



# Woolgrove School Communication Policy

'Equal opportunities lie at the heart of all that we do at Woolgrove. We are committed to ensuring that every member of the school community, whatever their position, race, gender, disability or religion is given the same chance as any other to access the services and support of the school'.



# Woolgrove Communication Policy

## Intent

To provide all pupils with the basic skill of communicating and an effective means of communicating so that they can:

- Succeed in the community.
- Communicate effectively with their peers, who may use a different method of communication to the one that they use.
- Choose their own means of communication and respect different methods of communication.
- Adjust their communication according to the needs of the situation.

The method of communication used may be:

- spoken language
- spoken language supported by signing
- signing- sign a long is the method used at Woolgrove and is based on BSL and Makaton
- symbol books
- symbols, photographs, objects
- written communication

## Pupils' communication modes

Pupils will often have a dominant means of communicating. This could be signing, speaking, using a talker or using symbols. We will therefore provide for all of these communication modes.

Spoken dominant communication.

Signing dominant communication.

Non-verbal pupils who have not acquired signing skills will be provided with symbols, communication book or talker dominant communication.

Pupils will therefore communicate in different ways:

Spoken dominant pupils will communicate in English and will learn signing taking into account their academic abilities.

Signing dominant pupils will communicate in sign and learn English taking into account their academic abilities.

Object, Photo, Symbol communication book or talker dominant pupils will communicate using these methods and be taught signing, to intonate words and possibly English taking into account their academic abilities.

Pupils' abilities in speaking and listening using their individual communication method will be assessed on entry to school and annually as part of the annual review process or more regularly, should there be a need. Pupils' communication preference will be recorded on the class overview.



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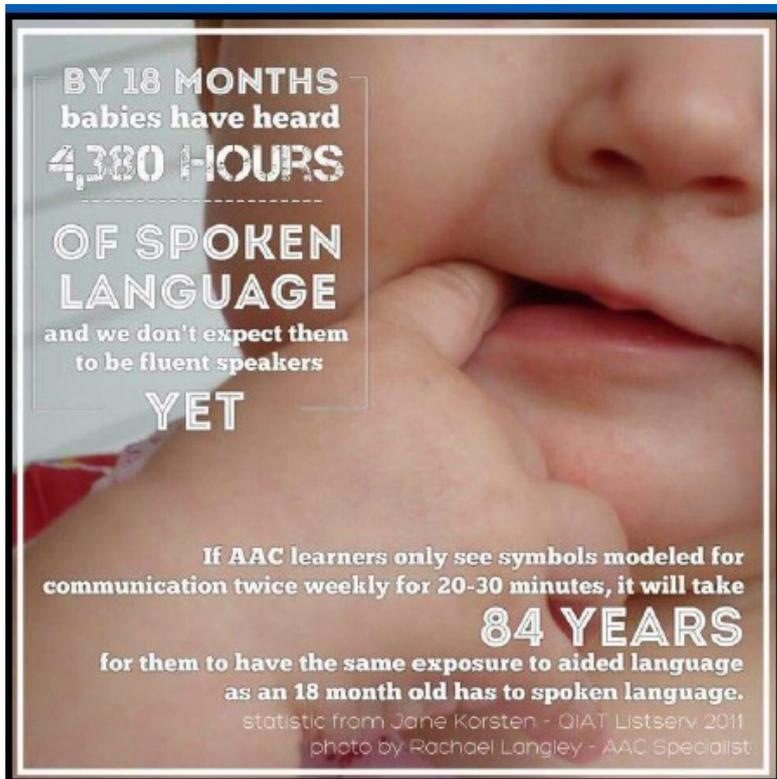
### Implementation - Communication in practice

Teachers should identify the modes of communication that pupils use within their class and will modify their mode of communication to cater for individual pupil's needs. Communication methods used at Woolgrove include:

- Intensive Interaction
- Gestalt Language strategies / Analytical Language Strategies
- Signing
- Core boards
- Objects of reference
- Photographs
- Symbols
- Communication books
- Communication aids such as switches, apps or a personalised communication device.

All staff will model the use of the communication methods used within their class and support their pupils to use and develop their communication skills using their preferred method of communication.

Modelling is one of the most important things to do when developing communication skills.



Some pupils' preferred method may not be the most effective for communicating for these children so they may use 2 methods, such as signing and symbols.



