Language and Communication Policy (Students)

Policy Control Page

Status	SLT approve as a working document
Responsible Person	Assistant Principal for Education (Student support, Communication and Language Lead)
Authors	Assistant Principal for Education (Student support, Communication and Language Lead) Assistant Principal for Education (Teaching and Learning) and Speech and Language Intervention Lead *Literacy Lead – in process*
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Policy Applicable to	The Deaf Academy

Date	Version	Person	Change / Action
1st June 2021	1.0	Mark Peel	Adoption of Policy
14th June 2021	1.0	EA	To SLT for approval
8 November 21		Jane Shann	A significant redraft has taken place reflecting the changing cohort of students. To ELT and SLT for approval

Deaf Academy core principles

OUR AIM is for our students to feel confident and successful at communicating in a variety of settings with a wide variety of people. We want them to reach their fullest potential with their language and communication and develop skills that they can draw upon in their lives, both at the Academy and when they leave. We strive to provide a Sign Bilingual environment to ensure all students, staff and visitors' communication needs are met.

General Principles

The Academy follows an Applied Sign Bilingual philosophy that promotes the acquisition of both BSL (British Sign Language) and English (spoken and / or written). This approach recognises that deaf children have the same potential for language and learning as hearing children. The policy promotes equality of opportunity and values diversity. It recognises that deaf students can be members of both the hearing world and the Deaf community and are therefore faced with the option of being bilingual and bicultural.

At the Academy, we recognise that our students have additional sensory, learning, physical and / or social/emotional needs. It is therefore vital that we take a holistic and student-centred approach to supporting a student's communication and language needs and in this way, we view this policy as an Applied Model of Sign Bilingualism. In addition to the Academy's use of English and BSL, this may include gesture, symbols, word boards, communication devices, pictures and the use of Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC).

Language and identity

This policy recognises the cultural identity that is held within the use of BSL. We foster a sense of identity and pride in ownership of a language, according to student need and desires; this can be in BSL or in English or in being bilingual.

How we achieve our aims

- In education, BSL and English (spoken and written) are taught as two separate languages. This supports the student's understanding that the two languages are distinct, and that equal value is given to both languages. In Care, staff use language according to student preference. Where both English and Speech are required at the same time, staff may use Signed Supporting English if agreed by participants.
- Students experience both BSL and English in their daily lives. Both languages are used by staff throughout the Academy, in formal and informal settings.
- Staff adapt their language delivery to meet the linguistic needs of their students.
- Staff recognise that students learn best if they are happy, motivated, and regulated. (Regulation refers to the student's ability to increase and decrease their alertness, or arousal, to match the situation or environment).
- Behaviour is seen as a form of communication; staff use these opportunities to explore what the students are expressing.
- The curriculum is language, communication, and Literacy rich.
- There is a focus on functional and meaningful learning which the students can draw on once they leave the Academy.
- Collaborative working is recognised as essential between different staff members and with parents, to ensure communication and language is embedded throughout the Academy and the student's home life.
- Staff sign (to the best of their ability) in the presence of deaf people, whether students, staff, or visitors, to ensure equality of access and mutual respect. Where required, a sign language interpreter or communicator will be used to ensure parity of access.
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is provided for staff on an ongoing basis e.g. BSL (with student-facing staff having at least a BSL Level 3), literacy, AAC. New staff are immediately enrolled onto an appropriate BSL course.
- A physical environment is provided which supports the student's auditory, visual and sensory needs.
- Language and literacy are recognised as being linked, with signed and spoken languages being the precursor to literacy development.

Student Advocacy

Through the Student Council within a student-participation model, students will be empowered to advocate for their own language and communication use and needs, including definition of preferred language, referrals (self- or with the support of staff) to obtain specific support around their personal language / communication needs. This will be further supported by the Independent Advocacy service.

