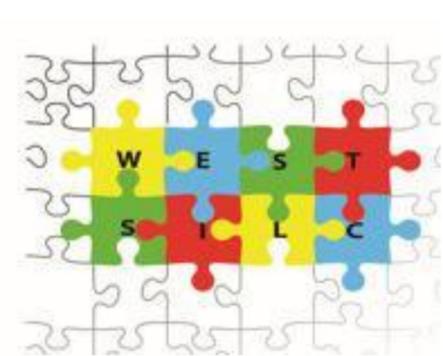


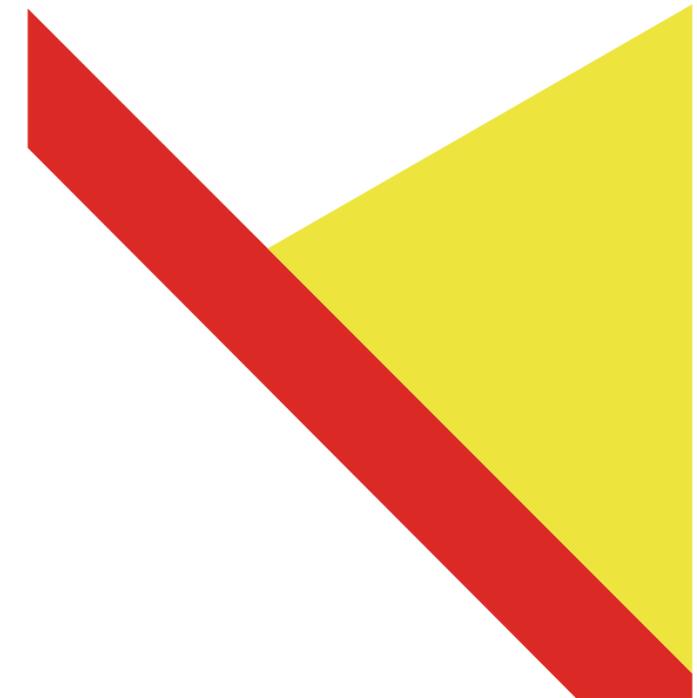
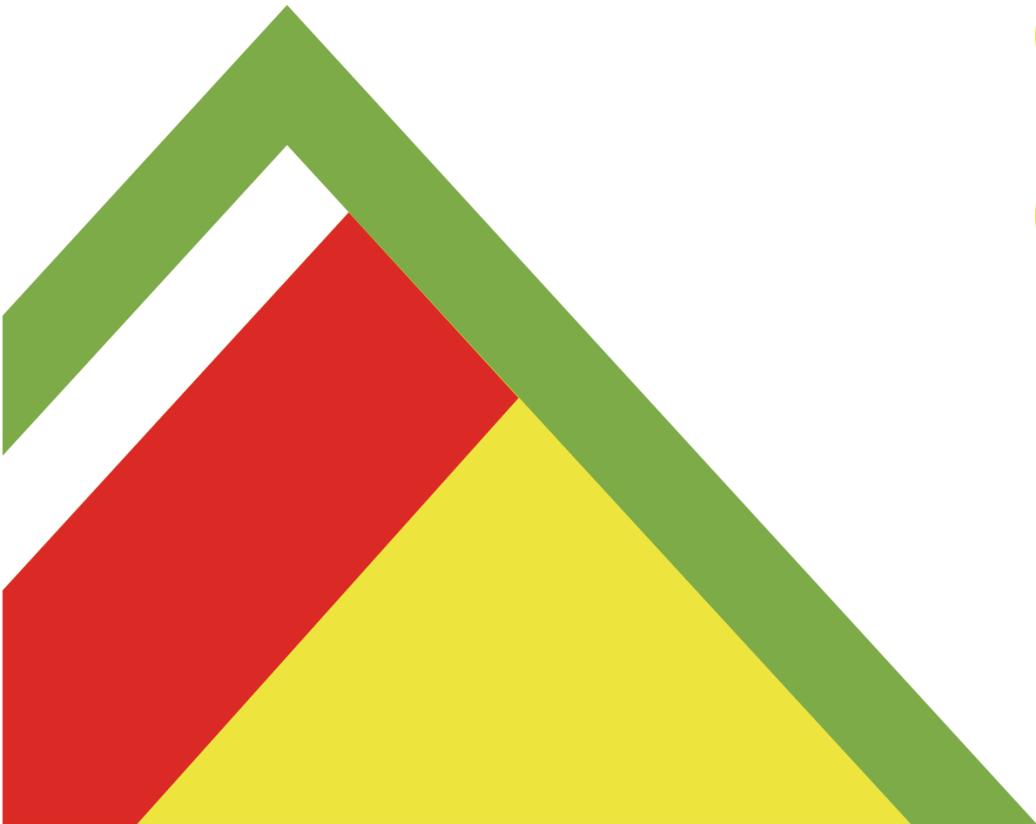
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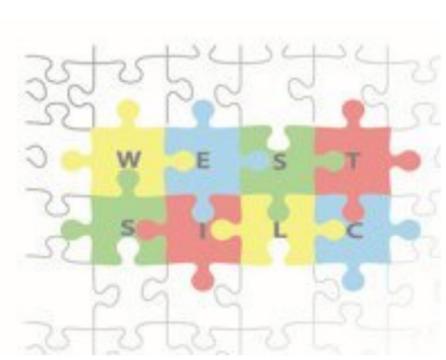
# *Communication at West SILC*



