



Total Communication Policy
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September 2026
Review September 2027

A.I.M. High

Ambitious, Inclusive, Meaningful.

At Woodsetton School, we believe everyone needs connection, but each person communicates differently. Our Total Communication Approach supports pupils to connect and express themselves in ways that suit their individual needs, whether through speech, sign, touch, movement, gesture, sound, or AAC.

Every pupil has the right to express their views, and this is fundamental to their wellbeing and personal development. Recognising that each pupil is on their own communication journey, we provide tailored support through a Total Communication Approach that reflects their individual strengths and needs.

Legislative Framework

This policy has been developed with reference to:

- Children and Families Act 2014
- SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 Years (updated 2024)
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children

Woodsetton School recognises that effective communication is fundamental to ensuring pupils can access education, participate fully in school life, develop independence, maintain positive relationships and communicate their wishes, feelings and views.

What is a total communication approach?

The total communication approach is about finding and using the right combination of communication methods for each individual. This approach helps to form connections, ensures successful interactions, and supports information exchanges and conversations. A combination of methods are used, which reinforce each other and strengthen meaning for the individual.

Methods of communication

Here are some examples of different formal and non-formal types of communication that we use at Woodsetton School (this can also be expanded upon dependant on the pupils needs):

- Intensive Interaction
- Gesture
- Signing- Makaton
- Verbalisation
- Symbols and symbol exchange
- Photographs
- Electronic devices – AAC boards
- Body Language
- Facial Expressions
- Use of ALD's (Aided Language display)
- Speech
- Communication Books
- Talking buttons/ cards

These methods of communication can be used in any combination and will be individual to the child. At Woodsetton School, we work closely with each pupil to identify preferred methods and how to maximise understanding and expression.

When looking at communication it is important to understand the two different types of language skills, expressive and receptive. How somebody expresses themselves can form a foundation for learning and offer a starting point on which to build communication development.

Children and adults learn to develop their expressive and receptive communication. Expressive communication is when you are sending a message, this may be in response to another person or to initiate communication. Receptive communication is when you receive a message from another person. An individual's expressive and receptive communication skills may not be the same. People will use a combination of the communication methods listed above, both expressively and receptively. For example, a person may receive and understand information in Makaton sign language and need symbols to help reinforce the meaning but will use signs and speech to express themselves.

Our total communication approach values and uses all methods of communication so that the children we support can communicate, understand, and be understood.

Makaton

Makaton is a signing system which is used alongside speech to develop a child's understanding of language and their ability to express themselves. By using Makaton signs consistently throughout the school day and across the curriculum, we are greatly enhancing our children's ability to become effective communicators. Makaton signs are always used alongside speech and symbols are introduced to enable the children to build up associations.

We have been accredited the Makaton Aware award, thus demonstrating that we embrace the following principles:

- Embrace Understanding and Patience: We approach communication with patience and understanding, respecting the diverse ways individuals express themselves.
- Allow Time and Space: We'll ensure individuals have the necessary time and space to communicate in their preferred manner, prioritising inclusivity and respect for everyone's voice.
- Foster Inclusivity: Our goal is to cultivate a nurturing and inclusive atmosphere where every member of our community feels valued.

- **Provide Staff Support:** Our team is dedicated to offering assistance and support to customers facing communication challenges, ensuring everyone feels empowered and supported.
- **Use Clear Signage:** We'll use clear symbols throughout the environment to aid easy navigation and identification of areas, promoting accessibility for all. Makaton symbols or other symbol programmes are acceptable.

Makaton website 2024.

The school continues to invest in specialist Makaton training. Accredited staff provide ongoing training and support for staff, pupils and families to ensure a consistent whole-school approach to communication.

AAC.

A range of voice output communication aids are used throughout school. These include, big macs, I-pads with the app – Widgit Go to support communication. These systems provide pupils with an opportunity to communicate effectively throughout the day and specialist programmes provide a hierarchal learning journey developing a unique form of communication.

Aided Language Display (ALD)

At Woodsetton we use ALD's across the school for all subject areas. An Aided Language Display (ALD) is a symbol display on a single page containing relevant symbolised vocabulary for a specific activity.

What are Aided Language Displays (ALD boards) used for:

- teaching new words
- extending the length of sentences
- using new language functions (making requests, instructions, comments, questions etc.)
- ALDs can be used to facilitate speech and/or instead of speech.

Intent

This document is a statement of the aims, principles and strategies for communication at School. We believe that it is important to promote a positive attitude towards communication amongst all our pupils in order to develop self-confidence and a sense of achievement.

The principles for communication are:

- Policy and provision are evaluated and reviewed regularly.
- Staff work alongside the Speech and Language Therapist.
- Staff are confident and competent in all aspects of communication.
- Resources are planned and budgeted for and in a yearly subject action plan as part of the School Development Plan.
- The governing body of the school follow their statutory responsibility in relation to the development of communication.
- Cross curricular links will be highlighted where appropriate.

Aims

Our school aims to:-

- Adopt a total communication environment in which all our pupils are encouraged to progress with their communication skills.
- Use communication to enhance achievement through relevant and differentiated communication systems.
- Create a learning environment which creates a need / desire to communicate.
- Ensure the communication needs of all our learners are met appropriately in order for them to develop expressive and receptive communication skills.

