



Communication Policy

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This policy applies to all stakeholders within Ridgeway School

Introduction and Aims

Ridgeway School recognises that communication should be placed at the heart of our curriculum and integrated provision. Being able to communicate with others is the foundation from which progress in all other areas of development can be built. It is central to how we understand ourselves, have our needs met, engage in social interactions and access the communities in which we live in. This document is a statement of the aims, principles and strategies for the supporting communication and interaction across the federation.

It is our aim to:

- Acknowledge and support each student's unique communication abilities and preferences
- Ensure that every student has access to a method of communication that suits their individual needs.
- Encourage students to communicate their needs, choices, and opinions effectively to support autonomy and self-advocacy.
- Provide a consistent and communication friendly environment throughout the federation (e.g., visual aids, quiet spaces, structured routines).
- Foster a culture where all forms of communication are valued and respected.

The purpose of this policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that there is a considered, clear and consistent approach to communication support across the federation and that all stakeholders can easily access and understand, in order to ensure that our pupils receive the support that they deserve.

This policy should be viewed in the context of the nature of our pupils and their difficulties. Our pupils have a variety of special educational needs and disabilities, including (but not limited to) autism, cerebral palsy and Down's syndrome; all pupils have learning disabilities, and many require additional support in order to meet their social, emotional and mental health needs.

Roles and Responsibilities

Governors will:

- Maintain an overview of this policy and its application
- Hold senior leaders to account through interrogation of any communication data
- Advocate for pupils, families and staff
- Ensure that the Designated Safeguarding governor is aware of this policy

Senior Leadership (including the Headteacher) will:

- Ensure the communication policy is reviewed annually in conjunction with governors
- Ensure that the school environment encourages and supports the universal offer for communication and that all staff are proactive in supporting this

Role of the Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT)

- To ensure the successful communication development of all students across the federation.
- To work effectively with students and staff
- To deliver therapy and training using their Universal, Targeted and Specialist model

SaLT aims within the federation are:

- To maximise students' communication skills within the scope of their ability.
- To work closely with school staff to promote the optimum environment for developing speech, language and communication skills.
- Discuss and set individual/group targets with teachers.
- To introduce, develop and maintain augmentative and alternative communication systems for individuals as appropriate.
- To provide advice, information and training as appropriate.
- To provide a monitoring system to ensure the quality of the work and provide appropriate and effective support.
- To provide students with assessment where necessary.
- To plan and deliver appropriate intervention.
- To liaise with and make referrals to other professionals.

Role of the Communication Support Worker

Strengthening the implementation and embedding of communication approaches across the federation. The Communication Support Worker works in alignment with the SaLT and works directly with students and class teams to support communication.

Role of school staff:

- Implement and embed communication approaches
- Model, implement and embed the use of communication aids to support speech and language development across the federation
- Use **total communication approaches** (speech, signs, symbols, AAC, visuals, gestures).
- Ensure communication tools (visual schedules, communication boards, devices) are available and consistently used.
- Model respectful, supportive communication that values every student's voice.
- Work with speech and language therapists (SLTs) to identify individual communication profiles.
- Observe and record how each learner expresses and receives information.
- Adapt approaches based on the learner's strengths, difficulties, and preferred modes of communication.
- Follow strategies outlined in EHCPs, behaviour plans, or communication plans.
- Support the use of AAC devices (e.g., PECS, voice output devices).
- Ensure communication goals are practiced throughout the school day, not just use the same symbols, signs, prompts, and routines across subjects and staff members.
- Create continuity between the classroom, playground, therapy sessions, and home.
- Facilitate peer interaction and social communication opportunities.
- Support communication in daily activities (requesting, choosing, greetings, turn-taking).
- Create situations that motivate learners to communicate spontaneously.
- Record progress toward communication targets.
- Note any changes in communication behaviours.
- Share observations with SLTs, parents, and external professionals.
- Communicate regularly with parents to ensure strategies are consistent at home.
- Participate in multi-disciplinary meetings.
- Follow guidance from SLTs, occupational therapists, educational psychologists, and behaviour specialists.
- Ensure every learner has opportunities to express choices, opinions, and feelings.
- Promote independence in communication.
- Encourage staff to speak *with* students, not *for* them.

Communication Support

All methods of communication are recognised and valued equally as forms of interaction. Communication underpins all areas of the curriculum and allows students to access learning and develop social relationships. Students are therefore presented with opportunities to develop their communication skills throughout the school day using both planned and spontaneous situations within a total communication approach. It is everybody's responsibility to have an understanding of the different methods of communication and to encourage students.

Means, Reasons and Opportunities

Our Communication Framework is based on Means, Reasons and Opportunities Approach (Money and Thurman, 1994). It is important that students have all three of these to effectively communicate.

- Reasons - The motivation or purpose for communicating
- Means - How someone communicates.
- Opportunities - The context, the chance to communicate. We build opportunities to communicate in a range of settings with a range of people.

The Graduated response

Our response to language and communication development follows a graduated universal, targeted, and specialist model.



Specialist

- Enhanced personalised advice and strategies provided to home and school for an identified individual.
- AAC Implementation, PECS, communication boards/books, PODD Support from CASEE TEAM for an individual

Targeted

- Packages of support by NHS speech and language therapist (see attached document below on packages of support).
- Personalised advice and strategies provided to home and school.
- Access to targeted training for school and / or parents
- Collaboration planning with school staff to embed communication goals into the curriculum for individual pupils
- Targeted communication intervention for identified groups e.g Attention Autism, Dance Massage, TACPAC

Universal

- Total communication approach used throughout the school
- Communication and Language is a prime area of the curriculum and is integrated into the curriculum
- Classroom environment is 'communication friendly' and support communication development
- Colourful semantics and Blanks Level questioning used across the school
- Range of approaches to support communication integrated throughout the day in classes, e.g. intervention, zones of regulation.

Working with others

We work with families to develop a shared understanding of the offer for communication and the strategies used across the federation. For many pupils, it is important to work closely with other professionals to ensure that we are supporting their communication to the best of our ability.

These professionals might include:

- Speech and Language Therapists
- Special Needs nursing team and/or pediatricians
- CAMHS workers
- Respite workers
- Social workers

Safeguarding

The federation recognises that the school's communication practices actively support safeguarding. Effective communication enables pupils to express their needs, report worries, and feel understood. Staff must create a safe, trusting environment where every pupil has a voice—regardless of their communication abilities. The federation recognises that any changes in behaviour may be an indicator that a pupil is in need of help or protection. We will consider whether any changes in behaviour may be linked to them suffering, or being likely to suffer, significant harm. Please refer to our safeguarding and child protection policy for further information.

Legal Framework & Statutory Guidance

Linked national guidance

- The Equality Act (2010)
- Keeping children safe in education (current version)
- SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years (2015)

Equalities and Inclusion

The federation will apply this policy fairly and without prejudice. The school recognises and will abide by its duties to ensure that pupils and staff are protected from discrimination in relation to their protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010. This policy has been written with due regard to the Equalities Act 2010.