

The use of sign language is so important for our pupils that we have a team to support not just them, but the staff and families around them also.

Our Provision:

- On site Total Communication Practitioner and Sign Language tutors
- Weekly timetabled sign language classes for staff; who are expected to attend one a week
- Weekly timetabled sign language session for each class
- Sign Language support on residential houses
- Additional Sign Language support for teachers to assist with signs needed for curriculum subjects
- 4 signing break time clubs a week
- Weekly awards for staff and pupil 'Star Signers'
- Topical 'Sign of the Week' phrases
- Free weekly sign language class in school for parents/carers
- Free Skype sign language lessons for parents/carers
- Signing Buddy Scheme where pupils with a high level of signing are 'buddied' up with a younger pupil to mentor them

The use of sign language is supported and encouraged in all environments



St. Mary's Sign Language /
Total Communication Team

Signing is used when communicating with all pupils at St Mary's, this is essential for a number of reasons:

To help understanding of words. Most of our pupils have much stronger visual processing skills, thus signing words supports their understanding of spoken language.

To develop words and concepts. Difficulties with auditory processing impacts on ability to learn and store language. If the sign is consistently used with the spoken word, this will help the pupils to store that word. Therefore we must always speak at the same time as signing.

To communicate with staff and peers. For those pupils with speech difficulties, signing can support communication with others without having to rely solely on speech.

To support word retrieval (if pupils have word finding difficulties) or to support them to slow down their rate of speech so that they can organise their language more effectively.

The act of signing also **slows the rate of our speech** and this gives the pupils a greater chance of processing what we are saying.

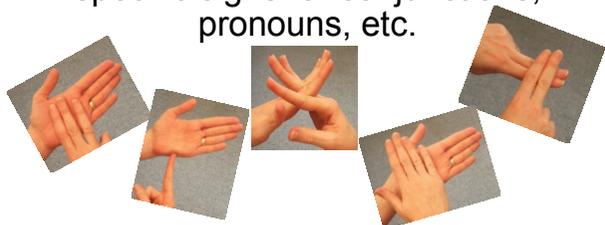
At St Mary's all pupils have speech, language and communication needs, therefore signing is crucial in all environments.

Sign Supported English

At St Mary's we use Sign Supported English. We speak to the pupils using short, simple sentences and we sign the key words. We always speak as we sign; therefore signing follows spoken English word order (unlike British Sign Language). Signing is used to support the pupils' speech, language and communication needs as part of our Total Communication approach.

Signed English

In an appropriate setting, such as when working on reading or grammar, Signed English is used. In Signed English every word of a spoken sentence is signed. To represent spoken language accurately, generated signs are used as grammatical markers to express such things as tenses as well as using specific signs for conjunctions, pronouns, etc.



What St Mary's offers

St Mary's School & College provides residential and non-residential education, care and therapy for pupils aged 7-19. Our pupils have speech, language and communication needs and may also have associated physical and learning difficulties.

Our therapy, health and wellbeing teams and on-site facilities enable us to deliver provision across the waking curriculum. Our model of integrated therapy means that the pupils' needs are planned, provided, and assessed in natural and functional settings. There is the opportunity to develop high levels of trust and familiarity leading to strong therapeutic relationships. We work as a multidisciplinary team to maximise independence levels and the development of 'tools for life'.

The ultimate aim is for every pupil to achieve as much independence as possible so that they can live a fulfilled life.

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Sign Language

