



COMMUNICATION POLICY

Rationale

We all have the right to communicate meaningfully with others to meet our basic needs (food, drink, comfort), to develop independence, to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships, and assert our rights. Southern Autistic School (SAS) acknowledges and follows the “Communication Bill of Rights” (Brady et. al., 2016).

Program Description

- Communication and language skills are developed across the curriculum as an integrated part of all teaching and learning activities. Explicit teaching of communication skills will be provided.
- Speech Pathologists are available to support the explicit teaching of communication skills through a range of modalities including verbal, non-verbal, and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) including low tech strategies such as core boards, picture exchange, visual schedules, and communication books, and high tech strategies such as speech generating devices.
- The Speech Pathologists at SAS work under a Response To Intervention approach, across the school on a Tier 1 basis to implement whole school communication intervention. If a student requires specialised support under a Tier 2 or 3 level, a referral may be activated in collaboration with the sub-school leader.
- Each referral will be logged and prioritised according to the needs of the student and the therapist’s clinical judgement, using the SPOT prioritisation hierarchy. Direct intervention may not always be required, but other supports such as liaising with staff and providing recommendations, providing and creating resources, staff training, assisting with program development, and providing input into the development and achievement of ILPs can occur.

Aims

- To provide a learning program that develops communication and language skills that encourage all students to interact with their environment and community in a functional and meaningful way.
- For students to have access to communication systems which optimise their ability to have their needs met, interact socially, express their emotions, reject items/actions, and share experiences.

Implementation

- Every student at Southern Autistic School will have an individualised learning goal in the area of communication.
- Student communication goals will be developed in collaboration with teachers and families. Speech pathologists and other team members may be asked to contribute.
- Student communication development will be an integral part of classroom practice, embedded across all subject areas.
- The Victorian Curriculum (English - Speaking and Listening) will be used to develop communication goals to ensure communication development follows a continuum of learning and skill acquisition.

- Students will be provided with age-appropriate activities designed to develop, enhance, and use their communication to access the curriculum and interact as a member of the school and wider community.
- Teachers will regularly review Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) and review communication goals in alliance with assessment dates and at other times in consultation with speech pathologists.
- Students will have access to universal communication strategies e.g. schedules, visuals, timers.
- Staff will be aware of students' methods of communication and consult with speech pathologists to ensure students have access to a working communication system and an alternative system.
- Staff will make reasonable adjustments to all curriculum materials presented to students to allow for non-verbal and minimally verbal students to understand and respond to classroom content.
- The speech pathology team will oversee and coordinate all aspects of the program, provide support and advice to others when needed and organise professional development when required.
- We will respect students and treat them with dignity, by the school community engaging in the practice of talking about a student out of their hearing range and treat the conversation with confidentiality.

I have read this policy and agree to abide by it at all times. I will seek support if I am unable to meet these obligations.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Evaluation

Date Implemented	February 2023
Authors	Brigette O'Leary/Alice Clapperton/Caitlin Donnelly/Annaleise Smith
Shared at school council	February 2023
Approval Authority (Signature & Date)	
Date reviewed	February 2025
Responsible for Review	Brigette O'Leary, Alice Clapperton, Caitlin Donnelly & Annaleise Smith

Brady, N. C., Bruce, S., Goldman, A., Erickson, K., Mineo, B., Ogletree, B. T., Paul, D., Ronski, M., Sevcik, R., Siegel, E., Schoonover, J., Snell, M., Sylvester, L., & Wilkinson, K. (2016). Communication services and supports for individuals with severe disabilities: Guidance for assessment and intervention. *American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 121(2), 121-138.