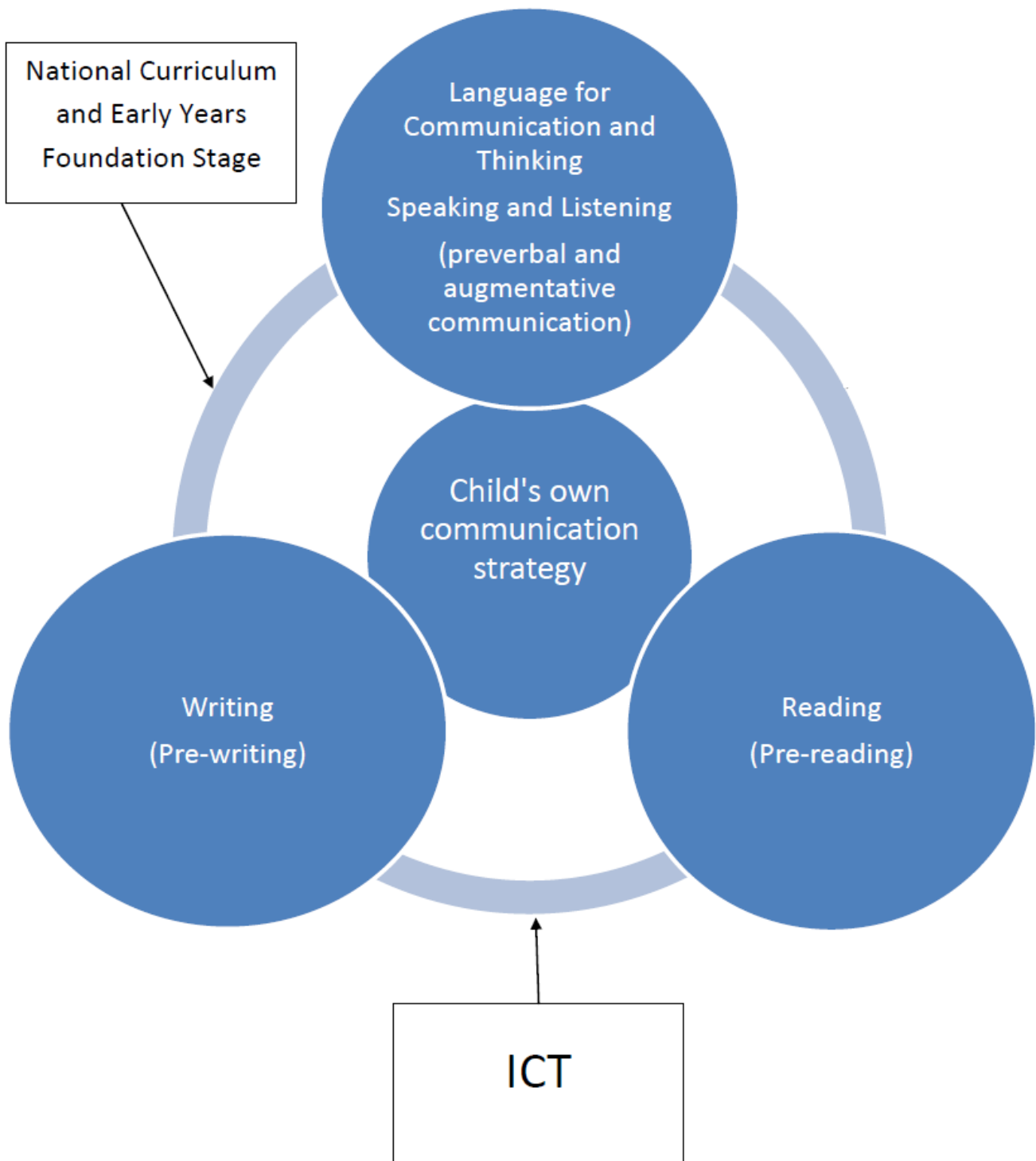


# **Communication Handbook**

# English

## At Stephen Hawking School



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## **Policy Statement**

### What is Communication?

‘Communication is a system of interpersonal interaction, the transmission of some message between two or more people’. (Goldbart, J. 1986 p.154)

Communication is essential for everyone. At Stephen Hawking School it is interpersonal interaction which provides the children with the ability to demonstrate achievements and to become as independent as possible.

