



**Communication with
Parents/Guardians Policy**

1.0 Introduction

Good communication is central to working with children, young people, their families and guardians. It is a fundamental part of the Common Core. Communication can be defined into 3 channels:

Transmission		Reception
Speaking	←→	Listening
Writing	←→	Reading
Doing	←→	Watching

- 1.1 Each channel is a vehicle for a two-way process. It is important to be able to communicate both on a one-on-one basis and in a group context. Communication is not just about the words you use, but also your manner of speaking, body language and, above all, the effectiveness with which you listen. To communicate effectively it is important to take account of culture and context, for example where English is an additional language. The effectiveness of any communication must be judged on how and how much information is received and what the receiver does with it not how well it was transmitted.
- 1.2 Effective engagement requires the involvement of children, young people and those caring for them in the design and delivery of services and decisions that affect them. It is important to consult with them and consider their opinions and perspectives from the outset. A key part of effective communication and engagement is trust, both between the workforce, children, young people and their carers, and between and within different sectors of the workforce itself.
- 1.3 To build a rapport with children, young people and those caring for them, it is important to demonstrate understanding, respect and honesty. Continuity in relationships promotes engagement and the improvement of lives.
- 1.4 The skills and knowledge highlighted here and throughout the prospectus are intended to provide a basic description of those areas you may need to develop through training, learning or experience in order to do your job well.
(DfES 2005, Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce)

2.0 Accessibility for Communications

- 2.1 *What are the key factors when considering accessibility?*

- 2.1.1 Often people consider accessibility according to the nature of an individual's disability or impairment. But this can produce long lists of impairments without recognising that within each there can be a very broad spectrum of needs, and that often, different disabilities/impairments can result in similar needs. For example, a person may be one of the over 2 million people who need others to have more patience in listening to their speech which is less fluent due to speech impairment, a stroke, Alzheimer's disease, head injuries, hearing impairment and other causes. So it is far simpler to focus on the need rather than the underlying conditions which may mean little to many.
- 2.1.2 Accessibility need not add significant cost, especially when it is considered at the outset and built in to the design. For example, being able to provide a Word document can enable production of the material in any type of print, can be used with screen reader software, production of Braille documents.
- 2.1.3 Communications and involvement mean a two-way exchange. Hence we need to be able to receive and use material that is provided to us in a range of ways. Some people will need accessibility to be considered from two perspectives. For example, someone from an ethnic background may need large print documents in their first language. For people who are born deaf, or lose their hearing before learning to speak, their first language may be British Sign Language (BSL) which has its own grammar, tenses and word order. Written English is no more useful than a second language.
- 2.1.4 Deaf-blindness is defined by the Department of Health as a combined seeing and hearing impairment causing difficulties with communication, access to information and mobility.

2.2 *What communications need to be considered?*

- 2.2.1 We are likely to use our existing communications methods e.g. letters, e-mail, intranet and internet, publications, press releases, other media outlets (TV and radio), advertising, meetings, one-to-one exchanges, workshops and seminars, briefings, conferences and presentations, surveys/questionnaires etc.

2.3 *What do we need to do?*

- 2.3.1 Firstly, we have a legal duty to anticipate the needs of our service users and to make adjustments when we know the needs of our employees. Hence, we should be building adjustments to communications in to our routine practices. We need to prominently promote adjustments, alternative formats and other types of support.

2.3.2 Asking disabled people what help they need means that we can best target resources. When requests are made, we need to meet those needs quickly – delays can mean that some people are effectively excluded from the communications. If material is requested in Braille, audio tape or in translation, we should aim to provide such within 5-10 days, otherwise other formats should be provided immediately. Disabled people are experts in their own communication methods so we should draw upon their knowledge. Finally, we should monitor our effectiveness in communicating to improve the quality our service, anticipate and plan for needs better and make best use of our resources.

2.4 *What specific steps should we take?*

2.4.1 Most of the actions in the following table are common sense, common courtesy and best practice for any communications. Hence, we will be improving our communications for everyone, not just disabled people.

