



**Castle Hill School**  
Innovating, Communicating, Empowering

# Communication and Language Policy

Policy Created	2006
Committee	Joint
Last review	January 2026
Frequency	3 years
Date to be reviewed	January 2029

## **General Policy Statement**

At Castle Hill School we intend to provide a safe, secure, caring environment where everyone is valued and respected equally. We aim to provide an inclusive education where children develop independent learning skills and are taught according to need whatever their age, gender, background, beliefs or abilities.

National legislation, the [Equality Act 2010](#) and the [Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014](#) re disabilities, race relations and special education needs underpin this policy, which has also taken into consideration national, local and school policies on Special Educational Needs, Equal Opportunities and Health and Safety.

## **General Curriculum Statement**

The fundamental principle behind curriculum design at Castle Hill School is personalisation. The learning needs of each pupil are rigorously assessed on entry to the school and on a regular basis through their school career. This work has included a full audit of learning needs (initially carried out in the spring and summer terms of 2014, but ongoing as required). Every aspect of each pupil's learning needs is reviewed, bringing in the experience and expertise of a wide range of staff, professionals and parents/carers to identify priority areas for the pupil's personalised curriculum. Each pupil's curriculum is therefore bespoke.

For more information please refer to the Curriculum Statement (a separate policy).

## Communication and Language

- Covers all aspects of communication including the curriculum areas of English, English as an Additional Language and policies and practices regarding Literacy
- Promotes learning across the curriculum and supports pupils' achievements
- Encourages pupils to express themselves creatively, imaginatively and practically to help them to meet their needs and to make sense of and contribute, where possible, to the wider world.

## Philosophy

At Castle Hill School Communication and Language was highlighted as being **the** key area of learning for our pupils.

Communication is the foundation upon which all other learning takes place. We believe that all pupils are entitled to an enriching and stimulating environment, which encourages them to communicate, participate as listeners and value the written word. Communication is a vehicle for all other cognitive activities and underpins participation in all aspects of life. The teaching of Communication and Language is so fundamental to the entire curriculum that, for it to be effective, input is required from parents, speech and language therapists and specialists for pupils with sensory impairments. For pupils for whom English is a second language bi-lingual support and acknowledgement of the importance of their mother tongue is paramount.

Communication and Language offers our pupils the opportunity to:

- Communicate effectively with others in a range of social situations and interact with their peers and adults in the world around them.
- Develop effective strategies for making choices, express likes and dislikes, feelings, emotions and make their needs known to different audiences.
- Develop their ability to respond in their preferred mode of communication
- Be valued as individuals, recognising equally their own worth and the contribution of others.
- Access an extensive, age-appropriate range of literary materials and experiences

## Practice

Communication and Language is a cross- curricular subject and permeates every learning experience across the key stages. It embraces Speaking, Listening, Writing and Reading. As well as differentiated class-based activities related to Communication and Language, Primary and Secondary pupils also take part in communication groups with a more specific focus on their personal communication method e.g. Makaton group, communication aid user's group, Intensive Interaction groups. Assessment is built into the teaching and learning process for all pupils. It is a valuable tool in informing staff of the next steps in learning.

### **Communication Baseline**

Castle Hill School has adopted a Total Communication Approach incorporating Intensive Interaction, speech, Makaton signs, facial expression, gesture, photos, symbols (Boardmaker), vocalisations, and touch cues, objects of reference, smells and augmented communication devices. To ensure a 'common language' core vocabulary symbols are displayed in every area of school and staff are provided with key ring fobs of symbols and room photos. Objects of reference, touch cues and sounds of reference are standardised throughout school.

### **Early Years (Foundation: Nursery and Reception)**

Children in the Early Years follow the Early Years (under 5's) Foundation Stage Framework (2017). This covers the following areas:

#### **Prime areas:**

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development

#### **Specific areas**

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

### **Key Stages 1-4**

At Key Stages 1-4 pupils follow the Castle Hill English Scheme of work. This is based on the Equals Literacy Strategy (2003) and the Equals Speaking and Listening Schemes of work which are compatible with the 2001 QCA SEN Curriculum. (*Planning, teaching and assessing the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties*) Pupils with multi-sensory Impairment access aspects of the MSI curricula from Victoria School, Birmingham (2009) and Routes for Learning (2006). Staff should modify the programmes of study as

required by the statutory inclusion statement of the National Curriculum (2014) in order to give all pupils relevant and appropriately challenging work at each Key Stage. Staff should teach knowledge, skills and understanding in ways that match and challenge their pupil's abilities

## **Post 16**

In Post 16, pupils access 1 of 3 curricula, which refer to a variety of sources, including Asdan Personal Progress, Asdan Personal and Social development (Accreditation), Equals Moving on. This covers the following areas:

- Key Skills
- Creativity
- Work Related Learning/Enterprise
- Life Skills
- PHSE
- Preparation for the future

Communication and Language will be covered across all the areas

The Castle Hill School Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening Pathways are drawn from all of the above and provide programmes of study for pupils aged 3 to 19 who are working from Castle Hill Level 1 to Pre-Key Stage 2 assessment Standard 6.

