

DOROTHY GOODMAN SCHOOL

Total Communication Policy

THE COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT

Each student will be exposed to an active total communication environment at all times.

AAC techniques are to be made available, as much as possible, at all times - not just in speaking and listening sessions.

The curriculum is to be presented in such a way that AAC techniques are used to enhance access to all areas of the curriculum, e.g. topic boards, appropriate labelling etc.

The use of Total Communication and its implications are to be included in IEPs.

It is recognised that aided speakers require more time to formulate their responses and therefore additional time will be afforded to these pupils.

Other pupils are to be discouraged from touching pupils' individual Communication Aids at any time during the day.

Whilst it is recognised that visitors to school may find the concept of aided speech new, undue attention should not be focussed on the aided speaker as a person who communicates in a different way.

Parents/carers are offered extensive support in the home to ensure continuity between home and school.

Communication is central to the individual's psychological, social, emotional and cognitive development. It is through communication that a child learns and develops.

AAC is understood to mean "any method of communicating that can supplement the ordinary method of speech where this is impaired".

At Dorothy Goodman School we aim to provide total communication. 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.

The school employs a teacher responsible for AAC for a half day each week. This teacher provides on-going training and supervision for the key workers, who work with children using AAC, and co-ordinates the provision of communication aids throughout the school. In addition an annual budget is allocated to this area, administered by the teacher, and this is used to release support staff both for training and to carry out identified work, e.g., up-dating PECS books. In support of the AAC teacher we also have a specialist HLTA (released for 0.5 of the week) and an

AAC designated member of the support staff team in each class (employed for an additional 1 hour per week for AAC related work).

Total Communication/AAC Methods include:

facial expression, body movements, objects of reference, body signing, Makaton signing, finger spelling, Makaton symbols, Picture Communication Symbols, PECS books, symbol books and charts, communication software, communication passports for children with PMLD and VI and a wide variety of communication aids.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

The revised National Curriculum Key Stage 1 and 2 state clearly that appropriate provision should be made for those pupils who need to use

“a means of communication other than speech, including computers, technological aids, signing, symbols or lip reading”

“non-sighted methods of reading, such as Braille, or non visual or non aural ways of acquiring information” or

“technological aids in practical and written work”.

EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

The school regards AAC as having similar status to speech. It is the fundamental right of pupils for their appropriate AAC equipment to be used in all appropriate situations throughout the day to supplement the use of spoken language.

OBJECTIVES

In order to achieve our aims we provide:

Multidisciplinary input at a variety of levels, initial assessment, ongoing assessment, target setting, report writing and evaluation.

Regular assessment of the true communicative potential in the school.

Assessment of:

- a) barriers to access
- b) awareness of the role of conversational partner .

Updating of staff skills by means of attendance at special interest groups (SIGs):

- a) within establishment
- b) local within Leicestershire

Regular training opportunities for all staff at a variety of levels, including Makaton signing for all staff every week.

Opportunities for staff to attend in-house training, workshops, communication aid meetings etc.

1:1 session in speech in Speech Therapist and AAC Teacher.

Training days to extend staff skills in a variety of communication methods.

Time for familiarisation with equipment.

Access to technical services and appropriate support.

Clear procedures for inventory, storage, maintenance, faults book etc.

AIMS

- To pursue the right of every pupil to have an effective means of communication regardless of their disability.
- To strive for excellence in the field of current total communication practice, and to ensure equality of provision and opportunity on both sites of the school (Upper and Lower).
- To empower pupils to make choices and exert control over the environment.
- To ensure carefully managed transition throughout the school and at key stages of transition to other placements.
- To ensure continuity of provision throughout all classes and departments within the school.
- To keep informed of developments in the rapidly changing field of AAC.
- To actively foster a total communication environment giving equal status to all methods of communication.
- When possible, to enable pupils to be responsible for determining their preferred method of communication.
- To provide motivating situations in which pupils can develop their language skills using total communication in meaningful, functional and enjoyable ways both to effect social interaction and to access the Curriculum.

- To provide effective training both accredited and informal in all aspects of total communication.
- To provide effective, high quality and multidisciplinary input.
- To inform the wider community to the value of total communication to those with speech difficulties.
- To work in partnership with parents or carers.
- To provide opportunities for interaction with other aided speakers through effective class groupings and the creation of user groups.
- To monitor and review the effectiveness of this policy.

ASSESSMENT

An open system of referral for a full assessment operates at Dorothy Goodman School. In the first instance a request should be made to the school's AAC Teacher. She will meet with the Speech Therapist on a regular basis, will liaise with the AAC specialist where necessary, and will decide upon the appropriate course of action.

Referrals can come from any source, e.g. Teacher for the Visually Impaired, Speech Therapist, Autism Outreach Teacher, classroom staff, and all referrals will be offered a preliminary consultation to establish if a full assessment is appropriate (classroom observation, discussion with class room staff and parents/carers).

If appropriate the student will then be offered a full AAC assessment. Where possible this will be multidisciplinary. Parents/carers will be encouraged to attend.

Staff who work intensively with the referred pupil will be required to complete a full assessment form. Wherever possible classroom staff will be released to attend the assessment. Copies of what is recommended will be circulated to staff.

Following the assessment a detailed assessment report will be provided to classroom staff, other relevant professionals and the parents/carers. This will include aims which are reviewed formally as a minimum once a term, and which should be used to inform the pupil's individual learning programme.

Each pupil's communication needs are to be detailed in their Individual Education Plan (IEP) and should be reviewed termly as a minimum.

