

Windsor Park School: Communication Policy



Windsor Park School is Falkirk Council's Staged Intervention 4 provision for deaf learners. The provision supports learners whose language is significantly impacted by deafness and who require intensive daily input from Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (TODCYP) to access A Curriculum for Excellence. The location and model of the school ensures that all learners also have access to the mainstream settings of Bantaskin Primary and Falkirk High School. The frequency and nature of that access is determined by the professional judgement of highly experienced Windsor Park staff who regularly plan and liaise with mainstream colleagues for each individual learner.

Other local authorities can make placing requests for learners where there is robust evidence in place to demonstrate that deafness is indeed the main barrier to accessing the curriculum and that Windsor Park is deemed suitable to best meet the holistic needs of the young deaf person.

* Throughout this policy, the term 'deaf' is used to include all types/levels of deafness.

Rationale

Learners who attend Windsor Park School have varying degrees/types of deafness. Learners use hearing aids or cochlear implants whilst others do not benefit from any amplification. The Communication Policy must therefore be flexible to accommodate all learners and provide the best means of communication for every individual.

"Language and literacy are of personal, social and economic importance. Our ability to use language lies at the centre of the development and expression of our emotions, our thinking, our learning and our sense of personal identity. Language is itself a key aspect of our culture. Through language children and young people can gain access to the literary heritage of humanity and develop their appreciation of the richness and breadth of Scotland's literary heritage. Children and young people encounter, enjoy and learn from the diversity of language used in their homes, their communities, by the media and by their peers."

A Curriculum for Excellence

Here the word '*language*' could be replaced by '*communication*' therefore one concept should never be far from the other. The word '*communication*' includes all aspects of oral, aural, manual and written methods.

The Communication Policy adopted by Windsor Park is one of Total Communication, incorporating speech, lip reading, audition (maximising the most

up to date technology) and Sign Supported English (SSE) with British Sign Language (BSL) input.

SSE has been selected as the manual element, allowing all children to access the curriculum at the same time whereby speech and sign are delivered simultaneously. SSE is not a language in its own right, independent of English, but spoken English supported with signs.

“Language is the vehicle through which needs and wants are conveyed. It enables the child to comment on his experiences, to predict and reflect. Without language social contacts are difficult to make and sustain. We need language to direct and organise ourselves, to experiment, generalise and connect one idea to another. We analyse, explain and make judgements through language.”

Alex Webster, ‘The Importance of Language in School’

It is the right of every human being to be given the opportunity to develop language which allows them to contribute meaningfully to discussions, to have their opinions valued and to contribute to decisions which will influence their lives and future.

Article 30 of the UNCRC highlights the right of minority groups to learn and use the language of that minority group. BSL is the language of the Deaf Community in Scotland. It is used by those who are born deaf and those who learn to sign as young children. BSL is their native, first language. Over 90% of deaf babies however are born to hearing parents therefore there are many deaf people who learn BSL as their second language. Provision must also be made for these young people and their families.

At Windsor Park, all learners are taught BSL by a deaf BSL tutor and work towards achieving Signature Level 1 and 2 qualifications. Free sign language classes are also available for all parents/carers and family members.

Aims of Windsor Park School

- To provide a dynamic, ambitious, challenging curriculum that meets the bespoke holistic needs of our learners and develops skills for life
- To ensure the highest quality of learning and teaching, facilitated by Qualified Teachers of the Deaf and highly skilled support staff
- To develop and sustain positive relationships with families and a wide range of partner agencies, in order to best meet the needs of individual learners
- To foster a positive self-identity in all, ensuring that the rights of every learner are respected and acted upon whilst promoting pupil voice and informed choice at every opportunity
- To support and nurture all learners to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors in school and the wider community.

- To strive for equity for all, both in school and in the wider community and to ensure a positive post-school destination for all

Role and Responsibility of the Local Authority

“To meet the needs of deaf children and effectively support their parents, it is vital that professionals possess a range of skills, knowledge and attributes. These should include:-

- *communication skills, the level of which will differ according to role and level of input. Those having a significant or direct input into the education of deaf children using sign language or a sign system should have or be working towards at least CACDP Stage 2.”*

NDCS Quality Standards in Education – Scotland

CACDP Stage 1/2 has been replaced by Signature Level 1/2/3 and all staff are given the opportunity to improve their signing skills to this level at least. This ensures staff have the knowledge and experience of communicating with a wide range of deaf people and be able to offer effective communication and support to deaf learners and their parents/carers.

