



## **The Partnership of Springfield and The Meadows**

### **Springfield Communication Policy**

#### **Intent**

#### **Aims & Objectives:**

The right to express your views is not only a key part of the Human Rights Act 1998, it is also vitally important for personal development and wellbeing. Children develop the skill to communicate at different speeds dependent upon their developmental needs, expressive preferences and abilities. Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) benefit from a Total Communication Approach, to ensure that their communication development is maximised over time. Communication is a top priority for us and features in all aspects of school life.

Pupils at Springfield School will leave Year 6:

- With a means of communication, be it verbal, PECs, AAC, Symbols, Makaton or any other suitable method.
  - With an interest in words and their meanings; developing a growing vocabulary in spoken/sign/symbol/ written forms.
  - Having a functional and extended vocabulary applicable to their growing needs
- A level of engagement appropriate to their needs.

Communication in Early Years is based upon the Foundation Stage Profile and Development Matters strand of Communication and Language.

This area of learning includes

- Listening, Attention and Understanding
- Speaking

In the National Curriculum for 5 - 11 year olds, English is developed through four key areas:

- Spoken Language
  - Reading - Word Reading & Comprehension
  - Writing - Transcription & Composition
  - Spelling, Vocabulary, Grammar & Punctuation
- It is important to note that each is closely interrelated with the next, so it becomes increasingly difficult to consider one without the others.

At Springfield in the early stages, children are given opportunities to:

- Speak and listen and represent ideas in their activities;
- Use communication, language and literacy in every part of the curriculum.

As children move through the school, and when and where appropriate, children may go on to change the way they speak and write to suit different situations, purposes and audiences.

It is important that communication is an everyday experience for children. Our focus at Springfield School is on developing the Means, Reasons and Opportunities to communicate (Money and Thurman, 1994). We are aware that:



The link between behaviour and communication behaviour is communication. Many children and young people, who have behavioural difficulties, including many of those with social, emotional and mental health needs; also have speech, language and communication needs. These needs often go unrecognised because behaviour can mask a child or young person's difficulties communicating. We see all behaviour as communication and therefore link our Positive Behaviour Policy with our Communication Policy.

At Springfield, we take a strategic whole-school approach (this is our total communication approach) to supporting communication for our pupils. This includes school development planning and a strategic systemic approach to support pupils with SLCN. This is driven by the schools Senior Leadership Team and the Communication Team at Springfield by:

- Ensuring that communication is part of the school improvement plan incorporating support from the schools communication team and the relevant outside agencies - for example, Occupational Therapy (OT)/ Physiotherapy (PT), Speech and Language Therapy (SALT).
- Supporting pupils with SLCN and incorporate this in their Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP).
- Supporting the professional development of all staff at Springfield School.
- Supporting staff to provide high quality teaching and supportive learning environments that foster and encourage the development of communication skills.
- Supporting parents to develop and incorporate communication skills into home and community environments through parent training and liaison.

## **Implementation**

At Springfield, we encourage a total communication approach where children can develop and are entitled to a range of methods to convey their wants, opinions, fears, feelings and needs.

We want all our children to access a system that is within their skill set and function to their cognitive ability. (This may not always be through spoken words.) This is known as Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) and can be approached in a variety of ways, dependent on each child's needs. The range of expressive communication systems that we support include:

**Attention Autism** Attention Autism is used to support those children developing early communication skills with a particular focus on engagement in adult lead activities.

- **Makaton (Signing)** Makaton is a hand-based system where children learn to develop motor patterns or signs with their hands to communicate different activities/ objects/ requests and curriculum core language. Makaton is used as a visual and kinaesthetic support to aid the development of the spoken word and as a means of communicating everyday needs and wants.
- **Objects of Reference**: Physical objects can be used in a number of different ways to help children develop their choice making and requesting skills.
- **Intensive Interaction** This is a pre-verbal approach that serves to help support children to engage with a supporting adult or peer in order to develop their communication skills. By copying the actions or vocalisations of a child, we can help support them to develop the idea that communication can influence interaction with our environment.
- **Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)** This is a symbol or photo-based system where children with social communication difficulties will learn to include others in their requests. PECS helps to teach children to exchange a token for a motivating object (Phase 1). The six phases focus on acquiring a hierarchy of skills including, travelling with a token to a communication partner.
- **Voice Output Communication Aid (VOCA)** VOCA is a communication system (usually computer based) where children can select a variety of symbols and photos to create functional requests to communicate within their environment. Access to this system requires some level of sentence construction and an awareness of categorisation.
- **Expressive Oral Language** Some children use spoken language to communicate their wants and needs. We initially focus on labelling single words through play and modelling from a supporting adult. When children can label single words spontaneously, we model adding information such as child says "ball", adult says "red ball". Early Communication skills are an everyday activity that must be part of a child's everyday experiences and cannot be taught in isolation. Most importantly, we speak to children: we encourage them to greet visitors and provide opportunity to speak and be spoken to.

Visual support systems We use several visual support systems at Springfield School to help pupils to understand what is happening and transition across their day. These may include symbols and photographs and are adapted to suit the students level of visual hierarchy and understanding:

- Now/ Next
- Rewards Charts
- Visual Timetables

Colourful Semantics to support language and literacy, including Blank Level Questioning, comprehension and inference skills.

Now/ Next Now and Next boards are used at Springfield School to visually communicate instructions or expectations to a pupil, supporting their understanding of what is happening/going to happen. Now/ Next boards can help reduce anxiety about transitions or changes in routines. They can also reduce the need to regularly repeat verbal instructions.

Visual Timetables Many of our pupils at Springfield School need to know what is happening across the day. We support this by using a visual timetable, for the whole class. Some children also have their own personalised visual timetables. A visual timetable means placing objects/ photos/symbols of activities in the order in which they are going to happen. The visual supports are moveable so they can be taken off when finished or put into a different order, when needed or at points of change.

Cued Articulation This is a strategy where staff are trained to support children with severe speech and language difficulties using this hand cue system to model how and where in the mouth each of the 49 phonemes are articulated. This is also used to support phonological and phonics development.

## **Impact**

### **Assessment:**

Pupils ability to communicate is seen as the gateway to all learning at Springfield. At Springfield we will assess their level and progress in communication and analyse to identify any gaps or barriers.

Initial screening of speech, language and communication skills where appropriate - speech sound assessments, Elklan, PA screener, phonics screen.

The progress of other subjects will be compared to this data to ensure that pupils are enabled to access the full curriculum through appropriate methods of communication.

## Monitoring and Review:

Our total communication approach will be reviewed and monitored through -


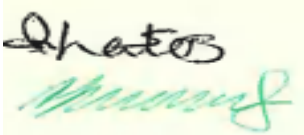
- Lesson Observations
- Book Scans
- Learning Walks
- Moderation of work.

This policy will be reviewed according to the emerging needs of our school.

Links to other policies:

English Policy

Positive Behaviour Management Policy

Policy produced: April 2023		Policy agreed: 23.05.2023	
Signed:		Chair of LAB	
Signed:		Headteacher	
Review date: 23.05.2025		(2 years)	



**Company Number: 09461655**

**Registered Office:** Loxley Hall School, Stafford Road Uttoxeter, Staffordshire, ST14 8RS