

Fromefield Manor School



Total Communication – Local Procedure November 2025

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Introduction
<p>Fromefield Manor School has Total Communication at the heart of the school</p> <p>“Total Communication” describes an approach that strives to create a supportive means of communication to understand and be understood” (Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists). This means that pupils and staff are encouraged to use every available form of communication, with a particular emphasis on what is relevant to individuals. A Total Communication approach acknowledges that communication is not simply about talking and emphasises the importance of body language, gesture, photos, symbols, signs, objects and more creative mediums such as music.</p> <p>Every pupil in our school has Autism and their communication is impacted in various ways and with a range of severities, therefore Total Communication is important to each pupil as it supports the learning and understanding by presenting information in a variety of ways. At Fromefield Manor School we provide an enjoyable, structured, engaging and stimulating place for our pupils to learn. Each pupil is an individual and has their own preferred way of communicating either verbally or non-verbally. We believe that all children and young people have the right to understand and be understood in all aspects of life, therefore, it is the policy of the school to support the pupils with the following approaches.</p>
Communication approaches
<p>a) Verbally: when interacting with the pupils try to position yourself at their level and face them as you speak (remember eye-contact can be challenging for some children so do not insist upon it). Reduce your spoken language and use open body language and increased facial expressions to support engagement and understanding. Use the ten second rule when waiting for the pupil to respond.</p> <p>b) PECS: the majority, of our pupil use PECS to help communicate their needs. It is important that we know the stages our pupils are at, to give them the correct support and remember that PECS is not just used at snack time but incorporate opportunities for its use</p>

throughout the school day. Pupils who use PECS also rely on staff to update their PECS cards as their interests change and language develops.

c) Intensive Interaction: develops the “fundamentals of communication”. This is an approach that uses, eye contact, facial expression, body language and verbalisations through turn taking. A child gradually learns to communicate as they grow, develop and socialise. Intensive Interaction is delivered daily to some of the children across the school in a mixture of set intervention time in addition to being embedded into spontaneous communication during the course of the school day.

d) Sensory supportive environment: Many of the pupils experience sensory processing difficulty, therefore it is important that the school is sensitive to their needs. This is met through a distraction-controlled environment with minimal décor, sensitive lighting and a reduction in background noise all of which support a communication friendly environment.

e) Visuals and TEACCH (inc. timetables/whiteboards/timers/lanyards/workstations):

i) Visuals assist pupils understanding of routine/transitions made during their day. It also encourages anticipation of transitions whilst providing continuity and consistency in communication. Such visuals can also provide opportunities for pupils to make choices.

ii) As our pupils are visual learners the school's structure and rules are presented visually and tailored to each pupil's stage of symbolic understanding (objects/photos/symbols with the written word), to help pupils understand the daily routines. TEACCH schedules, workstations, timers and whiteboards are all visual strategies used to support pupils' attention, engagement and comprehension. All staff have standard school symbols labelled with the written word on lanyards to support spoken directives. 3

f) Signing: where appropriate staff use Signalong, a speech supported signing system. Only key words within a spoken sentence are signed to emphasise and provide clarity to the message, supporting a pupil's comprehension.

g) Objects of Reference (OOR): An OOR is any object which is used systematically to represent an item, activity, place, or person. Understanding real objects is the first stage of symbolic development. Therefore, using objects is considered the most concrete way of representing a word for pupils. Locations throughout the school are labelled with OOR and such door objects have been replicated for relevant classes to enable them to learn to anticipate events while moving around the school.

h) ELKLAN's Communication Stages and Blank Level questions: are used across the school to plot communication stages of every pupil. This is to ensure that the right communication approach is used to support the development of each pupil's communication.

i) One-page profiles: Classes have one-page profiles displayed in each classroom to ensure that consistent support is given to each pupil, in regards of their communication, medicals and sensory needs.

j) Labelling: clear and consistent labelling of rooms and equipment are used across the school with symbol and written word.

k) Communication Forum: Communication Forum is held once a term and is attended by the Headteacher, Total Communication HLTA and the Speech and Language Therapist. During the forum whole school communication approaches and communication training needs are discussed. Staff can refer pupils to be discussed at the Communication Forum with regards to being referred for specialist input from the NHS Speech and Language Therapy Department.

l) Parent involvement: Communication Workshops and 1:1 discussion are offered to parents through the in-house Speech and Language Therapy service. Parents are offered advice, support and opportunities to share experiences.

m) Core Board: Core Boards are a form of low tech AAC (Alternative and Augmentative Communication System).