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### **Intensive Interaction**

Intensive interaction is a play-based approach to helping children develop early, pre-speech communication and interaction skills like eye contact, facial expressions, the ability to copy sounds and shared attention. It also aims to reduce repetitive and self-injurious behaviour. Intensive interaction was developed by Dave Hewitt in the 1980s. It is a form of communication, usually between two people. Intensive interaction teaches the fundamentals of communication. It involves an interaction partner copying and mirroring the child's facial expressions, actions or vocalisations. It can be used with people of all ages with a wide range of needs. It allows for a two-way communication- the other person may end up looking at and copying the interaction partner.

Classes will use intensive interaction with individuals as and when needed.

### **Gestalt Language and Analytical Language**

Gestalt language processors (GLP) are "whole to part" thinkers and acquire language in chunks. These chunks of language, sometimes called "echolalia", "scripts" or "gestalts", are a vital component of gestalt language development. Echolalia is the repetition of chunks of language, repeated exactly how it has been heard. Echolalia can be in be a single word, sentence, part of a song, or a whole book. They can be immediate – the phrase is repeated straight away or delayed, the language is repeated after a delay. The delay could be weeks or even months later.

With the right language environment and support, these gestalts will become more flexible over time. The child will be able to mix and match portions of the gestalts (mitigating) and later free single words from these gestalts. These single words will allow the child to generate original, self-generated language. We need to embrace the child's echolalia (gestalts) in order to support the child through the Stages of Natural Language Acquisition (NLA).

To support the Gestalt Language Processors staff will;

- Understand that Ecolalia is communication. Don't try to eliminate or extinguish the script (gestalt).
- Acknowledge their script and accept it as communication. Smile, head nod, repeat it back to them.
- Try to eliminate questioning as a form of connection and interaction. Try declarative language instead. Comment, narrate and pause. Most GLPs aren't ready to answer questions until they are self-generating language (NLA Stages 3-4+).
- Don't take scripts literally. Most aren't literal.
- Try to find the meaning behind the script. Most are linked to a dramatic or emotional experience for the child that made the script "stick."

Analytical Language Processors start with learning a single word and the build on this.

To support Analytical Language processors staff will;

- Try declarative language instead. Comment, narrate and pause.
- Expand children's communication, for example if a child says "car" adult could say "red car"



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### **Signing**

All classes have been provided with a copy of the Woolgrove Sign-along book and additional copies are available to be purchased. At Woolgrove we will use the signs in the book apart from the signs for home, finished and number where alternative signs will be used. Any signs not in the Woolgrove Sign-along book can be found in the Sign-along books which are available in the Working Staffroom.

All staff will (according to their ability), when necessary, sign the keywords in a spoken sentence to support the development of speech and to aid understanding. This enables pupils to receive two clues about what the teacher is saying, a verbal clue and a visual clue.

All staff (according to their ability) are expected to use sign-along signs when communicating with pupils in communal areas including the playground, dining room and hall.

Some staff will sign the songs that are being sung in assembly.

Every class will teach children to sign key words related to their topic during their weekly signing session. Semi-Formal and Formal pathways will also introduce signing phrases that can be used to communicate during play, role-play / drama and have conversations with other children

The British Sign Language (BSL) alphabet will be used to sign the initial sound of names of places and people. Some teachers may wish to add an attribute associated with the pupil to the letter, for example for a pupil who is always dancing, a teacher may sign the initial sound of their name followed by the sign for dancing. Alternatively, a teacher may just wish to add a boy or girl sign after the sign for the initial sound of the pupil's name.

Cued articulation will be used to support pupils' articulation and some teachers may use this method when teaching phonic sessions.

All teachers will, if necessary, produce and provide appropriate pictures, symbols, communication books or talker overlays to enable a non verbal, non signing pupil to communicate or to enhance the communication of verbal or signing pupils.

Widgit symbols or pictures will be used to support pupils' understanding. Symbols should be used on displays and as a teaching aid. The lunchtime menu will be produced using symbols and displayed for pupils to read. Hymns and songs will be produced using symbols and will be displayed during assemblies and singing practices.

### **Core boards.**

Core boards are a board of symbols which can be used in multiple events or situations. The advantages of using a core board are that;

- they are flexible when they can be used,
- they are good for teaching sentence structure.
- can be used to teach functional social communication
- Can be part of a communication system or be used as a classroom tool.

