



Cavendish View School Alternative and Augmentative Communication Policy

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1. Rationale

The freedom to communicate is a basic human right. The inability to communicate impacts adversely on social, emotional, cognitive and language development and well-being.

Awareness of the need of AAC users to see others using their means of expression is essential for them to learn how to use it themselves.

The aim of our AAC policy is to:

- Provide human rights and equal opportunities
- Provide means of communication
- Develop language skills
- Ensure access to all potential modalities of language development
- Ensure there is a community of users
- Provide models of language and communication
- Safeguard access to the curriculum
- Maintain levels of training and resources.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STATEMENT

The Salutem Group is committed to the fair treatment of all in line with the Equality Act 2010. An equality impact assessment has been completed on this policy to ensure that it can be implemented consistently regardless of any such factors and all will be treated with dignity and respect.

2. Definition of Terms

Augmentative and Alternative communication (AAC)

Augmentative and Alternative communication (AAC) refers to any means by which an individual can supplement or replace spoken communication. Communication may range from any movement or behaviour that is observed and interpreted by another person as meaningful, to the use of a code agreed upon between people where items have specific meanings.

AAC stands for 'augmentative and alternative communication'. It is an approach to communication that helps people to communicate or to communicate more clearly and easily.

- Augmentative means that it helps to make communication clearer. This may be by helping people make their speech clearer or it may be by helping them to communicate something that a person is trying to say using things like body language or facial expressions.
- Alternative means a different way to communicate. This may be instead of speech.

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Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) is a range of strategies and tools to help people who struggle with speech. These may be simple letter or picture books or sophisticated computer-based systems. AAC helps someone to communicate as effectively as possible, in as many situations as possible.

Communication Matters

AAC categories

AAC can be divided into two categories: **unaided** and **aided** communication.

Unaided communication can be described as modes of communication that use only the body.

These include:

- Body language, eye pointing, facial expression, natural gesture, use of vocalisation/intonation
- Sign languages (eg British Sign Language)
- Signing systems (eg finger spelling)
- Signed vocabularies (eg Makaton)
- Verbal / gestural strategies to support poor speech (eg cued articulation)

Aided Communication can be described as modes of communication that require equipment in addition to the communicators body. These include:

- Objects or photographs, pictures, graphic symbols eg Widgits, or words. These may be organised into books, charts or boards
- Communication aids which produce speech and/or text i.e. VOCAs (Voice Output Communication Aids). These may be dedicated hardware units, tablets or iPads with communication software / apps.

Aided communication systems require a reliable method of access. This may be **direct** or **indirect**.

Direct access includes pointing, eye point, keyboard.

Indirect access includes scanning with a switch, use of joystick or listener-mediated scanning i.e. the communication partner assists to make vocabulary selections.

Total Communication Approach

To be effective, all AAC users will need to be taught to use more than one mode of communication according to their individual needs and abilities. Even an able user of VOCAs will also require simple aided and unaided systems.

Using a variety of modes of communication, including speech, can be referred to as total communication. The learner's social and learning environment should facilitate and encourage the use of total communication.

3. Supporting Evidence

Using the Means, Reasons and Opportunities Model (Money and Thurman, 1994) provides a solid basis to ensure we are enabling our students.

- Means – can include signing, gesture, eye contact, vocalisations and AAC resources
- Reasons – should include a wide variety of reasons such as joking, sharing stories, asking questions, giving directions, commenting and requesting
- Opportunities – communication will be accessible in our different environments in and outside of the classroom, during external visits and trips, at home and with different people such as friends, family, visitors and school staff.

We know that:

- AAC systems do not interfere with speech development and may encourage it. There is research available to support this.
- AAC systems can provide:
 - A means of communication for people at an early stage of development
 - A means of communication and language for those whose speech is unintelligible
 - A bridge to spoken language
- The implementation of AAC requires interdisciplinary assessment, coordination and monitoring
- All staff can make a difference
- Schools can make a difference
- Families can make a difference

4. Training

Training is available for our staff to successfully support AAC users. This may include in house training, modelling and advice or external training sessions as identified and agreed as necessary. Our school will work in partnership with all agencies to support the development of AAC for our pupils.

The Speech and Language therapist can access Specialised AAC services to ensure relevant and up to date information is received and specialist assessments can occur when necessary.

5. Assessment

Ongoing assessment will determine progress being made or adaptations required. Teachers and staff can raise any concerns at any time with the Speech and Language Therapist, and further assessment will be made. Trails may take place of different devices or apps. Goals will be determined in collaboration with staff and the pupil.

Targets will be set for individual pupils. Following the school's policy targets need to be:

- Specific**
- Measurable**
- Achievable**
- Realistic**
- Time related**
- Evaluated**
- Reviewed**

Wherever possible, pupils should be involved with the target setting process, identifying new targets and discussing ways to achieve their targets.

Parents will be informed of decisions around AAC for their child and discussions will take place regarding which mode of communication is the best fit for them.

6. Cavendish View School AAC Pledge

At our school we pledge to support our learners develop their AAC use.

- 1** We will read our learners Communication Passports
- 2** We will have AAC resources available and will use them
- 3** We will follow recommendations to support our learner's communication
- 4** We will provide consistent opportunities and aim to integrate AAC into daily routines

- 5** We will monitor AAC use and feedback observations
- 6** We will give our learners time and be flexible and adaptable within class
- 7** We will promote independence
- 8** We will assume competence
- 9** We will identify and focus on our learner's interests
- 10** We will always communicate in a dignified manner

7. Roles and Responsibilities

It is everyone's responsibility to ensure AAC is maintained, available, and ready for use.

Staff must Inform the Speech and Language Therapist or Senior Leadership Team if there are any issues with devices. iPads are managed by Jigsaw24.

If an iPad is going home, a parental agreement will be signed and a copy kept in school. If required, iPad's will be kept in the therapy room to be charged overnight. It is the class responsibility to collect and return the iPad to the therapy room.