



Providing the very best for every child, every day!

Communication and Language Protocol and Guidance.

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Communication is a fundamental human right that enables all individuals to achieve independence, make their own choices, and be included within their community. At Medeshamstede Academy, a Total Communication approach is adopted to develop the functional, receptive, and expressive language skills of our students. This approach values all forms of communication equally, creating an inclusive communication environment in which no single method is prioritised over another, and learners are supported to process information and express themselves in whichever way, or combination of ways, best meets their needs.

Aims

At Medeshamstede Academy, we aim to anticipate and respond effectively to the diverse communication and interaction needs of our students. We work in close partnership with families, students, and a range of professionals to minimise barriers and enhance each student's ability to participate fully and meaningfully in everyday life.

Objectives

- Ensure all staff receive high-quality training and ongoing support so they can confidently meet the communication and interaction needs of every student.

- Enable teaching staff to accurately model and use a range of communication systems, including both low- and high-technology approaches, tailored to individual needs.
- Implement effective, evidence-informed strategies and resources through a graduated and responsive approach.
- Promote strong collaboration between school staff and therapists, working as a multidisciplinary team to identify and embed universal strategies that support all students to reach their full communication potential.
- Ensure that targeted and specialist strategies are consistently applied throughout the school day through close partnership working between staff and therapists.
- Provide meaningful opportunities to develop communication and social interaction skills across the school environment, reflecting and respecting the preferences of our neurodivergent learners.
- Ensure that every learner can access the most functional and appropriate form of communication within both the school setting and the wider community.
- Foster an inclusive school culture in which every student's chosen method of communication is recognised, respected, and valued.

Communication

Communication is a collaborative, responsive process where two or more individuals connect and share meaning around thoughts, needs, ideas and feelings, using a range of methods that are tailored to the individual's communication profile.

Expressive communication is the ability to convey thoughts, needs, feelings, and ideas to others. It enables individuals to share information, express emotions, and build connections with those around them. *Some pupils may be minimally verbal or use non-speaking forms of communication, and all communication attempts are recognised and valued.* This may include spoken language, gestures, writing, or other forms of communication, and is essential for enabling individuals to express their needs, preferences, and perspectives effectively.

Receptive communication is the ability to understand, process, and make meaning from messages, language, and information conveyed by others. It involves comprehending spoken language as well as interpreting visual cues, gestures, facial expressions, sounds, written information, and environmental signals. This process is influenced by an individual's ability to focus, attend, retain, and recall information, often drawing on prior knowledge and experiences. Receptive communication enables learners to make sense of what is being communicated to them across a range of contexts.

Shared language is a formal system of words, symbols, signs, or representations, spoken, written, or visual, that provides a common meaning through which people communicate. It enables individuals and groups to express ideas, share knowledge, and interact effectively, ensuring that information is understood consistently.

Total Communication

A Total Communication approach is a flexible, multimodal strategy that uses all available methods of communication to support individuals in expressing themselves and understanding others. It brings together spoken language, signs, gestures, facial expressions, body language, symbols, lipreading,

fingerspelling, and assistive technologies into a flexible system tailored to each individual's strengths and needs. The approach values and recognises all forms of communication equally, accepting and encouraging every attempt a student makes to communicate.

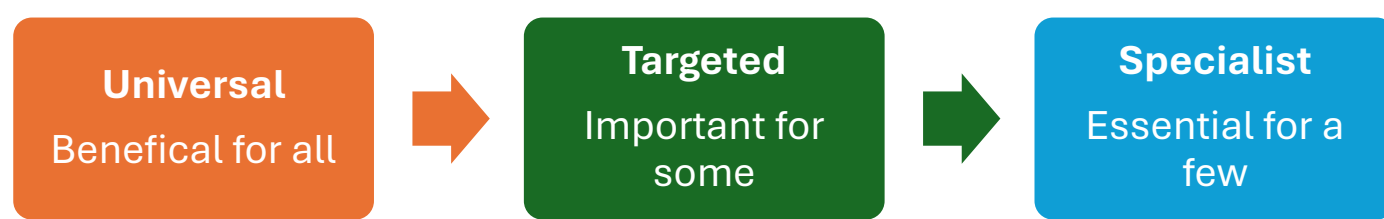
By adopting a Total Communication approach, an inclusive communication environment is created where no single method is prioritised over another. This ensures that students can process information and communicate in the way, or combination of ways, that works best for them, with all members of the school community actively using and respecting multiple forms of communication, rather than relying on spoken language alone.

Tools that support understanding and communication are known collectively as Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).

Augmentative: refers to methods that support and enhance a person's existing communication abilities e.g. Makaton.

Alternative: refers to systems or methods used instead of speech to enable communication e.g. Communication Books.

