



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

# **Total Communication Policy**

<b>Policy Created</b>	<b>2018</b>
<b>Committee</b>	<b>Local Governors</b>
<b>Last review</b>	<b>2025</b>
<b>Frequency</b>	<b>3 years</b>
<b>Date to be reviewed</b>	<b>2028</b>

## **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 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, Gifted and Talented, Equal Opportunities and Health and Safety.

## **The Purpose of the Total Communication Policy**

At Castle Hill School we are committed to enabling every student to 'find their voice', whether through 'Intensive Interaction', Makaton signs, photos, symbols, written words, vocalisations or speech. We recognise that Total Communication underpins everything we do and lay the foundation for all other learning.

All students have the right to:

- Be communicated with in a dignified manner which takes into account their learning needs
- Be listened to
- Be included in social interaction
- Make choices
- Express their feelings and emotions
- Reject
- Request information
- Have access to information

This policy addresses:

- How we promote Total Communication
- How Alternative Augmented Communication (AAC) needs are identified and met
- Information on the provision and use of Communication aids, including iPads, in and out of school

## **Promoting Communication and Interaction**

At Castle Hill School we promote Total Communication through the curriculum and in non-curriculum activities. We do this through:

## **Total communication Environment**

- Core symbols in all classrooms, shared areas and playgrounds

- Visual timetables
- Photographs of rooms and destinations
- Symbol and photo key rings
- Now and Next boards
- Objects of reference
- Touch cues
- Music and song cues
- Smells and textures of the day
- Written labels
- Makaton signs

### **Communication Interventions: approaches and strategies**

- Communication groups
- Intervention sessions with Communication Teacher
- Advice from Speech and Language therapists
- Annual communication audit for each student in school
- Intensive Interaction
- Makaton
- Symbol and photo books
- 'Yes' and 'No' strips
- Grid for iPad
- Communication aids, including eyegaze devices
- Symbol and photo keyrings
- Touch cues
- Sign and sing
- Communication passports
- Transport Passports
- Blanks level of questions
- Colour coding sentence building strategies
- Social stories
- Sensory stories
- Regular twilights and training for teachers, support staff, including LSA's and parents
- Links with mainstream schools
- Partnerships with other special schools e.g. Intensive Interaction working parties
- Partnerships and collaborative working with other professionals e.g. SALTS
- Use of interpreters for families of students with different language backgrounds
- Use of bi-lingual support assistants
- Use of home-school books, newsletters, school website, parent text service, parents' meetings, parent surveys

All students at Castle Hill School will have access to Alternative and Augmentative Communication, whether that be '**unaided**' e.g. gesture,

Makaton, use of facial expression or '**aided**'. This may include '**low tech**' systems such as symbols books, or '**high tech**' devices such as an iPad with a communication package. All students' communication needs are reviewed at their Annual Reviews and 'next steps' identified. This may include a recommendation for assessment for a Communication device. Clear communication targets are identified through MAPP and PIPS.

### **Assessment for and allocation of Communication devices**

For 'high-tech' Alternative Augmented Communication (AAC) the following should be taken into consideration:

- a referral can be made for a communication aid assessment by a teacher, other professional, parent or carer to the Communication teacher
- a preliminary consultation should be completed to establish if a full assessment is appropriate. This preliminary consultation may include observation in the classroom, discussions with other members of staff and/or parents or carers
- students must show some form of reliable intentional movement, intentional communication, an awareness of cause and effect and the ability to use switches purposefully. For students who are being referred for eyegaze communication aids they must be able to demonstrate that they can use their eyes to make consistent and meaningful selections and have a consistent way of demonstrating 'yes' and 'no'
- students must have accessed low tech communication systems prior to assessment e.g. symbol boards, symbol books and continue to have access to low tech systems as 'backup'
- funding of any communication aid should be discussed with budget holders prior to assessment. Where school, Barnsley Alternative Augmented Communication (AAC) team or the health authority are not able to provide funding for a device, then support will be offered to parents to pursue charity funding
- a Multi-Disciplinary Assessment will be completed which includes parental input, input from the student, input from the class team, SALT, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and the Communication teacher. A joint report will be provided following this assessment
- the advice of Barnsley Assistive Technology team is sought, and referrals made to them for assessments where pupils are identified as meeting their criteria in terms of cognitive ability and have a demonstrable gap between their receptive and expressive language and communication skills. Barnsley can also provide support for students for whom access or positioning is difficult
- a key person, responsible for maintenance of the device will be identified
- training will be put in place for staff and parents to ensure effective use of the device

- an outlined teaching programme should be put in place which includes structured teaching sessions and practice alongside generalisation and everyday use.
- parents should be encouraged to make a firm commitment that they will use the device at home and in partnership with school
- parents should read and sign a copy of Castle Hill School Total Communication Policy
- any warranty agreements should be discussed and verified with Castle Hill School Business Manager
- the use of the communication aid should be monitored regularly to ensure that it continues to meet student need
- discussions need to take place with Post 19 providers when students leave Castle Hill School to ensure smooth transitions and continuation of established communication systems.

### **Acceptable use of iPads in school**

We recognise the benefits of the use of iPads within the classroom and how much they can enrich the learning experience for many of our pupils.

