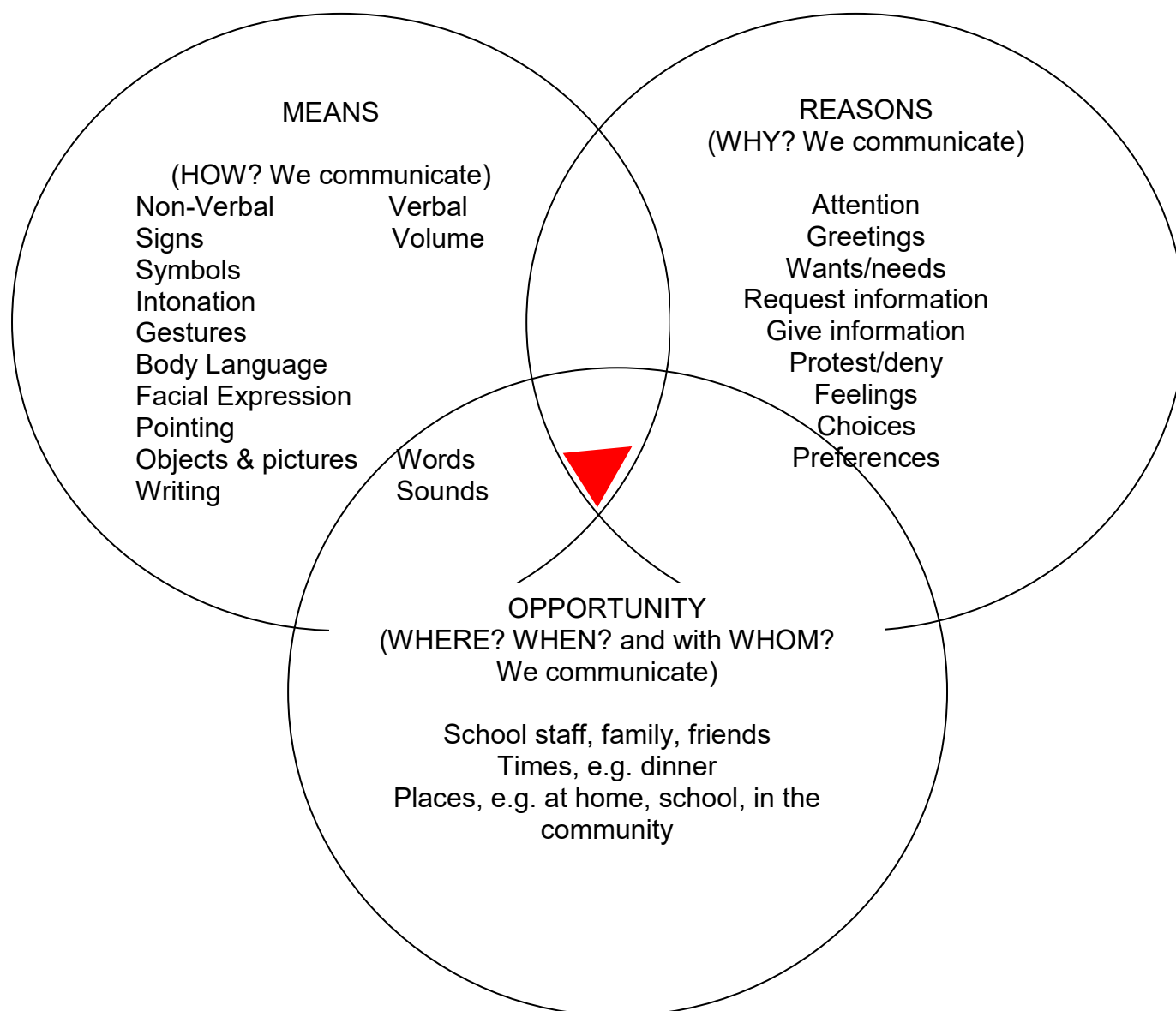# Communication Policy

January 2017
Review:

Basic Introduction to Communication

Means reasons and opportunities model of communication

MEANS

(HOW? We communicate)
Non-Verbal   Verbal
Signs   Volume
Symbols
Intonation
Gestures
Body Language
Facial Expression
Pointing
Objects & pictures   Words
Writing   Sounds

