

# The Coppice School



## Communication Policy

**Approved by the Governing Body of The Coppice School**

**Signed:** *H. Knell*

**Date: 11.05.18**

**Proposed Date of Future Review: June 2020**

## The Coppice School



## Policy for Communication

This policy is intended to ensure that all pupils develop skills which enable them to meaningfully interact and communicate within their community with a range of different people and for a range of different purposes.

Our school aims are to:

- Adopt a total communication approach throughout school, where pupils have access to their own means of communication throughout each day.
- Develop means of communication appropriate to each pupil's individual needs.
- Create opportunities for communication throughout the curriculum and the school day to enable each child to develop their communication skills to the best of his or her ability.

### **Who is the named person responsible for communication?**

The named member of staff with responsibility for communication is Debbie Bagwell (HLTA). Debbie works closely with school's Speech and Language Therapists.

### **How is communication managed?**

The member of staff with responsibility for communication will take the lead in school with:

- policy development
- effective support for colleagues in communication, including any training/INSET
- the purchase, upkeep and availability of resources
- liaison with speech and language therapists
- the monitoring and evaluation of communication
- assessment of communication
- any national/local initiatives in communication

### **Strategies used to support developing communication skills**

At The Coppice School we adopt a total communication approach using a range of communication methods and strategies to support and encourage communication skills and the development of speech and language. The methods are not used in isolation and a pupil may use a combination of the following methods.

- Pre-requisite level

For pupils who are at very early stages of development, this will involve staff closely observing their responses to sensory stimuli to try to establish how and what the pupils are communicating and what strategies and skills they already have in place.

Some pupils who, because they show little or no use or understanding of words, are not yet ready for more formal language teaching. For these pupils the emphasis will be on teaching the most basic skills necessary for communication and language to develop for example; being together, sharing, turn-taking, starting to use movements and noises with meaning. The school uses the Routes for Learning materials for guidance in this.

- Objects of reference

The use of objects is a means by which pupils are helped to make sense of their world and develop understanding of events. An object of reference is presented to a pupil with accompanying language in preparation for an event which is to follow e.g. in preparation for 'home' at the end of the school day pupils are shown the object of reference representing the journey home on school transport – a seat belt. At The Coppice School there is an agreed core of such objects and an agreed method of producing them to ensure consistency from class to class – see school symbol directory.

Some pupils may also use objects of reference to aid choice-making.

- Symbols and photographs

The use of symbols provides valuable support for most pupils and is encouraged even if pupils are not using PECS. They are particularly effective for visual learners and those pupils with ASD whose learning is scaffolded by constant access to pictorial information. Examples of symbol use include timetables, tuck shop choices and communication books. It is the responsibility of class staff to provide symbol vocabulary as appropriate and the school has a directory of commonly used symbols which aims to ensure consistency. Most symbols are generated using the program 'Communicating in Print'.

Symbols are used to support pupil development at both group and individual levels, for example photo timetables and 'Now and Next' boards to support anticipation of and transition between activities. They are also used to support 'emotional check-in', to help pupils, especially those with ASD, to identify, name and regulate their emotions.

- Signalong (Gill and Mike Kennard)

This is a key word signing system with its roots in BSL. It is used alongside speech and supports the development of a pupil's expressive and receptive language skills. The use of signing throughout the school day by staff greatly enhances a child's ability to be an effective communicator and thus all staff are expected to use sign supported speech consistently and accurately at every opportunity throughout each day. All pupils and staff have name signs. There were qualified Signalong trainers in school until Dec 17, who ran regular courses for staff, parents and other outside agencies. There is a plan in place to have new tutors trained within the next year. Most school staff are Signalong trained; Debbie Bagwell is able to refresh staff on individual signs on an ad hoc basis in the interim.

- Communication Aids

A number of pupils use communication aids in school. The most commonly used aid by our pupils are BIGMacks. These aids along with mounting arms, where appropriate, are allocated to individual pupils. As part of our commitment to a total communication approach they are sent home regularly so that pupils have 24 hour access to them. Parents sign a home school agreement which outlines the shared responsibilities between home/school for use and upkeep of the equipment.

Each child with a communication aid has a personalised programme devised by speech and language therapists which is shared with home and school.

For some pupils, for whom it is appropriate, specialist assessment by the speech and language therapists will be undertaken so that other high-tech communication aids can be made available.

