



Communication Policy

Beaufort School

Governing Body Approval date	16/05/2022
Review	Bi-annually
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This policy is intended for use by staff, support workers and Governors of Beaufort School.

At Beaufort, we believe that communication is at the centre of successful education. Communication can be defined as a meaningful interaction between two or more individuals to request, resist, choose, comment, and develop social relationships. Our ultimate vision for all pupils is that they will establish a system of expressive and receptive communication in whatever form is appropriate to them. The method of communication can take many forms and can include one or a combination of the following:

Body language

Facial expressions

Eye contact

Gestures and pointing

TaSSels

Signing (Makaton)

Vocalisations

Use of objects of reference and body cues

- Use of photographs
- Use of symbols/drawings
- Speech
- Writing

At Beaufort, we adopt a 'multimodal approach to communication. This means that all methods of communication are recognised and valued equally as forms of interaction. Communication underpins all areas of the curriculum and allows pupils to access learning and develop social relationships. Communication is central to the entire curriculum and an individual's autonomy. Pupils are therefore presented with opportunities to develop their communication skills throughout the school day using both planned and spontaneous situations. At Beaufort, we recognise that it is everybody's responsibility to understand the different methods of communication and to encourage pupils. To be effective communicators staff must be effective listeners and observers.

AIMS

- To respect the individual's communication style and ability and their right to communicate.
- To draw up specific, measurable, attainable, realistic communication targets that are regularly reviewed.
- To meet the communication potential of every pupil with respect of their cultural, religious, or family views.
- To ensure, where possible, that pupils are provided with an appropriate and consistent communication environment.
- To facilitate the development of successful social communication.

APPROACHES TO COMMUNICATION

At Beaufort, we use a range of different communication methods to interact with the pupils, both low and high tech. We do not follow one approach as the needs of the pupils vary between classes and age groups. However, many of these approaches are specific to learners with autism and other

communication/learning difficulties. The important thing to remember is that whatever approaches are assessed as being appropriate for the individual pupils, they should be consistently followed by all staff and carers working with the pupils, to ensure that maximum communicative function is achieved. This means that if a pupil is more able to communicate and understand photographs, they should always have access to them, and all staff should know how to use them with the pupil. They should be moved on to the next stage after structured discussion and planning between leadership, school staff and external professionals. We continue to support this through collaborative ongoing CPD.

Intensive Interaction

‘Intensive Interaction is a practical approach to interacting with people with learning difficulties who do not find it easy communicating or being social. This approach helps the person with learning difficulties and their communication partner to relate better to each other and enjoy each other’s company more. It helps them develop their communication abilities. In Intensive Interaction the LSA, teaching assistant, teacher or leadership works on being a better communication partner and so supports the person with learning difficulties to develop confidence and competence as a communicator. Intensive Interaction is a fun process. The communication partner is guided by what we know about how communication ordinarily develops for young pupils. S/he applies this knowledge in a way that is sensitive and respectful to the person with learning disability whatever their age.” (British Institute of Learning Disabilities).

TaSSeLs (Tactile Signing for Sensory Learners)

Touch is a vital channel of communication for learners at the earliest developmental levels. It has been said that it is “humankind’s earliest form of communication” (Gallace and Spence, 2010) and “our most fundamental means of contact with the outside world” (Hart, 2010). TaSSeLs is a system of touch-speech cues to promote effective communication with people with profound and complex learning disabilities, some of whom may have a visual impairment. Staff who work in classes with pupils who have a profound and multiple learning disabilities should be given training to enable them to use TaSSeLs to support the pupils in their class. For more information on TaSSeLs see www.communicationmatter.org.uk.

Object Cues and Objects of Reference

The terms Object cues and Objects of Reference (OOR) refer to the use of objects as a means of communication. They can be used to develop understanding, to help anticipation and memory, to develop choice and can be a bridge to other forms of communication. Objects are part of a total communication system and should be used in conjunction with other forms of communication such as signing and speech.

