

Pre-intentional Communication:

Pre-intentional communication young people react to events.

At this stage young people tend to respond to changes in their body or react to events instigated by adults or others around them. Vocalisations and body movements tend to relate to how comfortable they are feeling or discomfort. Adults supporting the young people are responsible for interpreting these responses and acting accordingly. Changes in behaviour and sounds conveys what the young person needs, likes or dislikes.

This communicative stage is similar to early infancy when a mother responds to the needs of her new baby.

Communication Partner Role

- Discover a range of sensory stimuli and activities pupils respond to.
- To interpret body movements, vocalisations and facial expressions and assign meaning.
- Ensure you give a 'pause' to allow response time.
- To communicate meaning to their responses – preferences by stating '..... you like this' or alternatively '..... you don't like this.' Always use pupil's name.
- To use repetitive routines to develop anticipation of events.
- Use people play regularly and broaden sensory experiences encouraging active exploration.

Vocabulary:

Pupil name. Greetings. More, stop, finished.

Label objects and actions. Key vocabulary linked to everyday routines.

Anticipating Communication:

Anticipating events.

Over time, by following familiar routines, young people combine sensory information about an event and start to recognise what is going to happen. This anticipation of an event is communicated by a change in vocalisation, facial expression or routine. The response from the young person happens just before the event.

This is an important milestone for both communicative and cognitive development.

Communication Partner Role:

- To acknowledge the anticipation when it happens. Then look for the same response repeated next time then becoming consistent to the same stimuli or event.
- Encourage vocalisation.
- Introduce objects of reference to link to daily activities.
- Use people play and intensive interaction to develop fundamentals of communication.

- Identify activities or interests the learner really enjoys and responds to.

Interventions

- Intensive interaction
- People play - ie: peek a boo, ready, steady go and rocking games.
- Objects of reference
- TACPAC

Vocabulary:

Pupil name. Greeting. More, stop, finished, look and help.

Label objects and actions. Key vocabulary linked to every day routines.

Joint Attention

Joint attention is the shared focus of two individuals on an object. Achieved by one individual alerting another to the object by eye pointing, pointing or other verbal or non-verbal indications.

There are progressive steps to developing joint attention.

1. Mutual gaze – communicators give eye-to-eye contact.
2. Gaze following – communication partner can draw attention to specific objects.
3. Coordinated joint looks – this stage has three steps and is initiated by the young person. This can be to look at an object, person then back to the object or person, object and back to the object.
4. Showing – this is when a pupil will hold up an object to show to someone.
5. Intentional following gaze – able to follow a gaze to person or object consistently.
6. Reaching and giving items.
7. Following the point of another person.
8. Pointing with clear communicative intent.

Joint attention needs to be established before a child can understand or start to point.

Typically by 20 months children can use a range of non-verbal gestures to support requesting and shared attention.

Communication Partner Role:

- Use pupil's name and hold objects in pupil's line of vision. Alternatively respond to pupil by picking up something in their eye line.
- Develop visual skills including tracking skills.
- Encourage eye contact during interactions.

- Respond to pupil's gaze and give meaning to their eye pointing by giving them the object.
- Develop object permanence skills to support joint attention.
- Teach joint attention specifically using motivating and objects of interest.

Interventions

- Teach joint attention.

If a student has difficulties with pointing assess joint attention skills.

Intentional Communication:

At this stage a young person can control and use body movements, posture and vocalisation to send a purposeful message.

Readiness

Pupil is demonstrating attempts to communicate, including facial expressions, gestures, drawing adult attention by leading or looking, or they are pointing at pictures and photographs.

Initiation and Choices

Young people can use a vocalisations, movements or verbalisation to initiate an increasing range of messages through their communication means.

- Requesting an object / action / information
- Answering
- Protesting
- Commenting

When a child is able to make clear choices introduce changes to extend a child's communicative behaviour and thinking.

Communication Partner

- Encourage young person to imitate sounds, actions and gestures.
- Encourage early requests in familiar, everyday routines to begin with. For example snack time.
- Check the pupil is able to look at the same object and action as the supporting adult.
- Ensure as many opportunities as possible for pupils to be able to communicate.
- Pupils need to start communication using objects (most concrete). Cognitively pupils need to be able to match photographs to objects then symbol to photograph to ensure the right means is used to support choice making.

