FOUNTAINS

PRIMARY SCHOOL

Always achieving our potential

Communication Policy

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Ratified by: Mrs Nicola Price (Executive Headteacher)

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Aims

This document policy is a statement for the development of communication at The Fountains Primary School. It outlines the aims, principles, and strategies for communication at our school. All new staff and parents/carers are encouraged to read the policy to highlight the communication ethos at The Fountains Primary School.

We provide education for young people aged 2 to 11 years who have a range of conditions and learning difficulties including a large percentage with a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Condition. In line with their diagnoses, lots of pupils at The Fountains Primary School have difficulties with communication and interaction. Communication underpins all learning and independence as well as giving the children a 'voice'. Therefore, we are committed to providing an enriched total communication environment and aim to celebrate all of the different methods of communication that the pupils use in our school as well as encourage them to learn something new.

The Fountains Primary School's aims are to:

- Adopt a communication enabling environment throughout school, where young people have access to their own means of communication throughout the day.
- Develop means of communication appropriate to each young person's individual needs.
- Create opportunities for communication throughout the curriculum and to enable each young person to communicate to the best of their ability.
- Provide opportunities to give every pupil a 'voice'.
- Support families in using communication strategies at home with the aim to keep things consistent for the young person between school and home.

Young People Starting at School

On admission to The Fountains Primary School, each young person's communication skills will be monitored and assessed by the class team through formative and summative assessment during their first full term in school. This will look at all aspects of speech, language, and communication. The outcomes of the assessment enable the class team, with support from SaLT when necessary, to provide appropriate provision for them to develop to their full potential.
A young person's communication needs are assessed within the school setting using a combination of individual assessments, classroom observations and liaison between staff and family.

Staff work closely together with the Speech and Language Therapist in the following ways:

- SALT observation in classes to share good practice and negotiate further communication targets within classroom setting.

- Training opportunities are provided by the Speech and Language Therapist to all staff to raise awareness of best practice.
- Staff to be supported in generalisation of new skills being taught.
- Speech and Language Therapist to deliver specific training according to individual young person's needs.
- Working together to identify any barriers to accessing communication support and achieving communication goals.

Communication and our curriculum

All four of our curriculum pathways aim to consistently embed the use of communication strategies during all learning opportunities allowing pupils to access the curriculum. When appropriate, learning activities are supported by visual aids including symbols, communication boards, high tech communication aids, colourful semantics and word webs to allow the pupils opportunities to communicate their wants, thoughts and observations as well as introducing new vocabulary.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The importance of monitoring and evaluating a young person's progress is central to their development. As with all communication methods, regular opportunities to use these are vital for the young person to achieve success. Signs, symbols, photographs, objects of reference and communication aids must always, with appropriate support from staff, be available to the young person:

- Within the class
- Around school/home environment
- In the community
- Modelled by all adults working and interacting with the child

If a therapy program is deemed appropriate, the Speech and Language Therapist will monitor the young person's progress accordingly, reporting overall progress against the targets set in the young person's programme as well as communication outcomes in the young person's EHCP during annual review. The class teacher is to continually monitor and evaluate pupil's progress in the area of communication.

The young person's communication and interaction needs, including progress and concerns, are reviewed and discussed at every child's EHCP annual review meeting.

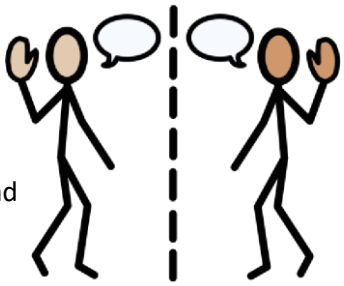
Communication Methods used at Fountains

At the Fountains Primary School, our aim is to provide a total communication environment. We use a number of interventions to support the young person's speech, language, and communication needs. We do not follow one approach as the needs of the young people vary.

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 behavior 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).

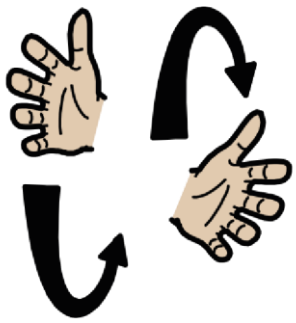
The Fountains Primary School implement the below strategies:

Intensive Interaction Principles



Intensive interaction is an approach designed to help people at early stages of development; people who have autism; people who have severe, profound or complex learning difficulties. Intensive interaction works on early interaction abilities- how to enjoy being with other people – to relate, interact, know, understand and practice communication routines. Intensive interaction teaches and develops the 'Fundamentals of communication', attainments such as use and understanding of eye contacts, facial expressions, vocalisations to communicate, taking turns in exchanges of conversation and the structure of conversation. (Dave Hewitt) We adhere to these principles within our school.