Photographs

Photographs can help people begin to develop their symbolic understanding of the world around them. A photograph supports the pupil to develop a link between the visual representation of an object or event and the real thing. Photographs not only develop understanding but can also be used to establish expressive communication e.g., choice making or requesting.

Symbols

As symbolic understanding develops pupils are more able to understand the abstract qualities of symbols in relation to objects and events. At Beaufort, we use a combination of Picture Communication Symbols (PCS) and Widget Symbols in colour with the pupils. Symbols are used throughout the environment e.g., timetables as well as directly during and outside of classroom sessions. Symbols can range from the easily recognisable 'cat' to the more arbitrary connecting words e.g., 'to' and 'but'. Once the symbols are established by the pupil it is imperative that the same size and the same symbol picture are used consistently. Symbols can be used with the written word underneath which can support pupils with their reading and pattern matching skills.

Pupils who use symbols as a means of expressive communication must have access to their symbols at all times so they can initiate interactions. However, some pupils will not naturally progress to using symbols as it can be too abstract for them if this is the case their communication needs should be met through the use of objects and photographs as appropriate.

PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System)

The Picture Exchange Communication System is a form of augmentative and alternative communication. It is a structured approach to developing communication with a pupil by 'exchanging' a photograph or picture symbol for a desired item.

It is used with a wide variety of learners who have variety communicative disorders. At Beaufort some of the pupils use PECS to express themselves. These pupils are identified by the leadership team in collaboration with the class teacher as certain prerequisite skills are required. PECS is a very structured approach and has a defined hierarchy that must be followed for it to become a successful communication system. For more information on PECS see www.pecs.org.uk.

TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication Handicapped Children)

All Beaufort's pupils benefit from some of the approaches that are used within the TEACCH approach like concepts such as 'finished', first and next, being taught how to transfer learnt skills to everyday activities, starting work independently, and using clear concise language.

Every class in the school has a daily timetable and/or individual timetables displaying what lessons the pupils will be having that morning, afternoon, day, or week depending on the ability of the pupil. These timetables can take the form of objects, photos, or symbols depending on the level of the pupils using them. These schedules help to facilitate the smooth running of the classroom day and can help reduce some pupil's anxieties about what may be happening throughout the day.

Makaton

Makaton is a language programme that uses signs and symbols to help people to communicate. Signs and symbols are used along with speech and gesture, facial expression, eye contact and body language. Makaton is designed to support spoken language and the signs and symbols are used with speech in spoken word order. Makaton helps to simplify language as only the keywords in a sentence are signed.

At Beaufort, we use Makaton signs to support and develop receptive, expressive, and functional communication skills. It is used by staff as part of a total communication approach to support pupil's

understanding of language and facilitate and encourage their expressive communication even if that pupil does not use signed Makaton expressively. For more information about Makaton see www.makaton.org.

Spoken Word (oro–motor, expressive language skills and understanding language)

Spoken communication is made up of speech sounds, word meanings, putting words into sentences and grammar. The use of speech is always encouraged, and we provide models of clear speech and language for the pupils. Many of the pupils at Beaufort, use the spoken word to communicate. They may have difficulties with the organisation, clarity and fluency of speech sounds and words.

At Beaufort, we focus on functional communication i.e., the pupil must be able to express their wants, needs, feelings appropriately in everyday situations, this maybe with speech and/or supported by other forms of communication. For some pupils, focused work on speech sounds may not be successful due to their developmental level, difficulties with awareness, motivation, and generalisation skills.

Social Communication Skills

Social communication skills are skills in interacting with other people. E.g., eye contact, turn taking, personal space, volume of voice, negotiating and resolving conflict. We regard these as an essential part of participation in society. Staff use good models of social communication in their interactions with each other and pupils within the school.