REASONS
(WHY? We communicate)

Attention
Greetings
Wants/needs
Request information
Give information
Protest/deny
Feelings
Choices
Preferences

OPPORTUNITY
(WHERE? WHEN? and with WHOM?
We communicate)

School staff, family, friends
Times, e.g. dinner
Places, e.g. at home, school, in the
community

COMMUNICATION Bulpitt 1989

Communication is the exchange of meaningful information between people. Communication may be verbal and/or non-verbal. See means, reasons and opportunities model. Communication is central to all areas of life from requesting basic needs through to complex social interactions with others. It is also central to the development and education of all individuals

At the Meadows Sports College;

 ➢ We are committed to providing a total communication environment
 ➢ We understands the relationship between communication and behaviour
 ➢ We work in an integrated multi-disciplinary way, jointly identifying and implementing strategies for communication enhancement

4.0 We will make sure that;

- Each student will receive a comprehensive assessment of his/her communication skills on arrival to the school assessment will be undertaken by class teacher, supported by speech and Language Therapist as required. Families will also be consulted on how their child communicates at home.
- Parents/Carers or school staff can refer to SALT for an assessment at any time.
- All staff will value and respond to all attempts of communication (both verbal and non-verbal) by every student
- Throughout the school day, appropriate communication systems will be used consistently and continuously to support spoken language in every classroom / lesson, as appropriate to the needs of each student group.
- Each and every area of the school will be developed and maintained as a total communication environment
- ICT will be used to support communication in classrooms/ lessons, as appropriate to the needs of each student
- Parents/carers will be fully included in any communication assessment and any therapy input required for their son / daughter. Families will be supported to use and develop these communication systems within their home and community environment.
- Continuing programmes of in-service training will both up-date existing staff and induct new recruits in the area of communication knowledge and skills (including signing, symbol use, AAC, ICT, objects of reference and specialist therapeutic approaches. An annual audit will be undertaken to ensure that staff are confident in appropriate communication systems. Additionally Communication ambassadors will be identified through staff PDI's

5.2 Environment

The concept of a total communication environment is agreed.

A total communication environment is where all relevant means of communication are used and supported, e.g. Makaton signing, symbols, objects of reference, intensive interaction, on-body signs, TaSSeLs etc.

5.3 Staff

Staff Self -Identify their communication training needs through PDI's (teachers) and skills matrix (all staff) Additionally knowledge and skills are assessed through classroom observations and appropriate training package is put in place..

6.0 Implementation

6.1 Students

All Students are individual and are assessed for the most appropriate communication system for them to enable them to get their needs and wants met. All attempts at communication by our students are valid and responded to using the appropriate system for the young person. Staff will model back appropriately what the young person is requesting. All staff have training and have the support from the

Communication TLR and Speech and Language Therapists to know how to move a young person forward with their communication.

Students will have access to 'high tech' alternative and augmentative communication devices as appropriate to individual need.

6.2 Staff

Class staff teams work closely with specialist support services to provide and support appropriate communication approaches for individual students.

All staff will use and model back appropriate communication systems for the students within their group throughout the school day and in after school clubs as appropriate to individual / group needs. These will always be used alongside spoken language. Staff will ensure they build as many opportunities as possible for young people to communicate meaningfully throughout the day.

The Meadows Sports College Management Team will ensure that appropriate training programmes are in place to support all staff in the implementation of the Communication Policy.

Staff will follow school protocols and procedures for assessment of need; referral to other appropriate agencies; centres of excellence and identification of specific channels of funding.

6.3 Environment

All staff are responsible for supporting the Total Communication Environment and ensuring that students have access to systems of communication that are appropriate to their needs.

The Meadows Sports College will use appropriate symbols and these symbols can be accessed via the 'Communication in print' on the school computer network

Students will have access to symbols/objects of reference (as appropriate) throughout the school day in order to facilitate their communication skills. This may include any or all of the following:

- Daily timetables
- Individual schedules
- Communication books
- Menu choices

Objects of reference will incorporate some generic items but also include personalised items where required.

