



Language and Communication Policy

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Introduction

Blanche Nevile strongly promotes and supports a bilingual approach to the education of our Deaf pupils. Good communication is the key to self-confidence, well-being, educational and academic success for all our pupils. The bilingual approach values English and British Sign Language (BSL) equally, uses both languages for teaching and learning in small teaching class environments and aims for pupils to become competent in both languages. For some pupils this means written and spoken English, and for others it means written only. A bilingual approach allows improved access to both hearing and Deaf worlds. Our approach is very pupil centred and we are committed to meeting every pupil's individual language needs.

Communication Mode

Our pupils have a wide range of communication needs. Blanche Nevile follows a pupil centred language and communication approach which incorporates BSL and English, based on individually identified strengths and preferred communication style. Pupils who have well-developed spoken English will receive their education through spoken English with the use of appropriate audiological equipment, possibly with signing to support the spoken word. Others will receive their education through BSL only.

A multi-disciplinary approach is taken to improving each pupil's communication skills and all pupils have access to a range of skilled professionals, including Teachers of the Deaf (ToD), BSL Teachers, Specialist Speech and Language Therapists (SLT), Educational Audiologist, Communication Support Workers (CSW) and Learning Support Assistants (LSA).

Pupils have an individual Communication Profile, which is the result of in-depth observations and discussions between the SLT Team, ToD, CSW, LSAs and the pupils themselves, where appropriate. It identifies in detail how the pupil communicates, their targets or preferred modes of communication.

It outlines strategies for the whole school to use to ensure the pupil's communication needs are incorporated into all aspects of their learning. It is also shared with families to support communication at home.

Some of our Deaf pupils have needs additional to their deafness and require further strategies to support communication and learning. These may include using visual materials such as photos, picture symbols, objects, more experiential learning and a differentiated curriculum with an emphasis on life skills.

We support Deafblind pupils through the use of visual frame or hands on sign language, adapted materials and braille, with regular support from a specialist visual impairment team.

A few of our pupils have hearing but lack the necessary processing skills to decode the auditory message and therefore are unable to communicate and learn through spoken language. These pupils need to learn and communicate visually through BSL and visual materials.

Mainstream Partnerships

Both primary and secondary sites are co-located and in partnership arrangements with mainstream schools, Highgate and Fortismere respectively, with staff from partnership schools being given the opportunity to learn BSL from Blanche Nevile BSL teachers. These partnerships give pupils the opportunity to mix with their hearing peers during break times, PE, Vertical Tutoring (VT), and for some pupils timetabled mainstream lessons. We provide Deaf Awareness Training to all relevant from staff who support Blanche Nevile pupils as well as give induction/INSET into how radio aids are used and provide advice about the needs of specific pupils. Level of inclusion for pupils is decided by the staff team, taking many factors into consideration. This develops confidence in a mainstream hearing environment, thus providing a 'best of both worlds' model.

Classroom Management of Bilingualism a Blanche Nevile

We strongly believe that bilingualism should be embedded in all subjects, and therefore both English and BSL are taught in our classes.

We deliver all lessons bilingually. Typically, the teacher will deliver using spoken English and the CSW will deliver simultaneously using BSL. This ensures pupils are receiving good models of both languages and can learn through their preferred language. Occasionally, roles are reversed and the teacher will deliver using BSL and the CSW will voice over in English.

Small Groups in the Classroom

The ability levels and communication needs of the pupils influence the mode of communication used when staff work with individuals, pairs or small groups within the classroom. For example, spoken English may be used with key words signed for particular pupils. Additional visual material to support learning, such as signed graphics, symbols, and visual timetables may also be used. The level of language used is adapted according to the pupil's linguistic abilities, with sentences being simplified or extended as necessary.