Need	What you need to do
1. Straightforward information/presentation	Use concise sentences and paragraphs. Use everyday, plain English. Avoid complex concepts. Avoid lengthy documents. Avoid jargon, acronyms and abbreviations. Use headings. Avoid underlining. Avoid use of capital letters in headings etc. Avoid italics – use Bold instead. Left hand justify only. Divide columns of text with a vertical line or 5 character spaces. Use bullet points. Use 12 or 14 point font. Use simple sans serif font. Avoid shading or pictures behind/around text. Avoid large areas of blank space. Avoid text at different angles. Avoid using glossy paper. Be prepared to print on coloured paper. Maximise contrast between print and paper colours.
2. Printed material to be available in alternative formats e.g. Large print, Braille, Electronic format, Easi-Read www.mencap.org.uk/download/makeitclear Audio tape/CD.	Promote alternative formats on front page in 18 font. “This information is available in other formats e.g. large print, audio tape, on disk or in Braille” please contact.....

	<p>Use free post for items for visually impaired people: www.royalmail.com</p> <p>Retain Word originals of documents.</p> <p>Identify how alternative formats can be produced.</p> <p>Provide electronic documents (via e-mail, on a website, on CD).</p> <p>Ensure that websites meet accessibility standards e.g. www.rnib.org.uk</p> <p>Produce documents without tables, graphs or other images but their content/meaning explained.</p> <p>Large print is at least 18 point font.</p> <p>Consider summaries of long documents.</p>
<p>3. Presentation material in alternative formats.</p>	<p>Keep slides simple: large clear fonts, high contrast, not too much information on each, avoid moving images/text.</p> <p>Word document in place of PowerPoint presentation - suitably punctuated and with any images explained.</p> <p>Presenter reads out material e.g. on flip chart.</p> <p>Provide copies of presentation before hand so interpreters can familiarise, can be read using screen reader.</p>
<p>4. Amplified sound.</p>	<p>Provide portable hearing loop e.g. hearing loops, mini-com phones.</p> <p>Microphones that link to loop system.</p> <p>Promote availability.</p> <p>Check that they are working.</p> <p>Minimise other sounds e.g. background music.</p> <p>Ask people to talk one at a time.</p>

	<p>Ensure that question and answer sessions are covered by microphone.</p>
<p>5. Visual/other cues to replace/assist hearing e.g. lip reading, use of British Sign Language, Deaf/blind communicator translating speech using Deaf/blind manual (finger-spell words onto receiver's palm), hands-on version of BSL or a speech-to-Braille translator machine (similar to a speech-to-text or palantype machine).</p>	<p>Avoid covering mouth and speak clearly.</p> <p>Ask people to talk one at a time. Allow time for others to both see interpretation and absorb any written/visual information.</p> <p>Use a Member of the Register of Sign Language Interpreters (MRSLI).</p> <p>Ensure BSL interpreter is well lit and visible. BSL interpreters need a break after 20 minutes so 2 may be required.</p> <p>Remote interpreters can be used via video link.</p> <p>May require professional lip speaker: repeats words silently and uses finger spelling (Council of Advancement of Communication with Deaf People lip speaking level 2 or 3).</p> <p>Have pen and paper available.</p>
<p>6. Alternative to standard phones e.g. typetalk, minicom, video phones.</p>	<p>Promote a minicom number and willingness to use typetalk.</p> <p>Know how to use typetalk operator – before dialing the number, dial 118000 then the person's phone number, 18001 for hearing users and 18002 for Text phone users.</p> <p>Allow for the extra time for your verbal communications to be typed by the operator and the other party.</p> <p>Use videophone and interpreter service via Royal National Institute for the Deaf.</p>
<p>7. Support when speaking.</p>	<p>Don't pretend to understand when you do not.</p> <p>Be patient.</p>

	<p>Don't interrupt or finish sentences.</p> <p>Offer alternative means of communication e.g. written input.</p>
<p>8. Support of another person e.g. guide, carer, British Sign Language interpreter, other language interpreter, Deaf/blind communicator.</p>	<p>Be prepared to provide/fund the costs of support person's time and expenses.</p> <p>Talk to the disabled person, not the support person.</p> <p>Adjust catering, seating etc numbers accordingly.</p>
<p>9. Other forms of support e.g. Guide/Hearing and other types of working dogs.</p>	<p>Provide access for working animals.</p> <p>Warn other attendees of their presence.</p> <p>Focus on the person not the animal.</p>

2.4.2 Further information can be found at:

http://www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/publicWebsite/public_site_right.hcsp

(Learning and Skills Council, 2006)

3.0 Partnership with Parents

3.1 Parents/guardians as partners in their child's or young person's education

3.1.1 It is widely acknowledged in Government guidance, legislation and research that parents/guardians have a key role to play in their child's or young person's education. Early years provision, schools, Academy and Local Authorities are all required to encourage and make arrangements for parents/carers to contribute to the shared view of their child's needs.

