



Total Communication Policy

Total Communication Environment

Manor Green School provides a Total Communication environment. 'Total Communication' can be defined as the complementary use of speech, signs, symbols and electronic systems to enhance verbal comprehension, improve expressive ability and develop literacy skills to enable students, parents and families, school staff and other professionals to all work together to enable each student to communicate in the most effective way possible and achieve their best outcomes.

Aims

- To ensure Alternative Augmentative Communication (AAC) methods are highly valued and have an equal status with natural speech.
- To ensure AAC users are given equal opportunity to communicate in school by using their preferred method as other students use speech.
- To ensure staff recognise the importance of creating a need for students to communicate at all levels of interaction and learn in a wide variety of situations outside of the classroom.
- To ensure appropriate communication methods are modelled by staff to all students.
- To create an atmosphere within the school that is conducive to developing a wide range of communication methods such as all staff using Makaton sign language, symbols, written word, picture/photographs and objects, where appropriate to meet the needs of the students.
- To ensure every student has easy access to an appropriate communication system at all times. Personal communication boards, symbols, PECS, and electronic aids should always be easily accessible and available to the students to maximise potential for communication, social interaction and access to education across the school environment.

Guidelines

When supporting students directly, as individuals or as a group, the speaker should:

- Be on the same level.
- Gain their attention first, e.g. by saying their name.
- Use language of an appropriate level.
- Model the 'user's' language using their preferred AAC

Always ensure:

- Electronic aids are set up appropriately and securely mounted with switches positioned correctly for easy access (as advised by OT/SaLT).
- Objects of reference, signing, symbols, core vocabulary sheets and PECS books are used in the classroom and learning activities to support the curriculum.

- Symbols' systems such as PECS' books, communication books and core vocabulary are updated with appropriate vocabulary for outings and special events. It is the responsibility of the staff leading the sessions to ensure that these are available for the students to use.
- Advice is sought from the Teacher and/or Speech and Language Therapists if staff are unsure how to use a students' communication system.

Objects of Reference

Objects of Reference are sets of objects that are used consistently as a means of communication. The objects can be an agreed set of items, for example, a wooden spoon for cookery lessons, or they may be specific to an individual student.

Objects of Reference should be kept where students and staff can access them in the appropriate bag, labelled for the student as provided by the school. Staff should follow advice in a 'guide to using Objects of Reference'.

Signs

Makaton is used at Manor Green School. Makaton is a unique language programme that uses symbols, signs and speech to enable people to communicate. It supports the development of essential communication skills such as attention and listening, comprehension, memory, recall and organisation of language and expression.

Symbols

All symbols that are used are from Boardmaker. They should be used in line with the student's communication ability to augment communication, social interaction and to aid literacy as appropriate.

VOCAs (Voice Output Communication Aids)

Manor Green School offers access to VOCAs as part of the classroom environment, if required and appropriate to the needs of the student(s). These include buttons, switches, communication apps and specific student communication devices. These communication aids provide access to spoken language using an electronically recorded voice. They form an integral part of the Total Communication environment and system.

Referrals

Staff should seek advice from the class teacher in the first instance if requiring support to implement the appropriate communication system for the students they are supporting and ensuring all aspects of school life are accessible at all times. If further advice and training is required, the Teacher of the class should make a referral to the Speech and Language Therapists or Communication Specialist where appropriate.

Review

This policy shall be subject to periodic review and may be changed from time to time.

The Governing Body approved this policy on date: 21 May 2026 -

Signed: Colin Hayfield, Chair of Governor

Signed: Helen Hannam, Headteacher