(A) Verbal Communication

Five top tips for clear Communication

1. Positioning and body language Try to get down to the pupils' level and face them when to speak. Ensure that you have open body language, and you want to listen and engage with them. This can be shown through exaggerated facial expressions and warm responses.

2. Say the pupil's name before you speak to them. This just clarifies that you are talking to them as this can be missed by people with Autism.

3. Reduces your language Too much information can be hard to possess so keep to single words or short sentences. If you want a pupil to come and sit for group time you may want to say: "Jim, group time, sit on the chair" or even tap the chair and just say "sitting" as opposed to: "It is time for group, come and sit down on a chair with your friends"

4. Ten second rule People with Autism can have a delayed processing time so give the pupil ten seconds to respond to you, stay quiet but show you are waiting for a response by looking at them. Remember that ten seconds can seem like a really long time so if it helps count it quietly in your head.

5. Repeat the same instruction word for word It helps the pupil to process the information if when repeating an instruction, you use the exact same words, for example: "Jim, do you want banana or apple?" is repeated and not changed to a sentence meaning the same message: "Which one would you like Jim - apple or banana?"

(B) Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

PECS teaches the pupil how to communicate or what the basic rules of communication are. Then the pupil learns to communicate specific messages. The pupil learns to communicate first with single pictures, but later learns to combine pictures to learn a variety of grammatical structures, and communicative functions.

PECS Phases

Phase I – Physical Exchange

Phase II - Distance and Persistence

Phase III Discrimination of Symbols

Phase IV Sentence Structure (I want) Then Attributes

Phase V Answering, "what do you want?"

Phase VI Commenting in response to a question

(C) Intensive Interaction

Intensive interaction teaches and develops the "fundamentals of communication". This is an approach that uses eye contact, facial expression, body language and verbalisations through turn taking to exchange the patterns of conversation.

What is Intensive Interaction?

The pupil gradually learns to communicate as they grow, develop and socialise. Intensive Interaction builds on the existing communication skills your child already has. It focuses on the interactions that happen naturally between adults and children throughout the course of any day. These are the light-hearted, fun, face-to-face exchanges of eye contact, facial expression, touch or sounds. We need to communicate with pupils on their own level, so they can understand and relate to us. If we do this, they may be more responsive and sociable in a verbal or non-verbal way.

How can it benefit the child?

- Intensive Interaction sees the child as an individual - important for their self-esteem.
- It can help to strengthen the relationship you have with the child.

- It may help the child feel more relaxed and secure. This may have a positive effect on their behaviour.
- It may help children who feel isolated, anxious and who may head bang or rock to blank out confusion. Intensive Interaction can help them to develop early communication skills.

(D) The Sensory supportive environment

Many people with ASD have difficulty processing everyday sensory information. The individual's senses may be over or under-sensitive, or both, at different times. These sensory differences can affect the way our pupils experience the world around them. This can have effect on eating, physical activity, sleep, and behaviour. It is vital to our pupil's communication that we recognise this and help adapt the school environment accordingly.

As a school we achieve this by ensuring the school is a calm environment, with minimal décor, sensitive lighting and a reduction in background noise. Pupils are offered ear defenders when needed. Quiet spaces available, offering time out of busy classrooms. Sensory rooms and activities are given value across the school to reflect the pupil's choices. Staff follow a policy for displays which ensures that they are not over stimulating. Contractors and gardeners do not do noisy work on site when the pupils are in school.