Interventions

- Communication needs to be fun and about sharing experiences.
- Use Charlotte's Choice Making Chart to establish learning steps.
- When objects or other mediums are used in choice making present at eye level and label the item as they are presented, moving the item slightly as you speak to draw attention to it. Repeat if necessary. Allow processing time.
- Introduce PECs, communication boards with core and fringe vocabulary to support access to learning activities.
- Build in choice making into majority of learning experiences.
- Introduce Attention Autism to increase pupils' ability to attend.
- Introduce Colourful semantics stage one.
- Plan learning activities to develop matching skills so pre-verbal pupils can progress from objects to symbols.
- When a pupil is able to make a clear choice between two items then introduce changes; a third choice, sabotage through making a mistake, extend interests or miss something out.
- Use visuals to communicate daily routines or task planners. Develop a clear start and finish to learning experiences.

Vocabulary:

Pupil name. Greetings.

Core:

More, stop, finished, look, help, want, and different.

Fringe:

Peers names and supporting staff.

Label objects and actions. Key vocabulary linked to every day routines. Vocabulary linked to interests or activities – bubbles, blocks, books.

Verbs to accompany activities – blow, pop, catch.

Early concepts – like, don't like, little, big.

Progression in play from Exploratory to Imaginative

The development of play is closely linked to the development of language.

Initially a child will put everything in their mouth as a way to explore items. Through mouthing, handling objects and observing others young people begin to develop their own understanding of the purpose of an object. It is important that all Willoughby pupils have multi-sensory learning experiences. Modelling is key to enable our young people to learn.

Exploring everyday objects, as well as, toys is important for young people to establish function, what it is made of, and what it is associated with supports pupils to retain the word.

Imaginative play progresses in a developmental sequence.

Large doll / teddy play – Small world (miniature toys) – Play with pictures (puzzles / books) – Pretend play (dressing up and role play).

Through play experiences and adult support pupils will be supported in progressing from solitary play to parallel then onto social play.

Communication Partner

- Provide opportunities to define objects, especially everyday items. Model how to use items and rehearse labelling.
- Use a turn taking narrative, “Jonny’s turn, Laura’s turn.”
- Provide pupils opportunities to act out every day routines using large dolls or soft toys.
- Use small world toys to support the curriculum theme.
- Introduce Identi-play to support small world play development. Observe for transfer and generalisation of the skills learnt within the classroom.
- If at the pretend play stage introduce a role play corner within the classroom.
- Use rule based play; picture lotto, skittles, pop-up pirates and similar to develop social skills. Use a turn-taking board if it helps.

Attention and Listening Skills

Attention skills develop in a sequential manner. Fleeting attention – rigid attention – single channel attention – focused attention – two-channelled attention leading to integrated attention.

There can be a mismatch between pupil’s abilities and their attention skills. It is important to know at which stage of attending pupils are at as this can be well below integrated. Difficulties in attention can result in limiting academic progress.

Communication Partner

- Use the checklist to identify attention levels.
- Focus pupil’s attention by using their name. Use an appropriate level of language.
- Check pupil has understood where possible.
- Ensure pupils are aware of learning objective.
- Introduce learning breaks to ensure pupils are ready to learn.
- Don’t expect pupils to listen for too long and ensure activities are varied.
- Teach pupils how to listen – use visuals to support understanding.
- Consider where pupils sit.
- Reduce background noise and distractions.

Readiness

Pupils are beginning to communicate single ideas through signs, speech, symbols or other means.

Assessing Receptive Language – Questioning and Information Carrying Words

It is important instructional language and questioning is at an appropriate level. To check this Willoughby will use Blank Word level assessment and an information carrying word assessment (ICW).

Once pupils are on a semi-formal curriculum pathway the Language Links Assessment will be used to review main areas of language to ensure all pupils have a foundation of language. This will identify areas of language they struggle with.

