The class teacher is responsible for writing and updating these plans.

These should be reviewed and updated once a year or earlier if information changes significantly. These give people vital information about a pupil's individual needs including personal information, as well as how they communicate.

Communication Passport

A communication passport is a way of supporting a vulnerable person with communication difficulties across transitions, drawing together complex information (including the person's own views, as much as possible) and distilling it into a clear, positive and accessible format. This helps staff and conversation partners to get to know the person with communication disabilities. They can then interact/respond consistently to help the person make sense of events and get the best out of what communication abilities they do have.

Home/School Communication

In our school we aim to have clear and effective communications with all parents/carers and with the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values, through keeping parents well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting the school. Good communication between the school and the home is essential, and pupils achieve more when schools and parents/carers work together.

We send a newsletter to parents at the end of each school term. It contains general details of school events and activities. At the beginning of each term all teachers send parents of the pupils in their classes details of the work to be covered during the forthcoming term. Pupils in all classes have a home-school diary. This enables parents to record a wide range of information that they wish to share regularly with the teacher. Teachers use the home-school diary to record achievements, and as a regular channel for communication with parents.

Professional Development/ Training

All staff should be trained in the methodology of Signalong by staff who are appropriately qualified, school Signalong tutors.

As part of induction all new staff will have a session on Total Communication.

The speech and language therapist or staff in school run training on request for staff the use of Total Communication.

For more able pupils, staff should be trained in the use of visuals using the written word.

Relevant staff are trained to write social stories by staff who are appropriately qualified.

Identifying training needs of staff is vital to ensure continued progress for our pupils. These needs will be identified and met as follows:

1. Induction package for new staff where they begin to access an understanding of Total Communication. It is the school's responsibility to identify the staff's training needs and the SaLT and Communication Lead will support the implementation of these modules.
2. Staff are responsible for identifying their own training needs and can apply to Head Teacher to discuss relevant courses. This may be through the performance management structure or at any other appropriate time.

Equality of opportunity is evidenced when staff recognises that they are AAC users when in school.

This means that:-

- Staff will be encouraged to sign.
- Staff will be encouraged to use symbols.
- Symbols will be visible in all areas of school.
- Symbols will be incorporated into all aspects of the curriculum and not just AAC sessions.
- AAC will have a high status in terms of staff training and sharing of expertise.

The student will be encouraged to acquire, use and develop his/her language and communication skills across subjects, people and situations throughout, outside and beyond school life.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be regularly monitored, and will be reviewed by the Communication Lead teacher and Governors.