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# Overview

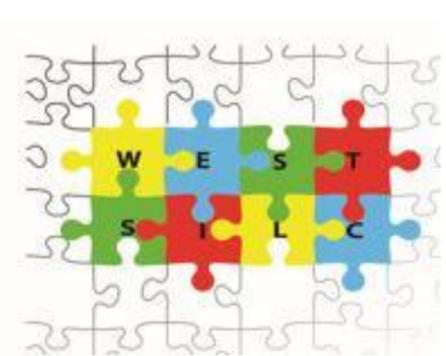
At West SILC, communication is central to learning, relationships, and well-being. It enables children and young people to engage with others, express themselves, and participate actively in their environment. We recognise communication as a dynamic and individual process that supports interaction, understanding, and connection in many different forms.

Communication allows learners to request, resist, choose, comment, and develop social relationships. For some, this may be through spoken or written language; for others, through movement, gesture, symbols, sensory experiences, or technology. All forms of communication are meaningful and are actively recognised and supported.

West SILC adopts a Total Communication approach to ensure that every learner can communicate in ways that are most effective for them. This approach acknowledges that individuals may use more than one method of communication and that these methods may change over time or across contexts.

Communication is a shared responsibility across all staff and is embedded consistently throughout the school day and across all pathways. We provide a rich, responsive communication environment that enables learners to develop their skills, express their needs and emotions, and engage confidently with the world around them.





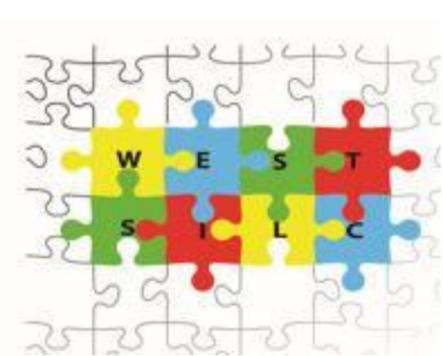
# Overview

Our Total Communication approach includes a wide range of strategies and systems, such as:

- Intensive Interaction
- Body language, facial expressions, and eye contact
- Play-based interaction
- Gestures, pointing, and signing (Makaton)
- Aided Language Displays and communication books
- Tactile symbols and pre-Braille systems
- Vocalisations and objects of reference
- Photographs and symbol-based communication
- Eye gaze systems
- Low-tech and high-tech AAC
- Speech and writing

These strategies are used flexibly and purposefully to reflect the individual needs of learners across all pathways.





# Subject Intent

At West SILC, our approach to Total Communication ensures that every learner is supported to develop a meaningful and effective way to express themselves, understand others, and participate fully in daily life. Communication is fundamental to learning, relationships, and independence, and we recognise that each learner's communication journey is unique.

