



The Southfield Trust

Communication Policy & Guidelines

Supporting the development of Communication & Language.

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1. Introduction- The Bridge to Literacy

Literacy and particularly reading and writing, is rightly at the very centre of education, both in curriculum and accountability terms.

“Communication and Language” (along with personal and social development) is at the very centre of special education. It should not be seen as a separate subject but as an integral pre-cursor to “literacy”. The National Literacy Strategy Framework makes explicit: “.....the centrality of speaking and listening”. The Framework goes on to say “speaking and listening is not only a communication skill in its own right, but the bedrock of literacy development”.

Speaking and listening, communication and language is fundamental to children’s development. It is central for them to be able to meet their basic needs and to progress nearly all other learning. It is vital to children so they are able to progress their social, emotional and cognitive development. Particularly in the SLD/PMLD school context, the ability to communicate, as effectively as an individual’s disability will allow, is the fundamental human right.

2. Philosophy, Beliefs and Values

Our young people and their learning is the centre of everything we do. We believe it is every person’s right to have a voice (however they may express it) and be supported to learn to advocate this appropriately. We believe every young person should feel valued and listened to, and have every opportunity to understand and be understood.

We adopt a Total Communication Approach:-

‘Total Communication is a communication philosophy – not a communication method... Total communication is an approach to create a successful and equal communication between human beings with different language perceptions and/or production... To use Total Communication amounts to a willingness to use all available means in order to understand and be understood.’ (Hansen)

It is our duty to enable each pupil/student to communicate to the best of their ability and seek to support every aspect of communication. We recognise that communication can take many forms, both verbal and non-verbal, and that real communication is motivated by real life situations and the opportunity that pupils/students have to control elements of their environment.

3. Policy Aims

- i. To increase understanding of how communication and language develop.
- ii. To encourage and empower all staff to use a range of communication strategies and understand that these should not be used in isolation. (A pupil may use several methods/strategies to communicate and so should we).
- iii. To consolidate and improve our whole school total communication approach, supporting the development of communication and language using low, light and high tech forms of AAC (Alternative and Augmentative Communication).
- iv. To promote a strong and productive interdisciplinary approach involving parents/carers, specialist teachers, SALTs, OTs, physios and all school staff to support pupils/students in developing their skills of communicating. This is essential, with the pupil/student 'voice' being at the heart of this work.
- v. To ensure that every pupil/student reaches their full communicative potential and are prepared for the next stage, as fundamental to building relationships, finding happiness and living fulfilled lives.

4. The Communication Team

i) The Role of the Team (Roles & Responsibilities)

The Communication Team is co-led by the school's Communication Manager and Communication Team Lead. It also comprises of Specialist Teachers, Teaching Assistants and Senior Management Representatives from both schools. It also works in collaboration with Speech and Language, Occupational & Physiotherapists and assistants from the NHS Children's Integrated Therapy Service.

The role of the team is to lead, promote and develop a whole school approach to communication by working in an interdisciplinary way, endeavouring to empower both professionals, parents/carers and the pupils and students we are teaching by providing them with a structure for the development of communication and language through a range of methods.

We aim to support our pupils'/students' to develop the communication skills they need to make choices, advocate their opinion, build positive relationships and become confident and independent individuals.

We work in collaboration with class teachers, tutors & the Senior Management Team to ensure every pupil/student has a communication programme to meet their needs.

Together, using our Total Communication Approach we aim to:

- ▶ Enable all pupils/students to develop functional communication skills
- ▶ Support and develop every pupil's/student's receptive language skills & gain information through a variety of methods
- ▶ Progress every pupil's/student's means of expression & self-advocacy
- ▶ Support pupils'/students' social communication skills in order to develop and maintain their relationships

(See Appendix 2 – Planning & Provision, Cycle of Support)

Communication planning meetings at South Downs

Class Teachers meet with the Communication Teachers, and other appropriate persons working with the pupil, in terms 1, 3 and 5. Every pupil is discussed and their progress is evaluated against their current communication programme and a new programme is created for the following 2 terms. Discussion focuses on the pupil's current communication needs whilst considering the long term aim for communication to give context to short term goals (making reference to EHCP aims). There will be at least 2 communication goals set which forms part of the pupil's Individual Learning Plan (ILP) and individual work programme. During these meetings, pupils' current communication systems will be reviewed and updates planned for as necessary. All pupils who have made outstanding progress are identified and receive a certificate in assembly for their achievement. Pupils who would benefit from additional input from the team are identified at this meeting. Additional input includes, 1:1 work, group sessions, contact/support for families, assessment by one or more of the team dependent on the needs of the pupil, resource/equipment (e.g. PECS book/ Switch choosing grids), training for the team or referrals to other services (for example OT). If a pupil is not making expected progress, they will be identified at this time and a case study will be completed on them with an agreed action plan of support implemented. All the information is gathered by the Communication Teachers and informs planning discussion with the Communication team. It is then decided who will deliver the requested input over the following two terms. There is a commitment that pupils will then receive regular weekly sessions (for at least 6 weeks), and these will be negotiated, timetabled and circulated in advance to Class Teachers by the Communication Team.

Communication Student Progress meetings at TLS

Students at TLS have been grouped into 3 categories according to their communication needs.