“Parents need training which empowers them to become full partners in their child’s education. In particular they may need support to:-

- *Improve their communication skills*
- *Increase their deaf awareness*

All parents should be given access to “sign language and communication skills courses to be provided locally at low-cost or no-cost.”

NDCS Quality Standards in Education – Scotland

In line with Falkirk Council's BSL plan, all ToDCYP at Windsor Park are supported to achieve at least Signature Level 3 in BSL and parents/carers and family members are supported to achieve Signature Level 1 and 2.

In the Classroom/School Environment

“Language is the raw material which we use to teach across the curriculum.”

Alec Webster

In order to facilitate and enhance communication for all learners in Windsor Park classes, SSE is used, providing each individual with access the curriculum and promoting/facilitating effective communication between learners. Highly experienced staff ensure all pupils can access communication, taking into consideration seating arrangements, visual distractions and the acoustics of the room. Deaf awareness strategies will be reinforced with the learners, mainstream staff and visitors to the school. Learners will be supported in becoming confident in promoting deaf awareness strategies to enhance communication.

All learners at Windsor Park, both primary and secondary are given opportunities to develop their awareness of the variety of communication modes used by deaf people and other 'deaf issues' via the bespoke Deaf Studies element of the curriculum. This includes the role and use of sign language interpreters.

When our learners or deaf parents are involved in whole school activities in mainstream schools such as prize-giving, assemblies, services etc... Windsor Park staff facilitate signed access or Sign Language Interpreters are booked. Sign Language Interpreters will also be booked for deaf parents at Parent Evenings etc and for all learners (P6>) attending TAC meetings.

When appropriate, adults communicating in the classroom will sign to each other in order for learners to be exposed to incidental language and exchange of information.

When a deaf person is present, adults will sign to include the deaf person in the conversation. If the speaker cannot sign, other adults will facilitate the conversation.

When carrying out restorative conversations or seeking clarification of a situation, the person who communicates with the pupil most frequently should be present to ensure there is no misunderstanding and the situation is dealt with appropriately.

All resources used for learning should be fully accessible to deaf learners, including signed content and captioning. Windsor Park staff support their mainstream colleagues in ensuring that this is the case.

Awareness Raising

Windsor Park staff provide Deaf Awareness training for mainstream staff in Bantaskin Primary and Falkirk High School on an annual basis. Training will also be provided for other schools and nurseries across the authority on request.

Deaf Awareness sessions will also be delivered to each class associated with Windsor Park primary learners. In secondary, Deaf Awareness is delivered as part of the PSE programme.

In primary, Deaf Studies lessons are taught within the mainstream classes, in order to foster strong deaf awareness at an early stage.

Free Signature BSL Level 1 and 2 classes are available for Bantaskin Primary and Falkirk High staff, as well as other Falkirk Council employees.

Audiological Support

To ensure optimum use of residual hearing, it is vital that all learners are appropriately aided. Daily audiology checks are carried out by staff to ensure hearing aids/cochlear implants and Roger systems are functioning correctly. The Educational Audiologist at Windsor Park works closely with colleagues at Forth Valley Paediatric Audiology, Crosshouse Cochlear Implant Centre and other health services, maintaining and validating hearing aids/cochlear implants and assistive listening devices such as Roger Systems, minimics and Soundfield systems.

Soundfield systems are fitted throughout Bantaskin Primary and some have also been installed in Falkirk High School to improve listening environments for all pupils.

Speech and Language Therapy

A Speech and Language Therapists provide 0.2 support for some Windsor Park learners. Learners are assessed and receive individual and/or group sessions as identified. Any staff training requirements such as Colourful Semantics or Word Aware can also be supported by the Speech and Language Therapy team.

Recording Language Levels & Assessment

All primary learners will undergo a baseline assessment of language development using a variety of appropriate assessments. The children will then engage in a programme of work appropriate to their needs, in line with A Curriculum for Excellence and this will continue throughout the Broad General Education Stage (until the end of S3).

Learners will also have access to the Scottish National Standardised Assessments (P1, P4, P7, S3) with support from the person who communicates with the pupil most frequently.

Learner's communication skills will also be assessed using a variety of BSL assessments from the DCAL Assessment Portal.