## **Teaching Styles**

It is important to use a range of teaching styles to accommodate the different learning needs of individuals in any group of children. Pupils will be taught individually, in small groups or as a whole class. There may be times when Communication and Language is taught in ability groupings depending on the needs of the pupils. Teaching materials will be appropriate for the key stages.

## **Teaching content**

The focus for teaching Communication and Language is to give pupils the opportunities in:

### **speaking (expression) to:**

- develop their communication skills through speech, Makaton signs, symbols, gestures, vocalisations, real objects or communication aids by building on prior experiences
- communicate to different listeners and a range of audiences in their preferred means
- work in small groups and in a class, participating and contributing in their preferred means

- participate in drama and imaginative play activities, communicating with others in the group in their preferred means

**listening (understanding) to**

- attend and listen to what others are saying so that they can respond to, and recall, what has been said. For some students this will be through the use of tactile cues, responding to touch, or objects of reference.

**reading to:**

- build on their prior experience of literacy
- develop their interest and pleasure in reading through learning to focus on objects, pictures, symbols, words and sentences and how they relate to the text
- access text with support and demonstrate preferences for different types of literature. Materials used throughout the school will reflect the age and understanding of the pupils and sharing of books will be delivered in a multi-sensory way appropriate to a pupil's developmental stage.

**writing to:**

- build on prior literacy experiences and write and record in a variety of ways
- enjoy and understand the value of recording and writing
- differentiate between print and pictures
- understand the connections between speech and writing
- communicate meaning in narrative and non-fiction texts, *for example, writing shared stories and lists*
- attend and respond appropriately to others' understanding and use a developing vocabulary
- learn the sounds and names of letters and how to write them and combine letters to make words.

Adapted from QCA. (2001, 2009). *Planning, teaching and assessing the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties -English.*

For pupils across the key stages with **MSI** the focus for teaching Communication and Language is to give pupils opportunities in:

- Social relationships and emotional development
- Communication
- Sensory responses  
(Victoria Park MSI curriculum)

## **Phonics**

The majority of pupils in school are working within Phase 1 of the Letters and Sounds programme with emphasis being on developing phonological awareness through sound discrimination games, rhythm and rhyme activities, body percussion and voice sounds. This will be taught discretely throughout the curriculum. Many pupils struggle to discriminate between sounds due to auditory processing difficulties and phonemes may need to be exaggerated. For pupils working within Phase 2 staff will follow a systematic phonics approach using lower case letters and introducing upper case letters for name recognition. At Castle Hill School we use the terms 'sounds' and 'letters' when referring to the letter sounds pupils can hear and the corresponding written representation. We avoid specialised vocabulary e.g. phoneme, grapheme, digraph in order to make the alphabetic code as meaningful and accessible as possible for those students who are working within Phase 2 phonics and beyond. The Communication Trust recommends a 'hybrid approach' to teaching reading to accommodate the individual needs of pupils and advocates the importance of whole word recognition, use of visual and symbols and developing comprehension particularly for pupils with Down syndrome and autism. (The Communication Trust (2012). Communicating Phonics.) Castle Hill School has produced its own bespoke Phonics progression document and Phonics Pathway.

The 'letter of the week' provides a flexible framework which enables all learners to access literacy activities at a level which is appropriate and meaningful. Letters and letter sounds are re-visited frequently and there are regular opportunities for consolidation throughout the school day. Pupils who are learning at a faster rate move more quickly through the 'Phonics Progression' document. MAPP and PiP targets reflect the learner's individual needs.

## **Performance**

Assessment is built into the teaching and learning process for all pupils. It is a valuable tool in informing staff of the next steps in learning.

Assessment at Castle Hill is ongoing. However, formal assessment by the class team takes place twice each year during the autumn and summer terms when data is collected and progress and/or experiences measured. Assessment in Reading and Writing is based on Pre-Key Stage standards leading into the National Curriculum levels. Castle Hill levels are used for Speaking and Listening. These are moderated regularly throughout the school year. In the 6<sup>th</sup> form pupils are accredited using either ASDAN Personal Progress (teacher assessed), ASDAN Personal and Social Development (student-generated body of work) or OCR Functional Skills for Entry Level (examination). For ASDAN PP there is at least one unit a year which relates directly to communication or English skills. For ASDAN PSD communication and language is interwoven but not explicit. The OCR exam consists of three sections - speaking and listening, reading and writing

Learning objectives are set based on a pupil's MAPP (Mapping and Assessing Personal Progress). These are evaluated termly. Meetings take place with the teacher, Speech Therapist and member of the Communication Team to discuss communication targets for each pupil and any aids to communication and literacy which may be required.

