Communication Handbook:
A guide to effective communication at Fort

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FORT ROYAL COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Or talk to a member of the communication team in school.

Intensive Interaction

What is it?

Intensive Interaction is a strategy used to support and develop early communication skills, also known as the Fundamentals of Communication.

For example:

➢ Enjoying being with another person
➢ Sharing personal space
➢ Increasing attention and concentration
➢ Taking turns in exchange of behaviour
➢ Understanding and using eye contact, facial expressions, vocalisations and physical contact

Intensive Interaction supports the following areas for pupils with SEND:

➢ To begin to develop early communication skills
➢ To enjoy being with another person and sharing personal space
➢ To share joint attention
➢ To anticipate an action carried out by an adult
➢ To develop early turn taking skills
➢ To develop intentional communication skills

The adult responds to any vocalisations, movements, facial expressions and physical contact. They should pause, wait, watch and repeat the action or noise.

How do we use it at Fort Royal?

➢ Many pupils use this throughout the day at Fort Royal. Instead of it being timetabled pupils tend to experience and engage in Intensive Interaction throughout the curriculum.
➢ If you are engaging in Intensive Interaction with a pupil try to copy their movements, actions and vocalisations as far as possible. This encourages pupils to develop a positive relationship with you and begin to engage in intentional communication.
➢ Intensive Interaction is mostly used at Fort Royal in a 1:1 setting for pupils on the EDS curriculum.

For more information visit:

https://www.intensiveinteraction.org/

Tassels

What is it?

Tassels stands for Tactile Signing for Sensory Leaners. It is an on body signing strategy.

➢ It is a system of cues to aid understanding

➢ They help to alert learners that something is about to happen

➢ It supports early stages of communication as it encourages interaction with another person

➢ It has signs for a core vocabulary of everyday words and actions used in daily routines

➢ It can be used alongside objects of reference and sensory/ natural cues

➢ It benefits pupils with complex learning difficulties and visual impairments

How do we use it at Fort Royal?

➢ You alert a child by touching their shoulder, saying their name and moving your hands down their arm to end up under their hands. After this, you can follow up with an on body sign such as "hello", "finished", "toilet", "snack" etc.

➢ Pupils will have a keyring with the Tassels picture and action that they are working on

➢ The alert should always be used BEFORE any other on body sign

Finished/stop

With the hands together at the centre of the body (palms facing down), move the hands outwards horizontally then bring them back together to touch at the centre of the body

Example

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Objects of Reference

What is it?

➢ Objects are reference (OoR) are well-used, meaningful objects that consistently represent an activity, person or thing.

➢ People use these if they are not able to understand symbols or photo's for a schedule or are visually impaired.

➢ They teach someone what is happening next or can be used to make a choice between two activities.

➢ Objects need to be meaningful to the person and frequently used e.g. bowl – snack time, coat – home time, bell – sensory room etc.

How do we use it at Fort Royal?

➢ Pupils at Fort Royal are likely to use Objects of Reference if they are not yet able to recognise photos or are blind or partially sighted.

➢ The pupil would be presented an object by an adult upon transition of an activity or place. The adult should let the pupil touch / hold the object and also say they name of the activity or place e.g. bell – sensory room.

➢ Objects of reference should be kept all together for the child and taken around school by the adult for transitions. They are normally kept in a drawstring back to make it easier to transport. The bag should also have a list of all items and activities / places they represent in case anything gets lost.

➢ The objects of reference need to move up through school with the child to ensure consistency.

Example

Schedules

What is it?

Visual schedules (also known as daily schedules, across-task schedules, within-task schedules or mini-schedules) are a type of visual prompt used to help individuals predict or understand upcoming events.

Visual schedules are based on the idea that individuals on the autism spectrum may have difficulty understanding what will happen next. Visual schedules use pictures/ symbols to show which activities will occur and in what sequence.

A schedule can be one item, two/three items, split or full day.

- ➢ 'Now, Next' schedules
- ➢ 'Now, Next, Then' schedules
- ➢ Split morning and afternoon or full day schedules

How do we use them at Fort Royal?

When using two or three items it is a 'now and next' or 'now, next, then' board.

These boards will have no wording on them and will go from top to bottom <u>or</u> left to right.

The language used should be consistent throughout the whole school.

'Now…….. Next……..' or 'Now……, Next…….., Then…….'

- ➢ Adult's to use the language <u>*'check schedule'*</u> when they would like a child to look at their schedule to see what is happening next.
- ➢ When a child has finished what is on their schedule and is told to 'check schedule' the <u>*child should move the symbol.*</u>
- ➢ The symbol should be moved across to the right-hand side, turned over or moved out of sight in a wallet or on to the back. The schedule will then show what is happening next.
- ➢ A Now and Next board is typically used by the adults to support pupils with transitions and helping pupils to understand their day. If the child is on a 'now and next' board the adult should move the photo's/ symbols <u>not</u> the child.

