

ASHGATE CROFT SCHOOL

COMMUNICATION POLICY



Approved by Jenny Dodds

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

Ashgate Croft School is an all aged special school that caters for pupils with moderate, severe and profound/multiple learning difficulties as well as complex medical needs.

Good communication enables inclusive relationships and supports individuals to have choice, control and greater independence. It underpins all learning and therefore we are committed to providing a total communication environment, where all forms of communication are equally valued and where language and communication is seen as an integral part of the curriculum.

All new staff are given a copy of the Communication policy to highlight the communication ethos at Ashgate Croft school.

Aims

Communication at Ashgate Croft focuses on promoting language development through:

- To implement the Ashgate Croft Communication Charter. Each building is to have the Charter on display **and all staff should** adhere to this charter.
- Access to an environment in which a child has the need, desire and motivation to communicate.
- Frequent and consistent opportunities for pupils to communicate.
- Access to a means of communicating (whether verbal or other) with identified progression.
- An environment where all means/modes of communication are of equal value.
- A consistent response to every communicative attempt.
- Appropriate augmentative and alternative systems of communication.

PROCEDURES AND PRACTICE

Teaching

Symbols:

- Should only be used for key words in sentences and phrases
- should be used on every corridor display and relevant class displays

- Photos, pictures, symbols – should be used to help pupils give meaning to words (both verbal and written). 'Communication in Print' is used to produce the symbols
- Symbols should be used across the school for pupil timetables and schedules
- Symbols used for timetable sessions can be found here:

Sharepoint – Information – resources – communication – timetable symbols for new curriculum.

- Pupils may use symbols as part of their communication systems (e.g. through PECS, eye pointing, communication aids etc). Pupils should have the correct symbols accessible to them and that they are updated accordingly.

Makaton:

- Every member of staff to have at least one hour, job specific, Makaton training annually.
- Every member of staff should sign as much as possible throughout the day whilst working with pupils
- Some pupils may also require on body signing, which can be found here:

Sharepoint – information – resources – communication – on body signing.

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS):

- A large number of pupils at Ashgate Croft school use PECS as a form of communication, therefore, care should be taken to ensure that the books are up to date, staff should regularly have refresher training (as needed).
- Information on setting books up, sizes of symbols and PECS advice can be found here:

Sharepoint – information – resources – communication – PECS – PECS

Intensive Interaction:

- Some classes use Intensive Interaction as a form of communication with their pupils.

Eye Gaze:

- There is Eye Gaze technology in various classes. Training will be provided if staff are based in classes where eye gaze technology is used.

AAC devices:

- Specific pupils use I pads which have communication apps on them. In school these are: Widgetgo, Words for Life (LAMP) and Proloquo. The iPads should only have the communication app on them, no other games **or access to the internet**. Staff should ensure that they seek training needed to assist pupils with these AAC devices.
- Some pupils use Big Mack switches, staff should take time to ensure they know how to work these.
- Big macks should be used in relevant classes to support pupil voice.
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Objects of reference:

- Some classes use visual timetables and timetables with Objects of reference attached to them. These are to be shown at the appropriate times in order for pupils to begin to understand what is about to happen to them. List of Objects of Reference can be found here:

Sharepoint – information – resources – communication – objects of reference.

Additional cues:

- can be used to aid understanding and communication (e.g. sound, people, song, place etc). Pupils can also be cued in to the day of the week by a colour and smell and piece of music. The colours are: Mon – red, Tue – Orange, Wed – yellow, Thurs – green, Fri – Blue.
- Some pupils may also access communication through Moon or Braille with support from the Visual Impairment service.

One page profiles:

- Class teachers are responsible for compiling information needed to create and update (at least annually) One page pupil profiles.
- Views for the one page pupil profiles should also be sought from the pupils, parents and professionals involved.
- One page pupil profiles must be available in the pupil's classroom.

Staff should use a variety of games, strategies, teaching styles and resources to encourage all forms of communication.

It is the responsibility of the class staff to make sure any communication aids/devices/methods (e.g. PECS book/eye gaze/Makaton/symbols/big macks/intensive interaction) are available to the pupils and are used consistently by all staff. This includes: ensuring they are working (with charged batteries) and report any damages or problems immediately. Ensuring that they are able to programme the aids and technology and that they are up to date with symbols.

The speech and language therapist, communication lead and class teacher work together to assess appropriate communication aids for individuals and this is reviewed at least annually. If class teachers feel that a particular aid is not appropriate for an individual pupil then this should be reported to the communication co-ordinator.

Assessment

- Pupil profiles must have a communication section on them; this should be completed every year regarding the forms of communication used by the pupils. This is done to ascertain, alongside the Speech and language therapist and communication lead, that the most appropriate form of communication (including appropriate communication aid) is being used and encouraged.
- Where appropriate, pupils should have at least one communication target as part of their EHCP targets.
- Pupils' communication progress is monitored here:

Informal and Preformal classes – MAPP, Ashgate Levels and Seesaw.

Semi formal and Post 16 – Otrack, Ashgate Levels and Seesaw.

- The Speech and Language therapist may set targets which will need to be followed by the class staff
- The class teacher will need to keep their own, daily, assessments in regards to communication

Communication and behaviour

Ashgate Croft School recognises that in many cases communication and behaviour are linked, therefore on our Individual Behaviour Plans (IBPs) in the proactive strategies section there is opportunity to note down any communication and interaction needs.

Role of the Subject Leader (in liaison with Speech and Language Therapist)

- Give support and feedback to teachers to promote communication in their class
- Provide staff training
- Provide parent/carer training
- Provide other professionals training
- Support teachers to provide a 'Total Communication Environment'
- Provide action plan to Deputy head for Pupil Premium.
- Keep own CPD updated.
- Manage budget for communication
- Meet with parents, whose children have communication difficulties, annually to discuss their child's communication, what school can offer and how the pupil communicates at home.
- Drop in sessions are held every half term
- Learning walks

Parental Involvement

Parents are informed of the AAC modalities that their children will access whilst in school in a variety of ways; Speech and Language Therapist visits, Annual review reports, letters home and parent/carers' evening. In addition to this, we offer a specific communication meeting with the communication co-ordinator for parents/carers to access, at this point parents can give information on their child's communication, gain advice on how to use the different equipment through school and when training is being held throughout the school year. Makaton packs can be borrowed from school, enabling learning at home to take place.

Some pupils may take Big Macks home to practice communicating, explanation letters will accompany this and a slip will need sending back to school to acknowledge liability.

Equal Opportunities

The school's Equality policy should be consulted. All teachers should ensure that their practice reflects the Equality policy.

Monitoring of the policy

Communication lead monitors the policy. Reviewed bi-annually by the Headteacher/Deputy Head.

Explanation of terms:

AAC – Augmentative and alternative communication.

Total Communication Environment - This is a holistic view of communication, often using a range of modalities or even thinking “outside the box” to create a system of communication that works for an individual. Other definitions of Total Communication include:

- Using any means and every means to communicate and/or receive a message.
- Creating a best fit system of communication to facilitate an individual to communicate, optimizing his skills and reducing his impairments.
- A “catch-all” that ensures that an individual has access to some means of communication.
- Facilitating and assisting each person by providing supports and opportunities to become involved and to actualize their potential.

RRSA Articles:

12 – The right to give an opinion

13 – The right to share what you think

23 – The right to a special Education

28 – The right to have a high quality Education.