Graduation Approach to Communication



Universal: Medeshamstede Academy works in partnership with NHS SaLT and Bursting with Potential giving advice and strategies to benefit all students. Advice is implemented through quality first teaching with the majority of students in school accessing this level of provision.

Targeted: Enhanced and targeted support that is more personalised to the needs of a whole class or group of students. Staff members are supported through modelling of specific strategies or resources, supporting communication target setting, through social communication groups, 1:1 or group interventions and supporting the carryover of interventions into the classroom.

Specialist: The specialist provision provides a high level of targeted support for learners with significant speech, language, and communication needs. This includes direct intervention and regular input from specialist professionals, who work closely with teachers and teaching assistants. Support is delivered through a multi-disciplinary approach, with shared targets, planned interventions, and regular reviews. Students continue to access universal support through high-quality teaching in the classroom, alongside their specialist provision. Intervention may involve setting up personalised communication systems and using specific strategies to meet individual needs. This coordinated approach ensures that skills are practised and applied consistently across the whole school day.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication Provision

Dual Coding: At Medeshamstede Academy we use Widgit symbols and/or pictures alongside words to make the environment and learning more accessible, this is known as dual coding. Dual coding theory, developed by Allan Paivio, explains that the brain processes information through two

channels: one for words and one for images. When information is presented using both, it is stored in two ways in the brain, helping students make connections, understand more easily, and remember more effectively.

By combining visuals (such as symbols or pictures) with spoken or written words across the school, we reduce cognitive overload, support memory, and improve understanding. This helps students process information more efficiently and increases their independence when navigating and interacting within the school environment.

Makaton: Makaton uses signs (gestures), Symbols (pictures) and speech to enable people to communicate. With Makaton, signs are used, with speech, in spoken word order. This helps provide extra clues about what someone is saying. Symbols are also used for communication either with or without signing if someone physically can't sign or prefers not to sign.

When working with some students, especially younger learners, they may create their own version of a sign, which may be similar to the correct one. This is developmentally appropriate and should be encouraged; however, we should always model and repeat the correct sign while praising their efforts. Face-to-face communication is essential when signing, as it ensures the learner's full attention and engagement, allowing them to clearly see the signs, facial expressions, and accompanying speech.

Objects of Reference: Objects of reference are items that represent an activity, person, or place, and can be used with students who do not yet understand words, pictures, or symbols. They can help students become aware of what is happening now or what will happen next, support choice-making and develop early thinking skills. We use an agreed core set of objects of reference to ensure consistency across the academy (*Appendix A*).

When introducing new objects of reference, it is important to ensure that the object is used consistently across the academy, and that it is distinct, durable, easy to replace, and not too similar to another object.

Musical Cues:

Musical cues are an effective element of a communication approach, supporting understanding, participation, and smooth transitions. Consistent use of music helps to structure routines, reinforcing sequences and enabling individuals to anticipate and recall upcoming activities. For example, pairing specific songs with actions or daily routines can promote a sense of security and support individuals in managing transitions.

This approach is particularly beneficial for learners who respond well to rhythm, repetition, or early years-style songs. Musical cues, such as greeting and farewell songs, tidy-up songs, and movement transitions, should be brief, repetitive, and enjoyable. Their effectiveness relies on consistent use and clear association with specific activities or expectations.

Intensive Interaction: Intensive Interaction is an approach for individuals who *are at the early stages of communication development*.

Intensive Interaction is a relationship-based approach in which a communication partner joins in, follows the pupil's lead, responds to their communication style, and builds two-way exchanges. It

supports the development of communication through connection, shared attention, and trust, while respecting neurodivergent differences.

Research shows it can support individuals to take part in interactions, initiate contact, communicate needs and preferences. Although often used with individuals who do not use speech, it develops the foundations for all forms of communication, including language and alternative methods.

Intensive Interaction can happen at any time, during everyday activities or in planned one-to-one sessions where full attention is given. It is particularly helpful for individuals with more complex learning needs, including autism. The approach encourages sensitive “listening” and playful interaction, even if this is not always age-typical, ensuring that all individuals have a meaningful way to connect with others while maintaining dignity.

Communication Boards and Books: Communication books and boards are tools that help individuals communicate using pictures or symbols. They are useful for students who understand more than they can say, whose speech is unclear, or who need support to develop language.

A communication book is usually a folder with pages of symbols. Each page includes:

- Core vocabulary/words: *consists of the most commonly used words in daily speech. These words are flexible words that enable learners to communicate across different contexts, supporting the development of functional communication. Examples of core words include; more, help, go, stop, want, like, I*
- Fringe vocabulary/words: *refers to more specific, topic-based words that are used less frequently and are often linked to particular activities, interests, or environments, such as food, activities, or toys.*

A core vocabulary board is a low-tech AAC tool that provides access to high-frequency words, enabling flexible communication across daily activities.