- ▶ **Category A** – Students identified as having a specific communication therefore requiring specialist communication support and direct interventions from the communication team.
- ▶ **Category B** – Students requiring ongoing monitoring, guidance and support for class tutors by the communication team to meet their needs (Includes all pupils eligible for pupil premium).
- ▶ **Category C** – Students whose communication needs are met within class, and supported through whole school training & development

All students can move fluidly between categories to reflect their changing needs.

Communication Teachers and Key stage leaders meet at the end of every term to discuss progress (6X per year). The communication team share progress on students who have had direct input that term, and receive feedback on their progress in class from the key stage leaders. Students who would benefit from additional input from the team are identified at this meeting and the caseload categories are amended as necessary. If a student is not making expected progress, they will be identified at this time and a case study will be completed on them with an agreed action plan of support implemented. Additional input includes, 1:1 work, Sulp group sessions, contact/support for families, tutor liaison, assessment by one or more of the team dependent on the needs of the pupil, resource/equipment (e.g. social story), or referrals to other services (for example SALT). This information is gathered by the Communication Team and informs planning discussion, at which the Communication Teachers will set at least 1 communication goal per term for the students for whom they will be providing additional sessions. (These small steps to work towards the students' Individual Social & Learning Plans (ISLP) communication goal based on the overarching EHCP). It is then decided who will deliver the requested input over the following term. There is a commitment that pupils will then receive regular weekly sessions (for at least 6 weeks), and these will be negotiated, timetabled and circulated in advance to the Tutors by the Communication Team. Any additional training required is also discussed at these meetings, after which it is agreed by SMT and planned and delivered by the Communication Teachers.

Requesting additional input

Our schools have access to a number of services. Referral may happen in a number of ways, and the Communication Team lead will coordinate the process with the Class Teacher/Tutor having gained agreement from the parents/carers to progress with this.

Additional input may include:

- Dysphagia
- SCAMP Clinic
- Sensory Needs Service – visual & hearing impairment
- Occupational Therapy

As well as weekly team briefings, Communication Liaison meetings with the Communication Team and SALTS are held at the start of terms 2, 4 & 6 to plan for input following Communication Planning meetings. In addition, Multiagency meetings are held in terms 1, 3 & 5, where all agencies working in the schools (including OTs, Physios & SALTs) meet to celebrate pupil/student achievements and discuss whole school development linked to the 3 year development plan. Copies of the minutes of these meetings are stored under the 'Communication Team' on the network.

ii) School Development Plan

Alongside the school 3 year strategic development plan, a 3 year communication development plan is drawn up. Following consultation between the communication team members and multiagency, the team identifies key areas of focus and the individuals to lead on specific aspects of the development work at the beginning of each academic year. The plan is evaluated every 2 terms by the Communication Manager and feedback to SMT, with each item rated by its impact on pupils.

iii) Continued Professional Development

As communication is essential to all aspects of pupils' lives, it is important that staff receive the appropriate training and opportunities to experience and see examples of good practice. Staff are given a comprehensive induction in which they receive a specific session on Communication. (See Induction Policy), and are supported to continue their development through further training. Questionnaires are sent out to staff about their personal training needs. Additional training needs are identified by the Communication team through planning/ progress/ multiagency meetings or in class observations. Areas identified are included in the communication development plan and taken to SLT to agree & plan time to implement. This may take the form of school closure days, twilights, teacher or key stage meetings.

There are regular refresher/revision sessions for essential skills such as signing, PECS and symbol use. Targeted training is planned and delivered to class teams as a result of communication planning meetings to meet the needs of individual pupils.

iv) Resources

The Communication Team has a large resource bank which is shared with classes across the school. Requests for communication materials and resources can be made at the communication planning meetings/student progress meetings and during the term by completing the relevant form and giving it to the Communication Team Lead.

The Communication Team agree who makes these resources which are then delivered to class teams to support the development of pupils'/students' communication skills across the school or given to support families at home.

The Communication Team holds a 'Communication – Useful Sources of Information' folder & reference manuals for staff reference, which provides comprehensive information and support strategies for facilitating pupils' communication. Copies of these are stored under the 'Communication Team' on the network. Additional information on resources and support materials available can be found in Appendix 4 on 'Useful Sources of Information'.

5. Pupils

The Southfield Trust educates a wide range of pupils who range from moderate to significant communication needs.

Pupils at South Downs range from age 4 – 11, (and also a nursery with pupils starting for sessions at age 3). Within the school the pupil population falls within various categories including autism, profound and multiple learning disabilities and severe learning disabilities and work within a wide range of abilities from P level 1, up to National Curriculum level 2.

Students at The Lindfield School (TLS), range from age 11-16. The categories of need within TLS include pupils with autism, moderate learning disabilities, severe learning disabilities and behavioural, emotional social difficulties.

