Inclusive Communication Policy

Review Date	Ratified Date	Next Planned Review
Apr 2022	28/04/22	28/04/25

Directorate (Indicate which applies by ticking the appropriate box)								
General	Human Resources	Finance	College	ACC	Community Services	Housing & Support	Fundraising	Marketing
			X					

Author	Martin Best
Ratified by	College SLT

Reason for this Review	Planned review due
Were changes made?	Yes
Summary of changes	Policy transferred to new template, policy changed from Total Communication to a more college-wide expansive Inclusive Communication policy, content adapted to aid understanding of the aspiration for Henshaws to become an inclusive communication environment and supporting documents updated. A key development of the policy is to introduce Inclusive Communication Pledge across the six key areas of inclusive communication: staff training and information, student support, environment, curriculum, accessible information and technology.
Relevant Legislation	Accessible Information Standard – NHS England, 2017 RCSLT Inclusive Communication webpage, 2016 & 2021
Underpinning Knowledge – What have we used to ensure the policy is current	Advice and guidance from Speech and Language Therapist and the documents listed in Section 6.
Equality Impact Completed	See Appendix One
Suggested Action	College-wide communication of the new policy

1. Values Statement

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Henshaws has developed its core values, which are embedded through all we do. They are:

- Informed - Always aiming to increase knowledge through experience, expertise and history.
- Sharing - Desire to exchange experience and ideas with others.
- Proactive - Actively helping and supporting individuals.
- Inspiring - Through the life changing impact on the people we support.
- Compassionate - Displaying empathy and understanding.
- Empowering - Encouraging and supporting individuals to reach their full potential.

Henshaws recognises its duty to make reasonable adjustments for staff to enable them to adopt and comply with policies and working protocols to ensure full compliance. Henshaws will meet its statutory obligations within the Equality Act 2010 and aims to also 'go beyond' the scope of this act.
This will include making any practicable reasonable adjustments for a number of other diverse staff groups which also include people living with different neurodevelopmental conditions.

2. Purpose of Policy

Inclusive communication is an approach to communication which enables as many people as possible to be included in that interaction. This approach recognises that people use many ways of understanding and expressing themselves, and encourages, supports and enables people to use whatever ways of understanding and expressing themselves they find easiest.

It does not relate only to a specific activity for a particular group. It is an overarching approach which is relevant to:

- Everyone and in all situations, not just people with communication support needs
- All communication at individual, organisation and population levels
- All modes of communication – face-to-face, telephone, written, online.

(Source: Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists)

This policy sets out Henshaws Specialist College's commitment to creating an inclusive communication environment.

3. Scope

- This document applies to all employees of Henshaws Specialist College and all bank/agency staff and volunteers.
- All staff must follow this policy agreed by Henshaws Specialist College. Breaches of this policy may result in performance management.
- This policy will be available to staff via the central Policy and Procedure electronic drive.
- Staff must access the most up to date version and are strongly discouraged from printing copies of this policy.

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Standards used to develop policy

The College follows *the Accessible Information Standard (NHS England 2017)*
- Ask people if they have any information or communication needs and find out how to meet their needs.
- Record those needs in a set way.
- Highlight a person's file.
- Share information about a person's needs with other providers (with consent).
- Make sure people get information in an accessible way and communication support if they need it.

The College uses *The Five Good Communication Standards (Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, 2013)* to develop our policy and create a benchmark to measure progress against.

1. *There is a detailed description of how best to communicate with individuals.*
2. *Services demonstrate how they support individuals with communication needs to be involved in their care and their services.*
3. *Staff value and use competently the best approaches to communication with each individual.*
4. *Services create opportunities, relationships and environments that make individuals want to communicate.*
5. *Individuals are supported to understand and express their needs in relation to their health and wellbeing.*

Henshaws Specialist College Inclusive Communication Pledge

Henshaws Specialist College is committed to developing an inclusive communication environment in order to make communication inclusive and accessible for all and to improve students' quality of life.

This will be achieved through the following six priorities:

1. **Communication-friendly environment** – the environment plays an important role in supporting speaking and listening skills, emotional well-being, physical development and general engagement. Factors to consider include the layout, lighting, space, noise levels and visual distractions.
2. **Student Support** - each student has an individualised support plan which details their communication needs and preferences, involve students in the development and ongoing review of their plan and actively promote the plan to ensure the student receives consistent, targeted support.
3. **Curriculum** – the College curriculum is individualised, fit for purpose and provides students with the means, reason and opportunity to access Education, raise their achievement, interact with others and function as effective citizens.
4. **Accessible Information** – we will provide accessible resources to students to ensure full access to the College curriculum and the wider community.

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5. **Technology –** we will provide access to assistive technology devices and communication software.

6. **Staff Training and Information –** we will provide staff with the skills, training, information and opportunities to support students effectively with their communication needs.

Quality of Life

Developing an inclusive communication environment is essential to improve students' quality of life. Communication is needed within all Quality of Life domains, but is particularly relevant to Emotional Wellbeing, Relationships, Personal Development, Social Inclusion, Rights and Aspirations.