Early Years Foundation Stage

When pupils join the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), they do not always have an established mode of communication. Pupils may have language skills that are just emerging and will need a lot of support to access either BSL or English. Pupils are exposed to BSL at an early age through interaction and play to support them to develop language skills. All pupils are assessed and a communication plan written. There are times throughout the day when we may communicate using BSL or spoken English, depending on the pupil's individual needs. The level of language used is also adapted according to the pupil's linguistic abilities, with sentences being simplified or extended as necessary. Staff recognises that pupils at this stage of development are still "Learning to learn" and will need to be carefully taught the skills necessary for communication. The EYFS team work very closely with the SLT team to embed skills such as attention and listening. There is a focus on interaction and motivation led learning. Once these skills are in place, pupils will be supported to develop more formal language skills in both BSL and English.

Key Stage 1-4

Depending on the desired outcomes, TODs and CSWs use the pupils' target mode of communication as set out in their Communication Profile.

We are aware how important it is for pupils to adapt between BSL and English and match their use of language to suit audience and situations.

At the Secondary Department, Subject Specialists (Teachers and CSWs) deliver the Curriculum. This collaborative working between specialist staff ensures a high standard of content and delivery. Subject specific and technical vocabulary is agreed by the TOD and CSW in advance so there is clarity of usage between languages that is consistent across the school.

Classroom Management of Bilingualism in Mainstream Lesson

The Highgate Primary or Fortismere Secondary Teacher will deliver the lesson in spoken English. Pupils are supported by a CSW, according to need. CSWs will use the language and strategies most appropriate to the pupil. This includes interpreting the lesson into BSL, note taking and reinforcing the learning and incidental language which some pupils will not be able to access.

British Sign Language (BSL)

In the Primary Department, BSL is used to support learning in all curriculum subjects. Pupils are also given an in depth BSL language assessment by a qualified BSL teacher, and throughout BSL classes they are taught the BSL vocabulary and the foundations of BSL grammatical principles. All Blanche Nevile staff are expected to be fluent BSL users, this being assessed and explained during interviews. Those who join without skills must attend regular BSL sessions and are expected to continually develop their BSL skills. Support staff is present in all curriculum subjects to ensure lessons are accessible to all pupils.

As in the Primary Department, BSL is used in the Secondary Department to support learning in all areas of the curriculum which provides pupils with consistency throughout their transfer from one school to the other. Pupils at secondary are offered the opportunity to broaden their BSL skills by continuing to add to their vocabulary and benefit from a more intensive teaching of BSL grammar. Those who are able to sit formal qualifications can achieve certificates for BSL AQA and Signature BSL Level 1 and 2. It is known that effective use of BSL can support pupils' development, confidence and education and provide an effective base from which to learn other languages.

In BSL lessons, a range of visual materials is employed including flash cards, multi-media, books, DVDs and filming which encourages pupils to assess their own signing abilities and improve their use of facial expressions and gestures as appropriate. Discussions and debates are also encouraged to improve fluency of BSL. Deaf studies is also taught linked to BSL classes. In Deaf Studies pupils do their own research and are taught about Deaf history, Deafness in different parts of the world, Deaf communities, languages and technology. We also strongly encourage pupils to be involved in trips visiting other Deaf schools and events to mix with the Deaf community which helps them to strengthen their identity.

Working with Parents, Families and Carers

We actively support our partnership with family and carers. There is an expectation that parents will actively learn BSL in order to communicate effectively with their Deaf child, with the aim of achieving fluency. They have the opportunity to progress to take BSL exams. Parents, families and carers are encouraged to attend regular BSL classes which are provided free of charge to them.

English across the Whole School

Great emphasis is placed on children achieving high standards in English. For some pupils this means spoken and written English, for others it means written English only. We actively promote the development of literacy skills in order for children to learn across the curriculum. Both primary and secondary departments follow the curriculum as explained below;

Primary

We understand robust language skills underpin good literacy skills. Therefore our pupils are exposed to a language rich environment of both BSL and English. Speaking, listening and literacy skills are developed through a highly structured approach adapted by ToDs, BSL teachers and with input from SLTs to ensure that it meets the diverse linguistic needs of our pupils. This may include strategies such as Visual Phonics, shape coding and strategies such as key words signed to support spoken English and the use of symbols.