7.0 Monitoring & Review

7.1 Students

The progress of individuals will be continuously monitored and recorded, in line with the school assessment and monitoring process, by means of:

- ➢ Individual termly targets
- ➢ classroom records
- ➢ Home school diaries
- ➢ EHC Reports
- ➢ Classroom observations

7.2 Staff

Whole school progress in maintaining and developing Communication Policy will be continuously monitored by means of:

- ➢ Support from Communication Team
- ➢ Individual student termly targets
- ➢ informal staff one - to- ones
- ➢ staff development interviews
- ➢ class team meetings and liaison
- ➢ whole-school staff meetings
- ➢ annual Reviews

7.3 Environment

The quality and effectiveness of the environment is monitored via: classroom teacher/tutors and senior management team

8.0 Specialist support staff   Speech and Language Therapy

Speech and Language Therapists work within the school to:

- Offer assessment and advice for swallowing problems
- Offer assessment and advice for specific communication issues
- Offer training to staff, families and carers where needed on relevant communication/swallowing issues

Their work within the school includes the following areas:

Staff Training;

- Objects of reference
- Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
- Makaton signing – Communication TLR
- Communication books, Aided Language Displays and PODD
- Use of switches, e.g. Big Mack, ITalk2
- Assessment for a high-tech communication aid.
- Social Use of Language Programme (SULP)
- Tassels
- Lego Therapy

How to refer to Speech and Language Therapy

- Anyone can refer to Speech and Language Therapy
- This can be done verbally or in writing
- All new students will be discussed with SMT and parents/carers

9.0 Definitions

Total communication environment: is where all relevant means of communication are used and supported, e.g. Makaton signing, symbols, objects of reference, etc.

Objects of reference: The use of objects as a means of communication. For example the use of a cup could mean "I want a drink"

AAC: Augmentative and Alternative Communication. A method of communication that adds to (augments) or replaces (is an alternative for) spoken communication

AAC Care Pathway: "Aims to achieve the delivery of high quality services for people with AAC needs in the West Midlands region." The pathway provides guidance on how to carry out an AAC assessment and how to refer on to other agencies if required.

Communication book: A book, containing pages of personalised symbols, graphics and/or pictures used for communicating

High-tech: Complex communication systems that have a power supply either batteries or mains powered, e.g. electronic communication aid, Big Mack switch

Symbols: These are images that are used to represent words and can be used as a means of communication. They can be photographs, line drawings, etc

TaSSeLs: Tactile Signing for Sensory Learners. A system in which tactile cues are used to support effective communication.

Transition: the movement from one environment to another environment, e.g. from a previous school to the Meadows school

10.0 Cross-referenced to related policies

This policy has been written paying due regard to the following related policies;

Speech and Language Therapy AAC Policy: A Clinical Guideline
AAC Care Pathway Document
Behaviour Policy and Behaviour Support Guidelines
Moving and Handling Policy
Equal Opportunities Policy

Objects of Reference

Activity	Object
Drink	Beaker/plastic cup
Dinner	Plate
Snack	Empty crisp packet (filled with paper and resealed)
Transport	Piece of seat belt
Toilet	Small wooden curtain ring/hoop
Outside	Sandpaper stuck on card
Physio	Piece of rubber mat
Hydro/swimming	Piece of swimming costume (which is regularly dipped in pool)
Medicine	Syringe
Library	Small cardboard book
Classroom	Scourer
Assembly	Block of wood with an elastic band wrapped around

N.B   This is a basic list which will require adaptation / personalisation for individual

Appendix B

Intensive Interaction – Guidance

Intensive Interaction is about communicating
It is an approach which focuses on the pre-existing skills of students who have limited communication skills and are often at the pre-verbal stage of communication. It takes the developmental age of the student as the basis for developing communication.

Its aim is to show students that interacting with others can be worthwhile through developing such fundamentals of communication as:

- enjoying being with another person
- being able to attend to that person
- taking turns in exchanges of movement, vocalization
- sharing personal space
- using non-verbal communication such as body language with meaning
- using vocalizations with meaning

The student learns to communicate and relate by experimenting. It involves key learning principals in that::

- the activity is student led
- the interaction is intrinsically rewarding and motivating

The interaction is flexible and has no pre-set rigid outcome. Staff work on the assumption that every noise, gesture or movement is a communicative attempt. Staff follow the lead of the student in a close 1:1 relationship. As staff get to know the student and their responses they may attempt to include additional communicative skills to extend the student.

