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HAMILTON LODGE SCHOOL
Communication Policy

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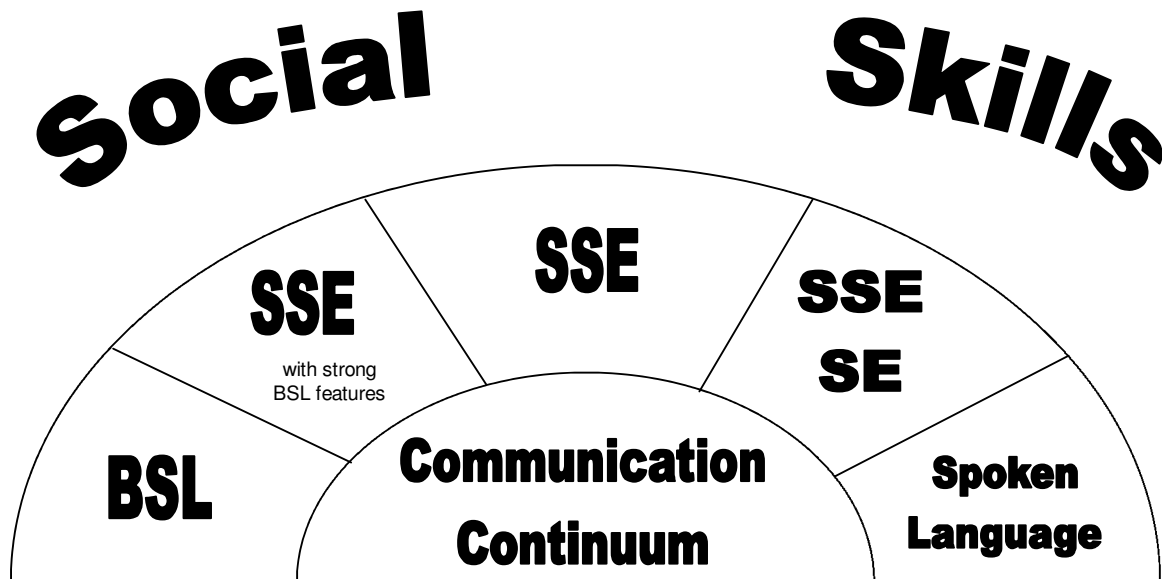
Communication Policy

Introduction:

Hamilton Lodge School takes an inclusive approach to education. To gain full access to the curriculum it is essential that deaf pupils enjoy the rich linguistic and communication experiences which are equal to their hearing peers. Communication forms the basis upon which all pupils are able to participate fully in society and engage in meaningful two-way interactions with a variety of people and in a variety of settings.

At Hamilton Lodge School we take a child-centred approach to communication. All communication is regarded as equally valid and valued. We look at communication in terms of a continuum:

The use of the continuum recognises that not all pupils or staff will have the same



way of communicating. Pupil skills may embrace the whole continuum and we aim to maximise their abilities in all areas but we also accept that some pupils tend towards one end. As pupils develop their communication and language skills, so will they develop preferred modes of communication. As has been said, staff communication abilities will also vary due to the time of entry to HLS, their own preferred mode of communication (BSL or English), how far along their programme they are and their metalinguistic skills (ability to understand that they are functioning across two languages; recognising differences and similarities between English and BSL grammatical structures). Pupils will experience different styles of delivery in lessons and also different communication abilities. We feel this gives pupils opportunities to develop different communication strategies themselves, enabling them to code switch and use their voice or not. In certain situations (e.g. group and/or whole class teaching, assemblies) Sign Supported English (SSE) will be used by staff for

practical purposes. Further explanation of the language used may be presented in a different mode (e.g. BSL, SE, and written English).

In both English and Deaf Studies, pupils are actively encouraged to develop metalinguistic skills with which to talk about their linguistic situation. This kind of discussion also occurs in other lessons, thereby supporting and developing these fundamental skills.

In order to enable pupils to develop other communication strategies, the school also advocates the use of residual hearing through appropriate amplification, lip reading and speech production. There is an Educational Audiologist available during the week to consult on audiological matters and who contributes to the annual review process. The school nurse also contributes to the general maintenance of hearing aids.

Essentially the communication philosophy centres on the four following statements:

- Developing a full language is a basic human right and the basis for learning.
- The grammar of BSL is fully accessible to our pupils, aspects of English are not necessarily.
- Hamilton Lodge takes a child-centred approach to communication, considering the specific needs of the individual pupil.
- The school exists to provide access to the curriculum for our pupils.
- For pupils to be able to communicate confidently in both the hearing and deaf world.

In summary, the policy of the school supports the need to maximise access to the curriculum and encourages the development of our pupils into independent and socially competent communicators.