The communication process, which occurs naturally as part of most children’s development, can be especially difficult for the children who attend Stephen Hawking School. For some children, in addition to their learning difficulty, they may have a sensory or physical disability, that makes communication more difficult.

### Implementation

It is essential that communication systems and strategies are consistently planned and implemented within a whole school framework and that each child has a communication Individual Education Plan (IEP) drawn up to address their specific needs.

This handbook has been compiled as a result of whole school discussion and the sharing of good practice. It is designed to ensure that all adults working at Stephen Hawking School have the information and skills to communicate consistently and effectively with all of the children.

### Assessment

All pupils are assessed via teacher assessment. In KS1 and KS2 children will be assessed via the P Levels. When necessary, assessment will follow a multi-disciplinary approach involving teachers, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists.

### Monitoring

As communication is a ‘continuous process that runs through the school day’ the agreed arrangements of curriculum monitoring are not appropriate.

The English co-ordinator, with the support of the Leadership Team, will have the responsibility of ensuring that good practice with regards to communication is maintained throughout the school day. The English co-ordinator will ensure that:

- Each curriculum co-ordinator will, as part of their monitoring and support, feed back to class teachers and the English Co-ordinator on the use of communication strategies used in lessons they have observed
- Peer monitoring, for all staff, will involve observations of each other and feedback on the use of communication strategies in class meetings. It is important that lunchtime assistants are also involved in this monitoring and feedback my need to be given on an individual basis or at half-termly lunchtime assistant meetings

These strategies are in addition to the collaborative work with the speech and language therapy service and school based assessment systems.

## Review

This handbook needs to be continuously reviewed and actively used if it is to fulfil our aims of ensuring continuity and consistency for all children. It is inevitable that, as class practice improves and evolves, that it will need to be updated and re-written.

It is essential that any proposed additions or amendments are formally registered with the English co-ordinator and then taken to the earliest possible teacher meeting.

If there is agreement to the proposed change, or addition, the English co-ordinator will ensure that notes are kept to feed into the annual review or arrange for the handbook to be edited and the new version distributed to all staff.

A full review of the handbook's contents and effectiveness will take place via governor, teacher, staff and class meetings on an annual basis.

## **Individual Education Plans for communication**

When devising IEPs the following points need to be considered:

1. is the child actively involved in learning communication skills?
2. is the child able to self-initiate communication?
3. has the child got real, motivating opportunities to communicate with mature language users?

Every communication IEP must be regularly reviewed and revised to meet the child's changing needs as they progress towards becoming an active communicator

All IEPs must be written following the guidelines in the school's Assessment, Recording and Reporting Policy which can be found on the schools IT system: 'publicread'

## **The role of the adult**

Communication occurs between two or more people. Whatever communication system is chosen it will only be as good as the child's partner in the communication process. For the child's communication IEP to be effective it is crucial that it is consistently followed by **all** adults involved with the child.

A sensitive responsible adult who uses the systems that are common across the school and the strategies that are specific to the individual child will have the greatest chance of promoting successful interactions and helping the child develop their communication skills.

Adults must:

- be familiar with the whole school systems of communication
- be familiar with the communication IEPs for the child they work with
- always use speech that is simple, direct and in clear short phrases
- allow pupils time to respond
- always use natural gestures
- accompany gestures or signs with an animated facial expression

- make eye contact with the child
- encourage children to indicate need and make choices
- stay 'on task' when working with children and not get drawn into adult social chat with other staff
- comply with the school's code of conduct of staff working with children.