Within these groups pupils could be described as different types of communicators:

- Pre-verbal pupils/students communicate in a very basic way, without using formal language skills (speech, sign, and symbols). Pupils/students may move through a simple progression of skills, and it is important to recognize the wide spectrum of ability that this group represents – from pupils whose reactions are reflex responses to stimuli and situations e.g. crying when hungry or uncomfortable (pre-intentional) to pupils/students who clearly want to communicate meaning and are purposeful in their intent to control aspects of their environment e.g. reaching towards cup when thirsty (purposeful).
- Non-verbal pupils/students show clear intent and motivation to initiate an interaction i.e. they have some form of purposeful or intentional communication, but due to various reasons (physical impairment, oral-motor issues, echolalic speech, etc.) have a receptive language level in advance of their ability to express themselves. These pupils/students are likely to require a symbol system in some form or another e.g. objects bag, simple choosing book, photo/symbol book, etc. Pupils/students at this stage will expect a response to their attempt to communicate.
- Verbal pupils/students use speech as their primary means of communication, but will still benefit greatly from being immersed in a Total Communication environment. They may have significant social and emotional needs where the prioritising of communication skills will enhance friendships, relationships and positive self-image through a mutual understanding and listening to and respecting their opinions.

Pupil/Student Voice

It is essential that we support every child in expressing their 'voice' and allowing them to express choices and feelings. All staff understand that there is a greater reason to communicate than simply to request and the greatest function of language is to comment and engage with others about our experiences.

In order to support this, pupils at the earliest stage of development are given opportunities to demonstrate their feelings during intensive interaction through body language, facial expression and intonation. As pupils/students' progress they are given opportunities to learn how to handle criticism and complaints, be assertive and represent the school to a wider audience.

All pupils/students have the opportunity to express their opinions on their progress in annual reviews and pupil progress meetings. Additional guidance on facilitating pupil views can be found under 'Communication Team' on the

network. Pupils/students are encouraged to review their learning against their ISLP target. Pupils/students have the opportunity to become a school council representative, engage with discussions and share their views in a range of issues that affect them in school. At TLS students may be able to become student prefects or receive their support to advocate their student voice. TLS students also vote for a student to become a member of Youth Parliament to act as the voice of the Lindfield School across East Sussex.

6. Communication in the Curriculum – Teaching & Learning

Before pupils/students can become purposeful in their communication they must become 'switched on' to their environment - they must be interested and attend to what's in it before they can learn to take control over elements of it. If a pupil/student becomes curious, their level of motivation will increase. The degree of alertness and curiosity determines in large part how motivated a pupil/student will be to deliberately control their immediate environment.

The same principles can be applied to our more able pupils/students. Some of the greatest learning for our pupils/students will take place outside the classroom, when communication is driven through real-life, meaningful contexts and pupils/students have the opportunity to practice and transfer these skills in the community to prepare them for their future lives. It is therefore essential that pupils'/students' communication skills are taught through highly motivating, purposeful experiences.

i) Curriculum & Planning

Our curriculum is designed to be both incisively relevant to the needs of individual pupils/students and ensure an entitlement to curricular breadth and balance. Further guidance can be found in the Teaching & Learning policy.

There is a complex link between communication and literacy - in order to understand this link, it is important to have clear definitions of both terms.

- **Communication** is 'fundamental to children's development; children need to be able to understand and be understood; it's the foundation of relationships and is essential for learning, play and social interaction.' (Hello Campaign)
- **Literacy** is 'explicitly defined as the 4 areas of language – reading, writing, speaking and listening' (Rose Report)

In this setting, all pupils/students have difficulties with their Speech, Language and Communication due to the nature of their learning disabilities.

The development of formal literacy requires a certain level of language skills. All pupils/students need to establish the pre requisite skills of 'communication' before progressing on to their formal 'literacy' development.

At p1-3 – Pupils'/students' core learning focusses on Communication & Personal Development with all other areas incorporated into a breadth of study.

At P4-8 – Pupils'/students' core learning focuses on Communication, Personal Development and Early Literacy & Numeracy for functionality with all other areas incorporated into a breadth of study.

At NC up – Pupils'/students' learning would focus on subject based learning working towards formal qualifications, but with Communication and Personal Development running parallel with equal weighting as key skills for the future.

Communication is planned and assessed according to individual pupil/student needs and included in pupils'/students' ISLP targets. Incisively relevant communication targets will be set for each pupil/student using the Southfield Trust Communication Curriculum as guidance. The targets will consider the overarching long term aim included in the EHCP in order to directly on the quality of pupils'/students' lives now and in the future. ISLP targets are woven into all contexts throughout the day and are not seen in isolation. Whilst pupils/students may participate in a specific group to learn new skills, they will be encouraged to integrate their learning in all their daily routines. We also recognise the importance of the communication learning that occurs at play and lunch times including developing choice making and social skills at this time. Pupils'/students' targets are reflective of this, with every time in the day seen as a learning opportunity.

ii) The Environment

We recognise that in order for pupils/students to take on new information and understanding, they must first be in an environment which supports them to feel safe, in control and ready to learn. Staff understand that no one system should be used in isolation but that pupils/students may use several strategies to communicate and therefore so should we. (For further information on systems that can be used see Appendix 3 & 4)

Every classroom has visual (or multi-sensory) support appropriate to the needs of the pupils/students. Environments are well structured with clear areas and visual support throughout (e.g. key fobs/ emotions feelings charts/ visual labels/ visual timetable), and where appropriate, pupils/students have access to TEACCH structures to support them in their learning.