Equal opportunities
Whilst this is not an approach to be used with every student we believe every student has the right to be able to communicate and to develop that ability at whatever level being given the opportunity to control and respond to his/her environment.

Intensive Interaction – used over a period of time can:

- Develop and maintain meaningful communication between students, staff and peers
- Increase awareness and participation in the environment
- Increase communicative intentions
- Build positive relationships
- Reduce challenging behaviours
- Increase non-verbal communication

Intensive interaction can be done daily in set lessons or used across the whole day. Intensive Interaction may involve positive touch

NOTE: Staff using the approach need to be happy using it for it to work well to the student's advantage

Intensive Interaction

Touch

We are looking at touch as a positive means of communication, but are not addressing the following issues – physical interventions, personal care, Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy programmes or massage. The use of positive touch complies with organisational ethos and safe practice.

Positive touch is physical contact given in a way to promote communication, enhance interactions and emotional wellbeing. When using positive touch the following areas need to be considered:-

- Have consent from the person (following Care plans, BSP's etc., that are already in place)
- Playfulness, responsiveness, reassurance and sensitivity should be your reasons for using positive touch
- Ensure positive touch is appropriate and is aiding the person's developmental progress

- Have other staff present as often as possible to ensure transparency
- Develop an ethos within teams where the use of positive touch is discussed openly
- In the unlikely situation where positive touch may result in sexual arousal, put some spaces between the individual and yourself and discuss the issue within the team/organisation prior to the next interaction
- All staff are aware of existing safe practice guidelines and the school's Safeguarding Policy.

Intensive Interaction

Teaching and Learning

The schools approach to teaching and learning stresses the importance of students as active learners. Active learning is supported in all key skills, thinking skills and additional priorities across the curriculum. Students are entitled to learning opportunities that are meaningful, stimulating and challenging.

Opportunities to be actively engaged in **communication** learning will be offered across the curriculum	Lessons will involve students in a range of processes including: - Responding to others - Communicating preferences - Expressing choices - Expressing emotions - Anticipating responses - Sustaining social interactions - Terminating interactions - Initiating interactions	Progress will be monitored through narrative and video records, noting significant developments such as: - new responses - increased range of facial expressions - emerging vocalisations - bodily responses nearing gestures - more effective use of gaze to effect changes in the communicative exchange
Opportunities for actively **working with others** will be offered across the curriculum	Lessons will involve students in a range of processes including: - awareness of others - joint focus - turn-taking - sharing - negotiating rules	Progress will be monitored through narrative and video records, noting significant developments such as: - greater tolerance - spontaneous participation - observing others - waiting a turn

Opportunities for actively developing **thinking skills** will be offered across the curriculum	Lessons will involve students in a range of processes including • exploring social agency – what will happen if… • exploring variations within familiar interactive games • anticipating – if I vocalise I get a vocal response • remembering – rehearsing familiar games	Progress will be monitored through narrative and video records, noting significant developments such as: • new variations • awareness of cause and effect • looking for an expected response • visually tracking a familiar adult in anticipation of a game

Individual targets communicate clear intentions for the student's involvement with Intensive Interaction. We are not saying what we want to happen in a particular lesson, but where we are heading over a period of time such as a school term. Although we want the flexibility to be student led in individual interactions, we are likely to have ideas about our interactive aspirations with a student such as developing eye contact, contingent responding and gesture.

PECS – Picture Exchange Communication System

What is PECS? PECS is a **functional communication system** using pictures that develops important communication and social skills. It focuses on communication that is **relevant** and **motivating** to each student and teaches them to **initiate**. Spontaneous communication is the goal!