Accessible information

Henshaws is legally required to adhere to the Accessible Information Standard *(NHS England 2017)* and is committed to providing accessible information for students and staff. Accessible information is generally concerned with developing resources and making written information easier to understand for people who find reading hard, such as people with learning disabilities or difficulties, dementia and aphasia. Different words are used to describe accessible information, for example:
- Easy read or easier read

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- Aphasia-friendly information
- Making information easier
- Easier to understand information

- Simple words and pictures
- Easy write or easy info

Generally these terms mean using easy words (i.e. used commonly in everyday interaction) and pictures (e.g. symbols, cartoons and/or photographs), writing in short, simple sentences and without any abbreviations or professional jargon.

Accessible information is not just about providing written information in different formats, but also making sure that people get the support with communication that they need. This may include providing interpreters, advocates, communication partners, communication tools or strategies identified in their support plan, to help them both understand and express themselves.

The College is committed to increasing staff awareness and knowledge in the use of various communication methods including Makaton, symbols, signing, pictures, photos, communication aids, Intensive Interaction, Braille and any other form of aided communication that an individual may require. Effective classroom support and communication techniques will be monitored through themed walk-throughs, together with the targeted staff training and development programme.

While students are the primary focus, Henshaws recognises that other stakeholders, including staff and parents/carers may have communication needs, and, as such, will adapt any relevant communication accordingly.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

All employees (and all volunteers and bank/agency staff) are responsible for:
- actively promoting a culture of inclusive communication
- reading, complying with and maintaining an up-to-date awareness of this policy, including the Six Inclusive Communication Priorities
- accessing training and developing competencies to enable students to communicate effectively to ensure they fulfil their potential.

Middle Leaders are responsible for:
- ensuring that students are supported through the Six Inclusive Communication Priorities
- identifying the training needs of staff and undertaking annual training needs analysis for communication training
- ensuring all staff are compliant with mandatory communication training
- ensuring all staff can be released to attend/access training as required to enable the successful implementation of this policy
- providing staff with access to the most up to date version of this policy.

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Senior Leadership Team are responsible for:

- committing to the Six Inclusive Communication Priorities and supporting the implementation of this policy.

- managing the allocation of staffing, budgets and resources to achieve an Inclusive Communication environment.
- maintaining a database of current and archived policies/procedures
- carrying out quality control checks on all documents to ensure that they meet the Accessible Information Standard.
- up-loading documents onto both the n drive and public websites once approved
- archiving previous versions, ensuring that only the most up to date policy is available.

Policy author/s are responsible for:

- reviewing the policy at the agreed review date or earlier if changes in legislation occur or new evidence becomes available
- Submitting new/revised policies/procedures to the appropriate body for ratification.

5. Review and Monitoring

This Policy will be reviewed every 3 years by the Policy Author. The Inclusive Communication Pledge will be reviewed on an annual basis to support the College CPD plan and form part of the Equality Improvement Plan.

6. Associated Definitions, Acronyms, Documents and Procedures

Accessible Information Standard – NHS England, 2017
The Five Good Communication Standards – Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists, 2013
Position paper: Inclusive Communication and the role of Speech and Language Therapy – Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, September 2016
RCSLT Inclusive Communication webpage, 2016 & 2021
https://www.rcslt.org/speech-and-language-therapy/inclusive-communication-overview/

Appendix One: Equality Impact Assessment

7. Implementation Plan

This policy should be disseminated to all Leaders/managers who in turn will ensure that staff have access to read and understand the policy and its implementation. In addition, Middle Leaders need to work with their teams to ensure that appropriate resources and training are in place to enable implementation.

8. Linked Policies

In Class Support Handbook
College Code of Conduct
College Mission and Values
Equality and Diversity Policy
Training & Development Policy

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Appendix One: Equality Impact Assessment

EIA Form	
Question	**Response**
Name of policy	Inclusive Communication Policy
Summary of aims and objectives of the policy	See Section Two above
What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? *(e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)*	Consultation with College SLT and Speech & Language Therapist.
Who is affected by the policy	All students, staff, volunteers and visitors at Henshaws Specialist College
What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy	See Section Five above

Protected Characteristic Group	Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?	Please explain and give examples of any evidence/data used	Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)/Lead/Timescale
Disability	Negative	Potential negative impact if the training and information was not made accessible.	All reasonable adjustments will be made in the presentation of information and the delivery of training to be as individualised and inclusive as possible
Gender reassignment	No adverse impact expected		
Marriage or civil partnership	No adverse impact expected		
Pregnancy & Maternity	No adverse impact expected		
Race	No adverse impact expected		
Religion or belief	No adverse impact expected		

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Sexual orientation	No adverse impact expected		
Sex (gender)	No adverse impact expected		
Age	No adverse impact expected		

Question	Explanation/Justification
Is it possible the proposed policy or activity or change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	This policy has been written in conjunction with a wide range of evidence based literature and practice that has been designed to follow similar core values to our organisation, and as such we are being mindful.

Final Decision:	Tick the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
1. No barriers identified, therefore activity will **proceed**.		
2. **Stop** the policy or practice at some point because the data shows bias towards one or more groups		
3. A**dapt or change** the policy in a way which you think will eliminate the bias	X ☐	All policies and procedures will be adapted to meet a member of staff's reasonable access requirements
4. Barriers and impact identified, however having considered all available options carefully, there appear to be no other proportionate ways to achieve the aim of the policy or practice (e.g. in extreme cases or where positive action is taken). Therefore you are going to **proceed with caution** with this policy or practice knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision.		

Name of Responsible Manager	Title Responsible Manager	Date completed
Martin Best	Head of ITS	05/04/22

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