



**PensMeadowSchool**

*Living, Growing, Learning*

# Total Communication Policy

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MARCH 2023

NEXT REVIEW DATE: MARCH 2025

Staff Responsible: Headteacher

## **Disclaimer**

Pens Meadow School makes every effort to ensure that the information in this document is accurate and up-to-date. If errors are brought to our attention, we will correct them as soon as practicable.

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*This policy is the result of collaboration between staff of Pens Meadow School and the Speech and Language Therapy Team (S&LT). It will be reviewed regularly, taking account of new research and approaches to Total Communication within the context of Pens Meadow School.*

We have a team of three Communication HLTA's that work at Pens Meadow School.

## **What is communication?**

Communication is fundamental to teaching and learning in Pens Meadow School. It is a two-way process through which information, ideas, thoughts and feelings are passed between individuals and/or groups of people. Communication is central to life, human rights, inclusion and all areas of human development.

The development of communication skills for all learners at Pens Meadow is an integral part of the provision and should not be seen in isolation.

The term 'Total Communication' encompasses all aspects of alternative and augmentative communication.

At Pens Meadow School the pupils have a range of communication difficulties. It is important to recognise these as soon as possible as it is through communication that pupils' progress and learn.

Pupils learning difficulties including autism may mean they are non-verbal, have limited language or have functional language use.

It is crucial to understand that the spoken language is different to social communication. Social communication includes body language, eye contact, hand gesture, tone, intonation and volume and many people with ASD lack those skills, which is why we put communication systems in place to support them.

A pupil that does not or cannot speak doesn't have nothing to say and it certainly is no indication of their level of understanding.

At Pens Meadow School we operate a Total Communication Environment, which provides a range of approaches to enable the pupils to communicate effectively. This Communication Policy promotes the use of effective communication which staff and visitors are expected to follow consistently.

### **Pens Meadow School aims to:**

- Understand the world from the learner's perspective and the frustrations/difficulties that they can face.
- Ensure that our learners are equipped to communicate effectively in adult life
- Provide opportunities for learners to develop a meaningful and functional system of Total Communication using verbal and/or non-verbal communication.
- Ensure that all learners feel included with their preferred method of communication which facilitates the opportunity to be understood, responded to and to make decisions and choices.
- Integrate fully our approach to communication within all aspects of the provision, with particular regard to literacy and its elements of speaking and listening.
- Enable access to provision through a total communication approach

#### **This may include:**

- Aided Language Displays (ALD's)
- Communication books
- Gestures, body language, vocalisation/speech, eye pointing and facial expression
- Intensive Interaction
- Makaton signing
- Objects Of Reference (OOR)
- On Body Signing
- Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
- Photographs/pictures/symbols/schedules/first you, then you strips
- Social Stories
- Talking Mats
- Voice Output Communication Aids/equipment (VOCA)

### **Equal Opportunities**

All learners are entitled to appropriate support and intervention relating to the development of their communication, regardless of their race, culture, gender, disability and socioeconomic background.

We all communicate in different ways and each way should be equally respected and encouraged.

Communication is vital to every aspect of our lives. It impacts on our relationships, choice, control, emotions, self-esteem and self-expression. Therefore it is fundamental to our wellbeing and quality of life.

Using total communication approaches helps people with learning disabilities develop their understanding and expression in order to communicate more effectively.

- **Communication is a basic human right**
- **Total communication is an approach, which includes all the ways we communicate**
- **Total communication is about building relationships and self-esteem**
- **Total communication is for everyone**

### **Working with the Speech and Language Therapy Team (SaLT Team)**

Pens Meadow School works in partnership with all agencies and has specific links with our commissioned speech and language therapy team who work in school on a weekly basis.

Individual learners are assessed at the request of the school/ class staff/ parents, and an agreed approach to communication is devised. This forms an integral part of the learner's individual education plan and holistic approach to their communication. Opportunities to develop these skills are facilitated through the pathways to learning.

In some cases the SaLT team may have direct focused intervention with learners; this may specifically relate to establishing a system of communication e.g. assessing the learner for a communication aid. This may involve making referrals to ACT (Access to Communication and Technology) Selly Oak Birmingham. Once the system of communication is established, all staff should work closely as part of a team, ensuring consistency of approach and use. It is sometimes necessary for SLT and/or the Communication HLTA's to carry out home visits or meetings with parents/carers.

The SaLT team continue to work closely with Pens Meadow School supporting a range of Continuing Professional Development opportunities linked to total communication. Pens Meadow School recognises the importance of regular liaison with the SaLT team and the Leadership Team is committed to this through the identification of training, development and any learner-centred issues.

### **Working with Parents and Carers**

Pens Meadow School is committed to supporting Parents and Carers in the development of their child's communication. This may involve joint meetings with the SaLT team, school staff and regular home-school liaison. Parents and Carers are aware of our 'open door' policy and are welcome to visit school to observe and discuss any aspect of their child's approach to communication. Where it is considered appropriate, and in consultation with the Parents & Carers, Pens Meadow will provide resources to support the pupil in the home environment (e.g. symbols, books).

### **Assessment, recording and reporting**

The SaLT team will make an initial assessment of a learner if this is approved by the deputy headteacher for provision. This may involve individual work with the learner, consultation with class staff, learner observation and parental liaison.

Ongoing assessment is then facilitated by class staff as part of the learners agreed pathway to learning. Monitoring, includes the use of information taken from the IEPs (Individual Education Plans), EHCP's (Educational Health Care Plans) and SaLT Targets. All these documents are available on the learner's individual clipboards. Targets should be referred to during teaching and learning throughout the school day.

An annual written report is produced by the school at the end of the academic year. Parents and carers also have the opportunity to discuss their child's progress at termly parent's evenings