Secondary

In the Secondary Department, speaking and listening skills are delivered through both the curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils follow the national curriculum and then have a choice of accredited subjects in

KS4. This covers the ability range from Life Skills, Functional Skills and AQA Unit Award Schemes to GCSE. All subjects have a significant literacy demand and all members of staff receive regular training on how to best deliver literacy across the curriculum. In addition, there are training opportunities with fellow professionals from other schools and services to ensure parity in expectations and standardisation of language.

ToDs refer to each pupil's Communication Profile for information on targeted or preferred modes of communication and strategies to support learning. The audiology profile is also used to inform practice. Pupils are discussed regularly in teachers' meetings to ensure that teaching is matched to need.

Pupils participate in VT sessions four times a week where the focus is on language and communication. Pupils are encouraged and supported in developing their communication skills further through a regular rotation of different activities.

Many pupils are also given the opportunity to experience VT in the mainstream setting where language and communication is practised amongst hearing peer and staff. Further, hearing peers and staff also have the opportunity to learn to sign.

Mainstream staff members liaise with Blanche Nevile staff regularly to discuss language and communication needs in mainstream classes.

At the end of Year 11 pupils will leave Blanche Nevile with recognised qualifications and confidence to enter the outside world, be that further education, an apprenticeship or career.

Speech & Language Therapy

Our team of Speech and Language Therapists actively work with staff to ensure that communication aims are built into every part of the school day. We also work closely with parents and carers, who play such a vital role in their child's language development. We work in partnership with several Cochlear Implant Centres and Audiology Clinics.

We Support Pupils to:

- become independent learners who are confident to take responsibility for their communication
- maximise their potential in 'Active Listening' skills in spoken English and in BSL, where this is their main language. This builds effective inter-personal communication and specifically develops confidence to ask for clarification when a message is not understood
- communicate effectively with hearing people who have no experience of interacting with deaf people, using smiLE Therapy (strategies and measurable interaction in Live English Therapy)
- make the best use of new hearing skills following a cochlear implant or residual hearing (from hearing aids or bone conductors), explicitly working on listening skills
- access the curriculum by developing language skills and, when necessary, establishing additional or alternative strategies to access learning

How We Work:

- Pupils' communication needs are assessed and evaluated on an on-going basis
- Pupils have an individual 'Communication Profile' written by the SLTs, working jointly with the school team. This is an active tool that details how they communicate. It outlines strategies for the whole school to use to ensure the students' communication needs are incorporated into all aspects of their learning throughout the day
- Therapy is carried out in small groups, pairs, individually or in the class, as appropriate
- Therapies we offer across the whole school include: Attention Groups (Ref: Gina Davis), Shape Coding (Ref: Susan Ebbels), intensive listening therapy following Cochlear Implants, smiLE Therapy (Ref: Karin Schamroth), VERVE Therapy (Ref: Keena Cummins), Core Vocabulary Therapy (Ref: Crosbie, Holm & Dodd), language therapy for functional everyday tasks, phonological awareness and speech sounds therapy incorporating visual phonics

- For nursery and reception children, the following are additionally offered: Communication at snack-time groups, Language enrichment groups, and VERVE Therapy for practitioners
- We work actively with families to support communication aims in the home and in the community. This may include an initial home visit, running smiLE Therapy parent groups, parent workshops on different themes, meeting parents at school events and, where there is a specific need, parents may be invited to join an individual therapy session or receive a block of VERVE Therapy for parent/carers.

Audiology

Blanche Nevile has an Educational Audiologist who works in collaboration with teachers, support staff, families, pupils' Audiology Clinics and Hospitals to ensure that the pupils' amplification systems (hearing aids and cochlear implants) are working optimally at all times.

Where appropriate, FM systems are used to maximise pupils' curriculum access. FM systems can help reduce effects of background noise and help pupils' to concentrate on one person's voice. FM systems are used in both Blanche Nevile and mainstream.

Pupils are strongly supported to be independent in looking after and maintaining their audiological equipment.

Key: abbreviations

ToD = Teacher of the Deaf

CSW = Communication Support Worker

LSA = Learning Support Assistant

VT = Vertical Tutoring

SLT = Speech and Language Therapy

EYFS =Early Years Foundation Stage

Related Policies:

- **Teaching & Learning**
- **Assessment**
- **Curriculum**