Teachers will establish their own systems for their class type or specific groups of pupils/students within their class according to the need. In addition, specific communication systems will be set up by class teachers or with support from the communication team, for individual pupils according to their need.

iii) The Adult's role

The adult's role is crucial in supporting, facilitating and extending pupils'/students' communication. They act as role models and support the integration of communication into all areas of the curriculum.

When working with pupils/students in the area of communication there are some simple but fundamental principles that all should endeavour to employ:

- A Total Communication approach is essential. Communication partners should use a mixture of speech, sign, symbols, photos and objects of reference to give pupils information and allow them to express themselves using their own method(s)
- Consider and respect how the pupil/student wants to communicate
- The communication partner should try to get on the same face to face level as the pupil/students they are talking to
- The communication partner should be aware of the age and language level of the pupil/student and give clear simple messages using a Total Communication approach
- Communication partners should respond to pupils'/students' communications, and give them time to respond
- Staff working with pupils/students should have consistently high expectations.
- Provide a breadth of communication and language experiences
- All those working with pupils/students should understand the importance of the use of language and communication and the primacy of its social function and links with behaviour
- No one working with pupils should ever underestimate the central importance of strong relationships in empowering and facilitating pupils.

The **Communication Charter** was devised and agreed by all staff is a vitally important part of the Trusts' ethos and values. Its principles are to be followed by all staff, pupils/students and visitors. (See Appendix 1)

iv) Challenging Behaviour & Communication

All staff understand that challenging behaviour fundamentally linked to communication and by supporting pupils/students to communicate, you are able to alleviate much of their frustration and anxiety thus supporting their behaviour. All pupils/students who display challenging behaviour have behaviour management plans which include a communication profile, how best to communicate with the child at a time of crisis, what the behaviour could be trying

to communicate and what communication systems should be used to support. Each child is a unique individual and will require different strategies to support them. All staff are trained in Team Teach, which emphasises the importance of communication to deescalate challenging behaviour.

7. Identifying progress, Assessing, Monitoring & Evaluation

In its simplest form three questions may form the basis of an assessment: -

- How is the child communicating spontaneously e.g. what systems are they using?
- What is the function of his/her communication?
- Where does their best communication take place most frequently?

Through identifying and answering key questions such as these, we are able to critically assess the skills of a child's communication and identify the areas for development in order to plan for the next steps. In ILP/ISLP evaluations, these key questions will be asked to identify the current level of the pupil/student in their communication, the possible reasons for progress or lack of progress and identify the next steps for the pupil's/student's new targets.

The communication curriculum & assessment guidance breaks the down and expands the QCA performance descriptors for Speaking and Listening, to include Expressive Language, Speech, Social Interaction, Self-Advocacy, Comprehension and Attention & Listening (From P1-NC5). These provide a clear progression of communication skills to support teachers tracking progress and planning for the next step. (For Additional information see Curriculum & Teaching & Learning Policy)

For communication, we have 6 assessment instruments to measure progress and demonstrate achievement: (For additional information see Assessment Policy)

- **Individual Learning Plans** - which include communication goals that are written and evaluated on a termly basis and are p-level referenced & linked to pupils'/students' EHCPs.
- **P-level/NC data** - assessment using the speaking and listening QCA performance descriptors and have the adapted speaking and listening assessments for communication which are made 3 times per year.
- **EHCP/ Annual review reports** - which provide summative description of communication progress during the past year which is levelled and goes to parents/carers.

- **Record of Achievements** - which are cumulative pupil/student records of achievements that demonstrate attainment and progress. These are completed termly and levelled then moderated both internally and externally 3 times per year.
- **Lesson Observations** - Lessons are formally observed three times per year and social communication is one of the key areas for focus. Pupils'/students' communication and interaction is observed during lesson observations and graded for both their social interaction progress as well as their academic progress.
- **Pupil/Student Progress meetings** – meetings are held 3 times per year and judgements on pupils/students overall progress including communication are made using all the 7 indicators of progress.

The Communication Team will carry out its own formative assessments during any sessions working with the pupils/students at the end of which a summary of progress is written and copies given to the teacher to inform the EHCP report. Any assessments carried out by the team will be discussed with Teachers, and added to the pupil's/student's file.

All pupils'/students' progress against their ILP/ISLP targets is measured after communication planning meetings/ progress meetings, after which the progress is scrutinized by the Communication Manager and reported to the SMT for each school respectively.