Strategies for implementing this policy

The student will be supported in developing the following areas, as appropriate, whilst at the Academy: -

- BSL Skills-understanding and use
- Spoken English language skills-understanding and use
- Speech intelligibility
- Lip reading
- Listening skills/use of hearing
- English literacy skills-reading and writing
- AAC communication skills
- Theory of mind (understanding others' thoughts, actions and behaviour)
- Functional use of communication
- Social interaction skills
- Overcoming communication barriers with others
- Deaf Adult BSL / English language models

These areas of focus are held within our **Key Principles** and specifically '**Rich Language Acquisition'**. The way staff use strategies that foster development reflect the diverse needs of the students. Staff are able to demonstrate communication and language adaptability from student to student, whilst holding a key understanding of how language and communication is grown. Targets for communication and language work are set from discussions between SaLT and the class teacher, the Care Key worker and the student (where appropriate) and reflect the student's experience. Specific support that enables the ongoing development of language and communication operates at both discrete and embedded levels. Similarly, literacy work is embedded throughout the student's experience, as well as being taught during specific lessons in literacy during the learning day.

Assessment and practice

On joining the Academy, a student will be assessed for their level of competence in the areas described above. This may include formal and informal assessments and observations, previous reports, and parental contributions as well as a literature review. The people involved in this assessment may include the Speech and Language team, the Language and Communication lead in education, the BSL Lead, the Literacy lead, Teaching and Care staff, parents, and outside agencies who are familiar with the student. From this assessment, Language and Communication targets will be set as part of the student's Individual Learning Plan (ILP). These will be regularly reviewed, and new targets set as appropriate.

The staff who support the student will work in partnership to ensure communication and language is embedded in the varied environments throughout the Academy. This may include: -

- Meetings to plan and review the targets
- Modelling ways of working
- Joint working in groups and one to one
- CPD
- Report and target writing
- Signposting relevant research

EXAMPLES OF POLICY INTO PRACTICE

Student A: cochlear implant user, attending Core, Spoken English first language user. Residential student

Assessment of communication, language, both BSL and English, literacy, listening (in noise and in quiet) and speech production skills. Communication and language targets are created by the SaLTs in conjunction with key staff (Class teacher, Care keyworker) and work is undertaken in any or a combination of the following:

a) one to one listening and speech production b) small group communication work c) embedded communication and linguistic skills within the Class and within Care.

Communication and language work in class primarily focuses on the development of and functional use of communication, language and theory of mind skills. Communication and language work in care is primarily informal, student-led and functional within a residential setting. Literacy is taught as a discrete subject and then supported as an embedded practice, in education and in care.

Student B: hearing aid user, BSL first language user, attending college. Non-residential student

Assessment of communication, language, both BSL and English, listening (in noise and in quiet) and speech production skills. Communication and language work is undertaken in a) small group and / or one to one communication work, with functionality a key aim b) specific BSL and English timetabled

lessons c) embedded communication and linguistic skills within the class. Literacy is taught as a discrete subject and then supported as an embedded practice, in all other lessons.

Student C: BAHA user, complex needs, attending Foundation class

Assessment of communication and language, both BSL and English, use of amplification, AAC or other augmentative system as required. Communication and language work is undertaken within a strong student-centred practice with the following a) one to one sessions and / or small group communication work, with functionality of communication and language a key aim b) embedded communication and linguistic skills within the class's activities and lessons. Literacy is taught as a discrete subject and then supported as an embedded practice, in all other lessons.

Monitoring, tracking progress and quality assurance

Student progress is closely monitored through collaborative practice between colleagues with targets updated as appropriate by the SaLT with key staff with the Literacy Lead supporting the updating of targets for Literacy.

The implementation and impact of this policy is monitored by our Assistant Principal for Education (Student Support and Language and Communication Lead). Lesson observations, student progress tracking, achievement data and monitoring visits by language specialists as well as close collaborative practice between departments at the Academy, take place to ensure timely and effective use of the policy.

 Quality assurance observations and discussions are led by the Assistant Principal responsible for Language and Communication, with support from colleagues as required. Reports from this work are fed into the appropriate sub-committees at Governor level (Education Standards, Care and Safeguarding).