Symbol schedule   Now and next schedule   Vertical schedule

Processing Time

What is it?

➢ Processing time is the amount of time it takes someone to process a command, question or instruction.

➢ 'Give yourself time to process.' It's a simple thing to say, but in reality it can be hard for adults to do. Our lives are so busy; there are targets to be met, and jobs to do.

➢ The average person with no communication difficulties takes 10-15 seconds to process new information. Take a moment and count that. It can feel like a long time. For some children, their processing time is significantly longer. Allowing children processing time can quite literally be a skill you have to teach yourself.

How do we use it at Fort Royal?

➢ Our pupils with a range of SEND need longer processing time.

➢ Whenever you ask a pupil a question count to <u>at least</u> 10 in your head before you repeat the question.

➢ If you repeat the question try to keep the question EXACTLY the same as before or you are giving the child new information to process.

➢ When we give children longer to process they ask for help more spontaneously, problem solve, complete tasks independently, further their use of language, and feel less pressure.

Example

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Key Word

What is it?

➢ The minimal language approach focuses on using one or two key words rather than a sentence.

➢ When communicating with children who have severe difficulties understanding language, we must communicate whatever is the focus of their attention. If we are putting their boots on, we say "boot". This way the child can start to relate objects or events with particular words. In the longer term, the teacher will not have to physically show the child the objects, they can just name them and the child will recognise the word.

➢ When using language it is also important to avoid using abstract language and terms. Initially it is probably best to stick with nouns (ball, cup) and verbs (run, swim) until the child has mastered two key words.

➢ A Key word is a word that we must understand in order to be able to respond to an instruction or request correctly. Key words are information carrying words that offer choice.
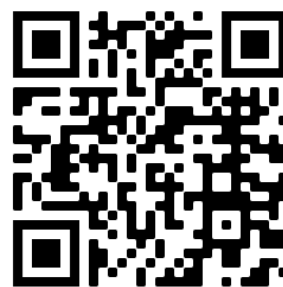
How do we use it at Fort Royal?

➢ Dependent on their level of understanding will depend on the amount of key words that you use with the pupil. This information can be found on their pupil profile.

1 key word	2 key word	3 key word

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Examples of Key Words:

0 Key words – No choice given. The child has an object and the adult gestures or points to the item "give me that"
1 Key word – This is where there is only one word in a phrase or short sentence which the child has to understand. "pass me the <u>scissors</u>" where there is a choice of scissors, paper or glue "Where's the <u>book</u>?" when there is a choice of book, key or monkey
2 key words – This is where there are two words in a sentence that have to be understood for the child to follow the instruction accurately. "Put <u>teddy</u> on the <u>chair</u>" when there is a choice of toddy or dolly and chair or table.
3 key words – At a three key word level you can start to introduce concepts such as "under" and "big / little". "Put <u>big</u> <u>cat</u> in the <u>car</u>" when there is a choice of a big cat, small cat, big dog, small dog, car and boat
4 key words - 4 key words – At a four key word level you can introduce colours and more complex position words such as "behind" and "next to". "Give <u>Alice</u> the <u>big</u> <u>red</u> <u>brick</u>" with a choice of Alice or Matthew, and red/ blue/ yellow bricks and cars which are big and small "Put SpongeBob in the box and Barbie in the house" where there is a choice of SpongeBob / Barbie/ Cow/ Action Man and box / house/ basket

For more information please visit:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCuMs3aiRslFSrqNZn_j_2JA/videos

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PECS

What is it?

➢ PECS stands for Picture Exchange Communication System
➢ PECS is a picture based system used to teach children and young people intentional communication. It begins by teaching the learner to give a picture of a desired item to a communication partner, it works towards teaching leaners to discriminate pictures and how to put pictures together to form sentences.
➢ PECS follows a set of phases that you need to work through systematically. It is a highly structured approach.
➢ In order for skills to be mastered adults need to create opportunities for communication across the day. Researchers suggest that an individual needs around 90 exchanges a day in order to develop successful skills to work towards intentional communication.

PECS supports pupils with SEND and, in particular, Autism Spectrum Disorders, by:
➢ Developing intentional communication
➢ Providing opportunities to participate in the curriculum
➢ Express basic needs and wants
➢ Increase independence

How do we use it at Fort Royal?

Some pupils at Fort Royal use PECS. This is usually through a PECS book. If a child has a PECS book this should always be accessible to them throughout the day (including outside of the classroom) as this is their voice and way of communicating their wants and needs.

If a pupil gives you a symbol/ picture then you should get the item requested as quickly as possible and name the item as you give it to them. If they are eating food break it up into small pieces to promote more exchanges or give an activity for a short period and then take it away so that they need to request it again.

Only put items that are available in the PECS book until pupils get to phase 3 when a "not available" symbol is introduced.

PECS is a highly structured approach and verbal prompting should **not** be used.