In exceptional circumstances, where a child has a specific behaviour programme drawn up in line with the agreed school procedures, some of these requirements may not apply.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EVERYONE WORKING WITH THE PUPILS AT STEPHEN HAWKING SCHOOL**

### **THE NEED FOR CONSISTENCY:**

All people working with the pupils must be fully aware of the school's Behaviour Policy and give an active commitment to its broad aims and requirements as well as to the practicalities of implementing individual behaviour programmes.

This is essential for a positive ethos that enables all pupils to be successful and active learners.

### **RESPECT ALL PUPILS AS INDIVIDUALS, WITH INDIVIDUAL STRENGTHS AND NEEDS:**

Always - Give pupils the time and opportunity to respond to you.

When helping a pupil, always hold their hand or put your hand on their shoulder

Never - Pull or push

Help a pupil along by their wrist

Make threats you don't mean or can't keep

### **BE AN ACTIVE COMMUNICATOR**

Always - Give a pupil eye contact even if it means bending down or going on the floor

Sign or/and give a tactile cue AS WELL AS saying

Allow plenty of time for a response

Never - Shout, unless it is an emergency or absolutely necessary

Conduct a personal conversation with another adult over the heads of the pupils

### **BE AWARE OF YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AS A ROLE MODEL**

Always - Knock on doors before you enter a room

Dress appropriately

Never - Walk round while you are eating or drinking

Sit on tables or other work surfaces

Use a mobile phone when working with, or supervising, children

### **ACTIVELY LOOK TO PROMOTE POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR**

Always - Encourage play between pupils

Get involved in activities

Be clear in your praise

### **RESPECT AND BE AWARE OF THE NEED FOR CONFIDENTIALITY**

Always - Chose a suitable place and time to discuss sensitive matters

Deal with a child's personal needs discretely

Respect parents, they didn't choose their role as carer, you did!

Never - Talk about pupils in front of them

Enter the toilets or changing rooms unless you are caring for a pupil

Copies of the school Behaviour Policy, as well as all other policy documents,  
are stored on the school's ICT system – 'publicread'.

### **Strategies we use at Stephen Hawking School**

At Stephen Hawking School we promote the concept of total communication which means we use many different methods in combination to support our student's understanding of spoken language and their ability to communicate by whichever method is the most successful in different situations. This handbook is to be read in conjunction with the school's English policy.

As well as spoken language, we use a range of alternative and augmentative communication systems (AAC). These systems have been researched and used effectively with children and adults who have learning difficulties, autism and/or sensory or physical impairments. They are:

- **Object cues**
- **Objects of Reference**
- **Photographs**
- **Picture Communication Symbols (PCS)**
- **Signs and Speech Cues / Signalong**
- **Music cues**
- **Touch Cues**
- **Creating a Communicative Environment**
- **Intensive Interaction**
- **Non-directive communication / Minimal Speech Approach**
- **PECS**
- **Communication Passports**

The systems used by individual pupils will be written in their pupil profile and/or communication passport. The introduction of a new AAC system can be introduced with guidance from the Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) where necessary.

Pupils may use only one system or a combination of two or more systems at any one time to ensure a total communication approach. One or more of them may be supported by information and communication technology. Please see ICT Policy for more details of hi-tech communication aid use.

### **The Use of Cues at Stephen Hawking School**

At Stephen Hawking School cues are used to support pupil's understanding of what is going to happen next as part of a structured daily routine (receptive skills). As pupils progress in their use of cues they may be able to use them to make choices about what they would like to do (expressive skills). Cues may include objects, photos, symbols, touch, music or the consistent use of a sign and standardised phrases. For example tapping a pupil's arm and saying "up up up" to let them know they will be lifted.



The spoken word should always be used alongside all cues and consideration should be given when labelling activities and places to ensure consistency. Photos and symbols should be labelled to help with consistency of spoken language.

Individualised cues may be used with pupils, but all non standardised cues must be recorded in the Pupil Profile as part of their communication strategy.

Consideration should be given to pupil's level of symbolic understanding when deciding upon the appropriate type of cues to be used. Please refer to the table below on ***Symbolic Development*** for further information on this.