Communication partners will model without expectation, pointing to the symbol/word as they speak, allowing the student to observe and gradually participate in communication.

Core boards help students express themselves; communicate for different reasons (e.g. requesting, commenting, choosing), build confidence and reduce frustration.

Communication books and boards can be used throughout the day in both everyday moments and planned activities, helping students take an active role in interactions and learning.

Communication and the Curriculum

Attention Autism

Attention Autism is an intervention model designed by Gina Davies, Specialist Speech and Language Therapist. It aims to develop natural and spontaneous communication using visually based and highly motivating activities. It originates from the idea that successful communication is dynamic, engaging and joyful. We learn best when we work with enthusiasm, motivation and creativity. We remember good times and shared experiences. Attention Autism is an approach which provides the student with an experience worth communicating about.

Attention Autism builds on strengths, such as visual skills, a memory for motivating things and routines and lots of energy. It helps build shared concentration, attention and listening skills within the student because they want to see what is in the bucket and what is going to happen next. All these skills are needed in order to develop speech skills.

Blank Level Questioning

The Blank Questions Model separates questions and directions into four levels, starting with basic questions that ask for simple and concrete responses and leading up to more complex questions that require abstract answers, problem-solving, and reasoning.

Colourful Semantics

Colourful Semantics is a structured visual approach used to support children with speech, language, and communication needs to understand and build sentences. It works by colour-coding different parts of a sentence to show how language is organised.

By breaking sentences into these colour-coded parts, individuals can clearly see how sentences are formed. This makes it easier for them to build their own sentences and understand what others are saying. This approach helps individuals to: use a wider vocabulary; build longer sentences; answer and ask questions; develop grammar (nouns, verbs, adjectives, prepositions); improve storytelling skills and support both spoken and written language

Colourful Semantics can be used in one-to-one or small group work and is especially helpful for students with speech and language difficulties.

Communication and the Environment

Now and Next Boards

Visual Schedules (including Now, Next and Then Boards)

Visual schedules are important tools for supporting student with Special Educational Needs (SEN). They use pictures, symbols, or words to show the order of activities throughout the day. Visual schedules help individuals to:

- Develop independence by allowing them to follow their day without relying on adults
- Understand what is happening through clear, consistent visual information
- Reduce anxiety by making routines predictable
- Navigate transitions more easily between activities
- Provide a lasting visual reminder that can be checked at any time

By clearly communicating expectations and routines, visual schedules support students to feel more confident, secure, and in control of their learning environment. As a minimum all classrooms, in our academy, will have a whole class visual schedule. Where appropriate and/or required students will have their own schedule.

A now and next board or a now, next and then board is a simple visual tool that helps students understand routines and move between activities. It uses pictures, symbols, objects, or words to show what is happening now and what will happen after. The board has two or three parts: “Now” (the current activity) and “Next” and “Then” (what is coming after). Adults point to each part and say “now...” and “next...” to support understanding. When an activity is finished, the symbol is removed (often placed in a “finished” box) to show progress and help the student move on. Now, next and then boards are especially helpful for students who find transitions or changes difficult, giving them clear structure, reducing anxiety, and supporting understanding of daily routines.

Appendix A: Core Objects of Reference

Daily routines		
Circle time  Wooden circle	Home  Car wheel	
Learning Activities		
Special job  Plastic yellow star	My Learning – Maths  Plastic numbers	My Learning – English  Plastic letters
Reading / Library  Small book	Me and My Body  Small mirror	Me and My World  Small globe
Cooking  Wooden Spoon	Creative  Paint brush	Music  Maraca
Attention Autism  Small bucket		
Daily Living & Social Times		

 Snack	 Lunch	 Drink
Toilet  Toilet Sign	Wash hands  Soap bar	
Movement and Breaks		
Playtime / Outside  Astroturf	Physical Activity / Sport  Bean bag	Forest School  Leaf
Soft play  Soft play ball	Sensory Room  Sensory scarf	Sensory Circuits  Gym mat

Appendix B: Intensive Interaction

How do we do Intensive Interaction?

- Take the other person's lead - respond to things they do. This can be by commenting on their actions, joining in with them, playfully imitating them. By responding instead of leading we don't make demands on the person that they cannot cope with. Instead we communicate that we value them and enjoy being with them. We allow them the chance to explore making things happen and to take the lead. The 'topic of conversation' is within their realm of interest.
- Treat the things the person does as communication. We read social meaning into actions even when this meaning isn't yet clear. In this way the person is responded to as a communicator and gets to know what this feels like and involves. The communication partner 'tunes in' to the possible intent of various actions and expressions, so that eventually the partners are negotiating. For example, when I dip my head I want a break, when I vocalize I'm seeing if I can get a response, and when I look at you I'm saying I want more.
- Use sensitive observation to judge how well the interaction is going. We respond quickly to any feedback, interpreting it so that we can keep the interaction positive and enjoyable for both partners. We also get other colleagues or friends to observe us interacting and use video recordings if possible. In this way we don't just use our intuitive skills as communicators, but we reflect on how we can enhance these and we problem-solve with others, so that interactions don't 'get stuck'.
- Use timing and rhythm in the interactions. Rhythm and repetition help the student to anticipate and predict what will happen next, enjoy being with another person and take turns in exchanges of behaviour.