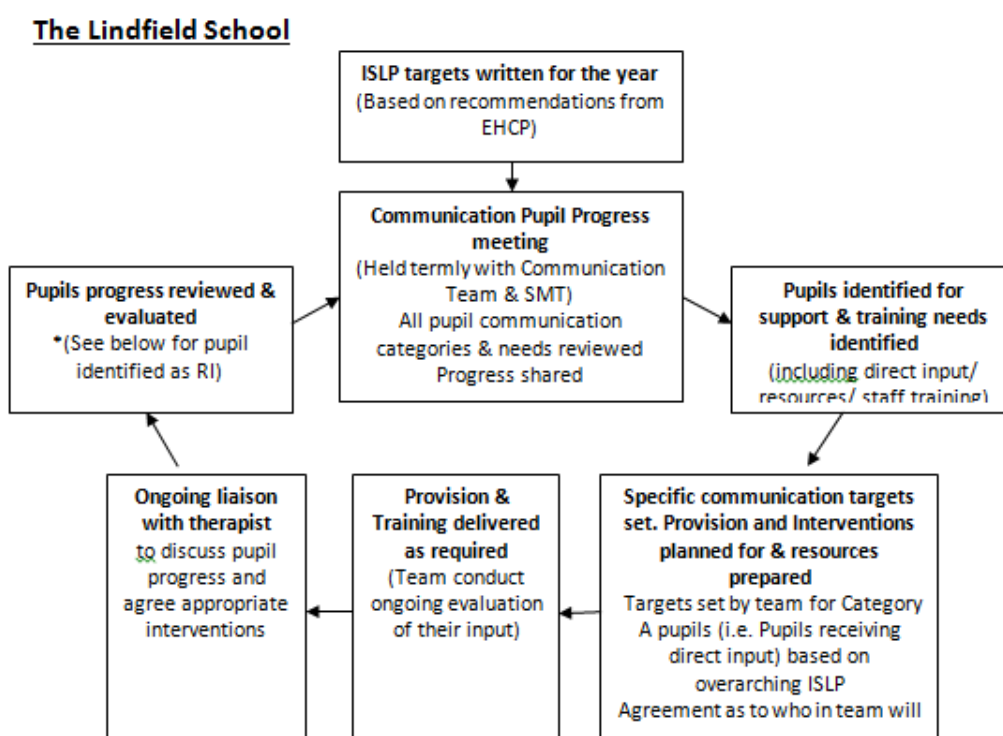
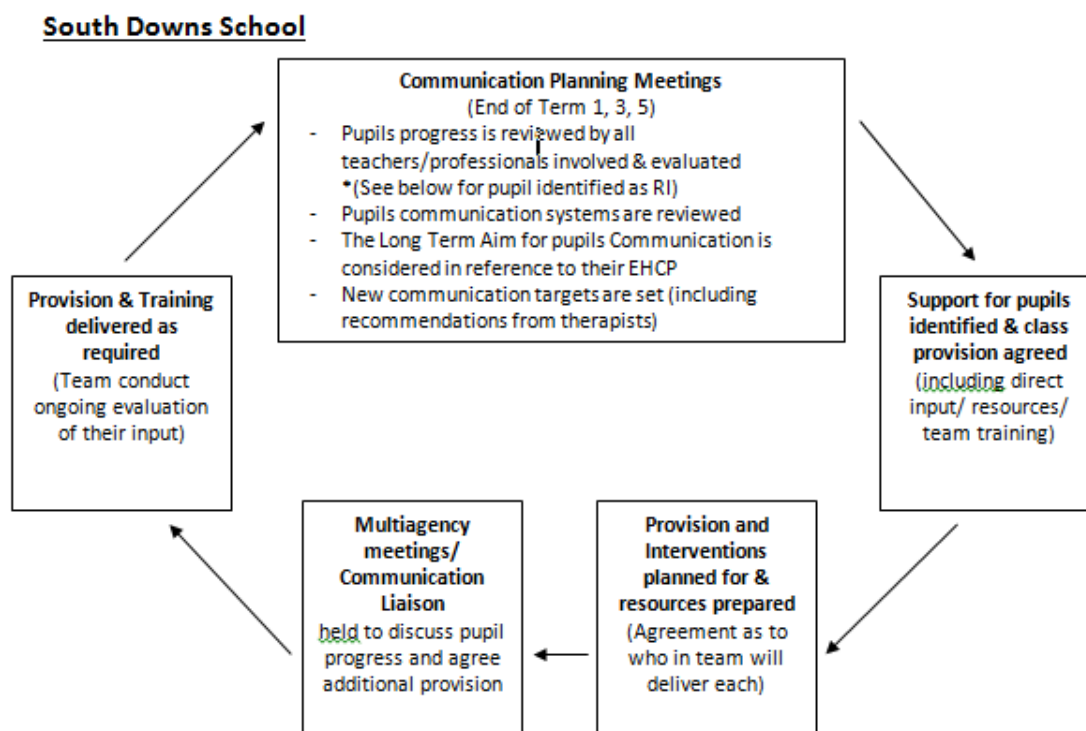
Communication is also monitored through learning walks, photographic evidence and through staff training and evaluations. Progress is reported at least annually to trustees, governors and the school improvement partners and may also be externally moderated by other schools and/or independent education consultants.

Appendix 1:

Communication Charter:

- ◆ I might not speak but I will communicate with you.
- ◆ Take time to recognise and understand the methods or signals I use to communicate.
- ◆ Have patience and allow me plenty of time to respond – it may take me a while to listen, think and respond to you.
- ◆ It's good to communicate face to face.
- ◆ Learn the methods I need you to use to help me understand what you're telling me.
- ◆ I will learn from you. Model what you want me to learn.
- ◆ I may need lots of opportunities to practice my new communication skills.
- ◆ Communicate with me in a dignified manner, with respect and in a way that is appropriate to my age.
- ◆ Include me in social interactions and provide me with the means to participate.
- ◆ Please don't take away my means of communication.

Appendix 2: Planning & Provision Cycle of Support



Appendix 3: Definitions & Descriptions

Speech

The sounds used to produce words. This includes how people speak, the fluency, volume, intonation and pitch used to support meaning.

