

Horton Lodge Special School

Alternative and Augmentative Communication

Date	Review Date	Subject Leader	Nominated Governor
September 2017	Sept 2019	Lucy Bloor	Mrs. Sara Clay

Communication, including Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC), forms a central part of the curriculum at Horton Lodge School. It both supports and is taught through all areas of the day. AAC is fundamental to the lives and learning of pupils at Horton Lodge. We provide a total communication environment in which all pupils can access what is said to them and express themselves. We value the importance of pupils seeing their AAC system being used by others and aim to immerse the pupils in an environment where AAC is used by adults across the day. The freedom to communicate is a basic equal opportunity human right. We recognise that the inability to communicate impacts adversely on social, emotional, cognitive, language development, and wellbeing. It is proposed that this policy will underpin the practice of AAC throughout the school and prove an informative document for parents and governors for the purpose of monitoring practice.

AAC can be defined as follows:

'Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) refers to any means by which an individual can supplement or replace spoken communication. Communication may range from any movement or behaviour that is observed and interpreted by another person as meaningful, to the use of a code agreed upon between people where items have specific meanings, i.e. a language. We all use some form of augmentative communication in our daily life, for example, gesture (waving goodbye) and graphic symbols (washing label symbols, road signs). AAC is both a means of accessing an educational curriculum and language in its own right. It is appropriate for individuals who have difficulty with receptive and expressive language due to physical, sensory or learning disability. It provides an opportunity to attain emotional, social, educational and vocational goals.' (ACE Centre Advisory Trust).

Pupils and communication partners (staff) may use one, or more than one, of the following AAC methods:

- Makaton and other signing systems appropriate to individual pupils e.g. BSL, on the body signing (for Multisensory Impaired pupils).
- Movement, gesture, body language and facial expression
- Graphic symbols (primarily Mayer Johnson Boardmaker symbols although other symbol systems may be used if they are more appropriate for a particular pupil) and photographs.
- Additional Language Display (ALD) communication boards.
- Objects of reference.
- Sensory cues (e.g. daily aroma, physical touch, personal identifiers).
- Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD) – low tech and high tech.
- Technology including computer assisted learning.
- Switch activated toys and equipment to develop cause and effect and as a precursor to communication aids.
- Voice Output Communication Aids

Aims

- Our key aim is to ensure that every child is given every opportunity to work towards being an autonomous communicator. This involves being able to say **whatever** they want to say, to **whoever** they want to say it to and **whenever** they want to say it.
- We aim to provide a 'total communication' environment where all modes of communication are equally valued and pupils are given opportunities to make choices, initiate conversation and express their own ideas and opinions.
- We aim to ensure that adults around the child have the understanding and skills to support the child effectively.

Objectives

- To ensure that equality of opportunity is provided for all
- To ensure access to the school communication curriculum at the level appropriate to their development

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- To ensure access to the appropriate AAC resources and teaching approaches. Class AAC resources and low tech individual resources are provided by the school for all pupils who require them. Where pupils require individual high tech AAC they are referred to the relevant specialises e.g. ACT / Ace North.
- To ensure that all staff are skilled in how to use and develop AAC systems
- To provide opportunities to develop the full potential of all pupils
- To work closely in collaboration with parents and other agencies
- To have high expectations of pupils
- To record and report on achievements and progress in communication

Roles and Responsibility for the Policy

Role of the Governing Body

The Governing Body has:

- appointed a member of staff to be responsible for ensuring the effective leadership of AAC;
- delegated powers and responsibilities to the Headteacher to ensure all school personnel and stakeholders are aware of and comply with this policy;
- responsibility for ensuring that the school complies with all equalities legislation;
- responsibility for ensuring funding is in place to support this policy;
- responsibility for ensuring this policy and all linked policies are maintained and updated regularly;
- responsibility for ensuring all policies are made available to parents through the school website;
- nominated a link governor with responsibility for teaching and learning to visit the school regularly, to liaise with the Headteacher and the coordinator and to report back to the Governing Body;
- responsibility for the effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this policy

Role of the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team

The Headteacher and the Senior Leadership Team will:

- ensure all school personnel are aware of and comply with this policy;
- work closely with the area leader and the link governor;
- encourage parents to take an active role;
- provide leadership and vision in respect of equality;
- provide guidance, support and training to all staff;
- monitor the effectiveness of this policy by;
 - observations
 - learning walks
 - ensuring that pupil's opinions are heard through discussions, questionnaires and school council.
- annually report to the Governing Body on the success and development of this policy

Role of the AAC Leader

The AAC Leader will:

- lead the development of this policy throughout the school;
- work closely with the Headteacher and the nominated governor;
- be accountable for standards in this area;
- monitor standards, in conjunction with the SLT by;
 - monitoring pupil plans
 - observations of practice
 - discussions with pupils
- devise an improvement plan;
- provide guidance and support to all staff;
- provide training for all staff on induction and when the need arises regarding AAC;
- attend appropriate and relevant INSET;
- keep up to date with new developments;
- undertake an annual audit and stock take of resources;
- purchase new resources when required.

