

Communication Policy

At Heart of the Forest we share the commitment to Gloucestershire Total Communication which aims to ensure that all pupils with communication difficulties have a consistent and coherent approach to meeting their communication needs throughout their lives in school and the wider community.

Total Communication is a process that ensures that all forms of verbal and non-verbal communication are recognised, valued and actively promoted within an individual's environment.

Communication is fundamental to teaching and learning in our school. It is a two-way process through which information, ideas, thoughts and feelings are passed between individuals and/or groups of people. Communication is central to life, human rights, inclusion and all areas of human development.

The development of communication skills for all learners in our school is an integral part of the provision and should not be seen in isolation.

At Heart of the Forest we operate a Total Communication Environment, which provides a range of approaches to enable the pupils to communicate effectively. Using total communication approaches helps people develop their understanding and expression in order to communicate more effectively. This Communication Policy promotes the use of effective communication which staff and visitors are expected to follow consistently.

Heart of the Forest School aims to:

- Value and respect every possible method of communication that pupils may need to use.
- Provide opportunities for learners to develop a meaningful and functional system of Total Communication using verbal and/or non-verbal communication.
- Ensure all individual communication strategies are supported by developing a shared knowledge, skills and attitudes base essential for an effective total communication environment.
- Raise awareness and develop confidence in the use of Total Communication throughout school and wider communities.
- Ensure that our learners are equipped to communicate effectively in adult life
- Ensure that all learners feel included with their preferred method of communication which facilitates the opportunity to be understood, responded to and to make decisions and choices.
- Enable access to provision through a total communication approach.

These are some of the communication tools you may experience at Heart of the Forest School School:

- Gestures, body language, vocalisation/speech, eye pointing and facial expression
- Intensive Interaction
- Objects Of Reference (OOR)
- On Body Signing
- Makaton signing
- Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
- Photographs/pictures/symbols/schedules/first you, then you strips
- Communication books
- Social Stories
- Talking Mats
- Voice Output Communication Aids/equipment (VOCA)
- Access to modern technology

Equal Opportunities

All learners are entitled to appropriate support and intervention relating to the development of their communication, regardless of their race, culture, gender, disability and socioeconomic background.

We all communicate in different ways and each way should be equally respected and encouraged.

Communication is vital to every aspect of our lives. It impacts on our relationships, choice, control, emotions, self-esteem and self-expression. Therefore it is fundamental to our wellbeing and quality of life.

At Heart of the Forest School we agree that all learners have the right to:

- Have and use their speech system at all times.
- Be taught how to communicate.
- Ask for and know about their schedule and world.
- Ask for and get attention and interaction.
- Be a full and equal member of their community.
- Be treated with respect and dignity.
- Be spoken with, not about.
- Be communicated with in a sensitive manner.
- Have their system in working order and to have a back up.

This is agreed by all staff and visitors to Heart of the Forest and is displayed on a poster in each learning area. See appendix 1.

Working with the Speech and Language Therapist and Advisory Teacher Service for Augmentative and Alternative Communication.

Heart of the Forest School works in partnership with all agencies and has specific links with the speech and language therapist who visits school on a regular basis. Individual learners are assessed at the request of the school staff or parents, and an agreed approach to communication is devised. This forms an integral part of the learner's Personalised Curriculum Plan and holistic approach to their communication.

Opportunities to develop these skills are facilitated through the pathways to learning.

In some cases the speech and language therapist and AAC teacher may have direct focused intervention with learners; this may specifically relate to establishing a system of communication e.g. assessing the learner for a communication aid. This may involve making referrals to BCAS (Bristol Communication Aid Service.) Once the system of communication is established, all staff should work closely as part of a team, ensuring consistency of approach and use and following direct advice given by professionals.

Working with Parents and Carers

Heart of the forest School is committed to supporting Parents and Carers in the development of their child's communication. This may involve joint meetings with the S<, AAC teacher, Communication Champion or Total Communication coordinators. Parents and Carers are aware of our 'open door' policy and are welcome to arrange to visit school to observe and discuss any aspect of their child's approach to communication. Where it is considered appropriate, and in consultation with the Parents & Carers, Heart of the Forest will provide resources to support the pupil in the home environment (e.g. symbols, books). Parents and Carers will be offered the opportunity to attend Gloucestershire Total Communication course 1 training annually held at school.

Assessment, recording and reporting

The S<, AAC advisory teacher, Communication Champion or Total Communication Coordinator will make an initial assessment of a learner on request. This may involve individual work with the learner, consultation with class staff, learner observation and parental liaison.

Ongoing assessment is then facilitated by class staff as part of the learners agreed plan.

Monitoring, includes the use of information taken from the PCP's (Personalised Curriculum Plans), EHCP's (Educational Health Care Plans) and S & LT Targets. All these documents are available in the learner's purple communication files. Targets should be referred to during teaching and learning throughout the school day. The Senior Leadership Team will formally monitor communication through direct classroom observation and Learning Walks throughout the year. They will use the Framework for

Communication, language and interaction teaching (Appendix 2) to form the basis of this monitoring.

Each learner in school has a purple communication evidence folder which should be used for recording progress and achievement towards communication targets. This may take many forms such as written statements, photographs or post it notes.

An annual written report is produced by the school at the end of the academic year. Parents and carers also have the opportunity to discuss their child's progress at parent's evenings and EHCP review meetings. Both the school and the S< Team are happy to provide reports at times other than these for specific purposes e.g. re assessment.

It may at times be necessary for Speech & Language Therapist, AAC Advisory teacher or Communication Champion to observe learners within their class/group in order to assess and provide constructive support and advice.

Gloucestershire Total communication - GTC

For a number of years Heart of the Forest School have been involved with GTC. There information is as follows:

Ethos:

Gloucestershire Total Communication aims to ensure that all pupils with communication difficulties have a consistent and coherent approach to meeting their communication needs throughout their lives in school and the wider community.

Objectives:

- To value and respect every possible method of communication that a pupil may need to use
- To ensure all individual communication strategies are supported by developing a shared knowledge, skills and attitudes base essential for an effective total communication environment
- To raise awareness and develop confidence in the use of Total Communication throughout school and wider communities

Implementation:

- To have a minimum of one Total Communication co-ordinator in school
- All staff to attend Induction Level training on Total Communication
- Induction Level training to be offered to parents/carers and other interested individuals
- A Communication Passport to be provided for every pupil who would benefit from one

- Further training to be provided as required to enable staff to support the range of communication strategies identified.
- Ensure all communication support and materials provided for a pupil remains with the pupil for as long as necessary.
- Ensure adequate resources to support pupils' methods of communication are provided and maintained.
- Ensure that communication aids are available wherever the pupil is, eg on educational visits, at home, in the playground.