Getting started: Carry out a motivator assessment by observing the student's attempts to gain access to desired items in an unstructured 'free access' situation. You can also ask significant others about their preferences. You can also carry out a formal reinforce assessment to develop a 'reinforcer hierarchy' (from most to least preferred).
Phase 1 – *'How' to communicate*: Students learn to exchange single pictures for items or activities they really want. Use a 2 person prompt procedure (communication partner and a physical prompter). You are expecting the student to complete a physical exchange of a picture using the following sequence: pick up (picture) → reach (towards communication partner) → release (picture into communication partner's hand). An open hand prompt may be used but must be phased out. **All requests must be honoured immediately (½ second rule!)** This Phase is achieved when the student independently completes the request sequence on 10 out of 10 opportunities when the communication partner is within 1 foot for **5 different reinforcers** with **3 different communication partners**, for **3 different activities** with **no prompts.**
Phase 2 – *Distance and Persistence*: Still using single pictures, students learn to generalise the new skill learned in Phase 1 by using it in different places, with different people and across distances. They are also taught to be more persistent communicators. The student is first expected to travel increased distances to reach the relevant communication partner. When they are achieving this consistently, the student is then expected to travel increased distances to get a picture before travelling to the relevant communication partner (including from room to room). All subtle prompting must now be eliminated and students should be gaining the adults attention. **All requests must be honoured immediately (½ second rule!)** This Phase is achieved when the student independently completes the request sequence on 9 out of 10 opportunities when their book is **across the room** for **5 different reinforcers**, with **5 different communication partners** with **no prompts.**
Phase 3 – *Picture discrimination*: Students learn to select from 2 or more pictures to ask for their favourite things. These are now placed in a communication book. The student is initially expected to choose between a preferred (familiar/highly desired) and a non-preferred (contextually irrelevant/low desired) item. Eventually the student is expected to choose from multiple desired objects. It is important to intermittently carry out 'correspondence checks' to ensure that the student is making the correct choices. **All requests must be honoured immediately (½ second rule!)** This Phase is achieved when the student independently completes the request sequence on 9 out of 10

opportunities for a **variety** of objects, activities, communicative partners and environments.
Phase 4 – *Sentence structure:* Students learn to construct simple sentences on a detachable sentence strip using an 'I want' picture followed by a picture of the item being requested. It is important that the communication partner 'reads' the entire sentence each time the student exchanges. 'Backward chaining' can be used to teach the sequence of steps in constructing the sentence in the correct order. *Do not use sentence strips with a fixed 'I want' symbol!* This Phase is achieved when the student independently **constructs the sentence** and the request sequence on 9 out of 10 opportunities for a **variety** of objects, activities, communicative partners and environments.
Attributes and language expansion: Students learn to expand their sentences by adding adjectives, verbs, prepositions, etc. This Phase is achieved when the student independently completes the request sequence on 9 out of 10 opportunities for at least three different icons (e.g. 3 colours of M&Ms) and across at least 2 exemplars (e.g. 3 colours of M&Ms AND 3 colours of crayons)
Phase 5 – *Responding to question "what do you want?":* Students learn to use PECS to answer this question. They also learn to spontaneously request a variety of items (responsive requesting). Adults should continue to support spontaneous requesting from the student. This Phase is achieved when the student independently completes the request sequence on 9 out of 10 opportunities for a **variety** of objects, activities, communicative partners and environments when opportunities to spontaneously or responsively request are randomised.
Phase 6 – *Commenting:* Now students are taught to spontaneously comment in response to questions like "what do you see?, "what do you hear", "what is it?", etc. They learn to make up sentences with 'I see', 'I hear', 'I feel', 'It is a', etc. This Phase is achieved when the student independently completes 9 out of 10 opportunities.

Literacy The Meadows Sports College

At The Meadows Sports College we believe that literacy is a fundamental life skill to be delivered in all lessons. It develops a student's ability to contribute across a wide range of purpose and across a range of different situations.

Teaching & Learning

Through focussing on using appropriate questioning of students and concentrating on embedding key words through symbols, Makaton signs, word labels, onbody signing and objects of reference across all curriculum areas literacy at The Meadows Sports College will:

• Provoke students thinking and enable them to explore.
• Be engaging and enjoyable.
• Through using skilful interaction/communication help students to be heard and help them gain ownership.
• Use the student's strengths and develop all available senses.

Literacy is about teaching the student

• Thinking skills and the relevant skills and knowledge to develop independence.
• To understand their environment and take control of the world around them.
• To be heard to communicate their wishes/choices and interact with others
• To care for themselves and have an awareness of their body.
• To access entitlements and facilities/support available to enhance the quality of the students life.

Spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development
Literacy contributes to all these areas.