

HARLOW FIELDS SCHOOL & COLLEGE



POLICY TITLE: **COMMUNICATIONS POLICY**


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Harlow Fields School & College
Working Together To Succeed

Communication Policy

Introduction

Harlow Fields School and College is committed to maintaining and enhancing communication with all members of the school community, staff, children, parents, other schools and outside agencies.

This document is a statement of the aims, principles and strategies for communication within Harlow Fields School and College. This can be divided into two areas of communication:

- The communication strategies and techniques used to enhance the pupils' opportunities.
- The various means of communication used to ensure that everyone involved with school is kept fully informed about the life and work of school.

Harlow Fields School and College caters for pupils aged from 3-19 years with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, complex medical needs and challenging behaviours. Many pupils have significant communication difficulties. Communication underpins all learning and therefore we are committed to providing individualised teaching to promote speech and language skills.

Pupils

We aim to:

- Support and augment social, verbal and non-verbal communication
- Work towards communication approaches throughout school, where pupils have access to their own means of communication throughout the day and facilitate carryover outside of the school environment
- Develop a means of communication appropriate to each child's individual needs to include both comprehension and expressive language skills
- Create opportunities for communication throughout the curriculum to enable each child to communicate to the best of their ability.

A pupil's communication needs are assessed within the school setting using a combination of individual assessments, classroom observations and liaison between staff and family.

Pupils' needs are best met when education and Speech and Language Therapy Services (SaLT) work collaboratively in the following ways:

- SaLT observation in classes sharing good practice and negotiating further communication goals within classroom setting.
- SaLT will contribute to Annual Reviews as appropriate
- Joint planning and delivery of groups within classes which are focused on the development of communication skills, and are in addition to regular communication activities.

Monitoring & Evaluating Pupils' Progress

The importance of monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress is central to their development. As with all communication methods, regular opportunities to use these are vital for the pupil to achieve success. Signs, symbols and communication aids should always be available to the pupils and staff must be aware of the need to modify their communication to facilitate pupils' comprehension:

- Within the class
- Around school
- In the community

The appropriate SALT will monitor pupils' progress. Class staff continually monitor and evaluate pupils' progress in the area of communication. Support will be given as needed and/or requested.

Communication may be monitored through the termly speaking and listening strands of BSquared and through termly evidence collected via Earwig. Additionally, all pupils have a communication target linked to their Education, Health Care Plan which is set as part of the annual review process and reviewed termly.

Communication Methods in School

At Harlow Fields School and College we aim to use a range of communication approaches involving a range of alternative and augmentative communication methods (AAC), where appropriate, to support and encourage speech and language development.

These methods include gestures, signs, symbols (including PECs), communication boards/books as well as Voice Output Communication Devices. These are not used in isolation and a pupil may use several or a combination of these methods. AAC strategies will evolve and change over time.

Picture Exchange Communication System – PECS

PECS is used in school for some pupils, where pupils learn to exchange picture symbols/photographs to communicate. There are 6 phases of PECS that pupils will move through. These are:

1. Exchanging a symbol
2. Travelling
3. Discrimination
4. Sentence structure
5. Spontaneous requesting
6. Social communication

Communication Aids

Communication aids, ranging from low tech to high tech, are used throughout the school and, if appropriate, are supplied to individual pupils as required. Communication aids currently used in school include the Big Mack which records a single message for example, asking for the register, picture communication boards, Go Talk and Communication Passports.

Communication passports give people vital information, at transition to post 19 provision for example, about a pupil's individual needs including personal information, as well as how they communicate. These passports are produced after consultation with SaLT, the class team and, parents and the pupil as appropriate. These should be prepared as part of the Person Centred Planning process and are updated if information changes significantly.

Visual timetables/ Schedules

These are pictorial references or written timetables enabling pupils and staff to order an activity or events for the day.

Makaton

This is a language programme using signs to support comprehension and encourage communication.

Writing With Symbols

This is used to produce a wide range of written communication, including worksheets, notices, instructions and cues.

General methods of communication throughout school

Communication with staff

A variety of methods of communication are used to ensure that all staff are fully informed of the day to day management and organisational issues and are actively informed of all school developments.

Regular scheduled meetings include

Weekly updates sent to staff via ParentPay and displayed on the interactive board in the staff room

Class staff meetings on Tuesday or Wednesday afternoons

Termly therapists meetings with the Head (known as PIMs meetings)

Weekly teacher meetings as required

Other methods of communication with staff include:

- Parent Pay and email
- School calendar in staffroom
- Noticeboards around school and in the staffroom
- Staff Handbook
- Internal telephone system
- Staff newsletters
- An open-door policy with the Head and Deputy Head

Communication is a two-way process. Part-time and job share staff, as well as those who have been absent, have a responsibility to ensure that they update themselves with all necessary information, both in class and throughout school.

Communication with parents

Good communication and partnership between school and home is essential to enhance the learning opportunities for the pupils. We work on the understanding that parents are empowered to further support their child's education and development if they are informed of educational targets and how they can reinforce these in the home environment. At Harlow Fields we communicate with parents using a range of strategies.

Consultation Evenings

These take place twice a year, giving parents and carers the opportunity to discuss progress with class staff and specialist teachers. Currently these take place via phone calls.

Initial Planning Meetings

For those pupils new to Harlow Fields, an IPM will be held during the second half of the autumn term to gather information, share progress since starting and agree targets until the next annual review.

Annual Reviews

These take place each year. Parents are invited into school to meet with the teacher, therapists and other professionals to review their child's EHCP and receive a verbal report on progress. These meetings can be face to face, via conference call or on TEAMS via the internet

These take place throughout the year; however for those pupils who will be leaving at the end of their 19th year, they happen in the autumn term.

Annual Report

In June of each year, parents receive a written report reflecting progress in all areas of the curriculum including photographic evidence of engagement

Home/School Diaries

Each pupil has a diary which is used to communicate news or information to and from home. Class staff will write a general comment about the day and it is very helpful to hear news from home.

Telephone

Parents are welcome to contact the school at any time to speak to the Head or Deputy Head, or to leave a message for classroom staff through the school office.

School Prospectus and Other Information

The school prospectus provides parents and prospective parents with a range of information about the school. The prospectus is reviewed and updated annually.

Parents of pre-school children also receive information about the activities in which their child will engage and the facilities available.

Parents of those pupils who are new to the school are asked to complete essential details and permission forms, which helps make the transition from home or other setting to school or school to school.

Other forms of Communication

Some of the other ways in which we communicate with parents include:

- Messages with Bus/Taxi Escorts and drivers
- Consultations
- Open Evenings
- School website – www.harlowfields.essex.sch.uk

School Policies

Copies of all school policies are available on the school website and in hard copy in the school office