Observe First: watch what the student is doing. Notice movements, sounds, rhythm. Identify what they enjoy or repeat

Join In: gently copy (mirror) movements, sounds, pace. Keep it simple and natural

Pause and Wait: give time for the student to notice you. Look for small responses – glance, pause, change in movement.

Respond: Respond to any interaction. Repeat or build on what they do. Develop a shared rhythm or turn-taking

Follow Their Lead: Let the pupil control the activity, the pace, when to stop. If they move away, respect this and pause.

Neuroaffirming Practice: All behaviour is communication Repetitive behaviours are valid. Respect sensory needs and boundaries. Look for consent (e.g. engagement – continue, disengagement – stop).

You tube clip examples

Intensive Interaction – Sam and Hayley: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ec08iPWStH8>

Intensive Interaction – Sasha and Riana <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvIEwUbzF4c>

Appendix C: Communication Boards and Books

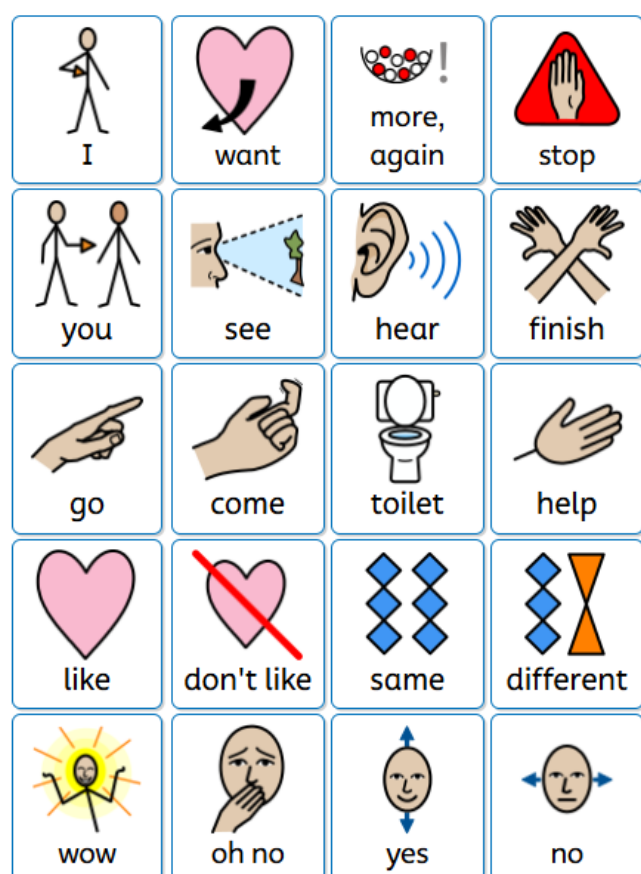
What does a Communication Book look like?

A Communication Book is typically made up of A5 or A4 sized pages in a folder that contains lots of different symbols an individual will use to communicate with you.

Within a communication book, there will be two sets of symbols, one on each page. On the left-hand side is the 'Core Vocabulary'. The core vocabulary appears in the same place on every left-hand page in the Communication Book, as this is the vocabulary individuals will always need to use to build sentences.

On the right-hand side of each page are symbols of items an individual might request. They are split up into different categories to make it easier for both you and the individual to find the right symbols, for example "snacks". Each right-hand page in the book will have a different category on it.

Core Vocabulary



Fringe Vocabulary



Top tips for using a Communication Book

- Model by pointing to the corresponding symbols in the student's communication book at the same time as talking.
- Remember that the communication book is for chatting and commenting. Avoid using the book to 'test', e.g. "Can you find the symbol for book?"

- If asking questions, try to ask open ended questions (“What can you see?”) rather than closed or yes/no questions (“Is that a dog?”)
- Do not worry if you are not using the exact grammar.
- Model language for a range of different communication functions such as:
 - requesting (‘I want’)
 - commenting (‘It was fun’)
 - informing (‘I saw a movie’)
 - questioning, (‘Who is it?’)
 - labelling (‘Red shirt’)
 - responding to questions and comments
- Model and extend; add a word e.g. ‘want ice-cream’ – ‘want chocolate ice-cream’.
- The Communication Book should be kept with the student whenever possible, or somewhere that is easily accessible for the student to leave it if necessary.
- Continue to add to your Communication Book, as the individual’s vocabulary and understanding grows and develops.