Progress in Communication and Language is reported to pupils, parents, carers and other professionals through the end of year report, Annual Reviews, learning journals and videos.

Achievement is reflected in displays, IT work and assemblies

### **Recording and Evaluation**

The progress and achievement of all students can be recognised through:

- Teacher assessment through lesson evaluations
- Ongoing monitoring of pupils' work
- Photographic and video evidence
- Annual reports
- MAPP
- Learning Journals
- Evidence of Learning files
- EHCP review process

### **Recognising progress**

For most pupils with learning difficulties achievements can be predicted and planned for and progress can be demonstrated in terms of increased knowledge, skills and understanding. Not all pupils will follow the same developmental pattern at the same age or rate. Progress may not be made in all areas of the curriculum. For some pupils progress may be difficult to predict and may only be demonstrated in a certain environment with a familiar person.

### **Planning for progression**

Planning for progression at Castle Hill School is based on the philosophy that effective planning involves thorough and informed sequencing of curriculum content and experiences which build on prior learning. This is demonstrated within the small, short-term PIP (Progress in Provision) targets which feed into the MAPP targets.

Planning for progression for individuals or groups will include:

- The development of skills

- Broad curriculum content
- Different contexts and environments
- Use of verbal and physical prompts and equipment
- A range of teaching methods and resources
- Pupils, where able, taking ownership of their own learning
- Independent learning opportunities

For our pupils, progression is not necessarily only movement up a hierarchical ladder of skills and knowledge. Horizontal progression is also important and for some pupils with degenerative conditions the priority is to maintain skills for as long as possible.

## **Equal opportunities**

All pupils and students will work at a level appropriate to their own needs and level of ability.

All pupils will have equal access to Communication and Language, regardless of gender, cultural origin or ability.

## **Unicef and the Rights of the Child**

We also see a strong link between Language and Communication and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), recognising that all of our pupils have all of the rights set out in the Articles, included but not limited to the following areas:

- develop personal autonomy by having a degree of responsibility and control over their lives (Article 5 – Parental guidance and a child's evolving capacity)
- make choices and decisions (Article 12 – Respect for the views of the child)
- develop communication and interactive skills (Article 13 – Freedom of expression)
- realise that they can make a difference by their individual or collective actions (Article 15 – Freedom of association)
- develop an awareness and respect for other people and different societies (Article 29 – Goals of education)
- every child has the right to relax, play and take part in cultural and artistic activities (Article 31 - Leisure, play and culture)

## **The role of the Communication and Language curriculum team**

- Learning audit / Data analysis

- Achievement is tracked through the communication audit supported by ongoing dialogue with class teachers which assists in their C and L target setting process
- Information from Learning Journals can also be used to collect evidence.
- Learning Walks. The learning walk should be carried out with as many members of the Curriculum team as possible - it might be beneficial to invite those members of support staff who do not attend teachers' meetings. Follow-up interviews should take place if possible to discuss findings from the learning walk and possible strategies that may be needed. If possible, interviews to be carried out with one teacher per phase.
- Curriculum Guides for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening to be completed for each coming term.
- Displays
- Resource audit / resource cupboard
- Curriculum Teams are responsible for ensuring that resources are accessible and updated regularly for their Curriculum area.
- Collation of photographic evidence of learning and planning evidence.
- Policy updates
- Support / Continued Professional Development
- Subject development.
- To advise the Principal of action required (e.g. resources, standards etc.)
- To encourage ways of involving parents in their children's learning
- To liaise with families to recognise and develop the importance of pupils' home languages
- To promote liaison between school (moderation etc.)

The overriding task must be to provide support for all who teach Communication and Language and so to improve the quality and continuity of learning throughout the school.

Signed: Jayne Askew

Date: 13.5.11

Signed: Jayne Askew, Danielle Taylor

Date: 15.10.12

Reviewed: 11.2.15

Signed: J Askew, R McCusker, T Donegan

Reviewed: 23.5.17

Signed: J Askew

Reviewed 17.12.18

Signed: J Askew

Reviewed 06.03.19

Signed: J Askew T Donegan C Whitlam

Reviewed 13.10.22  
Signed J Askew