Beaumont College

Communication Policy

Document Control

Initial purpose and scope of the new policy/procedure agreed by:	Catherine Maunder September 2024
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Policy statement

This document is a statement of the principles, aims and strategies for communication at Beaumont College, in context of a broad range of learners considered to have a high level of need. This will enable all staff to work in a united and consistent way to provide a communication environment appropriate to student needs. This document should be shared with staff at the start of their employment with Beaumont College.

Beaumont College is a Specialist Post-16 Further Education College that caters for young people with a range of learning, sensory, health and physical needs. Many of the young people who attend Beaumont College have a communication and interaction difficulty. Communication underpins all learning and therefore the college is committed to providing a Total Communication Environment. **Definitions – see Appendix A**

Principles

Communication is a basic human right and happens throughout the day and across contexts. It is therefore the responsibility of everyone in the college to understand and use individualised communication systems and to promote communication development. The consequence of not having a set of tools for effective communication are intrinsically linked to wellbeing and emotional regulation. Students should feel heard, listened to and understood, as they Prepare for Adulthood.
Beaumont College works on the basis that everyone can, and does communicate at some level. Sometimes the student is reliant on the person supporting them to interpret their communication. The college values all methods of communication and supports the development of effective means of communication. However, staff are expected to respond to the content of the message irrespective of the method of communication. The ethos of the college is Total Communication. **Aims**

The college aims to:

- Continue to adopt, embed and improve Total Communication approach throughout all sites of the college
- Ensure young people have access to their own means of communication throughout the day
- Develop means of communication appropriate to each young person's individual needs
- Identify and create opportunities for communication throughout the 24 hour curriculum, to enable each young person to communicate to the best of their ability
- Proactively remove barriers to communication, including environmental and attitudinal barriers.
- Promote student voice and choice.
- Be a model for good practice in promoting effective communication
- Adhere to the '5 Good Communication Standards' as described by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.

The college therefore employs a Communication Team consisting of Speech and Language Therapists and Communication Technicians.

Who is covered by this policy?

The application of this policy is mandatory for all Beaumont College staff, volunteers, agency/bank staff and all other Beaumont College representatives.

Staff understanding of this policy will be assured through training.

Areas of Governance

This policy has been written with the expert contribution from staff across college.

This policy will be reviewed and updated two years from implementation by Beaumont College Leadership Team.

The Curriculum

Communication is addressed directly within the education curriculum. There are 5 curriculum Pathways, each of which target communication skills alongside other areas of learning. Where students have been assessed as having specific communication needs, they may require more individualised communication goals. Students with a diagnosis of autism have specific social interaction and communication difficulties which are addressed through the curriculum with the use of recognised strategies.

It is expected that students are supported to communicate when participating in all other non-timetabled living and learning activities. Staff are trained to identify opportunities for communication, follow communication recommendations and reinforce students' attempts to interact.

The Communication Team

The purpose of the Communication Team is to:

At a Strategic Level

- Provide a specialist perspective on college strategy and future development. This includes advising the College Leadership Team on currently recognised best practise and national trends.
- Work collaboratively and proactively with the Education team to embed communication into a dynamic curriculum which adapts to the changing profile of the student population.

At an Individual Level

- Make specific recommendations, based on robust assessment, about how to support the student's current communication and how to develop their communication skills in preparation for their future. Assessment and recommendations take into consideration not only the young person's

communication skills, but also the environment in which they're operating and the tasks/activities they need to achieve.

At an Environmental Level

- Support the development of the skillset of all staff at college.
- Ensure staff are able to effectively implement generic communication recommendations.
- Work collaboratively with all other teams across college to ensure that the physical learning and living environment promotes effective communication.

The Broader College Staff Team

Communication happens all day, every day across all settings. It is therefore expected that communication can and does happen between students and a wide variety of staff. Therefore, responsibility for creating a Total Communication environment does not fall solely to the Communication Team, but all staff are expected to understand and implement an individualised approach to communicating with students. All staff working directly with students need to be aware of the recommendations made by the Speech and Language Therapist, and need to implement strategies as necessary. All staff are expected to adapt their own communication to meet the needs of each individual student.

Strategies

The College works with individuals with a range of disabilities including cerebral palsy, autism, chromosomal disorders and global developmental delay. Assessment of communication skills leads to the identification of individual student need and appropriate recommendations. As a result, the college staff employ a range of strategies and approaches to support individual communication:

- Object cues
- Objects of reference (OoR)
- PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System)
- Visual timetables and supports
- Makaton signing
- TaSSeLs (whole body signs)
- Colourful Semantics
- Communication books and symbol boards.
- Communication software (Switch it series, Choose it series, Communicate in Print, The Grid, Clicker, etc)
- Low-tech Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCA) (Big Mack, Little Mack, Go Talk, Super Talker, etc)
- High-tech VOCA (DynaVox, iPad, etc)
- Gesture
- Verbalisations

Other strategies, such as Social Stories and Comic Strip Conversations are used across college to develop social understanding and social skills, particularly for students with a diagnosis of autism.

This policy needs to be read alongside the following policies:

- Autism
- Positive Behaviour Support

Appendix A

Communication - is a two-way process that involves the exchange of information by speech, signs, actions or other medium from one person to another.

Augmentative Communication – communication methods that supplement the user's own means of communication.

Alternative Communication – communication methods that replace the user's own means of communication.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication – an umbrella term that encompasses the communication methods used to supplement or replace speech or writing for those with impairments in the production or comprehension of spoken or written language.

Total Communication – an approach whereby all staff and students are encouraged to communicate by any means possible. This means that, in practice, all students' communication systems and methods are respected and promoted.

Student – this is a recipient of the education service provided by Beaumont College.

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