Aims:

Our commitment is to there being an understanding by all staff of the preferred modes of our pupils and to reflect this in our interaction with them as far as possible. We recognise the need for differentiation not only in schemes of work but in our daily interactions appropriate to the needs of the individual pupil, taking a child-centred approach to curriculum planning and delivery. Pupils are also aware of the reality of working with staff for whom BSL or English may be their first language.

The Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) and Deaf Studies Tutor assess pupils in terms of the continuum. The continuum addresses signed and spoken language in terms of different modes of communication, both understanding and expression, and also incorporates the use and application of social skills. Recognising that pupils have different communication needs and preferred modes, this information is passed on to staff to ensure understanding of how communication preferences affect lesson delivery and the use of Teaching Assistants (TAs). As a school, we aim to encourage the development of communicative confidence and competence. This is

achieved through diverse teaching strategies and our daily interactions, which take account of the needs of the individual pupil.

The presentation of teaching materials, notices, Assemblies, Pupil Care meetings, the school council to name but a few, take account of the need to present information in a variety of ways to facilitate access to the information for all. Materials should be presented as visually as possible and, for those pupils whose BSL and English skills are below their chronological age,

Assessment:

For pupils entering Hamilton Lodge at Foundation level, there is a statutory obligation to have a baseline assessment of each pupil. However, for all pupils we gather our own information to provide an Entry Baseline when they start at the school irrespective of year of entry. Emphasis is placed on developing pupils' awareness and understanding of functioning within two languages: BSL and English. A BSL framework has been devised to provide a shared understanding of pupils' levels and contribute to the assessment procedures. The pupils' English levels are assessed within the English department, providing National Curriculum levels for speaking & listening, reading and writing. This information is passed on to all members of staff via the pupil tracker system.

In terms of communication the following areas will be assessed and information gathered:

- Audiological information
- Functional Auditory Discrimination
- Auditory Behaviour
- Memory and processing preferences
- Receptive Language (English - spoken and literacy skills)
- Lip Reading
- Expressive Language (English – spoken and literacy skills)
- Speech
- Voice
- Receptive Language (BSL)
- Expressive Language (BSL)
- Pragmatic and Social Skills

Communication Approaches:

The Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) works within both departments of the school (Primary and Secondary), following an integrated approach to working with teaching staff and pupils. The role of the SALT is one of monitoring pupils and advising staff on communication approaches in addition to working with pupils directly as and when this is considered appropriate. Direct SALT work occurs in groups during English lessons and as short individual sessions.

Deaf Studies provides pupils with the opportunity to study and improve their BSL

whilst gaining an accredited qualification through Signature. This programme is offered across all four key stages and is delivered by Deaf Studies Tutors. Deaf Studies offers a broad course in terms of BSL grammar, styles of delivery incorporating different registers, formal and informal BSL, story and news telling, receptive skills, investigating Deaf issues, Deaf Culture and Deaf Identity. It fosters the ability of the pupils to recognize their individual rights and to appreciate the importance of requesting appropriate communication support when needed. Other areas studied include telecommunications in relation to Deaf users, Deaf Awareness and discussion of being Deaf in a hearing world.

Understanding of, and access to, the many Deaf organisations relevant to our pupils and the availability of devices for Deaf people are also addressed. Through the Signature Level 1 curriculum, pupils are given the opportunity to develop their understanding of the differences in structure between BSL and English and to pursue a Signature Level 1 qualification. This opportunity is offered to Year 9 pupils. After the successful completion of Level 1, pupils move on to study the Level 2 curriculum in Year 10. There are some pupils who for particular individual reasons continue accessing Deaf Studies beyond Year 10.

The Care Department liaises closely with school staff to ensure consistency in communication approaches with the children. Individual children have their own key worker who can raise any issues regarding communication with the Deaf Studies Tutors, Speech and Language Therapist, SENCO, Assistant Head (Support for Learning) or form tutor. Parents/carers are encouraged to discuss any of their concerns with any of the aforementioned members of staff.

Whole school Assemblies take account of different communication needs. Staff and children use a variety of modes as appropriate. For visitors attending Assemblies, voice-over and BSL interpretation is provided as necessary. Pupils and staff are encouraged to choose their most preferred mode of communication for Assembly.

Parents / Carers:

Parents/Carers are fully informed of the Communication policy of the school via the Parent/Carer Communication Booklet. Copies are sent to new parents. Parents/carers are encouraged to attend signing classes to ensure their signing skills match the level of their children and advice can be given about available classes local to their homes.

Parents and carers are welcome to come into the school at any time to discuss any concerns regarding their child's communication skills. The school is committed to involving the families of our pupils in the development of their communication needs and families are asked to complete a Parent/Carer Communication Document on entry to the school.

Information from the Parent/Carer Communication Document is distributed to all school and care staff via the pupil profile document.