<b>P scales</b>	<b>Understanding</b>	<b>Symbol</b>	<b>Example</b>
P1 (ii) to P2 (i) Pupils attend to familiar objects linked to routines of the day e.g. drink time/cup.	Easy	Real Objects	A real orange
P2 (ii) to P3 (i) Pupils remember learnt responses over short periods of time e.g. showing pleasure each time a particular puppet character appears in a sensory story.	Less easy if a smaller version of the item or more abstract such as "plastic flowers" to represent going to the garden.	Representational Objects	A plastic orange
P3 (ii) Pupils remember the routine and anticipate activities like this. Pupils show interest in pictures.	2D can be difficult for some pupils to relate to	Photographs of the real objects	A photo of an orange
P4 Pupils show interest in illustrations and print in books. Pupils can hold the book the right way up.	Some symbols are easier to understand than others e.g. the symbol for orange looks like the photo but the symbol for "more" is very abstract.	Colour Symbols (PCS)	A colour symbol of an orange
P5-P6 Pupils select a few words, signs or symbols with which they are particularly familiar and derive some meaning from text, symbols or signs presented to them.	Some pupils with visual impairment may find these easier to understand than colour symbols but generally colour adds meaning to the picture.	Black and white Symbols (PCS)	A black and white line drawing of an orange
	These have to be learnt but are "portable" so often used more readily than photos, objects and	Signs – Signalong	The sign for orange

	symbols so with practice can be learnt well.		
P7+ Pupils show an interest in the activity of reading. They predict words, signs and symbols in narrative. They understand the convention of reading and recognise some letters of the alphabet.	Most difficult	Written/Spoken Word	The written or spoken word "orange."

At Stephen Hawking School we promote the concept of total communication which means we use many different methods in combination to support our students to understand spoken language and communicate by whichever method is the most successful in different situations.

For example a pupil may understand the spoken word for mum but may need a sign to understand that an activity is finished and may need a photo of the outdoor area to understand that it is playtime.

Similarly a pupil may have a spoken word that they use for dad "abu" but use a sign for "more" (as this is a relatively easy sign to learn) and make choices of preferred activities using photographs of the real activities.

Staff should have an awareness of the above hierarchy and the level of symbolic understanding for individual pupils should be outlined on the Pupil Profile displayed on the walls of the classrooms. Then all staff working with students will know when introducing new vocabulary what visual supports will best support the students understanding.

### Why do we use cues?

- To support pupil's understanding of spoken language and the routine of the day and expectations
- To connect meaning between objects actions and their referents (semantics)
- To ease transitions.

### Object Cues (Receptive)

Object cues are real objects which are directly related to or used within an activity for example, a pupil's own spoon shown to them when it is dinner time, a switch shown to a pupil before starting a switching activity. Examples of other object cues that have been used at Stephen Hawking School:

- Pupil's own cup
- Swimming costume

- Cooking utensils
- Painting apron

These are not standardised objects but are specific to the activity/event which is about to take place and are represented to pupils prior to the activity as a cue to what is about to happen

A red finished bowl is presented to pupils to indicate that an activity is finished. Items from the activity are placed in the bowl, either by the pupil themselves or by a supporting adult, as appropriate.

### **Objects (Expressive)**

Objects used within an activity may also be used to help pupils make choices to express themselves or to answer questions. The adult asks which do you want or “Where’s the....” and holds up two items for the pupil to look at or reach to point or take.

### **Objects of Reference**

Objects of reference are representational objects which have a symbolic meaning and are used to represent an activity or event, for example a set of beads to represent number games. Before using objects of reference, assessments should be made of a pupil’s level of symbolic understanding. Object of reference can be useful for pupils with visual impairment who will not be able to use photos, pictures or signing as alternative communication strategies.

### **Guidelines on using Objects of Reference**

The object is the key element of the activity it represents, for example, a cup for drink time.

The object is introduced at the beginning of the activity, remains with the pupil during the activity and is put away at the end of the activity.

Presentation of the object is always accompanied by the spoken word.

