



Total Communication Policy

STATEMENT OF INTENT

“Acorns School aims to develop communication as an all-day long approach. We will provide staff with the training, resources and support needed to develop and implement aids to support a communication approach suitable to individual’s needs.

Vocabulary will be modelled with the aim to expand individuals understanding and use of language at a level appropriate to them.

Appropriate, engaging, and purposeful activities will be provided to support the development of children’s functional communication skills. Skills will be practiced in the school environment, wider community and within the home environment to provide children with the opportunities to continually make their want and needs known in a way that can be understood by all.

A consistent whole-school approach will be developed supporting consistency and continual progression for all”.

AIMS AND PURPOSE

The aim of this policy is to:

- Set out clear and consistent strategies to meet the diverse communication needs of our pupils to equip them for life and enable them to operate successfully within their own environment and the wider community.
- Identify the ways in which Acorns Primary School will provide and maintain a successful communication environment, which allows all children the opportunity to develop his/her language and communication across the curriculum.
- Promote regular liaison between parents/carers and professionals to ensure continuous and consistent communication experiences at home and school.

TOTAL COMMUNICATION AT ACORNS PRIMARY

At Acorns Primary School we adopt a total communication approach using a range of communication methods and strategies to support and encourage communication skills and the development of speech and language. The

methods are not used in isolation and a pupil may use a combination of the following methods.

Intensive Interaction –

This is a pre-verbal approach that facilitates children's engagement with a supporting adult or peer to develop their communication skills. By copying the actions or vocalisations of a child, we can help support them to develop the ideas that communication can influence interaction with our environment.

Object Cues and Objects of Reference –

The use of objects as a means by which pupils are helped to make sense of their world and to develop an understanding of events.

An object of reference is presented to a pupil with accompanying language in preparation for an event which is to follow e.g., in preparation for 'lunch' the pupils are shown the object of reference representing lunch time – a spoon.

At Acorns Primary School we have an agreed consistent set of objects of reference which are to be used by agreed classes and identified pupils. Some pupils may also use objects of reference to aid choice making.

Photographs and Symbols –

The use of photographs and symbols provides valuable support for pupils and is encouraged for most pupils especially those pupils who are considered visual learners and those with ASD.

Examples of symbol use includes but is not limited to timetables (individual and class timetables), communication books, ALI boards.

It is the responsibility of class staff to provide symbols / photographs as appropriate to support and aid communication. Acorns has an agreed set of commonly used symbols which aims to ensure consistency across school. All symbols should be generated using Boardmaker.

PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) –

The Picture Exchange Communication System is a form of augmentative and alternative communication.

It is a structured approach to developing communication with a student by 'exchanging' a photograph or symbol for a desired item. It aims to develop a pupil's functional communication.

PECS is a very structured approach and has a defined hierarchy that must be followed for it to become a successful communication system. At Acorns we also use many PECS strategies to support pupils e.g. Now / Next and individual timetables.

There are 6 phases of PECS that pupils move through These are:

1. Exchanging a symbol
2. Travelling
3. Discrimination 4
4. Sentence structure
5. Spontaneous requesting
6. Social communication.

Makaton –

Makaton is a hand-based system where children learn to develop motor patterns or signs with their hands to communicate different activities/ objects/ requests and curriculum core language. Makaton is used as a visual and kinesthetic support to aid the development of the spoken word and as a means of communicating everyday needs and wants.

Makaton should be used throughout lessons where appropriate as a visual to aid understanding of language. Some pupils may also choose to use Makaton signs to convey meaning or understanding.

Colourful Semantics –

Colourful semantics is aimed at helping children to develop their grammar, but it is routed in the meaning of words (semantics). Some students at Acorns Primary School use colourful semantics to support their understanding of language.

Spoken word –

Spoken communication is made up of speech sounds, word meanings, putting words into sentences and grammar.

The use of speech is always encouraged, and we provide models of clear speech and language for the students.

Some of those who do use spoken communication may have difficulties with the organization, clarity and fluency of speech sounds and words.

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Assessment

Assessment of communication skills is in line with the assessment, recording and reporting policy for the school.

In relation to communication the following considerations apply:

- All pupils should be assessed using the Communication Matrix twice yearly. This assesses a child's functional communication skills and any developments made towards their communication skills.
- Pupils who are in the Early Years Foundation Stage are assessed using the Early Years Foundation Stage Development Matters.
- Most pupils have communication targets on their IEP's. Assessment against learning outcomes is made on an individual basis to demonstrate progress and inform future targets relating to EHCP and Annual Review outcomes.
- For pupils who are involved with Speech and Language Therapy, a formal report is submitted with the pupil's annual review.

Monitoring and Evaluating

The Senior Leadership Team, supported by Hannah Serventi and Kelly Vacchiano, will take responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of communication through:

- Planned observations
 - Peer to peer observations (feedback)
 - Informal feedback and discussions with staff including Speech and Language
 - Monitoring of progress towards targets on EFL (evidence for learning); including written comments and pictorial or video evidence.
 - Tracking pupil data using Communication Matrix devised by Acorns School.
 - Speech and Language will monitor progress through specialized Speech and Language assessments.
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Inset and Training

At Acorns Primary School we recognise the importance of up skilling all teaching team to enable all pupils to reach their potential.

All new staff undergo staff induction which includes Communication at Acorns.

The teaching team and support staff have an ongoing programme of CPD support based on individual needs.

Parental / Carers

The school recognises that home-school partnership is pivotal to the success of pupils' achievements in communication.

Close liaison is encouraged through:

- Parent / carer meeting with class teachers and / or Speech and Language Therapists
- Parent / carer communication workshops
- IEPs shared with parents and outcomes reported to parents termly.
- EFL (Evidence for Learning) parent view to share progress with parents / carers.
- Annual reports
- Annual reviews

Speech and Language Therapy (SALT)

To ensure the successful communication development of all students at the school it is essential that the Speech and Language Therapist, SALT department and school staff work collaboratively.

Speech and Language Therapists adopt a Consultative Approach, they work in conjunction with school staff, and parents to assess the communication needs of the child. Assessment may involve observation in the classroom, teacher discussion and individual assessments.

Following assessment, the SALTs advice and plans are carried out throughout the day by school staff and parents/carers for the majority of our pupils. This is the Universal Approach.

The Speech and Language Team can be contacted on 01772 777318

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Signed by:

Headteacher:

L Hall

Date: October 2025

Chair of Governors:

S Jukes

Date: October 2025

Next Review Date: October 2026

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