Core boards contain Non-specific words we use constantly. Being non-specific means they're actually more useful



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- *I want to go there*
- *I want that one*
- *That was not good*
- *That was funny*

Every word is core and re-used regularly. If you know a core word, you can use it in loads of situations to get your message across.

Fringe words, which are very specific words that can give communication context

*Such as juice, wotsits, car, ball, tiger etc...* Often with fringe words the context the user is currently in is often enough. If they use core to say "I want that one" and there are snacks available to point to, you already know what they mean. Fringe is important, especially fringe about the user's interests, which can also be used to support children to communicate.

Core boards can be used to support children to communicate generic and context based CORE, for example;

- "Let me do it" VS. "Let me stir the brownie mix"
- "Get the stuff" vs. "Get the brownie mix, eggs, oil"
- "Use the little one" Vs. "Use the teaspoon measure"
- Little words that hold the meaning words together
- "Some of that"
- "Go with you"
- Social words
- "Hello you"

Core boards are in all classrooms, playgrounds and individual core boards are available. Fringe boards can be created for individuals if necessary.

### **Woolgrove, Object, Symbol Communication**

Any child who needs to learn to:

- Communicate clearly (cannot be understood by adults or is non-verbal)
- Initiate communication
- Extend communication to include commenting as well as requesting

May benefit from being provided with an alternative method of communication such as object, photo, symbol communication or signing. Once a child has learnt to initiate or extended their vocabulary, they can be provided with a communication book or iPad app such as sound board maker/Grid Player 2.

The Woolgrove Object, Photo, Symbol communication is based on SCERTs principles and the Picture Exchange Communication system (PECs). Real objects, objects or reference, photographs of objects or symbols can be used depending on the child's level of understanding.

Adults should decide which stage to start a child at and what method to use, objects, photos or symbols. Each stage should be introduced and the success criteria met before moving to the next stage. When an adult is supporting a child's communication, they should physically prompt the child without talking if needed to work towards independence. Ideally 2 adults, one supporting and one receiving communication, should be available but this system can be completed with one adult.



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All adults working with the child need to build opportunities for the child to communicate; this can be done by withholding support and resources.

Stage	Objects, photo, symbol?	How it works	Success criteria
1	Objects in a sealed container that child is unable to open	One or two containers containing desirable object/s are placed in front of the child. Adult holds out hand and waits for child to pick up container and place container in the adult's hand. (Initially adult may need to use other hand to support child to place container in the hand.) Adult says the word i.e. apple and opens the container & gives child the item.	Child can: Choose between two objects Hand container to adult Look at adult
2	Objects in a sealed container that child is unable to open with symbols or photos velcroed on top of the container  Objects of reference can be used at this stage if necessary	One or two containers containing desirable object/s are placed in front of the child. Adult holds out hand and waits for child to go to pick up container, adult supports child to remove symbol or photo and place it in adult's hand. Adult says the word i.e. apple and opens the container & gives child the item.	Child can Choose between 2 symbols/photos Hand photo / symbol with support  Then Hand photo / symbol independently
3	Symbols or photos that the child has used in stage 2 on an A5 folder Objects in a sealed container that child is unable to open  Objects of reference can be used at this stage if necessary	One or two containers containing desirable object/s are placed in front of the child with the folder and 2 symbols/photos. Adult holds out hand and waits for child to remove symbol or photo and place it in adult's hand. Adult says the word i.e. apple and opens the container & gives child the item.	Child can: remove symbol / photo and hand it to the adult independently Child has at least 10 objects they are able to request using photos or symbols (Child should move on from objects of reference during this stage)
3b	Objects and photos to match	If a child is still using objects at this stage begin getting the child to match objects to the photographs and then exchange the objects for photos on their book (may need to match objects to object first).	Child can: Match 10 objects to photos
4	Symbols or photos that the child has used in stage 3 on	Objects are on a tray, adult shows tray and names items. Child has symbols of objects on the	Child can: Choose between 4 objects