Makaton



Each one of us use gestures, actions and body language to communicate with others. Using our hands to add meaning when we talk helps us to get our message across. For young people who find it difficult to communicate verbally, gestures and actions might become a tool for communicating their needs and opinions to others. We can support young people to extend their natural vocabulary of gestures, actions and body language by teaching them new signs to represent the items and activities that are important to them.

At The Fountains Primary School we use Makaton. Makaton is used alongside the spoken key words to the young people to aid their verbal language development and support their understanding. The pupils are introduced to a new 'Sign of the Week' in whole school assemblies.

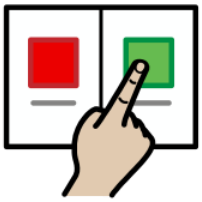
Symbol Use

At the Fountains Primary School, we use the Widgit symbol system with the young people consistently across school. Symbols are used throughout the school environment and in the community. Once the symbols are learnt by the young person, it is imperative that the same size and the same symbol picture are used consistently, as this prevents the young person from having to relearn the symbol. All symbols are to have the written word underneath as this support's the young person with their early literacy skills, as well as supporting others in the wider communicative environment to understand what the child or young person is communicating A consistent font is used on symbols. Young people who use symbols as a means of expressive communication must have access to their symbols at all times so they can initiate interactions. Staff wear symbols on their lanyards. Symbols are also used to support attention and listening, understanding, memory and recall, and transitions.

Communication Boards

Some of the young people at Fountains Primary School are at the stage to use communication boards. These are used to expand communication beyond the use of single symbols. Communication boards are used to organise vocabulary to support expression and comprehension for individuals as well as a support for sentence building. These are often used during learning activities to allow the children to make requests such as 'I want more bubbles' or to share observations such as 'I hear birds'. Communication boards can be used for both young people who are non-verbal or have some spoken language as they are a tool to support speech, not to replace it.

Visual Aids



A Fountains Primary, we ensure we create an enriched total-communication environment. Many of the young people are supported by the use of visual aids. Visual aids such as timetables, now and next boards, choice boards, transition cards, objects of reference and symbol cards aid the young person's understanding of the structure of the day and what they are being asked to do. Areas within the setting should be clearly defined with symbols. All visual aids are to be made using Widgit online. Many of our classes display 'How we communicate' boards to indicate to new staff and visitors how they can interact with our young people individually.

High & Mid Tech Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

Mid-tech devices can range from a single switch, Big Mac switches and single touch communication boards which verbalise what the young person wants to say. These devices enable the pupil to develop a range of functional communication; these include greeting others, making choices and decisions, commenting, expressing opinions and giving information.

Some young people will be assessed for suitability of accessing a **high-tech AAC** throughout their placement at The Fountains Primary School, High Tech AAC is not necessarily the right approach for all young people. Detailed assessment with the Speech and Language Therapist will determine suitability for a device. Throughout the assessment, liaison will take place with the young person's family, education staff and any other named professional known to the individual.
Any young person that has a high tech AAC device will need the functions on the device 'modelling' to them throughout the day. It is imperative that this happens as it is how the young person learns the functions of the communication device. When a young person receives a high tech AAC training will be provided by AAC specific companies/Speech and Language therapist, to ensure all staff and parents/carers are familiar with the device.
Any young person using a High Tech AAC must also have a Low Tech AAC back up.

Grid for iPad

Children and young people within school are given the opportunity to explore high-tech AAC (augmentative and alternative communication) devices through the use of grid for iPad. Grid for iPad is an app that assists with communication by 'speaking' the word when a symbol is selected by the user. Grids used in school use Widgit symbols and the same general structure as communication boards and books to support motor planning and navigation between symbols. Grid can support with sentence construction, narrative skills, increased vocabulary, and expanding linguistic functions. Communication iPads, with grid for iPad, are available in all classrooms and staff model the use of communication iPads to support young people's understanding of how to use grid to support their communication. Not all young people will be ready to access high-tech communication aids and staff work closely with the speech and language therapy service to ensure appropriate use of high-tech communication aids within the classroom.

Attention Autism

Attention Autism is an intervention model designed by Gina Davies, Speech and Language Therapist. It aims to develop natural and spontaneous communication through the use of visually based and highly motivating activities. The primary objective is that the sessions are fun and "offer and irresistible invitation to learn"!
We are using this approach with the young people to develop their concentration and to improve their joint attention, as well as supporting the increase of non-verbal and verbal communication through commenting.