Staff can talk to a member of the communication team if they want support/ advice on how to use PECS.
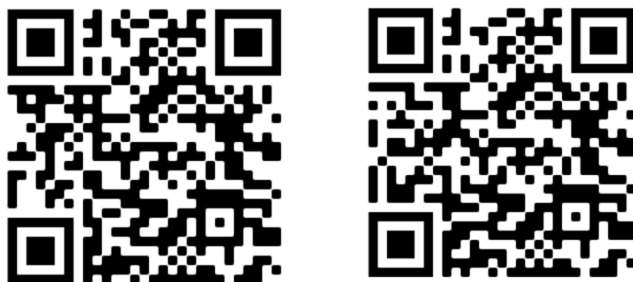
Example

Signalong

What is it?

➢ Signalong is based on British Sign Language, adapted for the needs and abilities of children and adults with verbal communication difficulties. It uses one sign per concept, one concept per sign.

➢ Sign–supported System used in spoken word order, references link between sign and word.

➢ Signalong is part of a total communication approach and uses speech, sign, body language, facial expression and voice tone.

➢ Key-word signing system only the essential word in any sentence. Sign at partner's level and moderate language to ensure that the message is understood.

➢ Start with real objects and real experiences, generalise concepts before moving on to more abstract representations.

How do we use it at Fort Royal?

➢ Pupils are encouraged to use Signalong alongside their verbal communication.

➢ Every lesson has key words and signs that the adults should encourage all pupils to use.

➢ Each week there is a "sign of the week" and "signer of the week". The signer of the week gets a certificate in assembly.

➢ All new members to the school will take a seven-week Foundation Course in Signalong.

Examples of pupil's signing

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Structured Learning

What is it?

- Structured learning organises the physical environment and develops schedules and work systems for children. It builds on the strengths that many children with Autism Spectrum Conditions have (visual, detail and memory).
- The child/adult works from left to right. They have all their work in the start box. Each piece of work may have a visual timetable or sequencing strip to encourage independence. Tasks are organised in order with a clear finish.

How do we use it at Fort Royal?

- If you have a child in your class that works in a structured learning area independently this is known as *'learning'* or *'learn'* on their schedule.
- A Personalised Learning Profile should be visible at the child's learning area outlining barriers to learning and strategies being used.
- Children working in independent learning areas should also have a different area where they are *'learning together'*.
- This can be as little as turning around in their chair to a different part of the table or moving to a different table completely. This is *'learn together'* or *'learning together'*.
- Learning break activities should be timed and what the child does for a learning break should be outlined in their Personalised Learning Profile.
- Learning breaks should be in the designated area for that particular activity. For example outdoor areas, balconies or an area of the classroom.
- Once their learning break has finished the adult should be using the language 'learning break has finished, check schedule'.
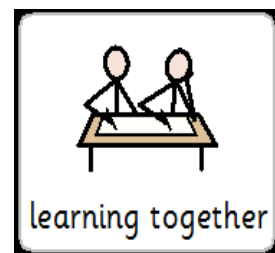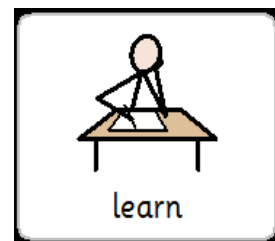
Structured learning examples

Structured learning training

AAC

What is it?

➢ AAC stands for Augmentative and Alternative Communication

➢ Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) is a range of strategies and tools to help people who struggle with speech and language. These may be simple letter or picture boards or sophisticated computer-based systems. AAC helps someone to communicate as effectively as possible, in as many situations as possible.

➢ **Low-tech communication systems** do not need power to function. They are sometimes called "aided communication" because they use basic equipment. Examples include: pen and paper to write or draw; alphabet and word boards; communication charts or books with pictures, photos and symbols; particular objects that represent what someone needs to understand or say.

➢ **High-tech communication systems** use batteries or mains power. Most gadgets or software speak and/or produce text. Some are based on familiar equipment such as mobile devices, tablets and laptops and may have simple buttons or pages that speak when touched. Very sophisticated systems use equipment specially designed to support communication. Hi-tech communication is also sometimes called "aided communication" because it uses equipment.

How do we use it at Fort Royal?

➢ Pupils should have access to their AAC all day at all times. This is their voice and way of communicating their wants and needs.

➢ Adults should model using AAC to children, it is not the pupil's responsibility to know how to use it. Try to model throughout the day – there are videos of this on Worcestershire SALT YouTube channel.

➢ Staff can talk to a member of the communication team if they want support/ advice.

Low tech communication systems:
➢ Some pupils at school use communication books and aided language displays

High tech communication systems:
➢ Some pupils at school use computer / voice output
➢ If you think a child in your class should be using a high-tech communication system, you should contact the assigned speech and language therapist for your class who can assess whether the pupil is ready for a high-tech communication system.

Low tech example

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