- Picture Exchange Communication System – PECS (Frost and Bondy)

Through this method pupils learn to exchange picture symbols/photographs to express their needs and wants. There are 6 phases of PECS that pupils move through These are:

1. Exchanging a symbol
2. Travelling

3. Discrimination
4. Sentence structure
5. Spontaneous requesting
6. Social communication.

- Derbyshire Language

Pupils who have attained the level of being able to understand (and in some cases say some words) can be supported through the use of the Derbyshire Language scheme. This provides a structured approach which promotes the development of early language skills in pupils who have speech and communication difficulties. With the support of the Speech and Language Therapists, staff at The Coppice School are expected to use this approach, so that the correct language level is used for individual pupils.

- Communication passports

Pupils who use non-verbal communication or those with very limited speech have a 'communication passport' which details their specific communication needs in written and sometimes, photographic form.

These passports are developed towards the end of a pupil's time in the Early Years department and are produced in collaboration with parents, class staff and other professionals e.g. speech and language therapists. The initial passport is made by the TA/HLTA who supports communication in school. Thereafter the passport is maintained by class staff.

Passports are *formally* reviewed at the following times during a pupil's school career:

- In the term before the pupil moves into middle school
- In the term before the pupil moves into upper school
- In the term before a pupil leaves The Coppice School

Passports can be informally reviewed *at any time* to reflect a pupil's changing needs or skills and each pupil's passport is available on Teacher data.

### **On entry to school**

On entry to school most pupils are already known to the Speech and Language Therapy department. If a pupil is not known then should the SLT department become involved, a referral form is sent home which parents must sign to show they agree to their child being assessed and treated. (See Speech and Language NHS referral form).

A pupil's initial speech and language needs are assessed within the school setting through observations and individual assessments as well as through close liaison between parents, teachers, support staff and speech and language therapists.

Where appropriate, pupils are assigned 'episodes of care'. Episode plans are then devised for pupils and these are used by class staff to inform day to day classroom practice and to inform target setting for pupils' Individual Education Plans.

### **Assessment**

Assessment of communication skills is in line with the assessment, recording and reporting policy for the school.

In relation to communication the following considerations apply:

- All pupils are assessed on the speaking and listening elements of B Squared
- Pupils who are in the Early Years Foundation Stage are assessed using the Early Years Developmental Journal.
- Routes for Learning is used to support the assessment of pupils who are working at very early communication levels.
- Most pupils have communication targets on their IEP. Assessments against learning outcomes are made on an individual basis to demonstrate progress and inform future targets.
- For pupils who have an episode of care with Speech and Language Therapy, a formal report is submitted with the pupil's annual review papers.

## **Resources**

Resources recommended to individual pupils may include:

- PECS books
- Symbols
- Switches or BIGMacks
- Mounting arms
- Choice boards

General resources available to all pupils and staff include:

- 'Communicating in Print' programme for generating symbols
- Directory of symbols which identifies commonly used symbols
- Objects of reference
- BIGMacks
- 'Step by steps'
- Signalong manuals

## **INSET**

Periodically there is a communication INSET in school. The focus of this INSET is decided by the leader for communication based on initiatives or issues in the school development plan. The meetings are usually planned in partnership with Speech and Language therapists. Further INSET is arranged as required.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Senior Leadership Team, supported by Debbie Bagwell, will take responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of communication through;

- planned observations
- informal feedback and discussion with staff including speech and language therapists
- tracking pupil data through speaking and listening elements of B Squared.
- Through the communication behaviours identified in Routes for Learning.
- Speech and Language Therapists will monitor progress through specialised SLT assessments

## **Home – school**

The school recognises that home-school partnership is pivotal to the success of pupils' achievements in communication. To this end close liaison is encouraged through:

- Parental meetings with speech and language therapists
- IEPs shared with parents and outcomes reported to parents termly
- Annual report
- Pupils who use AAC take their equipment home every day
- Home – school diary
- KIT (Keeping in Touch) Planned and informal discussions with parents.

## **Links to other policies:**

This policy has links to a range of other school policies:

- English
- Teaching and Learning
- Assessment, Recording and Reporting

Disability Equality Scheme  
Inclusion

**Revised and adopted by the Governing Body**

**Signed:**.....

**Date:** .....