

Inclusive Communication Policy



Updated: December 2024

Communication is a basic, fundamental human right that allows all people to achieve independence, make their own choices and to be included within their community. An Inclusive Communication Approach is an approach to communication which enables as many people as possible to be included in an interaction. This is the principle that we follow at Haughton School, with the aim of developing the functional, receptive, and expressive language and communication skills of our children. We follow our 'Whole School Communication Pyramid' that outlines our whole school approach to communication development. This pyramid outlines the levels of support that all of our children require; as well as the roles of the staff supporting them. Every class has a copy of this pyramid, and it is often referred to during whole school training days (see Appendix 1).

The 'Whole Communication Pyramid' outline our aims towards creating an Inclusive Communication environment for all of our children. An Inclusive Communication approach means that we support every child in communicating by ensuring that their 'voices' are heard. This is done by supporting them in using multiple ways to make their needs known and to help them to express their feelings, through the following means of communication:

- Through the use of objects and our agreed Objects of Reference (OOR)
- Photographs.
- Symbols.
- Written text/print.
- Use of voice, including pitch and tone.
- Verbal skills, including speech.
- Makaton signing, including gesture and body language skills.
- High Tec Augmentative Communication Devices e.g. iPads.
- Low Tec Augmentative Communication Devices e.g. the use of communication books, PODD books.

Our aims are to support the development of:

- Attention and listening skills.
- Understanding of language.
- Expressive language.
- Social interaction skills.

Inclusive Communication group

Our Inclusive Communication Group comprises of our Headteacher, Therapy Assistants, Makaton Trainer, Communication Coordinator and Speech and Language Therapists, who liaise regularly throughout the year regarding the communication needs of individual children and whole school implications. More regular, informal discussions will occur throughout the school day and/or week between these professionals. In addition to this other educational professionals, parents, governors, and wider teaching staff are closely involved in the sharing of this information, as and where appropriate.

Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) Professionals:

The Speech and Language Therapists work on a consultative basis in conjunction with the Speech and Language Therapy Assistants, school staff and parents. The Speech and Language Therapists are based within school for up to 1.5 days between them, per week. Assessment may involve observation in the classroom, individual assessments and liaison with parents and carers. General advice is given to the school and our staff regarding the development of a pupils' communication skills and whole staff training is provided by the SALT, in the form of training packages, as required. Following assessment, SALT

provides individualised programs which are carried out throughout the school day by the school staff and parents/carers where applicable. A child may also receive group or individual therapy sessions with one of our Therapy Assistants who work within school on a full-time basis.

Makaton Signing

Makaton is a form of sign supported English. At Haughton School Makaton signing is used across school and we have been awarded the Bronze Makaton Friendly Setting award. It is a valuable and effective way to support both expressive and receptive language. Only key words are signed, and children are encouraged to use signs to make requests, to comment and to answer questions. Signs are taught as part of vocabulary development opportunities during core subject and topic lessons where appropriate to the needs of the children. Through an Inclusive Communication Approach pupils learn to use signing to support their access to learning and communication; helping to break down barriers in their receptive and expressive speech and language skills.

We aim to continually develop our Makaton signing environment to ensure that all staff and children can communicate effectively.

Our rationale for this is:

- Signing helps focus a child's attention on the speaker.
- It helps staff and children alike to slow down their speech.
- It provides additional visual cues to aid understanding and processing of information.
- Staff will provide a model for pupils who are developing expressive use of signs.
- Pupils with a hearing impairment may be totally dependent on signing.

We aim to promote the use of signing across our school. You will therefore see signing taking place within:

- The classroom
- The dining hall
- Outdoor play
- Whole school assemblies
- Times of transition
- After school clubs

To maintain a high level of competency among all staff we have regular signing practise during weekly whole school briefings, which is led by our qualified Makaton trainers. Every class also shares the Makaton 'Sign of the Week' each day, to support the children and staff with learning one new, repeated sign. The sign of the week is shared with parents and carers via our school Twitter page and on our weekly school newsletter.

Symbols

'Communicate in Print 3' is the sole software package available within school. Symbols are used to support understanding and to enable pupils to communicate their knowledge and understanding across the whole school and across the whole curriculum. In September 2022, an updated, agreed set of symbols for core vocabulary and classroom timetables were issued to all staff. Our agreed Colourful Semantics symbols can also be found in our Colourful Semantics Policy. These items are all available to staff, via the school SharePoint area. All staff have also been issued with a 'Use of Visuals Reflection Checklist' and 'Symbol Progression Poster' to support them in reflecting upon and thus developing their use of symbols and other visuals within their teaching and learning. In --- a Symwriter 2 license was also purchased so that all staff and children's laptops have access to this software. 'Symwriter 2' is a symbolised word processor that allows our children to see the meaning of words as they type or input content from grids, supporting access to new or challenging vocabulary.

