

## Forms of Communication used at Acorns

- **Objects of reference**

Objects of reference are objects used to represent a person, activity or event e.g. a spoon for lunch time. These objects are used to help a child to understand what is happening in their environment.

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.

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

- **Touch cues**

Touch cues are physical prompts made on a person's body. They are often used for pupils who may need more than just a visual symbol to make sense of the world around them.

At Acorns we use four main physical prompts to support our pupils as a cue when moving them around school.

Going down – One tap on the pupil's shoulder. As you tap say "going down"

Going up – One tap on the pupil's elbow. As you tap say "going up"

Moving – One tap on pupil's knee. As you tap say "going to move"

Finished – One hand on either shoulder. Slowly move your hands down the child's arms towards hands. As you tap saying "finished"

- **Eye-gaze**

Eye-gaze can be used by pupils who have restricted movement or find moving limbs to communicate difficult.

Eye-gaze eliminates the need for pupils to travel and to reach to communicate.

Eye-gaze can be used either in a low-tech form such as an eye-comm board or using a high-tech device.

Eye-gaze works by a pupil using their eyes to make requests and comments.

- **Makaton**

Makaton uses signs and symbols to help our pupils to communicate. Makaton signs are used in conjunction with speech at all times.

Although some of our pupils will not use Makaton to expressively communicate it can be used to aid their understanding and is used as part of our total communication approach here at Acorns.

- **Intensive Interaction**

Intensive Interaction is an approach that focuses on enhancing communication. It focuses on supporting children who are in the early stages of developing communication and social skills.

Intensive interaction is a two-way communication exchange and can be used at all times in all environments.

Intensive interaction focuses on developing a range of early communication skills including:

- Encounter (being present)
- Awareness (fleeting focus)
- Attention and response (responding)
- Engagement (consistent attention)
- Participation (anticipation, taking turns)
- Involvement (consistently joins in interaction)
- Pupil initiated response (independently starting interaction)

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

PECS is an approach used to teach functional communication. PECS has 6 phases and teaches pupils how to initiate communication, sentence structure and how to extend vocabulary beyond single words.

It is extremely important when beginning PECS to find a number of motivating and reinforcing items for the individual (a mean to communicate). These could include but are not limited to consumables (e.g. crisps, orange etc.), toys (e.g. bubbles, balloons etc.) or actions (e.g. tickle, hug etc.)

Once a range of items have been established symbol or pictures will be used to represent them. Pupils will then be introduced to PECS with support from class staff.

At Acorns we use a programme called Boardmaker to generate and make all of our symbols.



- **Communication Books**

Communication books are a highly personalised communication system. A pupil will communicate by pointing to symbols in sequence to make requests or comments. It is a highly effective communication system based on core and fringe vocabulary.

Core words are progressive throughout the stages of a communication book. Fringe vocabulary can be adapted to suit the learners needs and requirements.

Communication books are staged 1-5. At each stage new core words are introduced. When new language is introduced, it will need to be modelled by an adult before the pupil can use the language within their everyday language.



- **Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD)**

PODD is a way of organising whole word and symbol vocabulary in a communication book or speech generating device to provide immersion and modelling for learning.

The aim of PODD is to provide vocabulary:

- For continuous communication all the time
- For a range of messages
- Across a range of topics
- In multiple environments

PODD can have different formats depending on the individuals physical, sensory and communication needs of the person using it.

- **Aided Language Input (ALI)**

At Acorns ALI is used in all classes to promote and extend all pupils language and range of vocabulary.

ALI involved modelling Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) in everyday settings. It helps to promote and develop pupil's understanding of language and symbols.

At Acorns we use ALI in a range of settings including our outdoor facilities. We have incorporated ALI boards into our setting to enhance input modelling throughout the school.

