



HAMILTON LODGE
SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

All policies are developed collaboratively to ensure we fulfil our mission to teach each one of our Primary, Secondary pupils and Further Education students to:

- develop a full language to support memory & learning
- achieve their academic and vocational potential
- be safe and confident in the modern world
- have happy memories of their childhood and make lasting friendships
- be healthy and resilient both physically and emotionally

41 SP: Communication Policy.

Compulsory Policy.

HLSC Specific Policy.



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Hamilton Lodge School and College Policy Document.

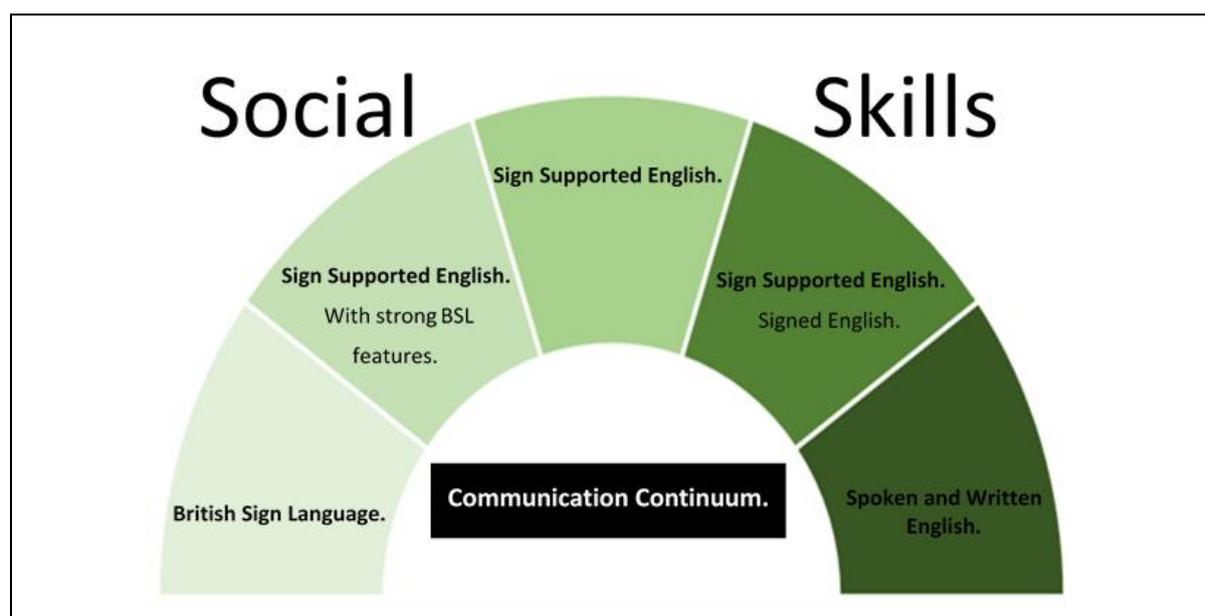
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Introduction

Hamilton Lodge School & College offers an inclusive education for all learners. In order to gain full access to the curriculum, it is essential that deaf learners enjoy the rich linguistic and communication experiences, equal to their hearing peers. Communication forms the basis upon which all people are able to participate fully in society and engage in meaningful interactions with a variety of people and in a variety of settings.

At Hamilton Lodge we take a child-centred approach to communication. This means that all forms of communication are regarded as equally valid and valued. We look at communication in terms of a continuum:



The use of a communication continuum recognises that not all learners, or staff, will communicate in the same way. Learners' skills may embrace the whole continuum and we aim to maximise their abilities in all areas. We accept that some learners demonstrate a preference towards one end or the other of this continuum. As learners develop their communication and language skills, so will they develop their preferred mode of communication. Staff themselves use a variety of communication methods depending on their own preferred mode of communication and the person they are interacting with. Learners at Hamilton Lodge are exposed to a wide range of teaching and communication styles to suit individual preferences. This gives learners themselves the opportunity to develop different communication strategies. This enables them to adapt their communication style to suit the personal preferences of the conversational partner.

In both English lessons and Deaf Studies, learners are encouraged to develop metalinguistic skills (an awareness of the differences in communication) so they can understand the differences in communication styles. Discussions also take place in lessons across the curriculum and in a variety of locations such as Assembly and the lunch hall.

In order to enable learners to develop all communication strategies, the school promotes the use of residual hearing and oral language skills, as well as BSL, through appropriate amplification. We have an Educational Audiologist on site who can assess hearing levels and advise on appropriate hearing aids and future interventions. The Educational Audiologist liaises directly with Hospital Audiology services and Cochlear Implant centres, and is available for consultations with parents and carers. An audiology report is included in the annual review process each year.

Our communication philosophy centres on the five following statements that:

- developing a full language is a basic human right and the basis for learning.
- the grammar of BSL is fully accessible to our Learners.
- the school takes a child-centred approach to communication, and considers the specific needs of the individual learner.
- the school ensures full access to the curriculum for all learners.
- learners should leave Hamilton Lodge able to communicate confidently in the Deaf world and with appropriate strategies for communicating in the hearing world.

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

Aims

All staff are responsive to the individual child's communication style and reflect this in their interaction with them. We recognise the need for differentiation, not only in the curriculum but also in our daily interactions with learners. Learners also have the opportunity to work with staff whose first language is BSL.

The Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) and Deaf Studies Tutor assess all learners in terms of their communication and where they lie on the continuum. Assessments include both receptive and expressive language as well as their social skills, and determines their different communication needs and preferred styles. This information is shared with staff to ensure that lesson delivery is geared to each individual learner. This also guides the use and deployment of teaching assistants to ensure that the communication needs of all learners are met.

Teaching materials, notices, assemblies, meetings, etc. are presented in a format which is accessible to all learners. Visual presentation is used throughout the school to ensure that all learners have equal access to information.

Assessment

Pupils entering Hamilton Lodge at Foundation level will have undergone a statutory baseline assessment. Whilst useful, it does not give us the information we need to fully describe the level of communication and language. We therefore carry out our own baseline assessment on entry to the school. A baseline assessment is also carried out irrespective of the age of entry to the school. We place an emphasis on developing learners' awareness and understanding of functioning within two languages; BSL and English. We use a BSL framework assessment to gain a shared understanding of learners' levels of BSL and contribute to the overall communication assessment. The learners' English levels are assessed within the English department using a reading assessment (NARA) and a written assessment.

With reference to communication the following areas are assessed:

- 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 all departments of the school & college following an integrated approach to working with teaching staff and learners. The role of the SALT is to monitor language development and advise staff on communication approach. The SALT also works directly with some pupils where appropriate. Direct SALT intervention is discussed with parents and staff, and planned following assessment. Direct SALT work can take place either in small groups or individual sessions.

Deaf Studies sessions provide learners with the opportunity to study and improve their BSL whilst gaining an accredited qualification through a recognised organisation (Signature). This programme is offered across all four key stages and is delivered by Deaf Studies Tutors. Deaf Studies offers a broad curriculum 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 learners to recognise their rights and to appreciate the importance of requesting appropriate communication support where required. Other areas studied include telecommunications in relation to Deaf users, Deaf Awareness and discussions surrounding being Deaf in a hearing world.

Learners are taught about the many Deaf organisations and the availability of assistive devices for Deaf people. Through the Signature Level 1 curriculum, learners 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 learners. After the successful completion of Level 1, learners move on to study the Level 2 curriculum in Year 10. Some learners can continue to access Deaf Studies beyond Year 10.

The Care Department liaises closely with school staff to ensure consistency in communication approaches. Individual learners have their own key worker who can raise any issues regarding communication with relevant staff. Parents and carers are encouraged to discuss any concerns with any member 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 required. Learners and staff are able to use their preferred mode of communication during Assemblies.

Parents / Carers

Parents and Carers are fully informed of the Communication policy of the school via the Parent and Carer Communication Booklet. Copies are sent to new parents on entry to the school. Parents and carers are encouraged to attend free signing classes to ensure their signing skills match the level of their children. Advice is available about accessing BSL 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. The school is committed to involving families in the development of their child's communication needs. On entry to the school or college, families are asked to complete a Parent and Carer Communication Document which details the child's preferred communication mode. If parents require an interpreter for a meeting, one can be arranged.

Information from the Parent and Carer Communication Document is shared with all school and care staff via the child's Learner Profile document.

Staff Communication in the Presence of Pupils/students & Cultural Awareness

The school is committed to the provision of equal opportunities for all members of staff and learners and we recognise the practical and educational implications of this policy. The provision of equal access to information and conversation necessitates the use of sign language in the presence of learners. This provides positive social and communication models for our learners. In addition, interpreter support is available, on request, for learners watching television or films.

If there is a learner present, it is the policy of the school that the staff will sign at all times. 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 learners in their presence without allowing them access to what is being said.

The use of interpreters for learners at annual reviews is important in maintaining our commitment to full access to information. External interpreters are booked and made available for Annual Reviews where the learner is present. Interpreter services can also be made available for medical appointments at the learner's request.

In some instances, gaining the attention of deaf learners may be problematic (especially when facing away from the speaker). In agreement with learners, it is acceptable to touch arms, shoulders and back to gain their attention.

During their formative school years, learners are developing strong views of themselves as individuals, particularly as Deaf individuals. Through the Deaf Studies programme, and other areas of the curriculum, learners are examining equal rights, disability rights, and communication rights. Learners are encouraged to develop cultural awareness and take part in open discussion of 'Deaf

Way' culture. Staff provide learners with 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 required to acquire Level 1 during their first year at the school. In order to achieve this, tuition from Deaf Studies Tutors is available on-site. Signing classes are timetabled for teaching and residential staff, as well as ancillary staff. The acquisition of BSL Level 2 is encouraged and is expected to be achieved within 2 years.

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

Equal Opportunities

The Communication Policy fully 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 school emphasises a child-centred approach to communication. Our aim is to equip learners with the skills and strategies to cope with a variety of communication situations and conversational partners. We aim to maximise the communication abilities of children and young people in all areas of the continuum and accepting that learners will make their own choices. The ultimate aim is for all children & young people to leave the school as confident, independent communicators who can thrive in the Deaf or hearing world.

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 have the opportunity 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 learners, Deaf parents and visitors.
- There is an expectation that staff will sign in the presence of Deaf staff at all times, including the staffroom. However, there will be occasions when hearing staff will engage in discrete conversation and may not necessarily sign to all staff present in the room.
- It is not necessary to sign telephone conversations unless they directly involve the Deaf member of staff.
- 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.
- All school documentation is accessible to all staff.

- Deaf and hearing staff may be touched on the arms, shoulders and back to gain their attention.
- Deaf staff use the Access to Work provision for interpreters.
- 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 immediately or following the lesson.
- Staff will show sensitivity with regard to background noise in classrooms and other teaching areas.

Glossary

BSL: 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: 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: 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 features of English.