Lanyard Key Rings

All class teams within school have agreed, key ring symbols containing any core vocabulary that may be needed to support children within school. A set if also given to supply staff upon their arrival to school to wear for the duration of their visit. These symbols have been agreed with the Speech and Language Therapy team. In addition to the agreed key ring symbols,

some class teams will have additional symbols added to meet the specific communication and behavioural needs of the children within their class. The agreed Zones of Regulation lanyard visual is also worn by all staff within school.

Transition Visuals

On the door of each room in school, there is a photograph and symbolised sign to represent the room. This in turn reinforces the child's understanding of where they are going next and fosters their independence during times of transition. Each classroom door also has a sign containing the names and pictures of all the children and staff based within that classroom.

Objects of Reference

Objects of Reference (OOR) is a highly effective approach to aiding the understanding of spoken language and supporting the understanding of daily routines. These objects also provide a means of expressive communication. Currently at Haughton some children in school will use OOR to support their understanding of daily routines, to support transitions and to introduce subject lessons. After discussions with our Speech and Language Therapy Team and the First Links team we have introduced an agreed list of Haughton OOR. This will ensure that staff can support any specific individuals that may need them within our school as well as embedding the use of OOR within Badgers Class and our specialist, Semi-Formal classes.

Alternative Augmentative Communication (AAC's)

What is AAC?

Alternative, Augmentative Communication (AAC'S) can be defined as any means which replaces speech and/or enhances an individual's ability to successfully convey meaning to others. Low tech devices can be a way of supporting AAC through the use of signing and symbols, Communication Passports, PODD (Pragmatic, Organisation, Dynamic, Display) books and PECs (please see below). Some pupils also use High tech aids to support their AAC, these are electronic devices such as the iPad, that some of our children have within school. High tech aids are used to support the pupils' access to the curriculum by giving them the vocabulary and language forms needed for learning.

Pupils who use AAC devices should have access to their AAC device at all times throughout the school day including break and lunchtimes. Staff training is delivered by the Speech and Language Therapists to develop the use of these AAC devices, effectively and consistently across school to support the children using them.

Training around the current AAC devices within school is updated annually and this is closely monitored by the Senior Leadership Team and the staff within the Communication Group.

Word Aware and the STAR Approach

Staff at Haughton School follow the principles outlined in the Word Aware approach to teaching the meaning of vocabulary within everyday teaching and learning contexts. The Word Aware approach is a tool developed by two Speech and Language Therapists: Stephen Parsons and Anna Branagan. They have developed the Word Aware programme as a resource that provides time efficient and practical ideas for teaching vocabulary to children within school. They outline a STAR approach to teaching words, and this is an approach that all of our teachers follow to teach words (see Appendix 2). Using the STAR Approach our teachers select the 'word/words' that they are going to teach as part of a new topic or text. In Key Stage groups the teaching staff will add a list of 'core', 'specific' and 'specialist' vocabulary to their Medium Term Plans (MTPs):

- The 'Core' words are the 'anchor' words that underpin the topic. Many children may already have a good understanding of these words. They are more familiar words used across a range of topics. Used often in daily interactions.
- The 'Specific' words are really useful words. They are core to the new learning within this topic. Many of these words will need to be 'taught'. They are likely to be encountered again in reading or oral language. Usually need to be taught to the whole class within topic lessons.
- The 'Specialist' words are words that are particularly specialist to this topic. They are not words children are likely to have encountered before. We would not expect the majority of our pupils to use these words in their writing or oral language skills. Therefore, it may not be appropriate for your class to encounter these words. Instead, the teaching of these words needs to be decided on an individual basis.

All staff within the class team will have access to a copy of this 'Word Aware Vocabulary List' so that everyone can make a sustained effort to provide their class with a language rich environment. A copy of these words is also sent home to parents/carers alongside each new topic overview. This is to support parents/carers in using some of these words at home with their child, to help provide more opportunities for them to develop their word knowledge.

During Topic lesson's the Class Teacher will identify a 'word' or 'words' from these MTP's that they will explicitly teach during each lesson. They will introduce the children to these words using predetermined Word Aware inspired slides that have been created by the Communication and Literacy Coordinators. These slides promote kinaesthetic learning of the new vocabulary and during the plenary: the application of skills by encouraging the children to define the words they have learnt or to use them in a sentence. These slides also aim to give the children motivation and a love of learning new words by giving them exciting roles within their own learning by referring to them as either:

- Word Wizards (Badgers, KS1, Class 12)
- Word Detectives (LKS2 & C11)
- Word Experts (UKS2)

This repetitive and dedicated time during each lesson aims to promote progress as the children are given the time to remember more by embedding new vocabulary into their long-term memory.

Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS)

PECS is a specific type of AAC support that is used to facilitate communication by teaching an individual to give a picture of a desired item to a "communicative partner", who immediately honours the exchange as a request. The system goes on to teach discrimination of pictures and how to put them together into sentences. In the more advanced phases, individuals are taught to answer questions and to comment. Some staff in school have been previously trained on the use of PECS within school and the Early Years Teacher has also been trained.

Intensive Interaction

Intensive Interaction is a communication approach designed to help people at early levels of development by supporting them in developing their early interaction abilities – how to enjoy being with other people – to relate, interact, know, understand, and practice communication routines. It is based upon the teaching of fundamental communication for those children/adults who need support in developing such skills e.g. attention and concentration, turn taking, sharing personal space, using facial expression and using vocalisations with meaning.

There are a range of benefits to using this approach for children with more complex communication needs; the aim is to increase their understanding and use of fundamental nonverbal communication and their understanding and use of verbal communications. This will help our children to develop their confidence, self-esteem, and relationships using meaningful vocalisations and interactions. Intensive Interaction can be used to support children with:

- Autism Spectrum Conditions
- Speech Language and Communication Needs
- Learning Difficulties
- Multi-Sensory Impairments

*Please note this is not an exhaustive list

Identified children within school will have dedicated 'Intensive Interaction' slots within their timetable, usually on a 1:1 basis. If a child initiates an interaction with us, we will continue this and respond to them in an appropriate way that also considers our curriculum expectations. Some of our children will also go out with their Speech and Language Therapist and/or one of our therapy assistants for dedicated, Intensive Interaction sessions. All staff in school received a half day SALT Training package on Intensive Interaction in July 2023; this training contained 'real life' examples of Intensive Interaction being used in our school with our children. These videos helped to support successful implementation of the approach into our school community. An additional accredited Intensive Interaction course has also been undertaken and offered to teaching staff within school.

Staff Training

We are committed to ensuring that all staff have the knowledge and skills to support our aim of a whole school Inclusive Communication approach. Communication is a regular item on new staff induction, training days and during twilight sessions for all staff across school. The SALT team deliver specific training packages or 'coaching' sessions for individual class teams, to help them to effectively support the communication of the children in their class. The Communication Coordinator offers coaching 'drop in' sessions throughout the year to cover areas of development for the school's communication; or in response to areas of communication that staff have expressed to have support with.

The Communication Coordinator and Makaton Tutor also create 'Makaton Booklets' for each class team to keep in their own 'Makaton' folder. These booklets contain core, everyday signs that are useful for staff in school to learn; as well as specific signs that are linked to each class's own IPC topics. These key words are taken from the 'Word Aware Vocabulary Lists' that are created by teaching staff for use alongside their MTPs.

Elklan training is also offered and provided as required for some staff within school. These members of staff have received this training to equip them with the tools they need to encourage and support communication for the children within their class and across school.

All staff at Haughton School aim to:

- Facilitate the social inclusion and well-being of all of our children.
- Support communication skills in order to prevent and deal with subsequent behavioural issues, as we support the concept that: 'All behaviour is a form of communication' (Michigan Alliance for Families, 2016).
- Support and help our children to find a way to express themselves using good levels of functional communication.
- Ensure that every child's individual communication system(s) are used consistently by all staff across school.
- Continually raise the status of communication systems used within school, to ensure all of our children can successfully access the curriculum.
- Contribute fully to the maintenance of an individual's communication systems; specifically, their Speech and Language Therapy assistants, class teacher and class team.

Parents & Carers

As a school we are committed to supporting parents in developing their understanding of their child's communication needs and in their communication with their child.

We do this in the following ways:

- The language and communication needs and targets are shared with parents/carers during parents evening and Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) reviews. For pupils on the SALT caseload, their specific SALT programmes are also continually shared with parents and carers.
- Resources and keywords from individual SALT sessions may also be sent home, where appropriate.
- Training events are offered for parents, such as Makaton courses.
- Sending home 'Word Aware Vocabulary List's' to parents/carers at the start of each new topic, to make them aware of the language that their children will be learning in their new topic.
- Support through the school website for parents to access and use communication resources e.g. our new Inclusive Communication page or through links to the Makaton sign of the week.

Review date: January 2026