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	an A5 folder	tray on the front of their book and a desirable symbol / photo that is not available. Child removes symbol hands it to an adult who is holding out their hand initially. During this stage begin to wait for child to reach independently before adult presents an open hand. If object is available adult names the object and hands it to the child, if it's not available adult shows the tray and says "No object (name of child)! Choose again" (child may initially need support to choose an alternative using physical prompting).	Hand a symbol independently reaching towards an adult who isn't holding an open hand out Accept if an object is not available and make an alternative choice with support
<b>Begin to add in a pause before saying symbol name to see if the child will vocalise the object at this stage</b>			
4b	Symbols and photos to match	If a child is still using photos at this stage begin getting the child to match symbols to the photographs and then exchange the photos for symbols on their book (may need to match photo to photo first with symbol in the corner).	Child can: Match 10 symbols to photos
5	Symbols or photos that the child has used in stage 3 on an A5 folder – pages added into the folder	Objects are on a tray, adult shows tray and names items. Child has symbols of objects on the tray on pages within the book. Adult supports child initially to open folder and find desirable symbol/photo. Child removes symbol hands it to an adult if object is available adult names the object and hands it to the child.	Child can: Choose between a range of symbols Open folder and find a page in their book that has a symbol that they want.
5b	As above	As above ask child what do you want?	As above – child can respond to question what do you want?
6 This stage needs to be practised throughout the next stages	As above	As above but adult sits away from child so they have to move to the adult. (Ideally another adult can physically prompt the child to stand and move) if another adult is not available and child doesn't move, adult can move to child holding the desired object and support child to stand and follow the object back to where the adult was sitting then adult	Child can: Select a symbol and move to an adult and hand it to them



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		holds out hand and takes symbol from child. Names object and gives it to the child.	
6b	As above	As above but adult has back turned to child, child is supported to put their hand onto the adult's arm to gain their attention. (If only one adult is available, adult should not look at child and reach for their hand and place it onto their arm before turning and looking at the child).	Child can: Gain adult's attention to initiate an interaction if adult is not looking at them independently. (Can be by vocalising, touching adult's arm, moving in front of the adult)
<b>When a child can consistently initiate with a range of adults you may wish to move to a communication book rather than a symbol book. The above stages will need to be taught with a communication book.</b>			

7	Folder with child's name or photo on it to identify it in an accessible place in the classroom	Child is physically prompted to collect folder and take to snack/dinner/work. Gradually remove the prompt so the child does this by themselves.	Child can: Collect their own folder and take it to Snack Dinner Work
8	Folder with symbols and colour coded sentence strip orange, yellow, and 2 white sections. 'I want' and 'please' symbol	Sentence strip with 'I want' and 'please' placed on it. When child gets symbol physically prompt them to place in the gap on the sentence strip, remove the sentence and hand it to the adult. Support child to touch each symbol while the adult reads the sentence and then hand the object to the child.	Child can: Independently place symbol on the sentence strip and then hand to an adult and point to the symbols while an adult reads
9	As above	Sentence strip Symbols on front of folder 'I want' and 'please', child moves symbols onto strip. (physically prompted if necessary)	Child can: Place I want object please on a sentence strip and hand it to an adult
10	As above add adults' names one at a time and give and help symbols	Sentence strip Symbols on front of folder: adult's name, give and please, child moves symbols onto strip. (physically prompted if necessary)	Child can: Place 'adult's name give me object' please on a sentence strip and hand it to an adult Place adult's name and 'help please' onto a



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			sentence strip and give it to an adult
10b	<p>Add more action symbols, Open Add packet, box, door, plus other symbols of objects that need opening</p> <p>Container or packet that child cannot open</p>	<p>Adults need to look for opportunities for children to request for things to be opened Sentence strip Symbols on front of folder adults name, open and please, child moves symbols onto strip. (physically prompted if necessary)</p>	<p>Child can: Request for objects to be opened independently using a sentence strip</p>
11	<p>Add 'like' and 'don't like' symbols</p> <p>Add more symbols to the book</p>	<p>Adults need to look for opportunities for children to express if they like or don't like Sentence strip Symbols on front of folder: adults' names, I, like, don't like Child moves symbols onto strip (physically prompted if necessary)</p> <p>In the beginning this is best done with food or toys the child likes and doesn't like (ask parents if you're not sure)</p>	<p>Child can: Make a sentence to say if they like/don't like an object, activity, toy etc independently</p>
12	<p>Add numbers, size, whole, half, length, colours vocabulary</p>	<p>Build opportunities for child to request a colour, amount, size or portion of an object. Activities matching amounts to numbers and measurement activities can support this stage.</p>	<p>Child can: Match number to amounts Use some descriptive vocabulary to request</p>
12b	<p>Add 'see', 'have', 'counted' and 'hear' symbols</p> <p>more, less, same</p>	<p>Adults need to look for opportunities for children to answer 'what's that?' 'How many?' Sentence strip Symbols on front of folder: I, see, hear, counted, have and objects. Child moves symbols onto strip. (Physically prompted if necessary).</p>	<p>Child can: Make an 'I see' sentence Make an 'I hear' sentence Make 'I have' sentence Make 'I counted' sentence</p>
13	<p>As above with symbols for answers</p>	<p>During free time child is asked a question (at blank level stage 1, what's that?) that requires their</p>	<p>Child can: Collect folder independently when</p>



