



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the school administration.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is our commitment to ensure that every student has a means of communication. Niddrie Autistic School is a social communication early intervention school, where teaching and extending communication is the core focus of our pedagogy. Communication is a fundamental human right, and students with a communication disability have the right to access a comprehensive Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) system pertinent to their individual needs.

Our Child at the Centre philosophy encompasses highly individualised and differentiated communication goals and supports for each student to ensure that every student has access to communication. It is essential that our students have a communication system so they can participate in and access the curriculum to learn and succeed.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all students that attend Niddrie Autistic School. It is the responsibility of all staff to facilitate communication by fostering a communication-rich environment and ensuring that all students have access to communication.

POLICY

Access to communication is the core of student well-being. This policy encompasses the elements to ensure each student has an AAC system that meets their individual needs. We respect all forms of communication and have shared values and beliefs to foster communication success as communication partners.

Modes of communication:

AAC may include and is not limited to:

- Unaided communication: gesture, facial expressions, Key Word Sign.
- Aided communication (low tech): Use of objects, pictures, symbols which may be organised into communication books (e.g.: picture exchange), aided language displays, and the universal core word board.
- Aided communication (high tech): Speech generating devices (e.g.: iPad with a communication app such as Proloquo2go or LAMP).



Roles and responsibilities of staff:

- **Teachers:**
 - Obtain information from the parent/carer about the students' communication system (if applicable).
 - Will complete a routine environmental audit termly (see Appendix A) to ensure that all students have access to universal communication supports (tier 1).
 - Identify student-specific vocabulary for communication at school in collaboration with the speech pathologist.
 - Prepare vocabulary and visual supports for planned lessons and learning intentions, ensuring each student has access to their communication system.
 - Explicitly teach and model AAC using the students' communication system.
 - Provide opportunities throughout the school day for the student to use their communication system.

- **Education support:**
 - Model communication in planned and unplanned experiences.
 - Ensuring that students have access to their communication system.
 - Identify situations where the student has communication breakdown and requires support.

- **Speech pathologist:**
 - Liaise with external therapists, parents/carers about the students' communication system.
 - Provide training to all staff on how to use and model the communication systems.
 - Supporting teachers in identifying communication goals and strategies to support communication as part of Individual Learning Plans.
 - Training education support staff how to facilitate communication within the classroom.
 - Assess and analyse communication data.
 - Respond to the identified individual communication needs.
 - Accessing and implementing up to date evidence-based practice in the area of communication.

- **Occupational therapist:**
 - Assess physical access to communication (e.g.: size of visuals/buttons, ability to isolate buttons/point to and/or exchange a visual).

- **IT:**
 - Ensure that devices are working efficiently.
 - Update school-based communication apps when necessary.

- **Parent/carer:**



- Ensure that the communication system comes to school with the student.

Communication access:

- All students will have access to multimodal communication (all the different ways to communicate) throughout the day, including universal (tier 1 supports, and their individualised system).
- All school staff will ensure that the AAC is accessible across all environments within the school and school-related activities including but not limited to: classroom, bathroom, playground, first aid, bus.
- All school staff will model communication throughout the school day in formal learning tasks and spontaneous unplanned experiences.
- The volume of the students' AAC will always remain on.
- The AAC will always be in an area where the student can access their system.

Training and support:

- Support on how to use the communication system will be provided by the school speech pathologist.
- Training will be outsourced in the event where a student has an individualised system that is identified as requiring support.

Communication Efficacy:

- The communication system will be used for the intended purpose of communication.
- It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure every student has access to the words they need and vocabulary is stored in a logical position that fosters vocabulary growth.
- All students will be supported to explore their communication system. In the instance that a student is using their system to stim, neurodiversity affirming measures will be in place to support exploration including but not limited to: providing planned opportunities to explore/stim throughout the school day, providing an environment where the student can explore/stim safely.
- Every student has an AAC implementation plan outlining how and when they will use their AAC throughout the school day in alignment with their Individual Learning Plan goals (see Appendix B).

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Provided to new staff at time of induction.
- Discussed at staff briefings as required.
- Made available publicly on our school website.
- Included in transition and enrolment packs.



Middrie
autistic school

STUDENT COMMUNICATION POLICY

- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

APPENDIX:

- A) Tier 1 Environmental Audit
- B) AAC Implementation Plan

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy approved by	Principal 07/05/2024 School Council 07/05/2024
Next scheduled review date	