

**Outcomes
First
Group.**

Syon Nursery

**Augmentative and
Alternative
Communication (AAC),
Policy**

INTRODUCTION

Communication, including AAC, forms a central part of the environment of Syon Nursery.

Communication is supported, encouraged, and celebrated throughout the curriculum and unstructured times such as lunch time and break times.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) refers to any way in which spoken communication is supported or replaced. The policy sets out reasons why AAC forms part of the curriculum at Syon nursery.

It is proposed that the policy will underpin the practice of AAC throughout the Nursery and prove an informative document for the purpose of monitoring practice. It will be implemented by the whole staff at Syon Nursery and monitored under the guidance of the Speech and Language Therapy team.

Implementation: It is the responsibility of line managers to ensure that staff members are aware of and understand this policy and any subsequent revisions.

Compliance: This policy complies with all relevant regulations and other legislation as detailed in the *Compliance with Regulations & Legislation Statement*.

02 RATIONALE

Communication happens when one person sends a message to another person either verbally or non-verbally.

Interaction happens when two people respond to one another – a two-way communication.

Most people on the autism spectrum have difficulty interacting with others. This may be a difficulty with responding to others when they are approached by them, with initiating interactions, or with using interaction to show people things or to be sociable.

Many children with autism are delayed in their use of language or have disordered language and don't use speech. It is therefore essential that other methods of communication are established. This means communication at Syon nursery is not limited to the use of formal systems such as speech, sign or the written word and a total communication approach is adopted with the overall aim of the provision of AAC to provide each student with an effective mode of interaction with as large an audience as possible.

03 TOTAL COMMUNICATION

Syon Nursery operates a 'total communication approach' this means that staff work using the pupil's preference for communication e.g. sign, PECS, speech but also expose them to different modes of communication to offer students the opportunity to find the most enjoyable and effective mode of interaction. Pupils with communication difficulties often struggle to understand and use spoken language, and need support to communicate basic needs, wants and desires. Total communication makes use of the skills a Pupil has, such as non-verbal communication and may include the use of Augmentative and Alternative communication.

Our Mission Statement

"Syon Nursery strives to provide effective specialist education and support to students with autistic spectrum disorders and their families, which will allow pupils to achieve their full potential in education and life."

To achieve this:

- We will provide all pupils with opportunities to learn and achieve.
- We will support children appropriately to their abilities of the pupils, using specialised strategies which are communication focussed.
- We will work with the pupils in an inclusive, equality-based manner.
- We will concentrate on the positive.
- Our Nursery will try to raise the self-esteem of all who attend.
- We will provide a safe environment and will make sure that all pupils know who to go to if they feel anxious or unsafe.
- We will work with our pupils towards improvements in their behaviour.
- We will provide opportunities for spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development.
- We promote positive and healthy relationships between all members of our community.
- We will keep you informed of your children's progress and the Nursery activities.
- We will treat you with courtesy and work towards meeting your goals for your child.

Communication and Equality

Syon Nursery aims to provide equality of communication opportunity for all. This involves appropriate staff organisation, class groupings and the development of individual programmes based on students need. Effective communication requires an easy and quick way of transmitting thought. For some students this will be through traditional sentence word structure, for others it may require other methods such as buttons, Makaton, VOCA or text/symbol to speech applications that support or replace speech. Communication is inextricably linked to the Nursery's philosophy, which states that Syon Nursery strives to provide effective specialist education and support to students emerging trait and delays, children with autistic spectrum disorder, and their families, which will allow students to achieve their full potential in education and life". AAC links with Syon Nursery's Aims as follows:

- To provide all pupils with opportunities to learn and achieve, by supporting them with a connective curriculum which makes explicit connections between areas of learning and concepts so that they can progress to their full potential.
- To provide learning opportunities that are appropriately to the abilities of the pupils, using specialised strategies which are communication focussed.
- To work with the pupils in an inclusive, equality-based manner.
- To value each pupil as an individual and support their intellectual, social, and emotional development within a caring, purposeful, and flexible framework.
- To provide effective education, therapies, and support for children with a range of physical, sensory, medical and learning difficulties
- To recognise and value the qualities, abilities, self-esteem, and dignity of everyone.
- To provide a high quality and appropriate environment in which all pupils are encouraged to develop to their full potential.
- To ensure our curriculum is enjoyable, stimulating and suitably challenging for all our pupils.
- To concentrate on the positive.
- To try to raise the self-esteem of all who attend.
- To provide a safe environment and the tools to ensure that all pupils know who to go to if they feel anxious or unsafe and the means to communicate this
- To support our pupils with their behaviour modelling accordingly.
- To promote positive and healthy relationships between all members of our Nursery.
- To respond effectively to each pupil's changing needs
- To encourage our children to achieve the greatest possible independence of thought and action.
- To maintain a high standard of performance in leadership, teaching, and communication.
- To work effectively with parents and other professionals in the best interests of the children and the Nursery.
- To ensure appropriate opportunities for all within the Nursery.
- To provide effective education, therapies, and support for children with a range of physical, sensory, medical, and learning difficulties.
- To ensure our curriculum is enjoyable, stimulating and suitably challenging for all our pupils.
- To ensure every child has access to a relevant, broad, and balanced curriculum, based on National Curriculum requirements.