Language

The comprehension of words (receptive language) & how they are used (expressive language). It is knowing the right words to explain what you mean and make sense of what people say.

Communication

Refers to how we interact with others, using language or gestures in different ways, for example to have a conversation or give directions. It's also being able to understand other people's points of view and understanding and using body language and facial expressions.

AAC

Alternative and Augmentative communication refers to any approach designed to support, enhance or augment (increase) the communication of individuals who are not independent verbal communicators in **all situations**. (Beukelman, Yorkston & Dowden, 1985 as quoted by the ACE centre)

Types of AAC

- Unaided systems of communication (requires nothing external to the body to represent meaning e.g. signing, gesture, vocalization, etc.)
- Aided systems of communication (communication that requires something external to the body to represent meaning e.g. communication books, boards, voice output communication aids (VOCA))

Aided AAC is further divided into 3 categories –

- i. Low tech AAC – any non-technical aid/support e.g. objects of reference, communication books/boards
- ii. Light tech AAC – simple voice output communication aids that are battery operated e.g. big macks, step by steps
- iii. High tech AAC – complex electronic voice output communication aids

A Description of AAC Systems used at South Downs School

This appendix provides information about Alternative and Augmentative forms of Communication (AAC). It is important to note that even when pupils use an AAC System, vocalization and speech are always encouraged. The school aims for all pupils to reach their communicative potential, therefore if pupils are not independent verbal communicators in all situations, forms of AAC may be used to enable pupils to be as independent as possible.

AAC can be used for a variety of communicative functions, for example gaining information, expressing opinions, choice making and commenting. There are many more! Pupils may use a range of the systems listed below. It may be appropriate for a pupil to use one system in one situation and a different system in another situation. For example, a pupil may use a communication board in the classroom, but if they can't access this whilst in the swimming pool they may need to make choices by auditory scanning. It's important to be creative when using AAC to maximize the potential for communication.

Unaided Systems:

These systems require nothing external to the body. We all use a range of non verbal communication, facial expression, body language, gesture, mime, vocalization, eye contact etc. For pupils with communication difficulties, this type of communication is essential. In school pupils are encouraged to use these methods to enhance the meaning of their expressive communication. Signing is a more formal type of unaided AAC.

South Downs uses 2 main signing systems:

- **Makaton** – The Makaton System was designed specifically for people with a learning disability and is our main signing system in school. Staff are encouraged to sign all the time and provide pupils with good signing models. If Makaton do not have a required sign, Communication Link is used, if no sign can be found there, a BSL sign maybe used.
- **Canaan Barrie On Body Signs** – this system was designed for people who have complex sensory needs, i.e. a visual and hearing impairment. The signs can be done on the pupils body, hand under hand with the pupil or near the pupils body. Pupils who use this system are introduced to key signs gradually.

Aided Systems:

Aided systems require something external to the body in order to communicate. In school, aided systems are tailored to the pupil's individual needs and wherever possible their personal wishes are taken into account.

- **Low Tech Systems:**
Low Tech Systems can be made with various forms of representation, for example objects, sounds, photographs, symbols and words (For more information on Objects of Reference see appendix). The type of representation used very much depends on a pupil's preference, level of

understanding, physical skills and sensory needs. It is ESSENTIAL to remember that whatever form is used, it must be TAUGHT.

- The school uses Widgit Literacy Symbols as a main symbol system. However when Widgit do not have a symbol that is required or it is not clear enough, Makaton Symbols are used. The PCS symbols are used for 'Yes' & 'No'.

Here is a brief description of the types of low tech systems used in school:

- Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) – PECS can be used with a range of people with communication difficulties. This system is taught in a very specific way. It is used to teach initiation, persistence, and discrimination of pictures/symbols, building simple sentences, widening vocabulary to include adjectives, verbs, questions etc, spontaneous communication and commenting.
- Choice Boards/Charts – these can be used with any form of representation, the size of the board/chart, content, number of items and access method (see below) will be determined by the user's needs.
- Timetables – all classes have a timetable and, again, objects, photographs and symbols can be used to make them. Some pupils have their own timetable to give them information about what is going to happen.
- Communication Books- for guidance the school bases all communication books on 'Developing a Communication Book' and 'Developing Eye Pointing' both by Clare Latham of The Ace Centre. A core vocabulary is always used so that pupils can develop a variety of communicative functions (see page 5). Each communication book is tailored to individual needs. The books need to be motivating and include vocabulary that is meaningful and fun for the pupil. When collating all the information needed to create a communication book, parents, class teams, relevant others and, when appropriate, pupils are consulted. The content, layout, size and form of representation etc. is decided with input from all those described above. The books are regularly reviewed at communication planning meetings and updated when required.

