

Total Communication Policy

Supporting All Aberdeenshire's Learners



Towards the very best

Total Communication Policy

Total communication involves using any means of communicating. Children with speech and language difficulties or more complex special needs may need support to initiate and take part in communication and interaction. This means making use of all the ways of communication which are available to the child.

This may include:

- **Speech and spoken language**
- **Makaton signing**
- **Photos**
- **Picture symbols**
- **Pictures**
- **Objects**
- **Voice output communication aids and computer based systems**
- **On body signing**
- **Natural gesture.**

Research highlights a clear link between reduced speech and language skills and literacy difficulties. Effective communication skills are essential for children if the aspirations of the Curriculum for Excellence are to be met and enable all children and young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

Spoken language skills are one of the aspects of a child's development that is most amenable to change. While this change is likely to be beneficial in its own right it is also likely to have a mediating effect on the impact of social disadvantage by improving the child's ability to:

- **negotiate with peers**
- **establish friendships**
- **create and retell stories**
- **contribute to the development of literacy and other more academic skills.**

Self confidence and self esteem are vitally important for children in primary schools. Children with communication difficulties are at a higher risk of reduced self-confidence and self-esteem. Children with speech, language and communication needs from the age of approximately eight upwards, rate themselves lower with regard to their academic ability and achievement and their relationships with peers. Implications of research in this area suggest that prolonged spoken language difficulties negatively impact on children's academic progress and their self esteem.

This policy aims to promote a whole school approach to support the child and the school. In conjunction with Education Services, the Speech and Language Therapists assess the needs of the children and the school and will tailor their intervention and training accordingly.

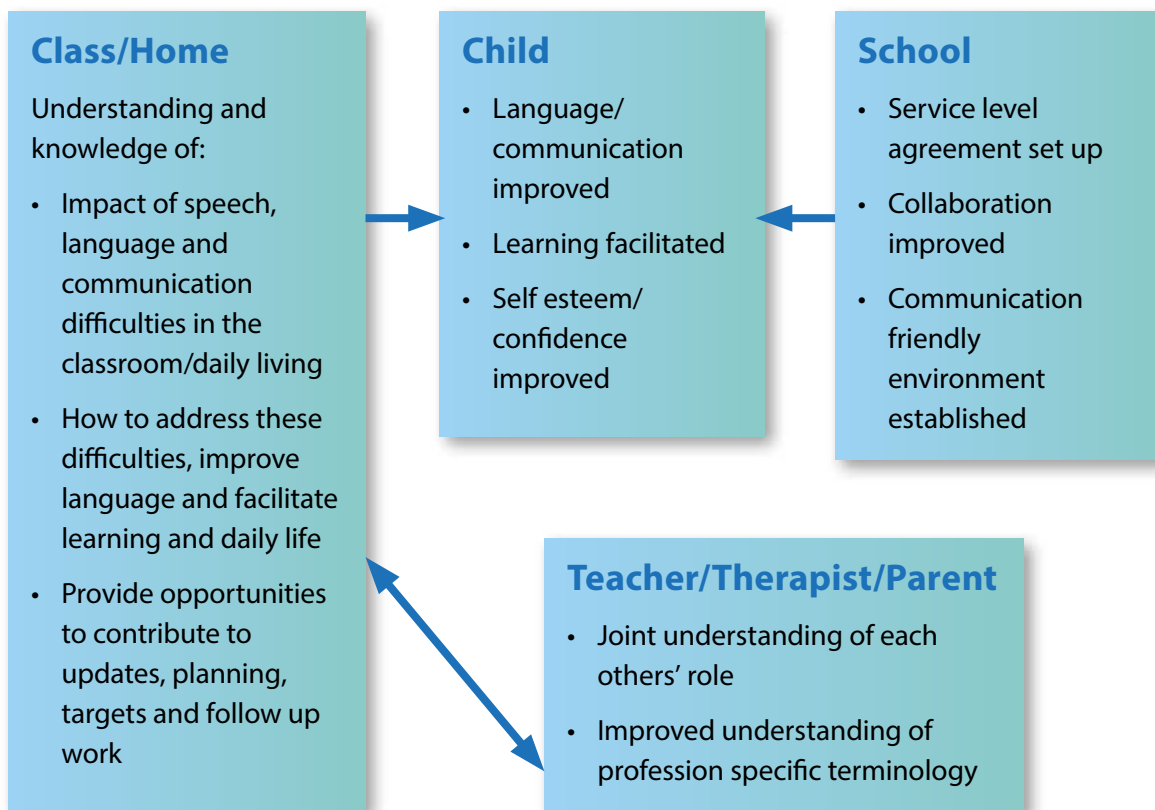


All interventions should be carried out in conjunction with Class Teachers, Specialist Teachers and Pupil Support Assistants with the emphasis on developing sustainability. We aim to develop the skills and knowledge of all staff and parents so that the children’s communication skills can continue to be developed by those who work with them on a daily basis.

