

Furlong Park School for Deaf Children

COMMUNICATION POLICY

Rationale:

Furlong Park School & Pre School for Deaf Children provides educational programs for children with a hearing loss, including those with additional needs, between 3 and 13 years. As an educational setting for deaf children, issues of language choice and development are of vital importance. The school recognises that Auslan is the language of and an essential element of the culture of the Deaf Community and as such has a significant role to play in the education and language development of our students. Our current practice is derived from research into bilingual/ bicultural models and has been adapted to meet the specific needs of our school community.

In determining the language policy for our school, consideration must be given to the backgrounds of our students. Variables to consider include:

- cultural background
- type and level of hearing loss
- family structure
- educational/life experiences
- language experiences
- Parental awareness of the implications of deafness and awareness of other issues pertaining to deafness.

Our students bring with them a variety of languages, language levels, skills and varying levels of deafness. When working with children, their families and other staff it may be necessary to alternate between languages to accommodate each individual's needs.

In addition Auslan has a significant role to play in the Furlong Park LOTE and Deaf Studies Program. The implementation of our LOTE and Deaf Studies is outlined in our LOTE policy.

Aim:

To meet and develop the language needs and preferences of each student, staff members at Furlong Park School for Deaf Children recognise that communication styles vary and include users of Australian Sign Language (Auslan), users of a more English style of signing (Sign Supported Spoken English), users of spoken English without any form of sign and the use of visual communication aids, with or without speech. We aim to address all areas of linguistic growth and development in both English and Auslan at the level appropriate for each individual.

Implementation:

Language expectations at Furlong Park require

- staff to:

- Respect a family member / carer's language choice for their child
 - Respect a student's preferred language choice.
 - Respect the individual language choice of deaf staff members
 - Maintain a high level of skill across the variety of language styles
 - Use the information outlined in Auslan, Oral Language and Literacy assessments when determining Individual Communication Goals for students.
 - Strive for educational outcomes that focus on a student-centred, meaning-based language and learning
 - Ensure that English and Auslan are equally valued and presented in class.
- School Council and Management to
 - Support the whole school community to build a wide range of appropriate language skills, experiences and strategies, by facilitating staff and community access to information and professional development in all areas of language development.
 - Auslan tuition to be offered by the school to support parent and family members to develop their language skills.
- Parents and Family members to
 - Be involved with their child's language development by attending the "Developing Early Communication with your Deaf Child" program offered to complement the speech therapy sessions.
 - Be involved with their child's language development by attending both Auslan classes and individual speech and language sessions offered by the school.
- Students to
 - Respond positively to the expectations placed upon them through language learning and other personal, educational and social areas. These expectations include the maintenance of technical devices such as hearing aids and cochlear implants.
 - Develop positive attitudes to Deafness and Auslan, and the acceptance of the variety of communication styles that exist within our school, our school community, the Deaf community and the wider Australian culture.
 - Focus on becoming effective communicators.

Assessment:

- Auslan assessments carried out biannually for all students by suitably qualified and skilled staff members
- Oral language assessments carried out biannually by the Speech Pathologist.
- Language assessments carried out by class teachers as outlined in VELs and each students' Individual Learning Plan.

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed in line with the school's policy review timeline and was last ratified by School Council in..... **NOV 2008**