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- ensure that teachers complete risk assessments when required;
- review and monitor;
- annually report to the Governing Body on the success and development of this policy.

Role of the Nominated Governor

The Nominated Governor will:

- work closely with the Senior Leadership Team.
- ensure this policy and other linked policies are up to date;
- ensure that everyone connected with the school is aware of this policy;
- attend training related to this policy;
- receive an annual report from the subject coordinator
- annually report to the Governing Body on the success and development of this subject.

Role of Teachers

Teachers will:

- comply with all aspects of this policy;
- develop pupils' communication skills, reading, writing and vocabulary in all subjects;
- ensure all students have access to individual communication systems in order to have full access to lessons, in close liaison with teaching assistants;
- **always** assume competence in terms of the communication of each pupil;
- ensure that pupils have access to AAC in all areas of the day;
- be a model as a communicator;
- have high expectations for all children and provide vocabulary that will extend them;
- assess, record and report on the development, progress and attainment of pupils;
- achieve high standards;
- provide meaningful contexts for each pupil to develop as a communicator;
- celebrate the success of pupils in across the day;
- implement the school's equalities policy;
- report and deal with all incidents of discrimination;
- report any concerns they have on any aspect of the school community

Role of Pupils

Pupils will:

- be encouraged to work in partnership with the school by communicating preferences, making decisions and exercising choice in relation to their AAC system;
- participate effectively in activities;
- participate in discussions concerning progress and attainment with support;
- treat others, their work and equipment with respect;
- liaise with the school council through the class council

Role of the School Council

The School Council will be involved in:

- opportunities to discuss what they enjoy about this subject and further opportunities they require.
- taking into account the views of all peers through the class council;
- reporting termly to school governors, via the staff facilitator.

Role of Parents/Carers

Parents/carers will:

- be aware of this policy;
- be committed to develop communication skills using AAC in the home and community;
- be encouraged to take an active role in the life of the school by attending:
 - parents and open evenings

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- parent-teacher consultations
- workshops
- be given the opportunity to volunteer in school
- be asked to provide suggestions and ideas for improving this area;
- encourage effort and achievement;
- encourage the child to transfer skills to the home and beyond;
- join the school in celebrating success of their child's learning;

Policy Procedure

Practice

ATAAC

- The school has an ATAAC team (Rachel, Eloise and Lucy). They support and empower all staff to ensure a consistent communication approach and high standards for all pupils;
- Every pupil who requires AAC has a Pragmatic Profile Assessment as part of their induction. Parents are involved in this baseline assessment.
- Every member of the class team is responsible and accountable for the development and upkeep of AAC systems;
- Under the guidance of the AAC co-ordinator we aim to achieve continuity and progression by working together with all those concerned with the child e.g. parents/carers, speech therapist, physiotherapist, all specialist teachers, escorts, lunchtime supervisors, pupils, volunteers, intervenors, Visual Impairment Service and Hearing Impairment Service. The AAC Co-ordinator is in close contact with the Speech Therapists to discuss new referrals and ongoing cases.

The Total Communication Environment

- How I communicate and make decisions and How to communicate with me are part of every child's All About Me board.
- Every child has an appropriate AAC system. Pupils with a high-tech system must always have a low tech backup;
- Staff are required to use sign language to support speech at all times and everywhere not just when speaking to a signing pupil;
- The classroom and environment that the pupil is in across the day is appropriate to their needs;
- Staff give the AAC user TIME to initiate and respond;
- Pupils are encouraged and facilitated to use of AAC everywhere and at all times;
- Staff look at the total communication that the pupil is using e.g. body language and facial expression as well as the use of their aid;
- Staff enable pupils to 'chat' informally without the adult controlling the subject matter;
- AAC resources are available at all times so that they may be used casually by any pupil;
- School staff and others who visit a class are encouraged to use the class/individual AAC resources themselves;
- All staff model how to communicate;
- Communication is implicit throughout the school day. The daily routines and interactions will develop many of the fundamental skills of communication. Objects of reference are utilised throughout the school day to support pupils understanding of the school routine.
- Time spent on structured communication/ AAC teaching varies according to the needs of the individual child.

Individualised AAC tools:

Vocabulary for communication aids and communication books is chosen very carefully. Opinions of parents/carers and other professionals are obtained to build an appropriate bank of vocabulary individual to each child. Vocabulary is chosen to match the normal development of speech and the pupil's cognitive level. As pupils progress they are encouraged to take an active part in choosing vocabulary. Pupils also have access to vocabulary relevant to the Early Years Foundation Stage, National Curriculum and School Topic Cycle.

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Links with ICT

The use of information and communication technology will promote, enhance and support communication.