This can be through:

- specialist communication packages e.g. Grid for iPad
- educational APPs e.g. letter tracing to develop hand-writing skills. sequencing, number games, memory games, phonics
- finding out information
- recording visits and experiences through photos and videos
- developing cause and effect
- developing fine motor control through scrolling, tapping, pressing buttons
- developing choice making through recognition of icons
- developing independence

For some pupils the iPad is their biggest motivator when making choices or it can help them with self-regulation. Where this is the case, clear targets for the use of the iPad should be written as part of a pupil's MAPP or on their individual behaviour plan. It is recommended that pupils do not spend more than 15 minutes in one session when working independently.

Students should not be left with free access to class IPADs unless restrictions are activated.

### **Ownership of devices purchased by school or the school charity, repairs and insurance**

All communication aids, including iPads purchased by school or the school charity for named students, will remain the property of the school whilst the

student is on roll. iPads will be locked (via Mobile Management) onto the Communication package and the internet will only be able to be accessed within school for updates by school staff. When students leave, for whatever reason, parents will be given the option to purchase the device at the accepted market price at the time, taking into account its age and condition. Where the device has been funded by the school charity, parents will be able to make a donation to the charity. Parents will need to purchase any communication package independently. Parents/carers will be referred to this information when completing the letter of agreement. (Appendix A). Their attention is also drawn to the statement about photographs not being able to be taken in school.

Parents/ carers should provide personal home insurance cover for any device. A letter of confirmation that this process has occurred should be produced, copied and filed.

- school will pay for any damages incurred on the school premises
- parents will cover the cost of any insurance excess incurred through damage at home
- any damage sustained outside of the school and home setting which is not covered by home insurance will be covered by school insurance, however parents will be responsible for excess costs of £125

Repairs to any school owned communication devices will be arranged through the ICT manager.

**Note:** Parents will have the option to purchase any communication aid at any time from school at the accepted market price. When purchased parents will then be responsible for any repair costs.

### **Communication aid loans**

School has a bank of communication devices which pupils can trial, including Techspeak, Proxtalker, Supertalker, Ipads which can be loaned on a temporary basis.

Prior to a trial device being used outside the school premises a letter will be drafted and signed by parents/carers stating that they will take full responsibility for any damage sustained and will either:

- Pay for a full repair.
- Pay excess insurance costs

**Note:** School owned communication aids should not be taken out of the country.

### **Privately owned devices**

- Many families are providing iPads for their children to use in school. The Communication Teacher and ICT manager are able to offer support around suitable communication packages. Parents/carers are asked to sign a form to agree:
- The school does not accept liability for any damage caused whilst on school property.
- Photographs are not allowed to be taken on the devices which travel between home and school to comply with GDPR requirements
- Access to the internet in school will be disabled (**Appendix B**)

## **Appendix A**

### **Communication aid loans**

I have read and understand Castle Hill School Total Communication Policy

Signed.....

Date.....

Parents/carers name.....

Students name.....

Address.....

.....Postcode.....

Details of Communication Aid.....

Serial No. of Communication Aid.....

Value of Communication Aid Provided.....

Date Communication Aid provided.....

Insurance certificate produced and copied? Yes ☐ No ☐

### **Ownership**

#### **School ownership**

I hereby agree that the above communication aid is the property of Castle Hill School or the School charity and that I am aware of the different options available when they leave Castle Hill School.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I agree that school owned communication aids should not be taken out of the country. Yes ☐ No ☐

### **Repairs**

I agree that repairs to any communication aid should be coordinated by Castle Hill School Communication Teacher or ICT Manager

Yes ☐ No ☐

### **Insurance agreement**

I agree to provide home insurance to cover my child's communication aid when out of school. I agree to provide an insurance certificate to this effect and give my permission for this certificate to be copied and filed. I agree to repair the said machine and meet the costs of any excess payments resulting from repair as a result of damage incurred.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I agree to pay any excess insurance charge for the repair of my child's communication aid as a result of damage incurred outside of home and school in the event that my home insurance does not cover the sustained damage. I am aware that this cost could be in excess of £120.

Yes ☐ No ☐

**Signed**..... **Date** .....

**Parent/carers of**.....



## **Appendix B**

### **Privately Funded equipment**

#### Communication Aid Agreement for Privately Funded Equipment

We are delighted that more and more parents/carers are providing a variety of devices to enhance their son/daughters experience in school. As such we are happy to provide any support, information, advice and guidance required. We would also like to take this opportunity to ensure that parents are aware that the school mobile device policy does not allow photographs to be taken on school premises.

We also regrettably inform parents /carers, that the school cannot take responsibility for any loss, physical damage or hardware/software failure that occurs to the equipment whilst on the school premises. This includes the maintenance and upkeep of the device.

We would, therefore, be grateful if parents/carers would sign this agreement prior to any device being used at school.

-----  
I would like my son/daughter to use their privately funded device in school and understand that the school is not liable for any loss, physical damage or hardware/software failure that occurs on the premises. This includes maintenance and upkeep of the device.

Parent/Carer of .....

Parent/ Carer Signature..... Date.....

Communication teacher:

Signature..... Date.....

Device .....

#### **Additional policies:**

Communication and Language  
ICT and Computing Policy