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		<p>communication folder. Child is physically prompted to collect folder and find symbol to answer question</p> <p>Can also be practised during group sessions such as big book.</p>	<p>asked a question Make a sentence to answer 'what's that?'</p>
13b	<p>As above</p> <p>Add people, places, action symbols</p>	<p>As other questions, who is that? What are they doing? Where are they?</p> <p>This can be completed during big book, reading and when looking at photos of previous activities.</p>	<p>Child can : Answer blank level 2 questions.</p>

14	<p><b>It is likely that at this stage the child will need to move onto a communication book or iPad.</b> <b>It is likely that this system will need to be taught to the child using physical prompting initially.</b></p>		
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### Communication books

Woolgrove communication books are set up with a core vocabulary section to the left of each page and topic vocabulary to the right. Every class has a class communication book that the class teacher can use to model communication to the children within their class, or children can use to answer questions.

Class teachers can create new pages of communication boards to use in specific lessons. Integrated Visual Coding (IVC) can be used to support pupils to answer, who (orange border), what doing (yellow border), where (blue border), what object (green border), when (brown border) questions or to describe (thought bubble) objects and pictures.

Pupils who can initiate, effectively use symbols to create sentences and have a wide range of vocabulary should be provided with their own communication book to extend their abilities and range of communication.

### Communication aids

Pupils who can effectively use a communication book or symbols to communicate may be introduced to using a talker app, such as Soundboard maker, Let me talk or Grid player 2.

The class teacher will plan for activities that can be taught to develop the use of a communication app on their class iPad.



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If children are able to use this method of communication effectively a discussion between the class teacher and Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) will take place to discuss the possibility of accessing funding for a personalised communication device. If a child is lent a school device this must be returned to the school when the child leaves the school. If the application for funding for a device is successful, this then becomes the child's device for them to take with them when they leave the school.

### **Speech and Language Therapy**

All children are seen as a matter of course by the Speech and Language Therapy Service (SALT) if they have S.L.T. in their Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). Many of the children will already be known to this service and their case notes will be transferred if they were seen in Hertfordshire. If they have not been seen in Hertfordshire but they are identified as having difficulties with communication, they can be referred for assessment and following that, if appropriate, ongoing therapy and strategies will be offered.

The SALT department has 2 S.L.T.s and an SLT Assistant. They are employed by the Hertfordshire NHS Trust and work at other locations, as well as Woolgrove, as part of their professional contract. A member of the team is at Woolgrove on some weekdays and available for either personal or telephone contact.

The children at Woolgrove may have difficulties in various areas of their communication.

These can be divided into:

### **Comprehension/Receptive Language**

This refers to how much a child can understand. Difficulties may affect:

- Vocabulary knowledge
- Ability to follow instructions
- Ability to follow longer pieces of information such as stories and lessons
- Understanding of grammar such as tenses and plurals
- Verbal reasoning such as being able to predict or infer information

### **Expression**

This refers to how well a child can express themselves. There may be difficulties such as:

- Ability to recall words
- Ability to construct sentences
- Difficulties in sequencing logically

Some children will have great difficulty in expressing themselves verbally and the use of a signing system such as Sign a Long will be encouraged or the use of an alternative/augmentative system such as Picture Exchange Communication Scheme (PECS) or an alternative method such as an electronic aid.

### **Speech**

This is the ability to produce speech sounds clearly.

### **Dysfluency**



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Some children have difficulty producing fluent speech and may repeat the sounds or syllables in words.