(E) TEACCH

The TEACCH approach has five basic principles: physical structure, scheduling, work system, routine, and visual structure. The use of visual structures to organise the environment and tasks is crucial when teaching skills. It focuses on the pupil and their skill, interests and needs. It gives structure to support transition and provides choices. TEACCH is implemented throughout the school in schedules, workstations, whole classroom layouts, and other strategies including working towards and now & next boards. Staff have a responsibility to continually assess the pupils to ensure they have the right TEACCH approach and support for their current needs. 10 **Whiteboards** - Whiteboards are used with some pupils to support transitions, give routine and signal an end to an activity. They can be used with drawings or the written word.

Timers - Timers are used throughout the school to give a visual understanding to how long an activity will last. This can give more time to processing a change and reducing anxiety. All classes have a range of timers for different situations from 30 seconds to 10 minutes.

Lanyards - All staff have standardised visuals on lanyards to support transition and understand school rules. It is the school staff's responsibility to ensure they use the lanyards and keep them in good condition. Lanyards can be customised to support some individual pupils needs.

(F) Objects of Reference (OOR)

An object of reference is any object which is used systematically to represent an item, activity or place. Understanding real objects is the first stage of symbolic development. Objects of reference are used with pupils who find it difficult to understand spoken words, signs, symbols or photographs.

Some pupils in the school will use OOR to help them transition or understand their routine. Show the OOR just before a pupil is about to start a new activity or make a transition whilst using short simple language saying what will happen e.g. before going swimming, give the pupil a 'towel' OOR and say "swimming".

Encourage pupils to take the OOR with them to the location. It is best if the pupil keeps in contact with the OOR. If they do not want to hold it, the adult can do so, keeping the object in the pupil's view throughout the transition.

Once a pupil has been introduced to the OOR they need to make the transition immediately in order to help them understand the connection between the object and what happens next. It is very important that the same object is used consistently (i.e. every time you do that activity/ transition.)

(G) ELKAN
<p>ELKAN Communication stages All pupils will be plotted using ELKAN's communication stages if their communication stage is developing below Abstract Words and Reasoning. This ensures that each pupil is receiving targeted communication support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-Intentional • Antiphony • Intentional • Word and Ideas • Joining Word and Ideas • Abstract Words and Reasoning <p>Blank level Questioning - Blank level questioning will be accessed once a pupil has progressed beyond the Communication Stages. This will support our pupils understanding of spoken language and ensure that they are accessing targeted support for their verbal communication.</p> <p>Blank level 1-Naming Blank Level 2-Describing Blank Level 3 Re-Telling Blank Level 4 Justifying</p>
(H) One Page Profile
<p>Every pupil in the school has a One Page Profile detailing personal information such as individual communication uses (e.g. PECS), likes and dislikes, and personal care. These One Page Profiles are displayed in each classroom to ensure that they are supported in their preferred manner. It provides information to supply staff giving consistent support to each pupil.</p>
(I) Labelling
<p>To support understanding of routine and transitions, every classroom and activity room is clearly labelled with a photo, symbol and the written word. Classrooms and the Life Skills room have clear labels on cupboards. This enables to pupils to be independent and supports communication choices.</p>
(J) CORE BOARDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Boards are a form of low tech AAC (Alternative and Augmentative Communication System). • Access to core words enables the user to communicate for a wide variety of functions e.g. to request, to comment, to give an opinion. This means it is important to not be restricted to just nouns. • The AAC learner needs to have lots of opportunities in their daily life to be immersed in their AAC system, to see and hear others using this to communicate for real reasons throughout the day. • Model regularly and consistently. • Point to the key word. You do not need to point to every word that you say. • Model a wide range of communication functions. • Model and extend depending on the AAC user's language levels. For example, if the AAC user is not pointing to any symbols, point to one key word at a time.

Local Procedure Review History:

Date Reviewed	Reviewer	Summary of revisions
November 2025	M Watch	Dates and RD updated.