Access Methods:

Choice Boards/Charts and Communication Books can be accessed by the pupil in a number of ways:

- Directly – by finger or fist pointing
- Eye pointing – pupils may eye point directly to objects/photographs/symbols in their book or on their board, or they may need photographs/symbols removed from the book/board and presented on an e-tran frame in order for them to make a choice.
- Partner Assisted Scanning – if a pupil cannot directly access the book or board or use eye pointing, the adult can scan the objects, photographs or symbols for the pupil. The adult waits for the pupil to say 'yes' (the pupil

may say 'yes', use vocalization, sign or movement or a simple voice output communication aid such as a Big Mack) when they see/hear the option they want. There are 2 main ways adults can use this form of scanning:

1. The adult scans the options, verbally labeling them whilst pointing or using a red frame to highlight each option. When the pupil sees the option they want they say 'yes' to make the choice. If a pupil is scanning a large number of photographs/symbols, the adult may scan the options in a particular order. For example row/column scanning.
2. If the pupil has a visual impairment the adult will read the categories or options in a certain order and at an appropriate pace for the pupil. The content is read from the pupil's auditory scanning chart or book. When the pupil hears the option they require they will say 'yes'.
3. If a pupil has a visual and hearing impairment or requires sensory cues, the adult will label the options whilst either using an on body sign or enabling the pupil to explore an object or tactile cue. When the pupil hears/feels the option they want they will say 'yes'.

Light Tec Communication Aids:

These aids are defined as 'communication systems needing limited technology to operate in practice, often defined as needing simply a battery'. In school the most commonly used light tech aids are Big Macks and Step by Steps.

Single Message devices can be used in a variety of ways, for example to gain attention, to give news, to take a message and for controlling games. These devices can promote an understanding of cause and effect, enable a pupil to initiate conversations, control their environment and so on. Pupils can move on to use step by step devices which extend the skills learned using a single message device. For example, pupils can practice simple turn taking skills, timing skills – activating the device at the appropriate time during a story. It is important that these aids have the appropriate labeling clearly displayed on them so the pupil knows what they are using them for.

High Tec Communication Aids:

These communication systems are based upon a greater degree of technology - both light and high tech aids are often referred to as VOCAs – voice output communication aids. There are many factors to consider when thinking about high tech AAC for pupils with a severe or profound learning disability. For example, current skills and readiness for an aid, the pupils preference and level of motivation to communicate and use an aid, how the pupil would access the aid, how language would be organized, portability, who would update the device, funding, training for those around the pupil, the low tech systems already in use or needed in case the device fails, how the aid could be used as part of the pupils Total Communication, future considerations for the pupil...these are just a few. Currently the school would seek specialist support if it was felt a pupil may need a high tech aid. A team assessment would also take place to gather all the required information in readiness for specialist assessment, advice and input.

For AAC Systems to be successful....

Essential skills of a communication partner

- Motivation – start with activities a pupil likes
- Modelling – point to some of the symbols while you chat
- Pause – see if the pupil points/looks/responds
- Extend – add to what the pupil says
- Use open ended questions
- Take the pressure off – don't test!
- Be super responsive
- Be patient
- Have fun

The following factors must be considered when using AAC:

- The purpose of a communication system is to arrange language in a space so an individual can say what they wish to say as quickly as possible, and can do this with minimal effort.
- Have the pupil's communication system available at all times
- Use the communication system for a range of functions*
- Provide motivating situations in which pupils can develop their language skills using total communication in meaningful, functional and enjoyable ways
- Provide communicative opportunities for pupils both in social and curricular settings
- Make sure the pupil and the communication system are positioned well in all situations
- Give AAC users opportunities to see others using the same methods of communication as themselves
- During times of transition everyone working/involved with the pupil must be aware of and understand the pupil's communication system
- Ensure continuity of provision throughout all classes and departments within the school.

*Examples of communicative functions:

- Social exchanges
- Gaining attention/ Initiating and interaction
- Requesting
- Responding
- Express feelings and opinions
- Problem solving
- Reject
- Communication repair
- Comment/Give information/transfer information/Asking questions
- Negotiation
- Humour

Alternative Augmentative Communication (AAC) - Progression Guidance Moving from a Low tech communication system to a High Tech.

With High tech communication equipment becoming more and more accessible, the means to develop and extend pupils communication are increasing and enabling far greater opportunities for our children.

However, in order to successfully use a high tech aid, practitioners must ensure that the children they work with have the pre-requisite skills needed to access the device and use it successfully, without becoming frustrated or confused (causing them to disengage with the device or be put off communicating).

In order to successfully access a high tech communication aid, the child must first develop skills in communicative understanding in order to recognise the purpose and use of the device, as well as the physical skills required to control the device. For a child to be deemed appropriate to move to using a high tech device, they must first:-

- Successfully demonstrate the ability to seek and gain attention in order to communicate. (This may need to be taught in a different way using a high tech aid).
- Demonstrate understanding of the reciprocity of communication.
- Demonstrate a clear yes and no response to stimuli
- Demonstrate understanding of the cause and effect nature of a switch/ voice output to communicate meaning e.g. to request an item/ for more.
- Show an interest in technology
- Show understanding that photos/pictures/ symbols correspond to and represent objects and be able to discriminate pictures.
- Demonstrate the ability to categorise objects into groups (i.e. for an iPad where pupils/students will be expected to scan and select the group they require to find the item)
- Be able to control their physical movements in some way in order to access and control the device (e.g. eye pointing, touch, chin switch etc)
- Currently be using a low/light tech system functionally and consistently and across a range of environments with a range of communication partners. (This is essential as pupils will need a system to fall back on if the technology breaks/ needs updating/ run out of battery etc).