Communication Entitlement

The aims of Syon Nursery are to ensure that equality of opportunity is provided for all. To achieve this, all children will have access to the Nursery's communication curriculum at the level appropriate to their development and considering their individual needs and preferences. Where appropriate they will have access to AAC resources and teaching approaches. We aim to provide a 'total communication' environment where all modes of communication are equally valued and students are given opportunities to make choices, initiate conversation and express their own ideas and opinions. AAC class resources and low-tech individual resources are provided by the Nursery for all students who require them. Pupils who are recognised through their EHCP/statement or by the Speech and Language Therapy Team following assessment as needing a High tech AAC device will be provided with one for use in the Nursery. This will be following consultation with parents and dependant on the pupil's motivation and preference for using the device.

04 IMPLEMENTATION

Syon Nursery recognise that pupils may need different modes of communication for expressive and receptive language and that different AAC methods may be needed in different situations e.g. it may be easier to sign when in a swimming pool than to use a communication book. An electronic aid may break down and the AAC user needs to have a 'low tech' alternative available.

Examples and training packages are being developed to show how AAC can be fitted into Nursery topic work in each subject for students to access the curriculum being supported with AAC.

Vocabulary for AAC is chosen carefully. A mixture of topic words and Core vocabulary is chosen to encourage communication in the least effortful, restrictive way. Core vocabulary is a small set of simple words, that are used frequently and across contexts, Core vocabulary contains all parts of speech - nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections (Cross, Baker, Klotz & Badman, 1997). Research suggests that students with language acquisition difficulties build early language three-word phrases with core vocabulary (Baker, Hill & Devylder, 2000). Core vocabulary makes up 80 percent or more of everyday communication and is at the heart of language development allowing students to request comment and direct freely.

As pupil's progress, alongside parents/caregivers and practitioners they are encouraged to take an active part in choosing vocabulary to encourage freedom of speech and equal communication opportunities.

Syon Nursery ensures that communication is implicit throughout the nursery day. The daily routines and interactions will develop many of the fundamental skills of communication. Time spent on structured communication/ AAC teaching will vary according to the needs of the individual child.

Practice will take place:

- Throughout play throughout the day. Interaction in natural contexts is essential if students are to generalise AAC skills and use them functionally.
- During all mealtimes and at 'hello' and 'good-bye' sessions.
- In small specific chatter time groups.
- In whole group sessions.
- In individual sessions led by nursery practitioners or speech therapy staff.
- This will be especially important for students using VOCAs as they will need time to learn how to use the machine before being able to use it to communicate:
- In communication through play sessions.
- Outside of the nursery environment.

We work in partnership with parents and others involved with the pupil and try to extend opportunities for communication and ensure that pupil's communication is supported beyond the nursery.

We offer support to parents with workshops and training opportunities.

The parent and adult communication partner may use one, or more than one, of the following Augmentative and Alternative Communication methods:

- Makaton
- Movement, gesture, body language and facial expression
- Graphic symbols (primarily symbolstix and boardmaker symbols although other symbol systems may be used if they are more appropriate for a particular student) and photographs.
- Communication charts, mats, and books.
- Objects of reference
- Sensory cues (e.g. daily aroma, physical touch, personal identifiers)
- PECs books
- Technology including computer assisted learning.
- Switch activated toys and equipment to develop cause and effect and as a precursor to communication aids: Voice Output Communication Aids.

To promote the use of AAC the following communication strategies may be employed:

- Giving the AAC user TIME to initiate and respond.
- always Encouraging the use of AAC everywhere and.
- Looking at the total communication that the student is using e.g. body language and facial expression as well as the use of their aid.
- Finding time to just 'chat' informally without the adult controlling the subject matter.
- Leaving class AAC resources 'lying around' so that they may be used casually by any other pupil.
- Encouraging Nursery staff and others to use the class/individual AAC resources themselves to find out how it feels to use it and to encourage Nursery and others to regard it as a 'normal' means of communication.
- To use Makaton alongside verbal communication.

Under the guidance of the Speech and Language Therapy Team we aim to achieve continuity and progression by working together with all those concerned with the child e.g. Music therapist, Occupational Therapist, parents, all specialist teachers, escorts, lunchtime supervisors.

Assessments are carried out by the Speech and Language Therapy Team, Occupational Therapist, practitioners, parents, SENCO, etc.

Planning is pupil centred and decisions on approaches to be used are made by the Multidisciplinary team e.g. Speech Therapist, Occupational Therapist and any other relevant professional.

Individual pupils have targets on EHCPs and Annual Reviews and may also have communication plans if appropriate with progress reported in Annual reviews to parents.

05 SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY TEAM

Continual assessment for each child forms the basis for future planning. Pupils using high tech AAC may require implementation plans outlining how they will be taught the skills that they require to firstly operate the devices and how to encourage generalisation of skills. When, where, and who will teach them, details of how charging, updating programming and access to the aid will be managed and how staff and family will be trained in the use of the aid are included in the plan.

The role of the Speech and Language Therapy Team is considered to encompass the following tasks:

- To lead policy development.
- To attend relevant courses and feedback information to staff.
- To manage and co-ordinate resources.
- To provide information to staff.

- To keep abreast of developments in the subject
- To monitor the teaching and learning of AAC throughout the Nursery.
- To liaise with outside agencies (e.g. speech therapy, visual impairment Service) on matters relating to AAC policy within the Nursery
- To assist in assessment for appropriate AAC.

We are part of the Outcomes First Group Family, by working together we will build incredible futures by empowering vulnerable children, young people and adults in the UK to be happy and make their way in the world