Appendix D: Attention Autism

Attention Autism builds on ASC strengths, such as visual skills, a memory for motivating things and routines and lots of energy. Programmes are designed to inspire shared attention and communication. Activities that are fun are motivating to communicate about. Activities that involve fun and laughter are remembered

The 4 stages of the Attention Autism approach help children at different levels.

Stage 1- The Bucket- to focus attention: everyone attends to the same thing chosen by the adult. (Focus)

- A bucket is filled with visually engaging objects and toys, aiming to gain the shared attention of the group. The adult leader shows each item to the group and uses simple repetitive vocabulary to comment on the various objects.

Stage 2- Attention Builder: students develop longer and sustained attention skills. Activity builder. (Sustain)

- Visually stimulating activities are shown to the group by the adult leader, aiming to sustain attention for a longer period. The activities are fun, visually engaging and can often involve delightful mess!

Stage 3- Turn-taking games to shift and re-engage attention: student learns to shift attention. (Shift)

- The adult leader demonstrates a simple activity, often modelled with another adult in the group. Some children are then invited to have a turn but only if they are comfortable to do so. Not every child in the group will get a turn, which then teaches important emotional regulation skills, as well as the essential skills of waiting, turn-taking and learning through modelling.

Stage 4- Independent work: students focus, sustain, shift attention, transition and then refocus.

- Stage 4 aims to develop the skill of engaging and shifting attention. The adult leader demonstrates a simple creative task, and then gives each child an individual kit to copy the task. The children take their kits to a table, complete the task independently, and then everyone returns to the group to show their completed tasks.

How do I do Attention Autism?

- Gather your 'bucket' with exciting objects inside. Use objects that are likely to create intrigue with the students you are working with, often things that move or make a sound e.g. wind up-toys, pop-up toys, spinning toys.
- The students should be encouraged to sit, facing the adult with the bucket.
- The 'leader' holds the bucket in front of them and sings 'I've got something in my bucket, in my bucket, in my bucket. I've got something in my bucket, what could it be?' to the tune of 'Here we go round the Mulberry Bush'. As the 'leader' sings 'what could it be?' they will open the bucket lid and look inside, making the bucket the most exciting/interesting thing in the room.
- The item from the bucket is demonstrated for the group and simple language modelled alongside this (e.g. pop, go, spin).
- Show the group 3 items from the bucket during each session.

Things to remember:

When delivering Attention Autism:

- Remember the bucket belongs to you and only you!
- Be the most interesting and amazing thing in the room
- Use simple relevant language
- Practise first
- Have fun!

As a supporting adult:

- You model how to sit and look at the bucket showing interest in the activities.

For more information and training on Attention Autism, please see this training webinar lead by the nhs speech and language team in Peterborough:

<https://vimeo.com/681787311/6b18290e08>

<https://www.cpft.nhs.uk/speech-and-language-therapy-training>

Curiosity webinar:

<https://vimeo.com/681781906/26dedc82a4>

<https://www.cpft.nhs.uk/speech-and-language-therapy-training>

Curiosity video for webinar:

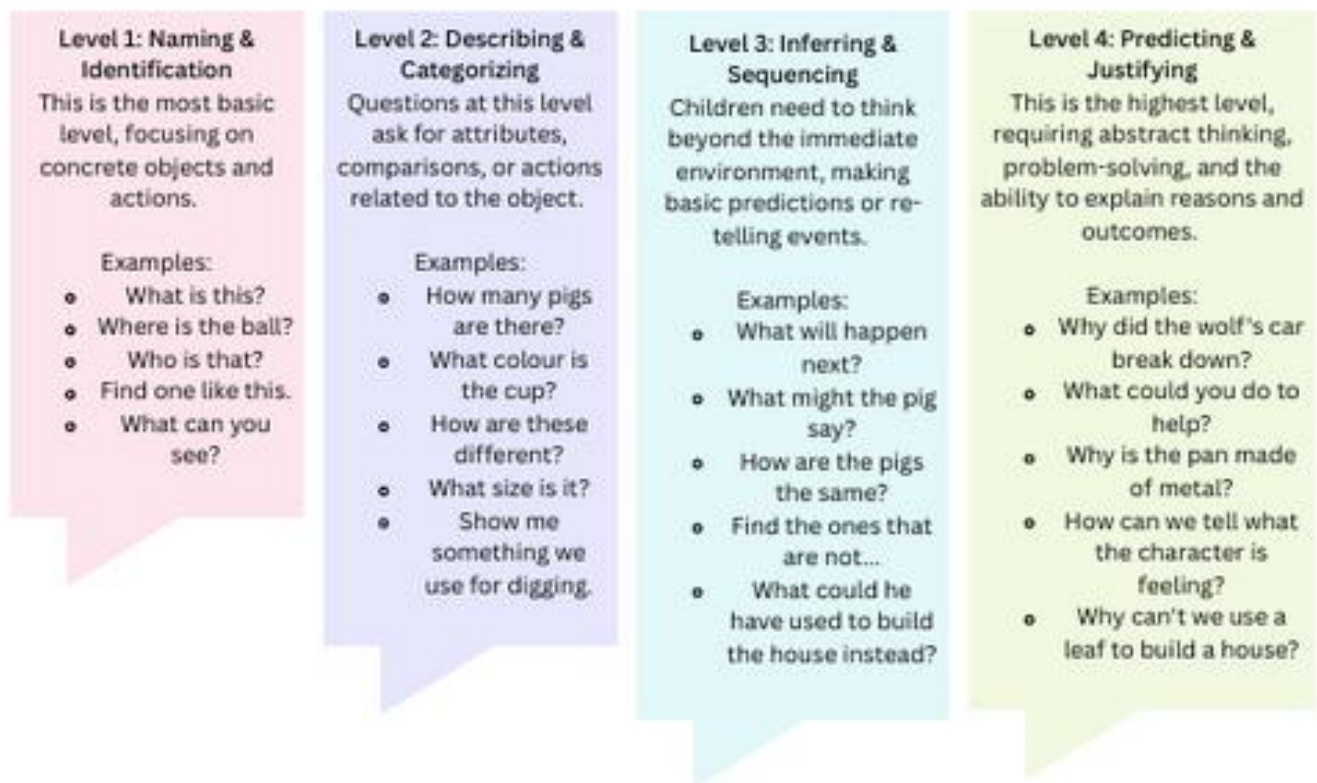
<https://vimeo.com/681784857/97bb8becf5>

<https://www.cpft.nhs.uk/speech-and-language-therapy-training>

Please see Attention Autism – A bucket full of ideas document which is located here for ideas you can use at each stage: [Communication and Interaction \(CI\)](#)

Appendix E: Blank Level Questioning

Blank Level Questioning



What are Blank's levels of Questioning?

Blank's Levels of Questioning is a questioning framework developed by Marion Blank, a renowned psychologist. There are four levels of questioning which move from simple, concrete questions to more difficult, abstract questions. Blank's questions encourage development of general language and vocabulary as well as skills in comprehension, reasoning, inferencing, predicting and problem solving (Blank, 2000).

What are the four Blank's levels of questioning?

Level 1: Matching Perception / Naming

Level 1 is focused on objects in a child's immediate environment - something that's either close to them, or that's just been taken away. The assessor uses short questions and statements that only require responses to key items and events - things like matching, identifying and naming objects. It requires concrete thinking skills, but the child's own language use doesn't necessarily have to be very complex - their responses can be very short, or even just a non-verbal sign, like pointing.

Here are a few examples of Level 1 questions:

- Find one like this. (Matching objects)

- What can you hear?
- What did you touch?
- What is this? (Pointing to object)
- Who is this? (Pointing to person)
- What is doing?
- Say this “ ” (Imitation)
- What did you see? (Remembering items in books)

Most children will be able to understand this level of questioning at around 3 years old.

Level 2: Selective Analysis of Perception / Describing

Level 2 builds on Level 1 to start describing a given object or person. The child will be shown the object (either before its removal, or throughout the questions), so it's still quite focused on the immediate physical items around them, but the tasks are a little more complicated: identifying an object by its function, grouping items, and describing the characteristics and functions of an object. Here are a few examples of Level 2 questions:

- What happened?
- Who/what/where is ? (Remembering information)
- Describe characteristics of objects: E.g. What size/shape/colour is it? How does it taste/smell/feel?
- Identifying object functions: E.g. Show me the one we use for .
- How are these different?
- Tell me something that is a type of . (Naming object from category)

Most children will be able to understand this level of questioning at around 4 years old.

Level 3: Reordering Perception / Retelling

Level 3 is where things move into more abstract territory. At this stage, the questions are no longer about items and events that are directly happening in front of the child and require the listeners to rely on their own knowledge from past experiences and reasoning skills. Children will be asked to make basic predictions, make generalisations, order events into a narrative, define words, and assume the role of another person.

Here are a few examples of Level 3 questions:

- What will happen next?
- What is a ? (Definition)
- Find one to use with this.
- Find the things that are not .
- What could he say? (Assuming the role of another person)
- How are these the same? (Identifying similarities)

Most children will be able to understand this level of questioning at around 4 1/2 years old.

Level 4: Reasoning about Perception / Justifying

Level 4 is the biggest step. Like at stage 3, the questions aren't about things directly in front of the child and require a further level of higher reasoning skills. Children will be asked to problem solve, predict consequences, and provide explanations for their answers.