### **Pragmatics**

Children with pragmatic difficulties may have difficulties with the social use of language which may affect their play and friendships.

Children may be assessed using formal standardised assessments. The Communication Framework is also used which is an informal assessment of a child's functional communication skills. This is done in conjunction with the class teacher. Following this, targets are set jointly with the teacher to ensure that the child's communication targets run through the curriculum and encourage the generalisation of new skills.

Targets need to have

- Small steps
- Be measurable
- Progressive

### **Staff and Parent training.**

The Senior Leadership Team will be responsible for ensuring that the following training takes place. Annual signing training sessions will take place for teaching and non teaching staff, including Teaching Assistants, Mid-day supervisors, Kitchen staff, Office staff and any other adult who may need to communicate with pupils in the school.

Annual signing training sessions for parents will take place. Any parent attending at least 3 of the sessions will be provided with a Woolgrove Sign-along book free of charge.

Outreach signing sessions will take place, these may take place in house with schools attending on site or Woolgrove staff may offer training at a school that has requested information about signing. Woolgrove staff who wish to increase their skills may also attend.

Cued articulation training will take place and be updated regularly.

Woolgrove Object, Photo, Symbol communication training will take place for teaching and non-teaching staff and will be updated regularly.

Training on making and using communication books will take place for teaching and non-teaching staff and will be updated regularly.

Training on talkers will take place and be updated regularly.

Training on using the Communicate In Print will be updated regularly.

Staff will be given opportunities to share good practice.

The SALT Dept will attend at least one coffee morning per year to give information to parents about the SALT service.



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Training will also be offered to staff from the SALT department as necessary.

All staff will be provided with opportunities to receive the necessary training and resources to be able to:

- Read the Woolgrove Sign-along book to effectively sign some of the signs from the book.
- Read the pictures for cued articulation to use this to teach phonics or support the articulation of sounds.
- To teach or support pupils who use the Woolgrove Object, Photo, Symbol communication
- To teach or support pupils who use communication books.
- To teach or support pupils who use switches or talkers.
- To make symbol resources using Widgeit software or Board Maker software.
- To make communication books or pages to insert into the book using Widgeit or Board Maker software.
- To make super talker overlays using the Board Maker software.
- To programme a switch or talker.
- To use sound board maker to create communication aids for pupils
- To effectively use communication apps such as Grid Player 2, Sound board maker and Let me talk to model communication and support children to communicate.

Staff can request additional training to the sessions that have been provided. Additional training may be provided by the SALT dept or The Senior Leadership Team.

### Terminology

At Woolgrove School we use the sign-along version of signing. Sign-along is based on British Sign Language (BSL) and the Makaton version of signing. It is a signing system that has been developed for use with people with special educational needs. It is a visual language with its own structure and grammar.

Sign supported English is a signing system that signs or fingerspells all of the words that would be spoken.

Augmentative communication is a method that non verbal pupils can use to communicate using pictures or a talker.

Talkers are electronic devices that can be programmed to enable a person to press a picture or symbol on the talker to produce the spoken word. At Woolgrove School we currently have a selection of switches and talkers that can be used by non verbal pupils.

The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is a method of communicating, by selecting photographs, pictures or symbols on a sentence strip and handing it to a person, to communicate. At Woolgrove digital photographs, widgeit symbols or colour pictures are used.

Communication books are books that contain symbols and are designed for individual pupils to enable them to point to the symbols to communicate with others.

Cued articulation is a method of visually signing a sound to support articulation.



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Widgit Symbols or Board Maker pictures are produced using the widgit computer programme or Board maker programme on a computer.

English includes:

- Speaking and Listening, including attentive listening skills, comprehension and deduction skills.
- Spoken English, in all its forms, questioning, answering, giving and following instructions, listening and responding to others, communicating own ideas and experiences, explaining ideas, understanding and expressing different view points and using a variety of expressions.
- Reading.
- Writing.
- Signs to support spoken English.

### **Impact**

Through providing a communication rich environment with a variety of communication methods and opportunities being provided, children will be:

- Confident to communicate with others using their preferred communication method.
- Resilient and be able to persist so that they can communicate with people who may not know, use or understand their communication method in the wider community.
- Able to communicate effectively with their peers, who may use a different method of communication to the one that they use.
- Tolerant of others who use a different communication method to the one they use.