Speech and Language Therapists respond to the needs of the school, contributing to the school improvement plan as required and providing quality training on topics which education staff, their managers and therapists have identified as priorities. Training of staff is a key activity with the aim of maximising the impact on the child.

Education and Health Services will work together to provide effective support where children’s speech, language, communication, confidence and learning are facilitated within the school environment.

Supporting Children’s Communication and Learning within Mainstream School Outcomes



A communication friendly school

- encourages all forms of communication, developing children's language skills and ensuring social, emotional and academic progress.
- provides opportunities for building speech language and communication skills from the Curriculum for Excellence by providing a supportive environment and ensuring adults are aware of children's language levels.
- works closely with parents/carers so that they can support language development and communication at home.
- continues to promote opportunities for speaking, listening and communication across a broad and creative curriculum enabling children to become articulate and confident.

All people have a basic right to affect, through communication, the conditions of their existence.

All people have the following specific communication rights in their daily interactions.

Every person has the right to:






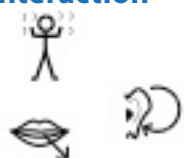



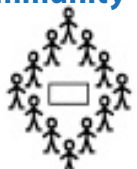


- request desired objects, actions, events and people
- refuse undesired objects, actions, or events
- express personal preferences and feelings
- be offered choices and alternatives
- reject offered choices
- request and receive another person's attention and interaction
- ask for and receive information about changes in routine and environment
- receive intervention to improve communication skills
- receive a response to any communication, whether or not the responder can fulfil the request
- have access to AAC (augmentative and alternative communication) and other AT (assistive technology) services and devices at all times
- have AAC and other AT devices that function properly at all times
- be in environments that promote one's communication as a full partner with other people, including peers
- be spoken to with respect and courtesy
- be spoken to directly and not be spoken for or talked about in the third person while present
- have clear, meaningful and culturally and linguistically appropriate communications.

Summarised and adapted from publication 1992 Asha, 34 (Suppl. 7), 2-3.

Reference

Sheffield City Council, ESCAL Communication Friendly School Audit, 2013



<p>To be given real choices</p> 	<p>To say no, refuse and reject choices</p> 	<p>To ask for what I want</p> 	<p>To share my feelings</p> 	<p>To be heard and responded to (even if the answer is no)</p> 
<p>To ask for and get attention and interaction</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">I have the right to communicate</p>			<p>To have and use my speech system at all times</p> 
<p>To ask and know about my schedule and my world</p> 				<p>To be taught how to communicate</p> 
<p>To have my speech system in working order and to have a back up</p> 	<p>To be a full and equal member of my community</p> 	<p>To be treated with dignity and respect</p> 	<p>To be spoken with, and not about</p> 	<p>To be communicated with in a sensitive manner</p> 



Adapted from Asha, 34 (suppl. 7) pgs 2-3

Symbols used taken from MAKATON



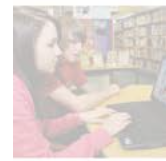
Total Communication Policy Audit

Criteria	Strategies / Examples	Never	Sometimes	Often	All the Time
Through management and leadership the whole school environment effectively supports all learners by applying the principles of the Total Communication Policy to meet the standards of GIRFEC, Curriculum for Excellence and the ASfL Act	Identified customised school policy linked to the school improvement plan and CPD/training				
	Direct link to and involvement with the Intervention & Prevention teacher and other specialist staff as appropriate				
	Parents and carers have a clear understanding of the school's systematic approach to speech, language and communication development and their opinions are listened to and acted upon				
	Parents and carers are supported in developing their child's speaking and listening skills as a result of parent/ carer workshops, family learning and talking boxes				
	Service Level Agreement with SLT service				
	SLT participation in MAAP, IEP, CSP, etc, i.e. target setting				
Comments:					



The Whole School Environment

Criteria	Strategies / Examples	Never	Sometimes	Often	All the Time
The school environment supports attentive listening, with learners responding to what they have heard by actions, relevant comments or questions	The classroom is physically organised to make it conducive to good listening and attention				
	The 'rules' of good listening (good sitting, good thinking, good looking, good waiting) are taught, modelled and regularly reinforced (with the use of visual cues, e.g. prompt cards, displays, symbols) and adults are aware of the range of listening strategies children may use. For suggestions, refer to Spooner, L. & Woodcock, J. (2013). Teaching children to listen: A practical approach to developing children's listening skills. London. Bloomsbury.				
Comments:					
The school environment supports interaction with others negotiating plans and activities and taking turns in conversations	Make use of visual aids to support language use e.g. gestures, facial expression, signs, photographs, pictures/symbols (for visual timetables etc)				
	Encourage the learner to use all forms of communication, e.g. speech, signing, symbols, gesture and behaviour				
Comments:					
The school environment supports the development of vocabulary and its expansion in all modalities; speech, signing, symbols, gestures and behaviour	Vocabulary learning is incorporated into all classroom activities using all forms of total communication during teaching and learning and for assessment				
	Use visual techniques for example signs, symbols, mind-mapping activities etc. which focus on a word and allow a learner to expand				
<p>A literacy strategy is being developed and links will be added when the policy is first reviewed. Reference to this would be advisable.</p>					
Comments:					