For PECS users, Pyramid recommend that pupils should also:-

- Be able to discriminate at least 20 pictures
- Be working at least at phase 4 of PECS

It would also be useful if they were taught to –

- Isolate 1 finger when reading back the strip to prepare for button pressing
- Place their symbols back in the book in the correct place to learn the need to clear the display on a screen and categorise correctly.

If a pupil/student is displaying these skills and parents, class teachers, Speech & Language, Occupational and Physiotherapists have met to discuss the child's needs and agreed that the child is a candidate for moving on, the communication team will support in the accessing of a trial of the new device or if appropriate, a referral will be made to the service for Communication Aids.

The referral is likely to be declined if:

- the child is not demonstrating consistently the skills listed above.
- the child shows little or no interest in technology
- the referral is not relating to a communication need
- there is a high risk of damage to the device, to the child or others
- there is a likelihood the technology will be a distraction to communication (this may be a problem for pupils with Autism)

If a pupil is recommended for a high tech communication aid and this is purchased by the school, parents/carers will be required to sign a home/school agreement before the device can be sent home.

Appendix 4: Useful Sources of Information

The table provides a list of sources of information for teaching strategies to support communication. Information on using these teaching strategies can be found on the school intranet under 'Communication Team'. Books & manuals can be found in the Communication & Autism library on each site. Further communication resources & information can be accessed directly from the Communication Team.

Source	Where to Find Information Resources listed below available from Communication Team	Lead Person in School
<u>The Ace Centre</u> AAC & Assistive Technology	www.ace-centre.org.uk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing & Using a Communication Book (see library) Look2Talk Variety of AAC resources & equipment available see team 	Sarah
<u>Communication Matters</u>	http://www.communicationmatters.org.uk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objects of Reference Symbol use & visual support 	Sarah
<u>Widgit</u> Symbol System	www.widgit.com <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate in Print Communicate Ideas 	Emma/ ICT
<u>Makaton</u> Main Signing System	www.makaton.org <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Makaton Collection Core Vocabulary book & DVD of signs (see library) Food & drink book & DVD of signs (see library) PSHE book of signs (see library) National Curriculum book of signs (see library) Animals, Transport & Vehicles book & DVD of signs (see library) People: Work & Leisure book of signs (see library) Plus various resources available 	Sarah/ Emma
<u>On Body Signing</u>	http://www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk/canaanbarrie/file:///C:/Users/sarahh/Downloads/teaching_on-body_signs_-_overview.pdf <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning Together (including illustrations of on body signs) 	Sarah
<u>The Nuffield Programme/ Black Sheep Press</u>	http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/nuffield-early-language-intervention http://www.blacksheeppress.co.uk/ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various resources available used to develop speech production 	SALT/ Emma
<u>Cued Articulation</u>	http://www.soundsforliteracy.co.uk/cued-articulation.html <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual Cueing System for Speech Sounds (only used for specific pupils) Cued Articulation Consonants & Vowels 	SALT/ Emma
<u>Talkabout</u> Social Skills Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talkabout Relationships (see library) Talkabout for Children- Developing Social Skills (see library) Talkabout for Children – developing Self Awareness & Self Esteem (see library) 	SALT/ Emma

<u>PECS</u> Picture Exchange Communication System	http://www.pecs-unitedkingdom.com/ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PECS Manual (see library) • PECS Information for Classes • Range of Resources available 	Emma/ Louise
<u>Switch</u> <u>Progression</u> <u>Roadmap</u>	http://www.inclusive.co.uk/articles/switch-progression-road-map <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manual & Poster 	Sarah
<u>SmartBox/</u> <u>Inclusive</u> <u>Technology</u>	https://thinksmartbox.com/communication/ www.inclusive.co.uk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information on Eye Gaze Technology - Grid 3 software manuals - Eye gaze software manuals 	Jackie/ Sarah/ SALT
<u>TEACCH</u>	https://www.autismuk.com/training/what-is-teech http://www.tasksgalore.com/ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Autism friendly work structure & approach 	Hollie
<u>Lego Therapy</u>	www.bricks-for-autism.co.uk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LEGO®-Based Therapy (see library) 	Louise/ SALT
<u>Zones of</u> <u>Regulation</u>	http://www.zonesofregulation.com/index.html <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Zones of Regulation Curriculum (see library) 	Hannah
<u>Social Stories</u>	http://www.autism.org.uk/socialstories http://carolgraysocialstories.com/social-stories/origins-of-the-social-story-philosophy/ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comic strip conversations, Carol Gray (see library) 	Emma
<u>Talking Mats</u>	http://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/page/talking-mats http://www.talkingmats.com/about-talking-mats/#howitworks	Emma
<u>Intensive</u> <u>Interaction</u>	http://www.intensiveinteraction.co.uk/about/ http://davehewett.com/about-intensive-interaction/	Sarah
<u>ICT</u> <u>Programmes</u>	ICT programmes available in school to support communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communicate in Print - Clicker6 - Choose it Maker - Slideshow maker - Help kids Learn - Grid 3 - Attention & Looking - Exploring & Playing - Choosing & Learning - Big Band - Switch Skills Set 1&2 - Choose it ready made 	Jackie