3.1.2 The parent/guardian of every child and young person of compulsory school age must make sure that they receive efficient full-time education suitable:

- to their age, ability and aptitude
- to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Section 7. Education Act 1996

3.2 *Parents/guardians have a vital role in their child's or young person's education. In working with schools they should:*

- Communicate regularly with academy staff and alert them to any concerns they have about their child's learning or provision.
- Fulfil their obligations under home-academy agreements, which set out the expectations of both sides.

3.3 *What the Appleton Academy can do to work positively with parents/carers*

3.3.1 By involving parents/guardians, they can become valuable co-educators. The Academy should therefore:

- Actively seek to work with parents/guardians.
- Value parents/guardians strengths, knowledge and experience.
- Empower parents/guardians to contribute to their child's or young person's education and support.

3.3.2 The Academy will need to ensure that they take all reasonable measures to allow all those with parental responsibility to be informed about and be involved in their child's or young person's education. (This is perhaps particularly relevant where a child or young person has SEN.)

3.3.3 The Academy should audit existing practice to ensure that parents/guardians:

- Feel welcomed into the Academy
- Receive and understand communications from the Academy
- Are supported as educators of their children and young people or as learners themselves
- Are involved in Academy life
- Have a voice in Academy' policies and organisation.

3.4 *Supporting parents/guardians of children and young people with SEN*

3.4.1 The SEN Code of Practice emphasises the importance of positive, supportive attitudes to parents/guardians and user-friendly information and procedures. There should be no presumption about what parents/guardians can or cannot do to support their children's or young people's learning. Stereotypic views of parents/guardians are unhelpful and should be challenged. All staff should bear in mind the pressures a parent/guardian may be under because of the child's or young person's needs (Para 2:6). Professionals should make efforts to ensure effective communication with parents (Para 2:7).

3.4.2 Staff within the Academy should help parents/guardians understand how to contribute effectively to their child's or young person's education and should

make every effort to ensure that parents/guardians understand their rights and responsibilities. All relevant information should be provided in a way that parents/guardians can understand.

3.5 *The responsibilities of parents/guardians*

3.5.1 As soon as parents/guardians feel that their child or young person may have a special educational need and may need different arrangements made for them:

- The Academy should listen to, and take parents'/guardians' views and concerns into account when considering any intervention
- When a child or young person is provided with any additional or different intervention through School Action or School Action Plus, parents/guardians can play a part in the processes of planning and reviewing their child's or young person's Provision Plan.

3.5.2 They can also help the Academy in implementing School Action or School Action Plus, for instance by helping their child or young person with any programmes to be followed at home.

3.5.3 If, despite the additional support provided by the Academy, parents/guardians feel their child or young person needs more help than the intervention available through School Action Plus, they have the right to ask the Local Authority to consider whether it is necessary to carry out a statutory assessment.

3.6 *The responsibilities of the Academy*

3.6.1 Within a culture of partnership with parents/guardians, Academy staff should ensure that any concerns they have about the child's or young person's learning should be discussed with them at an early stage. Staff should:

- Discuss concerns in private
- Listen carefully to information provided by the parent/guardian
- Acknowledge the parents'/guardians' expert knowledge of their child or young person
- Respect confidentiality
- Actively listen
- Show empathy
- Be honest
- Be positive - focus on the child's or young person's strengths as well as areas of need
- Be aware that parents/guardians may have needs themselves that may act as a barrier to communication
- Be flexible about arrangements for meetings and appointments