Staff Communication in the Presence of Pupils & Cultural Awareness:

The school is committed to the provision of equal opportunities for all members of staff and pupils and we recognise the practical and educational implications of such a policy. The provision of equal access to information and conversation necessitates the use of sign language in the presence of pupils. This provides positive social and communication models for our pupils. In addition, where pupils request it in the evenings, interpreter support will be given for pupils watching television or films.

If there is a pupil present, it is the policy of the school that the staff will sign at all times. For pupils this should not be at the expense of confidentiality and if this is an issue, then staff will leave the room or discuss the matter at a more appropriate time. However, staff do not discuss matters concerning pupils in their presence without allowing them access to what is being said.

The use of interpreters for pupils at annual reviews is important in maintaining our commitment to full access to information. External interpreters can be booked for medical appointments for pupils who so wish.

Pupils who are unable to make use of their residual hearing may be touched on the arms, shoulders and back to gain their attention.

Pupils are developing strong views of themselves as individuals, particularly as Deaf individuals and, through the Deaf Studies programme and other areas of the curriculum, are examining equal rights, disability rights and communication rights. Pupils are encouraged in their development of cultural awareness and open discussion of "Deaf Way" cultural aspects. Staff and pupils have a clear understanding of what is acceptable culturally and what is not.

Staff Awareness:

There is a recognised commitment to the acquisition of signing skills by staff through Signature accredited courses. Staff are encouraged to acquire Level 1 during their first year and receive tuition from Deaf Studies Tutors on site. Signing classes are timetabled for teaching and residential staff as well as ancillary staff. The acquisition of BSL Level 2 is encouraged but there is no time limit at present.

An induction package is available for new members of staff including volunteers and work experience students which addresses the communication policy in detail and provides Deaf Awareness training.

Equal Opportunities:

The Communication Policy supports the Equal Opportunities policy of the school.

Conclusion:

In summary, the communication policy of Hamilton Lodge School recognises and acknowledges that not all children use the same mode of communication. The emphasis is on a child-centred approach to communication and on giving pupils strategies with which to cope with a variety of communication situations and conversational partners. We aim to maximise the communication abilities of children in all areas of the continuum, although we accept that some children may tend towards different areas. The ultimate aim is for all children to leave the school as confident, independent communicators.

Communication forms the basis of a holistic educational and social approach to our pupils. As a staff we are aware that communication is a constantly developing process and we recognise that any communication system or policy must address the needs and capacities of the individuals to which it is aimed. This is a fundamental aspect of the policy at Hamilton Lodge and it is apparent throughout the whole school.

Code of Practice
For Good Working Relationships between Staff

- All new staff including volunteers and work experience students are to receive Deaf awareness training and communication induction.
- All staff to receive Signature BSL training up to level 2.
- There is mutual understanding and respect for members of staff who have just begun to learn to sign and who are not confident in such surroundings. In addition to this it is recognised and accepted that repetition of signed or spoken language may be necessary for some members of staff and there is no stigma attached to the need for clarification in conversation and discussion.
- All staff will sign in the presence of pupils, Deaf parents and visitors.
- There is an expectation that we will sign in the presence of Deaf staff at all times including the staffroom. However, there will be occasions when hearing staff are having a quick discrete conversation and might not necessarily sign to all the staff present.
- It is not necessary to sign telephone conversations unless they directly involve the Deaf member of staff present.
- All staff attending meetings at Hamilton Lodge will participate using their first language. An interpreter will be booked for meetings where Deaf staff are present.
- School documentation will use “D” when referring to Deaf issues.
- We will aim to make all school documentation accessible to all staff.
- Deaf and hearing staff may be touched on the arms, shoulders and back to gain their attention.
- Hearing staff at Hamilton Lodge may be used in an “interpreter” role as appropriate (see Interpreter policy). This may also include work related *internal* telephone calls; external calls can be made via typetalk or at the discretion of staff involved.
- Where there is an issue of misunderstanding or misinterpretation with regard to the use of BSL or English in a lesson, this may be drawn to the attention of the member of staff in a sensitive and supportive manner either at the time or later.
- Staff will show sensitivity with regard to background noise in classrooms and other teaching areas.

Glossary

BSL: What is it? BSL stands for British Sign Language. This is a language which has evolved over the years, in the same way that English has developed as a spoken language. It is a full language and it has its own grammar and rules which are quite different to those of English.

SSE: What is it? SSE stands for Sign Supported English. This borrows the signs of BSL but presents them in English word order, usually alongside spoken language, although not every English word is signed.

SE: What is it: SE stands for Signed English. This method of communication follows English word order and uses signs from BSL. It also has signs for different tenses e.g. past, present and future as well as signing all the grammatical aspects of English.