If it is appropriate that a pupil has some form of AAC, the AAC Specialist, in conjunction with multidisciplinary team help will:

- assess the pupil's strengths and needs, including their level of understanding

- assess pupil's likes and dislikes
- assess the environment
- choose an appropriate method of communication e.g. object, sign, symbol, VOCA (Voice Output Communication Aid e.g. Big Mack), PECS book, Body signing, Tech Talk, Dynavox.
- review the programme
- problem solve
- plan the next step

Where possible a key worker from the class should attend the assessment sessions.

DISCHARGE FOR PUPILS WHO USE HIGH TECH COMMUNICATION AIDS

When a pupil leaves Dorothy Goodman School a full communication report is made available to the parent/carers and those professionals who have responsibility for the student's future learning.

If a communication aid is required on leaving school, a request is made via SALT (Speech and Language Therapy) to the Leicestershire Area Health Authority for a reassessment of need. This request should be made prior to the pupil's penultimate Annual Review.

OBJECTS OF REFERENCE

An object of reference is an object acting as a cue that will be presented to the young person in order to indicate the start of a forthcoming activity, to make choices or sequence events of the day.

Objects of reference are used for those pupils who are at the earliest stages of communication or who have visual impairment or for those for whom an object is more motivating than other communication systems.

Some Objects of Reference are standardised across the school, e.g. the referents for Soft Play and for Sensory Room. However, where there is a need for an individual referent, (e.g. "dinner" for a child who is tube-fed) then this should be allocated. Objects of Reference are to be used only as communication aids and not as part of general classroom equipment.

A set of objects of reference is provided to each classroom. They are used in conjunction with speech.

SIGNING

All staff are expected to be committed to signing when working in school.

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Staff are expected to sign to pupils at all times both in and out of 'teaching' situations. This applies to all staff, all pupils, across both sites of the school, and also – as far as is possible – to all visitors to the school. **Dorothy Goodman is a signing environment.**

MAKATON is to be used as the predominant signing method.

If a sign is required that is not present in the Makaton vocabulary an alternative should be used taken from the British Sign Language vocabulary.

Signing is to be used for Key Words and sentence structure should follow the normal pattern for English grammar.

All signing is to be supported by speech.

Staff are encouraged to attend regular training sessions to improve and update their skills.

Parents will receive opportunities to attend training events.

BODY SIGNS

Body signs are individual to each student and will be found in the communication passport on the back of the wheelchairs.

Body signing is used for pupils with visual impairment and those at the earliest stages of communication.

Cannan Barrie signs are used as body signs.

New body signs will be introduced as appropriate, after close observation by Visual Impairment Teacher and key worker.

Information for the introduction of new body signs will be provided through the school. Training for key workers is done on an individual basis as the need arises by the V.I. and AAC teachers.

SYMBOLS

If a Widget 2000 (Matakon) symbol is not available, Picture Communication Symbols should be used as an alternative.

Symbol books and charts are to be available at all times and should be attached to pupils' wheelchairs if necessary.

Symbols should be used to support learning in all areas of the curriculum, not only in speaking and listening.

School computers have Widget 2000 (Makaton) and Board marker Symbols in their libraries.

Where possible symbols should be reproduced by computer graphics as this ensures consistency of image.

Some pupils require alternative symbol systems to ensure compatibility with their communication aids. Where variations of this nature occur, this should be indicated in the IEP.

The maintenance and updating of Communication Books and Charts is the responsibility of the class teacher or the pupil's key worker, **working in conjunction with the HLTA for AAC**. The vocabulary selection should be decided upon in liaison with the AAC Co-ordinator/SALT/Parent/Pupils.

SPEECH OUTPUT DEVICES

Pupils who require Speech Output Devices are offered one to one teaching support on a regular basis.

Appropriate devices are generally selected by the AAC specialist teacher, in liaison with the speech therapist, following a multi-disciplinary assessment. In some circumstances other assessment agencies may be used.

Requests for funding should be made to the relevant authorities following an annual review.

It is recognised that pupils may take a long time to learn to use their Speech Output Devices successfully. It is equally recognised that staff will require time to familiarise themselves with the workings of the machines.

On acquisition of a Speech Output Device it is the responsibility of the class teacher to note the serial number, to add it to the Inventory, and to locate an area of safe storage.

Before the aid is introduced to a pupil the class team will receive training covering basic maintenance of the machine, to be provided by the AAC specialist teacher.

If further training is required the specialist teacher or the speech therapist will work alongside the pupil's key worker.

Programming and choice and choice and inclusion of new vocabulary is in the first instance to be carried out the AAC specialist/SALT in liaison with class teacher and pupils. After training the key worker and pupil's parents/carers may programme the devices in liaison with the AAC specialist/SALT. **The AAC co-ordinator for each class team is also expected to be conversant with the operation of all AAC devices.**

Speech Output Devices attached to wheelchairs must undergo appropriate safety tests.

Communication aids attached to wheelchairs must be removed before a pupil leaves on school transport.

Speech Output Devices should be available to pupils at all times during the school day. Inappropriate responses should be dealt with in the same way as any other pupil speaking out of turn.

Speech Output Devices may be taken home and this should be encouraged. Insurance arrangements should be in place for equipment in all circumstances, and the equipment should be signed out in the appropriate book in the Office (“Equipment out of School”).

It is recognised that pupils who use Speech Output Devices require opportunities to interact with other aided speakers. Where possible class groupings will take account of this. Additionally pupils will be encouraged to attend meetings with other aided speakers on a regular basis.

Breakages and damage to Speech Output Devices are to be reported to the AAC specialist teacher or the speech therapist. Items must not be returned to suppliers without a reference number.

Staff should familiarise themselves on a regular basis with the new vocabulary included on the machine in order to ensure that they are asking relevant questions. Each pupil has a hard copy of their overlays in their IEP showing both vocabulary and location on screen.

Where possible, pupils should be encouraged to take the responsibility for using their aids.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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