Transition

Transition is an important part of a young person's life. At The Fountains Primary School, we recognise that it can be a challenging time for young people and their families and we support them to prepare for the change in classroom or setting. Information on the young person's communication skills will be transferred between classes and settings. Every young person will have a communication profile and current targets will be shared with the new teacher/setting. At The Fountains Primary School, we prepare young people for transition through a variety of means which may include visits to our setting, social stories, transition books and discussions with previous settings and photos/symbols as appropriate.

External agencies used at Fountains

At The Fountains Primary School, we have 2 Speech and Language Therapists (NHS- 2 days a week & Conscious Therapies- 4 days a week). The therapists oversee the communication provision at our school and offer suggestions on support and/or improvement on a whole school/class basis. All of our pupils have the right to be referred to these services individually, as deemed appropriate, when it is felt the young person requires additional support beyond our daily offer, which may include a speech and language programme.

Working with Families

Parents and carers will receive regular opportunities to attend a range of parent forums delivered by staff members or Speech and Language Therapists. This may include learning about strategies to use with the young person at home or an opportunity to come and make visual symbols to use at home. Communication resources, including symbols and communication boards, are also available on our school website.

Policy into Practice

To ensure that the communication policy is put into practice we carry out the following:

- Regular staff training on communication and specific interventions used within the setting
- Regular meetings between SLT and school and families.
- Regular monitoring of the use of the policy
- Yearly annual review reports to contribute to the EHCP process, reporting on the young person's communication skills, progress made and next steps. Contribution to the young person's summer term education report.
- Wherever possible, statutory requirements of an ECHP plan, will be facilitated and implemented accordingly.
- Keep up to date of developments on communication (CPD)
- Regular communication learning walks and observations carried out across school by the Speech and Language Therapists and Communication Lead.

Role of Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team

The Headteacher and the Senior Leadership Team will:

- Ensure all staff are aware of and comply with this policy; Policy to be initially read within the staff's induction training.
- 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 and questionnaires.
- Attend half-termly multi-professionals' meetings to keep up to date on the progress towards the communication action plan and address and concerns

Role of the named NHS Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT)

With some SaLT roles and responsibilities, the named NHS Speech and Language Therapist and named Independent Speech and Language Therapist work collaboratively to ensure that we have a robust and consistent communication offer.

The named Speech and Language Therapist will:

- Audit the communication provision at our school to inform a communication action plan alongside the named Independent Speech and Language Therapist.
- Work closely with the Communication Lead.
- Be responsible for ensuring all children with a SALT need identified in section F of their EHCP are supported appropriately. The named NHS Speech and Language Therapist must then report on the progress as part of the annual review process.
- Be accountable for standards in this area.
- Monitor standards by: monitoring pupil plans, observations of practice, discussions with pupils.
- Devise an improvement plan for speech and language therapy to link in with the school improvement plan alongside the named Independent Speech and Language Therapist.
- Provide guidance and support to staff and parents.
- Complete home-visits for children on the caseload who need support at home when necessary.
- Keep up to date with new developments.
- Deliver regular parent forums and staff training.

Role of the named Independent Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT) paid for through a Service Level agreement by School

The named Speech and Language Therapist will:

- Audit the communication provision at our school to inform a communication action plan alongside the named NHS Speech and Language Therapist.

- Work closely with the Communication Lead.
- Be accountable for standards in this area.
- Action SaLT referrals made my staff; timetable in weekly SaLT sessions with referred children
- Monitor standards by: monitoring pupil plans, observations of practice, discussions with pupils.
- Devise an improvement plan for speech and language therapy to link in with the school improvement plan alongside the named NHS Speech and Language Therapist.
- Provide guidance and support to staff and parents.
- Keep up to date with new developments.
- Deliver regular parent forums and staff training.
- Produce weekly communication updates in a newsletter.
- Create and provide staff and parents with communication resources.

Role of the Education Staff

The education staff will:

- Develop pupils' communication skills and vocabulary across the curriculum. To ensure that lesson planning is differentiated for a young person's communication needs by providing appropriate resources, for example; symbols, use of different coloured paper as directed, different size fonts
- Ensure all pupils have access to individual communication systems in order to have full access to lessons, in close liaison with teaching/support staff.
- Ensure that pupils have access to AAC throughout the day.
- Be a model as a communicator.
- Provide meaningful contexts for each pupil to develop as a communicator.
- Follow the guidance and suggestions of the SALT
- Support the pupils in working towards the communication outcomes set out on their EHCPs and report on these during their annual reviews

Role of Pupils

Pupils will:

- Be encouraged to work in partnership with The Fountains Primary School by communicating preferences, making decisions and exercising choice in relation to their AAC system.
- Participate effectively in activities.
- Where possible, participate in discussions concerning progress and attainment with support.