Inclusion

We believe that we are an educationally inclusive school as we are concerned about the teaching and learning, achievements, attitudes and well-being of all our pupils. We aim to provide places for all pupils who express a preference to join this school.

We work hard to offer equality of opportunity and diversity to all groups of pupils within school such as children:

- from both sexes;
- who have Special Educational Needs;
- who are looked after;
- from minority faiths, ethnicities, travelers, asylum seekers, refugees;
- who are at risk of disaffection;
- who have medical needs;
- who have behavioural, emotional and social needs;
- from families who are under stress

We believe we have a duty to ensure that all children have equal rights to the opportunities offered by education and that all children will be encouraged to fulfil their potential in their academic, physical and creative achievements.

We want to give all children the right to access high quality educational experiences, to take part in a broad and balanced curriculum and to be part of the social life of the school.

We recognise that as a Special School we have an even greater obligation to plan and deliver well-structured lessons with appropriate assessment plus ambitious targets for pupils who have low levels of prior attainment, or need additional support to enable them to have full access to the curriculum or come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Also, we have a duty to cater for pupils whose first language is not English by planning teaching opportunities to help them develop their English and to gain full access to the National Curriculum.

Selecting a communication strategy and system

Communication strategies and systems are agreed by professionals, parents and the pupil. When selecting an approach the following is considered:

- Communication and language requirements
- Physical skills
- Visual skills
- Environmental requirements
- The cognitive demands of different access methodologies.

Communication systems are never finished and vocabulary requirements are not static. The child's communication system will continue to be developed over time.

Special Educational Needs

All pupils at Horton Lodge require suitable learning challenges which reflect their diverse needs and any barriers to learning. The pupils' curriculum is planned and delivered using the Conductive Education (CE) ethos. CE involves the development of motor functions, self-care, social skills and a positive approach to learning. This enables pupils to fully participate in all areas of the EYFS and National Curriculum. The philosophy of Conductive Education is to equip and encourage all pupils to be as independent as possible and to adopt a problem solving approach. This mirrors the expectations of the EYFS and National Curriculum.

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All pupils at Horton Lodge have access to specialist equipment and approaches and alternative or adapted activities. For pupils with communication needs this will include IT, other technological aids and AAC (alternative and augmentative communication).

Assessment for Learning

In order to monitor progress of individual pupils staff maintain records of continual assessment. These are based on observations in various settings and are used to inform future planning and individual pupil programmes.

Pupil progress is recorded in Progress Review reports and meetings, through Annual Review Reports and through an annual report in their individual Moderation File. Communication is continually observed and reported through the EYFS and a record is kept in each child's learning journey.

Monitoring & Review of the Subject

Monitoring of standards of children's work and the quality of teaching is the responsibility of the subject coordinator supported by the Headteacher and the SLT.

Standards will be monitored by:

- Observation
- Data analysis
- Progress Meetings and Annual Reviews
- Communication reports as part of the end of year reporting system
- Parent surveys
- Report to governors

Contribution of AAC to other areas of the Curriculum

AAC is intrinsic to every area of the curriculum and all aspects of the day. AAC is fundamental to the individual's receptive and expressive communication.

Resources

The school has a full range of resources to support the teaching of this subject throughout all year groups. Resources are upgraded and replenished when the need arises. Resources are purchased to reflect all areas of learning, physical and communication needs.

Raising Awareness of this Policy

We will raise awareness of this policy via:

- the School Handbook/Prospectus
- the school website
- the Staff Handbook
- meetings with parents such as introductory, transition, parent-teacher consultations and periodic curriculum workshops
- school events
- meetings with school personnel
- communications with home
- reports such annual report to parents and Headteacher reports to the Governing Body
- information displays in relevant areas

Training

All school staff:

- have equal chances of training, career development and promotion
- receive training on this policy on induction which specifically covers:
 - AAC
 - teaching and learning
 - planning
 - assessment

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- key skills
- receive periodic training so that they are kept up to date with new information
- Makaton signs are a focus of each week's briefing
- receive equal opportunities training on induction

Equality Impact Assessment

Under the Equality Act 2010 we have a duty not to discriminate against people on the basis of their age, disability, gender, gender identity, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

We believe that this policy is in line with the Equality Act 2010 as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any pupil and it helps to promote equality at this school.

Monitoring the Effectiveness of the Policy

The practical application of this policy will be reviewed every 2 years or when the need arises by the coordinator, the Headteacher and the nominated governor.

Linked Policies

• Curriculum / Teaching and Learning	• English
• Health & Safety	• Assessment
• Pathways	• PSHE
• Equalities	• Conductive Education

Senior Leadership Team:	Jane Dambach	Date:	11.10.17
Chair of the Performance Committee	Alison Lee	Date:	11.10.17
Chair of Governors:	Jon Harris	Date:	11.10.17