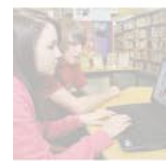
The Classroom Environment

Criteria	Strategies / Examples	Never	Sometimes	Often	All the Time
The classroom environment supports attentive listening, with learners responding to what they have heard by actions, relevant comments or questions	Keep noise levels to a minimum when learners need to listen				
	Give a visual signal to listen i.e. cup your ear				
	Keep instructions short and simple				
	Use a signal the class understands when they are to stop what they are doing and listen				
	Allow sufficient time for a learner to process information and formulate a response				
	Use listening games such as "Simon says" and listening lotto				
	Encourage learners to listen to stories, songs, chants and poems				
	Tell stories without a book and encourage learners to join in repetitive phrases				
	Provide opportunities for hearing and retelling familiar stories				
	Introduce a variety of music-related activities				
Provide IT e.g. speech buttons/ recording equipment or listening post with a selection of stories, songs or rhyme					
Comments:					



The Classroom Environment

Criteria	Strategies / Examples	Never	Sometimes	Often	All the Time
The classroom environment supports interaction with others negotiating plans and activities and taking turns in conversations	Develop routines for learners to greet each other, providing some key words or phrases				
	Take time to work specifically on 'wh' question words, e.g. 'who', 'what', 'where', 'when', 'why', etc				
	Model and encourage the use of "wh" questions				
	Provide some key words and phrases to allow the learner to respond appropriately to others in the group				
	Take time to work specifically on verbs, plurals, possessives, prepositions and tenses				
	Give the learner plenty of opportunities to talk about shared experiences and ideas				
	Encourage the learner to ask questions for clarification, obtaining extra information, or eliciting the ideas of others in a group				
Comments:					



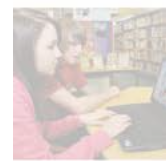
The Classroom Environment

Criteria	Strategies / Examples	Never	Sometimes	Often	All the Time
The classroom environment supports the development of vocabulary and its expansion in all modalities: speech, signing, symbols, gestures and behaviour	Teach new vocabulary using visual aids such as signing and symbols				
	Revisit the new words at intervals through the day and ensure learners take them home to share and generalise				
	Base naming activities on a current theme or topic and get the class to brainstorm as many related words as possible				
	Use memory or Twenty Questions type games, rhymes and stories				
	Provide opportunities for each learner to use the new vocabulary, using small groups if possible				
	Encourage the learner to express him/herself by any means				
<p>A literacy strategy is being developed and links will be added when the policy is first reviewed. Reference to this is advisable.</p>					
<p>Comments:</p>					



The Classroom Environment

Criteria	Strategies / Examples	Never	Sometimes	Often	All the Time
The classroom environment supports using language to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events	Implement a home/school diary to assist with clarification - get parents to note something learners could be encouraged to share				
	Encourage use of visual prompts such as an item from home, photo or newspaper clipping				
	Provide a basket of topics for learners to select from e.g., items, pictures or titles				
	Help learners express ideas more fully using prompting and cueing				
	Help learners focus on a few key ideas				
	Use pictures to reinforce verbal ideas e.g., a pictorial sequence of expected events to accompany the verbal explanation				
	Teach sequencing skills to aid retelling of stories e.g., mind mapping, a series of pictures drawn by the learner to capture key points				
	Use prompts such as when things happened, where it happened, who was involved and the basics of storytelling, e.g. the beginning, middle and end				
	Practise talking on a topic				
	Give learners a chance to rehearse asking questions about the topic. Put a chart up on the wall with the examples				
	Structure sharing times so all learners have a turn				
	Provide language models to help learners to build their stories. <i>Did you swim in the water? Oh, you swam in the water</i>				
	Praise attempts and remodel to provide clarity for others e.g., <i>your mum has a new car</i>				
	Use small groups to encourage role play				
	Set up an oral language group to facilitate the development of social skills				