Staff should ensure that everyone uses the same object to represent an activity consistently.

### **Photographs**

Photographs provide an important conceptual step between objects and symbols and should be used with spoken language. Photos should be taken of:

- motivating objects, for example favourite toys
- objects, for example a photo of a pupil’s cup to indicate time for a drink;
- activities, for example a photo of the swimming pool
- places around school, for example a photo of the dining hall
- events, for example a photo of the school bus to indicate it’s time to go home.

When pupils are familiar with a large range of photographs and as their symbolic understanding develops a symbol based system can be introduced to support pupil’s access to a wider range of vocabulary.

## **Picture Communication Symbols (PCS)**

At Stephen Hawking School we use the Mayer-Johnson Picture Communication Symbols (PCS) range of symbols as they are clear and less abstract than other symbol systems. They consist of coloured line drawings that are more abstract than photographs but more concrete than signs.

### **Guidelines for symbol use in school**

Pupils require well-established skills in order to understand that symbols can be used as a means of communication. All pupils must:

- understand symbolic representation
- be physically able to point to a symbol by the use of their hands, eyes or some form of electronic system.

Symbols can be used to help pupils understand what is happening around them and to develop their expressive communication skills.

Symbols should only be used in real and relevant situations. As with all communication systems symbols should be introduced in situations where the pupil is highly motivated to communicate and where they have something they want to say: for example, 'I want a drink.'

Staff should ensure that everyone uses the same symbol to represent an activity or object consistently.

### **Signs and Speech Cues**

Signalong (see section below) signs and consistently used standardised phrases are also used as cues. Some examples of this type of cue used at Stephen Hawking School include:

- "1, 2, 3, lights on / off" (before turning the lights on and off in the classroom)
- "(Named activity) has finished. It's time for (next named activity)".
- "Ready Steady LIFT!"

### **Signalong**

Signalong is a sign supporting system which has been developed to help children with learning difficulties to acquire language skills and to aid where there are communication difficulties.

There are six core points which underpin Signalong theory, which should be understood and followed by all those using this signing system within school.

A dictionary of all the basic vocabulary is held by the person with named responsibility for signing in the school.

#### **1. Signalong uses one sign per concept.**

Signs are based on British Sign Language but these are adapted for the needs and abilities of children and adults with learning difficulties.

Signalong training courses teach users how to interpret the manual of signs, which should be referred to when selecting appropriate signs to use with individual pupils.

**2. Signalong is a sign supporting system**

Signalong is used to support speech and reinforce the link between sign and word. The word should always be spoken alongside the sign.

**3. Signalong is part of a total communication approach.**

At Stephen Hawking School we use a total communication approach, which means a range of strategies are used to support understanding and language development. Signalong recognises this and makes use of speech, facial expression, body language and voice tone alongside the use of sign. The use of all of these alongside formal signs ensures pupils' are receiving auditory, visual and physical prompts to aid understanding.

Signing is understood as the formalisation of a natural instinct and natural gestures and idiosyncratic signs used by pupils should be encouraged.

**4. Signalong is a key word signing system**

Only the most important or essential words in any sentence are signed.

Signs should be used at the learner's level, for example if pupils are operating at a one word level, only the **key word** in any sentence should be signed.

Clear, simple language should be used with all pupils, and signs should be used to reinforce essential vocabulary.

**5. Signalong is based within an understanding of typical language development.**

Signalong should be introduced to pupils following typical language development stages. Basic signs should first be introduced alongside real objects and experiences, before moving on to more abstract representations and concepts.

**6. Signalong is 'needs led' communication approach**

The vocabulary chosen to introduce to pupils should be determined by individual pupil's needs and motivations i.e. the signs that are most important to pupil's understanding of the world around them, and those which will be most beneficial to supporting pupil's communication.

**Music Cues**

Set pieces of music are played before specific activities either within class or throughout the school. Examples of music cues used at Stephen Hawking School include:

- Music played before dinner
- Music played before leaving to go home
- Music played to introduce or indicate it's time for certain activities such as Assembly.