Here are a few examples of Level 4 questions:

- What will happen if ? (Predicting)
- Why did ? (Justifying cause of event)
- What could do/use? (Solution)
- Why could do that/use that? (Explaining means to goal)
- Why can't we ? (Explaining obstacle to solution)
- How can we tell ? (Explaining observation)
- Why is made of ? (Explaining construction of objects)

Most children will be able to understand this level of questioning at around 5 years old

How can I use Blank's levels in the classroom?

In the classroom, Blank's levels of questioning can be used in many ways including:

- As a tool to support comprehension
- To ensure questions are appropriately challenging for students
- To support comprehension of a topic during class-level, small group or one-on-one conversations
- To support comprehension when reading a book
- To create a shared context in whole-class or small-group activities
- To support students in achieving success in a range of subject areas

For activities that can support your student's Blank's level understanding please see the [blank's levels activity ideas](#) document.

Here are some pointers for using the higher levels of questioning with your pupils:

- Ensure questions are of a suitable difficulty for the listener. Trial questions starting from Blank's Level 1 and if the student is successful, progress to Level 2 etc. When students have difficulty responding to Blank's questions at a certain level, this level may be a suitable target for them.
- Utilise visual supports to aid understanding such as pictures or diagrams.
- Allow sufficient time (10 seconds +) for students to think through and provide an answer.
- Repeat the question for the listener, if required.
- Simplify the question by breaking it down into parts or presenting lower-level questions to prompt higher-level answers. For example, "How are a cow and a dog the same?" leads to "What group does a cow belong to?" (animal) leads to "What group does a dog belong to?" (animal) leads to "So how are they the same?" (they are animals).

- Focus on important features in the question (e.g. if asked how two items are the same, you can draw their attention to similarities).
- Provide the first sound or syllable of the answer.
- Provide sentence completion cues (e.g. What animal is this? It is a).
- Explicitly break down how to answer higher level questions.
- Relate known to unknown by relating answers back to student's previous experiences (e.g. The tea is hot. How will it feel after some time? Remember what happens when we leave hot water out for some time? How did it feel?).
- Provide a model of how to answer higher level questions by verbalising your own thought process when answering questions.
- Reinforce that questions can have many correct answers.

Appendix F: Colourful Semantics

Colourful Semantics is a structured visual approach used to support children with speech, language, and communication needs to understand and build sentences.

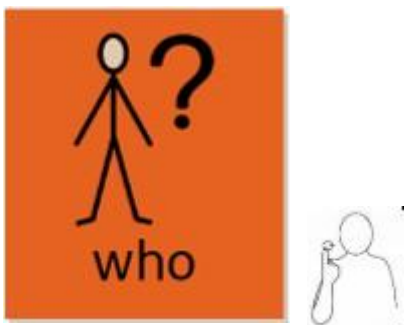
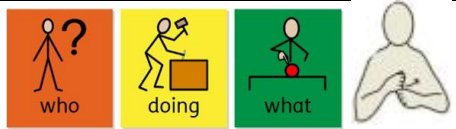
Here's how it works:

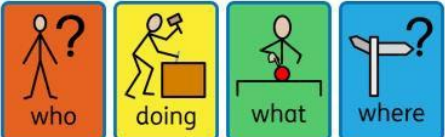
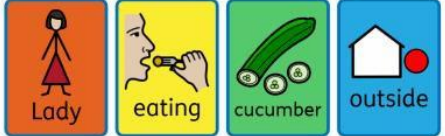
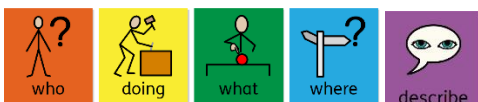
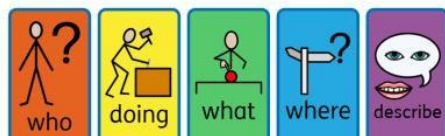
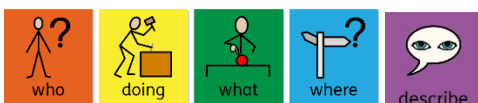
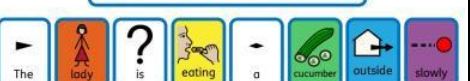
- Who? (Orange)– The person or thing doing the action.
- What doing? (Yellow)– The action they are doing.
- What? (Green)– The thing they are doing the action to.
- Where? (Blue)– The place where the action is happening.



When pupils are ready, you can add additional steps to create more complex sentences. Here are the next steps in Colourful Semantics:

- When? (Brown)– This step adds information about the time when the action is happening.
- Describe (Purple)– Describing the who? What doing? What? or Where?.
- To who? (White)– This step identifies the person or thing receiving the action.
- How? (Pink)– This step describes the manner in which the action is done.