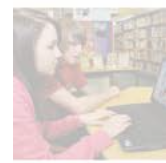
The Classroom Environment

Criteria	Strategies / Examples	Never	Sometimes	Often	All the Time
	Discuss the partnership of communication e.g., speaker and listener				
	Role-play social situations e.g., in the class, in the playground, on the football field				
	Include a topic on emotions within your programme				
	Discuss feelings, facial expressions and voice differences that give clues to the communication partner				
	Rehearse using fillers (<i>mmm and uhuh</i>) that show interest and keep conversation flowing				
Comments:					



The Classroom Environment

Criteria	Strategies / Examples	Never	Sometimes	Often	All the Time
The classroom environment supports speaking clearly and audibly with confidence	Respond to what the learner says, not how clearly he/she speaks				
	Don't always pretend to understand. Encourage the use of gesture and mime as well as speech from the learner to aid understanding				
	Avoid making the learner repeat the words as this is counter-productive				
	Repeat what the learner says but give a correct speech model. You may want to give just the slightest emphasis to the sound(s) the learner mispronounced				
	Build self-esteem. If part of the learner's conversation is understood, repeat it back. This shows him/her that s/he has been partially successful and may encourage him/her to tell you more				
	Link to activities used at home, such as sound lotto, rhyme and rhythm games				
	Concentrate on activities that are fun and simple to create for individuals and groups				
	Provide IT e.g. speech buttons/ recording equipment or listening post with a selection of stories, songs or rhyme				
<p>Please refer to Supporting Reluctant Speakers - Children with Selective Mutism</p>					
<p>Information and strategies to support reluctant speakers for Parents and Carers and Nursery and School Establishments to download</p>					
<p>Please refer to the Sensory Support Service Communication Guidelines for Learners with a Hearing Loss</p>					
<p>Comments</p>					



The Classroom Environment

Criteria	Strategies / Examples	Never	Sometimes	Often	All the Time
The classroom environment supports speaking fluently without tense jerky speech, stumbling over words and repetition of parts of words or whole words	Strongly discourage others from teasing or laughing at the learner				
	Speak more slowly yourself				
	Increase pauses, giving the learner time to respond				
	Try not to ask the learner too many questions				
	Use short and simple sentences				
	Do not interrupt the learner, finishing sentences for him/her				
	Maintain normal eye contact				
	Convey that you accept the learner for him/herself				
<p>Please refer to the pack supplied to all schools by The British Stammering Association Scotland – A Guide to Good Practice When Working with Pupils who Stammer (primary and secondary school versions) www.stammeringineducation.net</p>					
<p>Comments</p>					

Reference

Dockrell, J.E, Bakopoulou, I., Law, J., Spencer, S. & Lindsay, G. *Better Communication Research Programme, 2012, Communication Supporting Classroom Observation Tool, The Communication Trust.*

Sensory Support Service

Hearing Support Services Communication Guidelines

In Aberdeenshire we aim to meet the needs of most of our deaf children within our local authority schools.

When a baby/child is diagnosed with a hearing loss it may take the parents some time before they feel able to discuss the communication options available to them. Once they feel ready, the hearing support teacher will help them to consider what is best for their child. Other professionals e.g. speech & language therapist and the parent support group, Grampian Deaf Children's Society, will also be available to provide input and support, should it be required.

The communication options available within Aberdeenshire are:

The auditory-oral approach concentrates on developing the child's listening skills and spoken language. The child is likely to have hearing aids or a cochlear implant to make the most of any hearing that they have. A hearing support teacher will work with the family to support the development of speech and language through a range of activities. A speech and language therapist may also be involved.

Total Communication involves using any means of communicating.

This approach is recommended where it is important to make use of visual clues to supplement what he/she can hear. The range of communication methods may include:

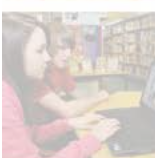
- **Speech**
- **Sign Supported English (signs taken from British Sign Language in an English word order)**
- **Makaton**
- **Finger spelling**
- **Gesture**
- **Lipreading**
- **Facial expression & body language**

Where the hearing support teacher is making home visits, she may provide informal training in sign communication for the family; within the education setting, for staff and pupils. Where parents/carers would like to attend formal British Sign Language (BSL) classes, the hearing support teacher will advise on classes available within the area.

While the child attends a nursery or school, he/she may receive signed support from a pupil support assistant or from the early years deaf support worker, in addition to regular sessions with the hearing support teacher. Where a child's first language is sign, he/she may receive signed support from a communicator who will provide access to the curriculum and promote the use of sign within the school community.

Should a child have more complex needs, the language programme, Makaton, may be used to support the development of language and communication. This consists of some signs from British Sign Language which may be used alongside symbols and photos.

For more information about Total Communication, please read Aberdeenshire's **Total Communication Policy** and **Total Communication Audit**.





Produced by Aberdeenshire Council
GDT23540 June 2015