## **Touch cues**

Some pupils may have difficulties processing environmental cues, for example due to sensory impairments and may benefit from consistent use of touch cues to enable them to anticipate what is about to happen. These cues may be individualised, but must be used consistently by all adults working with the pupil. Adults should ensure the touch cues used with pupils are not on body actions they are likely to experience in different contexts as this could be confusing to the pupil. Examples of touch cues used at Stephen Hawking School include:

- Tapping elbows firmly three times to indicate to pupil they are about to be lifted / hoisted.
- Pressure motion down a pupil's arms to indicate the activity is finishing.
- Call the pupil's name and touch their arm to warn them about moving or something new that is going to happen e.g. another spoon of food.

Pupils with visual impairment may benefit from the use of body signing for example, using a long sweeping movement down the pupil's shoulder to hand to indicate that something has finished.

Touch cues used with individual children should be recorded on their pupil profiles, to ensure consistency of use within class and as children transition between classes.

## **Creating a Communicative Environment**

All pupils need to be part of a communicative environment. This is an environment which:

- enables each pupil to access information about what is happening next
- allows pupils to make decisions
- enables each pupil to ask for an activity or object.

This environment is created when:

- daily life is structured to enable routines to be established
- cues are used consistently to help anticipate routines; for example, the positioning of chairs in the classroom or music in the entrance denotes the start and end of the day
- cues are easily accessible to pupils
- adults, sensitive to communication from the pupils, are able to respond to any expressive signal from the pupil.

Meaningful choices should be offered throughout the day. This encourages pupils to:

- Make requests
- Use eye contact, pointing, or words
- Make decisions
- Express their needs and interests

Choices can be about:

- What they want to play with e.g. Showing a pupil two objects and saying “Would you like to play with teddy or bricks?”
- What they would like to eat e.g. Showing a pupil two cereal boxes and saying ‘would you like to eat Weetabix or Ready Brek?’
- Who they would like to play with e.g. Showing a pupil two photographs of different people and saying ‘would you like to play with x or y?’

For some pupils making choices from two preferred items is difficult so it may be necessary to make a choice between a preferred and a non-preferred item or a preferred item and a blank card representing “nothing.” This can help pupils understand that the choice they make is important.

### Choosing Cues to Support Communication

The following table shows which cues cannot be used for pupils with different impairments.

Cognitive Development	IMPAIRMENT						
	Visual (V)	Auditory (A)	Physical (P)	VA	VP	AP	VAP
Object cue							
Object of reference							
Photos	x			x	x		x
Colour symbols	x			x	x		x
Black and white line drawing	x			x	x		x
Signs Touch cues	x			x	x		x
Spoken words		x		x		x	x
Written words	x			x	x		x

### Intensive Interaction

#### What is Intensive Interaction?

Intensive Interaction is an approach to working with people with learning difficulties which helps them to relate to others and begin to develop the fundamentals of communication (Nind and Hewett, 2001).

It is based on typical infant-caregiver interaction, through which early communication and sociability are learned in infancy through everyday interactions with caregivers. These typically consist of light hearted, face to face interactions involving eye contact, physical touch and responding to the sounds and facial expressions made by the infant. This captures

the infant's attention and motivates them to engage further with the adult and in this way the complex process of communication begins to develop.

Intensive Interaction makes use of these interactive games to teach those at the earliest stages of development the fundamentals of communication and sociability in a developmentally appropriate way (Kellet and Nind, 2003; Nind and Hewett, 1994).

During Intensive Interaction a repertoire of familiar 'games' can be developed, through which pupils begin to learn and rehearse communicative skills such as:

- Attending
- Exploring and interpreting facial expression
- Vocalising
- Anticipating
- Joint attention
- Turn taking

Adults make themselves available on the pupil's terms and start by responding to and celebrating things the pupil does. Responding to the pupil's signals as if they are intentional, even when they are at a pre-intentional level of communication, enables pupils to become active learners and begin to realise the message carrying possibilities of their movements, gestures and vocalisations (Corke, 2012).