		 What should it look like?
Stage 1	What should I use?  • Taught with the sign 'who?' • Look at a range of photos/pictures/videos of people/characters and identify 'WHO?' and 'what doing?' • Must be consistent in identifying 'WHO' in the pictures before moving on.	   
Stage 2	  • Taught with sign 'what (doing)?' • Look at a range of photos/pictures/videos of people/characters and identify 'who?'	     
Stage 3	 • Taught with sign 'doing'. • Show a range of pictures/photos/videos and ask the student to find the appropriate WHO + (WHAT) DOING + WHAT symbols	   

Stage 4	 • Taught with sign 'where'. • Look at range of pictures/photos of places (e.g. beaches, parks, bathrooms etc.) • Show a range of pictures/photos/videos and ask the student to find the appropriate WHO + (WHAT) DOING + WHAT symbols	   
Stage 5	 • Adjectives are used to describe the Who? What doing? What? Where? • Should be taught with the signs for the adjectives	   
Stage 6	 + little words	   

Appendix G: Now, Next and Then Boards

What is a 'Now and Next' or 'Now, Next and Then' board?

The board has the words 'Now' on the left-hand side and 'Next' on the right-hand side with a space underneath to add a symbol or photograph. It could be described as a miniature version of a visual timetable and helps a child to move on from one activity to another.

What does it look like?

Please see the below template which is also found in the shared folder on Widgit Online under Schedules.

 Now	 Next	 Now	 Next	 Then

How does it work?

- Place an Object of Reference/symbol on each side of the board. It's a good idea to place an activity that really motivates the child on the 'Next' side of the board. This acts as a 'reward', something for the child to aim for.
- Show the child the board, point to each symbol individually and support the child by saying "glue now....cars next". Reduce language by using key words only.
- When the child has engaged with the gluing activity for some time the adult should inform the child by saying "gluing finished... now cars" whilst pointing to the next symbol.
- Encourage the child to move on by supporting them to "post" the now symbol into a finish envelope or turning it over before moving onto the next activity.

Students who are not yet independently able to use their now and next/ Now, Next, Then board must use a 'Check schedule' card. A 'check schedule' card fixed to the top of their now and next/ Now, Next, Then board to match the 'check schedule' card to.

Appendix H: Visual Schedules

Whole class schedules.

- Schedule boards (See picture) should have hard Velcro in a long strip down the centre of the board.
- Differentiated, according to the ability of the class, using either or a combination of objects, photos, symbols and/or words.
- Schedules should be top down, not left to right.
- Symbols should be made using Widget (grid template 2 x 3) and the provided template should be used to ensure consistency in symbols across the school.
- Symbols should be laminated and have soft Velcro on the back.
- Schedules should be bare (only schedule items) and should be displayed on a distraction free surface.



Alternative whole class schedules

When student's skills in interpreting and following schedules has developed you may feel it is more appropriate to display a weekly schedule within the classroom.

 Orange	 9:00	 10:00	 11:00	 12:00	 1:00	 2:00	 3:15
 Monday	 Reading	 Maths	 Science	 Lunch	 Humanities	 Careers	 Home
 Tuesday	 Reading	 Maths	 English	 Lunch	 PSHE	 RE	 Home
 Wednesday	 Reading	 Maths	 English	 Lunch	 PE	 PE	 Home
 Thursday	 Swimming	 Swimming	 Swimming	 Lunch	 Computing	 Art	 Home
 Friday	 Reading	 Maths	 English	 Lunch	 Cookery	 Cookery	 Home

Individual schedules

When a student has progressed past an individual now, next and then board (*Appendix G*) an individual schedule may be appropriate.

- Individual schedules should be no larger than an A4 piece of paper.

- Differentiated, according to the ability of the student, using either or a combination of objects, photos, symbols and/or words.
- Schedules should be top down, not left to right.
- Symbols should be made using Widget (grid template 4 x 6) and the provided template should be used to ensure consistency in symbols across the school.
- Symbols should be laminated and have soft Velcro on the back.
- Schedules should be bare (only schedule items) and should be displayed on a distraction free surface.
- Schedules could represent a full day or part of the day.

Alternative individual schedules

Fold over schedules

Fold over schedules, students may fold tabs on the schedule to display 'finished' before making their transition. Please see example below. The template is in the shared folder on Widgeit in the schedules folder.



Tick off schedules

Tick off schedules can be organised using small symbols and words or just words.

- Printed schedule can be one or two sided
- Printed symbol and words or just words
- The day of the week must be at the top of the page
- Students 'tick off' their schedule as events are completed.

☐	 Circle time
☐	 Movement break
☐	 Work
☐	 Snack
☐	 Work
☐	 Lunch

Green and Red Boards.

When a student is completing a sequence of learning tasks it may be appropriate to use a green and red board which breaks down further what students need to do for task completion. The student moves the photo/symbol/word card across from the green strip to a red 'finished' strip as each step is completed.