At Beaufort, we facilitate the use of social communication skills through direct targeted work and reinforcing and generalising these throughout the school day. We practice these skills in real life situations such as going to the shops and buying what is needed for snack time, ordering a drink in a café etc.

ROLE OF THE SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPISTS

To ensure the successful communication development of all pupils at the school, it is essential that the Speech and Language Therapist, leadership, and school staff work collaboratively.

At Beaufort School there is a well-established relationship that leadership facilitate school staff to work in partnership with our external professionals, including the Speech and language therapists. Targets are set for the school and for individual class teams. The aims of this approach are:

- To maximise pupil's communication skills within the scope of their ability.
- To work closely with school staff to promote the optimum environment for developing opportunities for speech, language, and communication.
- Discuss and set individual/group targets with teachers.
- Develop and make resources in liaison with class teams.
- To introduce, develop and maintain augmentative and alternative communication systems for individuals as appropriate.

- To provide advice, information, and training as appropriate for staff, parents/carers
- To provide a monitoring system to ensure the quality of the work and provide appropriate and effective support.
- To provide pupils with assessment where necessary.
- To plan and deliver appropriate therapy (group/individual).
- To develop policies for particular areas of therapy.
- To liaise with and make referrals to other professionals.
- To input to Annual Reviews/Transition Plans.

THE MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAM (MDT)

Pupils at Beaufort, have a range of needs and a team of school staff take a holistic approach to provide greater access to the curriculum. The team includes leadership, Occupational Therapy, (OT), Physiotherapy (PT), School Nurse, Paediatric

Dietician, Music Therapists, Teacher of the Deaf and Teacher of the Visually Impaired, Educational Psychologists, (EPs), Consultant Community Paediatrician and the Special School Nursing Team

ROLE OF SCHOOL STAFF

- To write profiles on each pupil to include information about communication skills (All About Me)
- To write Communication Passports for Pupils with support from Leadership
- To create an environment conducive to the communication styles of individual pupils and classes
- To carry over good practice and programmes/activities observed and developed in group sessions to all areas of the curriculum
- To look for and use opportunities for communication throughout the day, such as transition times between lessons and playtimes.
- To be consistent in their approaches to communication with all pupils
- To have an understanding of individual or class approaches to communication
- To respond positively to support and advice from leadership and external professional's advice on approaches to communication at Beaufort School.

RESOURCES

Making communication resources, such as objects, photographs, symbols, ALDs and timetables etc. is a shared responsibility. We recognise that making resources is very time consuming. Leadership and

external professionals are available for advice on appropriate communication resources for school and parents.

POLICY INTO PRACTICE

To ensure that the communication policy is put into practice we carry out the following:

- Regular staff training
- Regular meetings between Leadership and external professionals
- Regular monitoring of the use of the policy
- Regular liaison with parents at Parents' Evenings
- Yearly annual review reports on the pupil's communication skills to share progress with other professionals and parents
- Home visits
- Parents groups
- Keep up to date of developments on communication (CPD)
- Regular MDT / Leadership meetings
- Good levels of supervision

TRANSITION

Transition is an important part of a pupil's life, and we believe in empowering the pupil. We recognise that it can be a challenging time for pupils and their families, and we support them to prepare for the changes ahead.

We ensure that information on their communication skills is transferred between classes and educational settings in the Summer Term at transition meetings. This is done through sharing Communication Profiles and Annual Review reports and previous targets.

Communication Profiles are individual profiles for each pupil, written yearly and updated when needed by the class teacher outlining the communication style with their strengths and needs.

The pupils are prepared for transitions through a variety of means, e.g., visits, social stories, discussions, photos, specific.

WORKING WITH PARENTS

We work with parents to develop a shared understanding of the quality and range of communication taking place both at home and school, by:

- Sharing information at annual reviews

- Regular parent/carer groups
- Training for parents (e.g., Makaton, PECS)
- Liaising with parents at termly Parents' Evening
- Leadership providing advice on communication development and ideas for activities at home
- Home-school book