### **Intensive Interaction at Stephen Hawking School**

At Stephen Hawking School Intensive Interaction is carried out by teachers and teaching assistants. It can take place during 1:1 sessions both in and out of the classroom; during personal care times, in the playground or incidentally throughout the day.

Sessions vary in length from five to thirty minutes depending on the pupil and pupils may indicate when they want to stop.

Specific targets are not set for Intensive Interaction sessions, but follow the aims and principles outlined above. Staff should reflect on sessions in order to think about how pupils are responding and how interactions may be extended.

See Appendix A for example of recording format for 1:1 sessions.

### **Non-Directive Communication**

Comments: Undemanding language

- A description of what a pupil is doing
- Talking about what a pupil is looking at
- Talking about what is going to happen
- Reflecting what happens to a toy or object (block tower falls over – "Crash!"; pupil finishes meal – "All gone!")

Expansions:

- Pupil looks at cup and says "juice" – you say "You want MORE juice"
- Pupil pushes car along the floor and says "bbrrrm" – you say "the CAR says brum"



The purpose is to focus the adult's attention and lets the pupil know the adult is watching and listening. It provides a model of language relating to what the pupil is focused on (it 'maps' words onto objects, actions, etc.) and develops joint attention.

The Hanen three A's

- ALLOW the child to take the lead by OWLing - Observe Wait and Listen
- ADAPT – make comments rather than asking questions
- ADD – expand and interpret

### **Principles of Non-Directive Communication**

1. Encourage comments and expansions: A description of what the pupil is doing or looking at
2. Encourage specific praise: Ideally this would be "I really like what you're doing" rather than "Good boy" (which may mean very little to a pupil)
3. Avoid directives: Instructions, including requests such as "Put the blue block on the red block"
4. Avoid too many questions: Fairly obvious what these are, but we often use them to fill gaps when working with non-verbal pupils, e.g. "What's this?"

### **Minimal Speech Approach**

All staff need to be aware that understanding spoken language is very difficult for many of the pupils at Stephen Hawking School and that it is best practice to use short, clear, jargon free language when communicating with pupils. This will enhance their ability to focus on the key words in a sentence.

### **Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)**

PECS is an approach used to develop a pupil's expressive communication skills. At Stephen Hawking School PECS is used with some pupils to teach them how to initiation communication, and at a later stage to teach sentence structure, extend vocabulary and possibly other concepts. In the later stages pupils are able to use PECS to make requests and make comments. PECS enables pupils to communicate with anyone in any environment.

Pupils are taught the stages of PECS progressively using any curriculum area. The teaching is dynamic and develops at an appropriate rate for each individual. The decision to begin teaching this system will be made after the following:

- recommendation by a member of staff who has attended the two day workshop
- assessment by the speech and language therapist and their agreement that a picture based communication system would be of benefit
- discussion with, and approval from, the parents.

When beginning PECS the initial aim will be to find a number of reinforcing items for the pupil. These may be consumable (e.g. raisins, apples etc.) or motivating toys such as bubbles, balloons, water spray, spinning tops etc.

Once a range of items has been established pictures will be used to represent them. Depending on the needs of the pupil these pictures may be large/small, colour/black or white, or even representative of the real object e.g. crisp packet. Where a symbol is used it should be a Meyer-Johnson symbol where possible.

When first teaching this system two members of staff, who have been trained to use PECS, will work together to teach the physical exchange of a picture for a desired object. This is usually taught by a member of class staff and the speech and language therapists / assistant. Once the pupil becomes familiar with the system, this can be reduced and taught by members of class staff.

Each pupil will have their own communication book which must be available for their use at all times

### **Communication Passports**

At Stephen Hawking School important information about individual pupil's communication is displayed on the classroom walls on the "Pupil Profile." For some pupils a need may be identified for a more in-depth profile and these can take the form of either detailed passports (several pages of information) or "Mini Passports" which are more condensed (typically a double sided A4 sheet that can be folded into a six section leaflet). Please see Appendix B for examples.