

Communication at the Milestone School

The Milestone school recognises that pupils, regardless of developmental stage, should be regulated and build relationships before any meaningful learning can take place. We also recognise the need to generalise acquired skills across all areas of life. Transferring skills beyond the classroom is a key goal.

Pupils working at levels 7+ of the English pathway will work on their communication skills through the Speaking and listening strand of the English Pathway.

Intent

Communication is a **fundamental skill** and every pupil has the **right** to develop their communication.

Through the Communication Pathway, Milestone wants pupils to develop their fundamental communication skills. Pupils working at levels 1-6 will be developing their fundamental communication across the following 4 areas:

- Refusal and rejection
- Making choices and sharing wants/needs
- Building social relationships
- Sharing/gaining information

Implementation

Levels 1-6 acknowledges that communication for some of our learners is complex at sometimes staff need find meaning in some actions or behaviours in order to reshape communication. Pupils will be working at a level appropriate to them. If a pupil needs to be baselined then the baselining document can be used

Pupils will develop their communication across the following levels:

1 – Pre-intentional Behaviour	2 – Intentional behaviour	3a - Unconventional	3b – conventional	4 – Concrete symbols	5 – Abstract symbols	6 – Language (1 word level)
Behaviour is not yet under the pupil's control and therefore not intentionally communicative. Nevertheless, the child's behaviours are very expressive at this stage and staff are sometimes able to interpret the child's general state of comfort or discomfort. Some children at this stage may not yet have voluntary control over most of their behaviours.	Some behaviours are under the pupil's control, but it is not yet used consistently to intentionally. Individuals at this stage do not yet realize that they can use these behaviours to control another person's behaviour. However, staff are able to interpret the individual's needs and desires from behaviours such as body movements, facial expressions, vocalizations and eye gaze.	Unconventional pre-symbolic behaviours are used intentionally to communicate though they are not socially acceptable. Communicative behaviours include body movements (which could include, vocalizations, facial expressions and simple gestures (such as tugging on people). Pupils will learn to reshape behaviours so that they become conventional and more socially acceptable.	Staff will model conventional and intentional communication which may include pointing, nodding or shaking the head, waving, hugging, and looking from a person to a desired item.	"Concrete" symbols that physically resemble what they represent, are used to communicate. Concrete symbols look like, feel like, move like or sound like what they represent. Concrete symbols include pictures, items (such as a shoelace to represent "shoe"), "iconic" gestures (such as patting a chair to say "sit down") and sounds (such as making a buzzing sound to mean "bee").	Abstract symbols such as speech, manual signs, Brailled or printed words are used to communicate. These symbols are "abstract" because they are NOT physically similar to what they represent. They are used one at a time.	Symbols (concrete or abstract) are combined into two- or three-symbol combinations ("want juice", "me go out"), according to grammatical rules. The individual understands that the meaning of symbol combinations may differ depending upon how the symbols are ordered.

Outcomes will be taken from the pathway with pupils working on these daily. Evidence (written observations, photos, videos) should be added to evidence for learning every 3 weeks.

Pupils will work on outcomes in a range of contexts: 1:1, in small group activities and in whole class activities. Communication can be developed within all subjects and pupils will learn to transfer skills beyond the classroom.

Due to our total communication approach, we value all types of communication. The following modes of communication may be seen in use by pupils and/or being modelled by adults:

- Behaviour
- Gestures and body language
- Facial expressions
- Real objects
- Objects of reference
- TOBIs
- Photos
- Widgit symbols
- Tassels (on body signing)
- Makaton Signing
- AACs – low tech, mid teach and high tech
- Written word
- Drawings
- Language at an appropriate level

The above list is by no means exhaustive. We hope that by valuing and modelling a range of communication modes, pupils will find a mode valuable to them. By the time they leave Milestone school, we hope that all pupils will have a preferred mode of communication and/or a document to support the understanding of communication.

Impact

The impact of the teaching of communication at the Milestone School can be seen through ongoing assessment and discussion throughout the year. This includes but is not limited to:

- Updating SOLAR (our assessment tool)
- Pupil progress meetings
- EHCP reviews
- Internal/external moderation
- End of year reports
- Anecdotal evidence
- Engagement model

Based on the needs of the children, evidence is collected in a range of ways. Teachers gather evidence throughout the year (every 3 weeks) to show the progress that children have made. Selected evidence (written observations, photos, videos) against an outcome is uploaded onto Evidence for Learning throughout the year. Progress is assessed against The Milestone Progression Pathway for Communication, using SOLAR, which is updated throughout the year.

Some pupils, particularly those working within levels 1-6, may make minimal or no progress within single academic years. This is to be expected, with Evidence for Learning and the engagement model documenting more anecdotal evidence over long periods of time.

Pupils that require an adaptive mode of communication will have a communication passport as part of their one-page profile. This will move with them to new settings.