- Provide motivating learning opportunities so our children can develop their speech, language and communication skills in a meaningful, functional and enjoyable ways both to effect social interaction and access the curriculum.
- Ensure continuity of provision throughout school, whilst promoting a positive learning environment in which all pupils are encouraged to communicate effectively.
- Develop confidence in the use of Total communication, both throughout school and in the wider community so that individual systems can be used consistently by our learners.
- Strive for excellence in the field of communication and interaction.
- Work effectively with other agencies.
- Develop strong relationships with parents and carers to ensure individual communication systems are in place at home.
- Create opportunities for staff to acquire expertise in communication using AAC

Implementation

At Woodsetton School we recognise that it is important to focus on our children's preferred means of communication. Therefore, both communication and interaction skills are taught through:

- Structured group sessions and interventions.
- Whole class sessions.
- Adult role modelling.
- Individual targets – EHCP/ ILP/ Personal Plans.
- 1:1 work.
- Specific activities within school.
- Characteristics of learning.
- Social stories
- Key words in displays, worksheets etc. and where appropriate, these are symbolised aid understanding.
- Opportunities for outdoor learning.
- Opportunities for using communication through extra curricula activities

We also identify the pre verbal communication, such as awareness of others, interactions, eye contact and turn taking are all important aspects of communication and we ensure our children have access to therapy sessions which include intensive interaction.

We also recognise the sensory needs of some of our children and place emphasis on strategies to support sensory processing and sensory needs including Deep Pressure, Fun with food and intensive interaction, with additional groups on offer to support fine motor and gross motor skills.

Pupil Voice and Communication Rights

At Woodsetton, we believe that every pupil has the right to communicate and to have their views listened to and valued.

In accordance with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Human Rights Act 1998, pupils are given opportunities to express their views, preferences and aspirations through their preferred communication methods.

We recognise that communication may take many forms including speech, signing, symbols, gesture, eye pointing, body language, AAC systems, facial expression, movement and behaviour. All communication attempts are valued, acknowledged and responded to appropriately.

Communication and Safeguarding

The school recognises that communication is fundamental to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all pupils.

Many of our pupils require specialist communication systems to express their wishes, feelings, concerns and disclosures. Staff will ensure that appropriate communication supports are available so that all pupils can:

- Express choices and preferences.
- Report worries or concerns.
- Participate in safeguarding discussions.
- Share their views during reviews and meetings.
- Contribute to decisions affecting their lives.

Communication support strategies may include AAC systems, communication books, visual supports, Talking Mats, Makaton signing, photographs and other personalised communication systems.

Communication-Friendly Environments

Woodsetton School is committed to creating communication-friendly learning environments throughout the school.

This includes:

- Consistent use of visual supports.
- Symbol-supported information where appropriate.
- Accessible classroom displays.
- Consistent use of Aided Language Displays (ALDs).
- Opportunities for pupils to communicate throughout the school day.
- Reduced communication barriers within the environment.
- Staff acting as effective communication partners.

Communication opportunities are embedded throughout the curriculum, social times, community experiences and preparation for adulthood activities.

AAC Assessment and Provision

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems are recognised as essential communication tools that provide pupils with a means of expressing themselves and accessing learning.

AAC provision is identified through collaborative assessment involving:

- Speech and Language Therapists.
- School staff.
- Parents and carers.
- The pupil where appropriate.

AAC systems are reviewed regularly to ensure they remain appropriate to the pupil's changing communication needs.

Where AAC technology is used, staff will ensure:

- Consistent access throughout the school day.
- Appropriate modelling of AAC use.
- Opportunities for communication across all curriculum areas.
- Effective maintenance and management of devices.
- Continuity of use between home and school wherever possible.

Staff Training and Professional Development

We recognise that all staff are communication partners and share responsibility for supporting communication development.

To maintain high-quality provision, staff will engage in ongoing professional development including:

- Total Communication approaches.

- Makaton signing.
- AAC implementation.
- Aided Language Displays.
- Intensive Interaction.
- Speech, language and communication needs.
- Communication and safeguarding.

Training needs are identified through quality assurance processes, staff appraisal and school development priorities.

This reflects the school's commitment to ensuring that staff remain confident and competent in supporting pupils with complex communication needs.

Role of the Class Teacher / Class Communication Lead

- To aim to develop communication skills with pupils.
- To develop and update skills, knowledge and understanding of Communication.
- To identify inset needs in Communication and take advantage of training opportunities.
- To keep appropriate on-going records.
- To plan effectively for Communication, liaising with co-ordinator and SALT when necessary.
- To inform parents of pupils' progress, achievements, and attainment.
- To analyse progress data in conjunction with assessment co-ordinator and suggest interventions where appropriate.

Additional Responsibilities

Role of Senior Leaders

Senior Leaders will:

- Monitor the implementation of the Total Communication Policy.
- Ensure communication remains a strategic priority.
- Promote consistent communication practice across the school.
- Facilitate appropriate staff training.
- Allocate resources to support communication development.
- Work collaboratively with external professionals.
- Report on communication outcomes to governors.

Role of Governors

Governors will:

- Monitor the impact of communication provision.
- Ensure statutory duties relating to SEND, equality and accessibility are fulfilled.
- Review communication outcomes as part of school improvement planning.
- Challenge and support leaders regarding communication provision.
- Receive regular reports on communication developments and pupil outcomes.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The impact of this policy will be monitored through:

- Progress towards EHCP outcomes.
- Progress against individual targets.
- Speech and Language Therapy reviews.
- Communication assessments and observations.
- Learning walks and lesson observations.
- AAC and Makaton audits.
- Pupil voice activities.

- Parent and carer feedback.
- Governor monitoring visits.
- Annual policy review.

The effectiveness of communication provision will inform future planning, resource allocation and staff development.

Woodsetton School values equality and celebrates the diversity of its community. Every pupil receives personalised communication support that reflects their individual strengths and needs, ensuring they can learn, communicate and participate fully in school life. We continually review our provision to remove barriers and ensure all pupils have the opportunity to succeed.