Blank Word Level

1. Naming (matching perception)
2. Describing
3. Re-telling
4. Justifying – problem solving

Information Carrying Words

The ICWs are linked to choices within an instruction. For the instruction, 'Give me the pencil' there would need to be a pen and pencil so a choice is made. This is an example of 1ICW.

2ICWs would require two choices. For example, 'Give me the large pig'. There would need to be a two different animals, cow and a pig as well as two different sized pigs.

Combining words, signs and symbols (Colourful semantics – modelling and developing writing)

Pupils need to develop their vocabulary and learn to combine words. Colourful semantics is the scaffold for teaching nouns, verbs, adjectives etc. These introduce word classes and sentence structure.

Colourful semantics needs to be environmental as well as support class text vocabulary.

1. **Orange** – who
2. **Yellow** – what doing (verb)
3. **Green** - object (noun)
4. **Blue** – place
5. **Purple** – adjectives
6. **Brown** – when (adverbs)
7. Conjunctions
8. Negatives

Communication Partner

- All staff model combining words / symbols using colourful semantic cue cards.
- Use colourful semantics to create vocabulary sheets.
- Include colourful semantics in English and text activities.
- Provide scaffolds in books or on the table to support independence.
- Use colourful semantics on display boards.
- Use communication systems (PECs / boards / AAC) to progress to combining words.

Intervention:

➤ Talking Boxes.

Who are Talking Boxes for?

- Pupils who have attention and listening difficulties
- Pupils with communication difficulties
- Support to transfer and generalise communication skills.

How do Talking Boxes work?

- The activities can be used as single activities or one after the other.
- They can be used in a small group or with individual children.
- Each session should be between 5-10 minutes dependent on the age and interest of the children.
- If you use the activities in a group then it is best to have 2 adults: one to lead the activities and one to support the children.
- Link the contents to the curriculum theme.

➤ Language Links Interventions linked to a specific area highlighted on screener.

Vocabulary:

Core:

I, my more, again look, question you, your stop, finish want, go, different, help, like, no, don't know, like.

Fringe:

Peers names and supporting staff.

Label objects and actions. Key vocabulary linked to every day routines. Vocabulary linked to interests and curriculum areas – forest school, class text, play, numbers.

Nouns, verbs, pronouns, and prepositions (including vocabulary of time). Adjectives and connectives.

Concepts – same/ different, happy/sad, on/off, full/empty, more/less, up/down, hot/cold.

Written Communication:***Producing a recorded, symbol or print outcome of their thoughts and ideas.***

At this stage pupils need to be able to verbalise, sign or combine symbols to produce sentences. Pupils can use high tech and low tech communication systems to demonstrate their understanding as well as their expressive sentences.

To achieve the outcomes for this stage pupils must be able to:

1. Reach level 4 of Blank Word Level Assessment.
2. Reach stage 5 of Colourful Semantics.
3. Be able to express a sentence verbally or via sign or symbol.
4. Ensure receptive language is at 2 ICWs, showing retention of complex instructions.
5. Complete the Switch progression road map.
6. Use core and fringe vocabulary in low tech or high tech communication aid.

[Refer to Willoughby Writing progression document and Computing Progression document.](#)

Augmentative and Alternative Communication:

Pupils at a stage of using either a low tech or high tech communication system (PECs, Communication boards or books, PECs app, Proloquo2go, Eye Gaze, Grid, Dynavox) need to be able to demonstrate skills in four areas,

1. Linguistic – applying language skills through their aid.
2. Social – to be able to participate in varying social situations using aid. Including deciding on a mutual topic of conversation.
3. Strategic – Plans ahead and creatively uses device to communicate effectively.
4. Operational – be able to operate and navigate their communication aid.

[Refer to the AAC Goal grid for more information in the skills required in each area.](#)

Communication Partner:

- Ensure necessary vocabulary for lessons is available, either printed or added to device.
- Model navigation to new vocabulary.
- Support constructing sentences by modelling through their device.

Key Information:

[SALT targets are an integral part of the EHCP process and need to be embedded. Use the speech and language reports and targets to help identify where pupils are in their communication on the Willoughby progression document.](#)