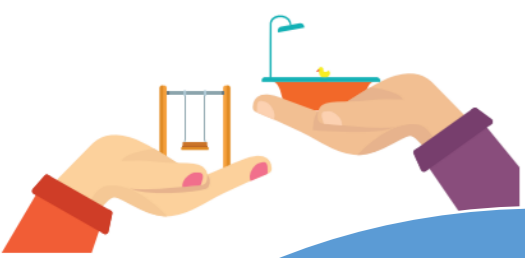




Spoken language

Many learners are able to use their voice and speech to communicate. When using spoken language we must be aware of rate, volume and intonation as well as using gesture and facial expression to help the listener understand the message.

Using a Minimal Speech approach can help, this focusses on trying to reduce the number of sentences and the length of sentences when communicating. Use 1 or 2 key words rather than full sentences, also say the learner's name first before communicating with them to help cue them into listening.



Objects of reference

Objects of reference are any object which can be used to represent an item, activity, place, or person. It is important that the objects used symbolise the real items as much as possible. In some instances, real items can be used such as a cup to communicate a drink. However, often it might be easier to use parts of these items, such as a label from a favourite snack. Other options include using miniature items such as toys, e.g. using a miniature toilet from a dolls house to indicate the bathroom, or a fork to indicate dinner. Objects of reference are in 3D format so they may be a suitable option for a learner who has difficulty discriminating and attending. They may not have yet developed the fine motor skills required to use sign and picture.

A similar approach can be applied to introduce songs of reference, singing a particular song to signal the start of an activity or event e.g. a wash hands song which is sung each time you go to wash hands, or a dinner time song when transitioning to the dining hall.

PECS

PECS is the most widely used picture system. It consists of six phases and begins by teaching a child to give a single picture of a desired item or action to a partner who immediately gives him or her the item requested. The system also teaches discrimination of pictures and how to put them together in sentences.

PECS can also be done with more tactile objects and symbols to support pupils who struggle with fine motor skills.

Total communication at Newfield

What is it?

A Total Communication Approach is a holistic view of communication, which involves using and accepting all types of communication, not just speech. This includes facial expression, body language, gesture, sign, sounds, symbols, written language, pictures, objects of reference and electronic aids. For a total communication approach to be effective, the following three components need to be included in the approach:

- Identifying and supporting a learner's mode(s) of communication.
- Motivating the learner by providing a reason to communicate.
- Practising and creating many opportunities to communicate.

Gestures and signs

We all communicate using gestures and sign in everyday life. Examples include waving to say hello, raising your hand to answer a question or shaking your head to indicate no.

Some communication approaches are based on sign language- the approach we use in school is Makaton. New signs are shared in the Professional Profile each week, and a Makaton library is being put together in the English and Communication folder on the computers.

Try introducing regular 'sing and sign' sessions to introduce and practice Makaton in class.



Pictures, choice boards and communication books

Pictures and symbols can be used in many ways to help communication. One approach is choice boards, for example a young person may have a collection of pictures on a board that represent their favourite things. This can be used to show the child what is available and help them to choose what they want.

Pictures can also be presented in a book. Communication books, like a choice board, contain a collection of the child's most used and favourite items. For example; a child's book might include one page with all of their food items, and another page with favourite activities (swings, trampoline, bike, etc.). The learner can use this book to select the picture which represents what he or she needs and wants to make a request or choose an option. They can also use this book across different settings and environments.