- Provide opportunities for parents/guardians to support their child's and young person's learning (e.g. through their contribution to the child's or young person's Provision Plan)
 - Invite views from parents/guardians about progress, e.g. at SEN review meetings
 - Provide access to all information and records on their child or young person
 - Be clear about what additional support the Academy will provide to meet the child's or young person's needs, and what arrangements will be put into place to monitor and review progress
 - Share with parents/guardians records kept of meetings.
- 3.6.2 Where the Academy feels that inadequate progress is being made at School Action and want to involve external agencies, they should carefully explain their reasons and give information about the external agency to be involved so that parents/guardians can give informed consent to their involvement. Where outside agencies provide leaflets to explain what their service can provide, the Academy should ensure that such leaflets are readily available.
- 3.6.3 Where the Academy decides to forward documentation to the Statutory Assessment and Moderating Panel, they should always go through the documentation carefully with parents/guardians inviting them to contribute their own views. Parents/guardians must sign the permission form for the documents to be shared with members of the Panel in order for papers to be considered.
- 3.6.4 Parents/guardians, of course, are accorded specific rights within the formal process of the statutory assessment and Annual Reviews of Statements.
- 3.6.5 As part of a statutory assessment of a child's or young person's SEN, the parents/guardians will be asked for their advice. Assistance can be given to parents/guardians from school staff. Parental/guardian advice is considered alongside advice from the Academy and other professionals when considering the child's or young person's SEN. Additional information can be attached to parental/guardian advice (e.g. a private report from a Psychologist or Speech and Language Therapist).
- 3.6.6 Prior to an Annual review (to which of course parents/guardians must be invited), the Academy should write to parents/guardians and professionals seeking written views. Any reports received should be sent out to parents/guardians two weeks before the review. Where necessary, the Principal should arrange for an interpreter or signer to be present at the meeting.
- 3.6.7 The Academy should discuss the child's or young person's needs in positive and constructive ways, seeking information from the parents/guardians only to inform the Academy as to the steps they will need to take in order to fully meet the

child's or young person's needs. At meetings with the parents/guardians regarding progress, Academy staff should focus on the child's or young person's needs, i.e. how the child or young person learns most effectively and what strategies and interventions help to improve the child's or young person's learning and development (all five outcomes as stated in 'Every Child Matters').

3.6.8 Parents/guardians, of course, are entitled to express a preference for special provision and their preference has to be given careful consideration by the Local Authority. If expressed in a meeting, such views would be carefully recorded by the Academy and included in documentation sent to the SEN Assessment Team.

3.7 *Positive meetings with parents/guardians*

3.7.1 However confident in their own skills and professional field, some parents/guardians may find meetings and case conferences very daunting and unfamiliar. The following suggestions may help you to create a non-threatening positive meeting situation:

- Arrange for parents/guardians to be greeted on arrival.
- Organise a circular seating arrangement for large groups so that parents/guardians and professionals are close, but not too close (do not have parents/guardians on one side of the room and professionals on the other).
- Do not use a table or a desk as a protective barrier.
- If only two or three of you, sit facing each other but at a slight angle.
- Greet the parents/guardians warmly when they enter the room.
- Allow parents/guardians to settle into their seats and take stock of the room and who is in it before launching into the discussion.
- Introduce everybody at the meeting – some parents/guardians like to take notes and will need time to write down the names of those at the meeting. Alternatively, create a seating plan for the parents/guardians upon which each professional can write their name and role before the start of the meeting and give this to the parents/guardians when they come in.
- Adopt a comfortable, relaxed seating position – parents/guardians will note your posture and read meanings into it.
- Orientate the whole body towards the parents/guardians.
- Lean forward slightly.
- Do not fidget and avoid mannerisms such as placing fingertips together.
- Smile and nod frequently – to encourage their involvement.
- Avoid looking at or shuffling papers.
- If taking notes, ask permission first.
- If you need to look at your watch, do it when you are speaking.
- Listen to the parents/guardians – give them time to say what they have come to say.

- Use paralanguage, e.g. “mm”, “uhuh”, to convey continuing interest and invite further discussion.
- Avoid jargon and acronyms.
- Give parents/guardians the time that was allocated.
- Sum up what has been discussed and the action agreed.
- Offer parents/guardians refreshments after the meeting so that they can talk over what has been agreed and get back to you before they leave if they need to.
- Send parents/guardians a copy of the agreed action and any formal record of the meeting.

Adopted by Appleton Academy on

Chair of the Academy Trust Board

Principal

Review date