



OLS Language and Communication Policy

Policy Date:	December 2023	Review: December 2024
Agreed to be adopted Signature:	Date:	Schools & Resources committee
Policy update Date	February 2025	Review: February 2026
Agreed to be adopted Signature:	Date	Schools & Resources committee
Review		
Agreed to be adopted Signature:	Date	Schools & Resources committee

Oak Lodge is a maintained Special Education Needs school in the London Borough of Wandsworth. Oak Lodge School provides education for students aged 10 to 19.

- Who are D/deaf
- Who have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)

The term D/deaf is used throughout education and research to describe students who are Deaf (British Sign Language users) and deaf (who are hard of hearing and tend to communicate more orally).

Oak Lodge aims to:

- Make learning and positive interactions accessible to all pupils.
- Develop students' functional language and communication skills, so that students leave school confident and competent in using a variety of communication methods to increase their chances of succeeding in both the hearing world and the wider D/deaf community as adults.
- To enable all students to develop positive relationships *and maintain a sense of wellbeing*.

Language and Communication Philosophy at Oak Lodge School

We promote the use of BSL/Sign Language across the school where, regardless of ability, staff and students are expected to sign in public places, so that all communication is visible. This promotes incidental learning to take place where students learn through informal communication interactions with others outside the classroom. Research is very clear that D/deaf students are not exposed to the same opportunities for incidental learning as hearing students. Oak Lodge is creating a language rich environment around the school which will promote incidental language learning to take place.

- We recognise the importance of raising students' confidence and self-esteem in learning both BSL and English.
- We also recognise the use of British Sign Language (BSL) and English equally and educate our students how to bridge both languages.
- We recognise the use and benefits of **Total Communication (TC)** approach in our teaching and delivering of curriculum.
- We aim to develop students' knowledge and skills in BSL, English and Spoken Language.
- We use Sign Supported English (SSE) to model spoken and written English and to bridge both languages, BSL and English.
- For those whose English is their first or preferred language, we aim to develop their knowledge and skills in BSL.
- For those whose Sign Language is their first Language, we aim to further develop their knowledge and skills in BSL and English.
- We recognise and support the development of Spoken English for some of our students.
- We provide bespoke Speech and Language Therapy programme focusing on developing language and communication skills.
- We provide life skills programme to support students in preparing for adult life where they learn strategies for communicating with hearing people in the community.

- We support students' listening skills so they can develop their Spoken English by ensuring consistent, effective, and appropriate use of implication.

School Assemblies

We provide school interpreters at the whole school assemblies where they use BSL.

Using Language and Communication in Teaching

Teaching is delivered using **Total Communication** approach. This means we deliver the learning using language that best fits our pupils' needs. These could be communication tools and/or systems that all contribute to the learning and development of language in the classroom such as BSL, Sign Supported English (SSE), Spoken English (SE), gesture, lip-reading, and use of visual prompts/support to aid communication.

Students who have BSL as their first language, access the curriculum through sign language. For these students the Oak Lodge philosophy is one of sign bilingualism. This philosophy gives equal status to BSL and English. These students are **also** explicitly taught how to use BSL as a medium to learn English using a unique bespoke programme developed by BSL specialists.

For deaf students whose first language is not British Sign Language, BSL is taught as a stand-alone subject to provide them with communication skills, knowledge of linguistics and a link to the Deaf community. BSL allows these students to access Deaf people and hearing people who sign in the community.

For students new to BSL, bespoke courses are provided which match their individual needs.

Students with speech language and communication needs (SCLN), benefit from the visual strategies offered (e.g., sign language, symbols, AAC, models, gestures, facial expression and pointing) to express themselves more clearly and to help them to access and make sense of the spoken language around them.

For those students who have access to aural approach, we promote and deliver effective listening skills- Oak Lodge School provides opportunity for these pupils by assistive technology (soundfield systems and / or radio aids), audiology (hearing-aids, implants) and individualised speech and language therapy sessions.

We work closely with Speech and Language Therapists (SaLT), Therapy team (OT, Physio), SENCo, and other specialised professionals to ensure that individual students' learning, linguistic and communication needs are being met in and out of the classroom.

Each student works towards communicative competency in their first language (be it in BSL, SSE or spoken English).

Use of Communication Rules in lessons

To ensure all students have full access to language during lesson time, Oak Lodge uses communication rules. It is expected all students must put their hand up when they want to contribute, this will enable other students to identify who is signing/speaking. The procedure for using the communication rules in lessons are:

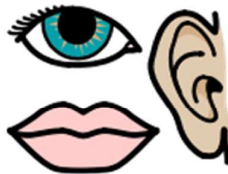
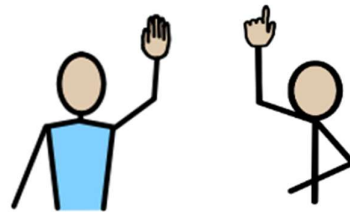
- All students must wait before the teacher signs/signals their name before responding.
- Before any student signs/talk and sign, this student must check all other students are watching before signing/talking and signing.
- No signing or talking over, nor is shouting acceptable.

Oak Lodge has produced a visual poster to reinforce the communication rules in lessons. It is displayed in the classrooms.



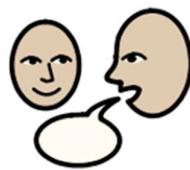
Oak Lodge Communication Rules

Put your hand up



Make sure everyone is watching and listening

Include everyone in the conversation



Take turns

Classroom Arrangement

Language and Communication classroom is organised to support and maximise students' language and communication needs; standing and seating layout ensures good visibility of the teacher/TA and other students.

Using Language and Communication Outside the Classroom

Staff should use sign language in line with their proficiency level all the time outside the classroom to provide students with natural exposure to different language and communication models. Consistently using BSL/Sign Language in all settings reinforces language development and ensures students receive varied linguistic input, supporting their communication and social skills in real-world contexts.

Deaf Awareness

It is expected that all school staff, and governors should participate in deaf awareness training to ensure deaf students and staff communication is supported.

BSL lessons for Parents

Oak Lodge School provide Family Communication Classes in school. The classes run on a fortnightly basis. The classes cover key every day topics and communication tips for families to communicate in BSL with their child.

We also have a Family Liaison officer (FLO) from the Royal Association for Deaf People who is able to arrange home visits and remote sessions to support families with BSL and communication strategies at home. The FLO will work closely with families and the school to provide resources and support with communication between home and school.

BSL lessons for Staff

BSL training is provided to support staff developing this BSL knowledge and skills. This is done at the request of the headteacher and staff availability to deliver the in-house training.

BSL lessons for Governors

School governors are encouraged to attend BSL courses from Level 1 in BSL onwards. This will promote positive awareness of the use of BSL across the school and it will help the governors to communicate with Deaf staff and students effectively.