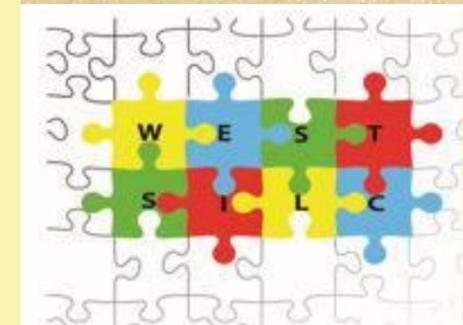


We aim to:

- Create inclusive communication environments where all attempts to communicate are recognised, valued, and responded to.
- Provide structured and consistent opportunities for learners to develop both expressive and receptive communication skills.
- Enable learners to use a range of communication methods to share needs, preferences, emotions, and ideas.
- Support the development of social communication through interaction, play, and shared experiences.
- Build confidence by ensuring learners' communication is acknowledged and understood across all settings.
- Promote independence through the effective use of appropriate communication strategies, systems, and tools.
- Support functional communication that can be applied meaningfully across contexts and environments.
- Ensure communication approaches reduce barriers to learning, routines, and participation.
- Prepare learners to communicate as effectively as possible within school and beyond.

This approach reflects the wider aims of West SILC: to nurture confidence, independence, and self-esteem; promote engagement and participation; foster respect and understanding; and support every learner to thrive and achieve their potential.

# Intensive Interaction



## What is Intensive Interaction?

Intensive Interaction is an approach that supports the development of early communication and interaction skills. It is particularly effective for learners who are at the earliest stages of communication development, including those with autism, complex communication needs, and profound and multiple learning difficulties.

Rather than focusing on formal language, Intensive Interaction prioritises connection, shared attention, and enjoyment in interaction. Adults observe carefully, respond sensitively, and follow the learner's lead, ensuring that all communication attempts—however subtle—are recognised, valued, and responded to.

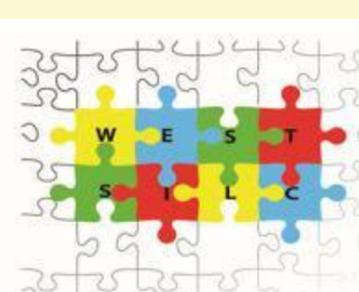
At West SILC, Intensive Interaction is embedded as a way of interacting, not as a standalone intervention. It forms a core part of our Total Communication approach and underpins emotional regulation, engagement, and positive relationships.

Why do we use Intensive Interaction?

Intensive Interaction supports the development of the fundamentals of communication, including:

- Eye contact and shared attention
- Facial expression and body language
- Vocalisation and early sound-making
- Turn-taking and reciprocity
- Awareness of others and enjoyment in interaction

These skills form the foundation for later communication, social development, and emotional wellbeing. By prioritising interaction before instruction, learners are supported to develop the confidence and motivation needed to communicate with others.



## Intensive Interaction across our pathways

### Engage Pathway

In Engage, Intensive Interaction supports learners with complex and multiple learning needs to develop purposeful interaction and engagement. Through sensory-rich experiences and trusted relationships, adults use responsive communication to strengthen shared attention, cause-and-effect understanding, and early social communication skills.



### Explore Pathway

In Explore, Intensive Interaction underpins early communication development through play, sensory exploration, and shared attention. Adults follow the child's lead, responding to movements, sounds, and expressions to build engagement, trust, and enjoyment in interaction. This supports the earliest stages of communication and lays strong foundations for learning and regulation.

# Intensive Interaction across our pathways

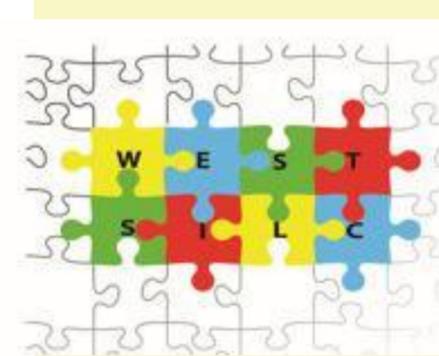
## Aspire Pathway

In Aspire, Intensive Interaction is central to daily practice. Learners with autism and complex communication needs are supported through highly responsive, play-based interactions that promote engagement, emotional regulation, and social connection. Staff prioritise attunement and relationship-building, ensuring communication develops in a safe and motivating environment.

## Why this matters

At West SILC, Intensive Interaction is a vital approach for learners whose communication development is best supported through responsive, relationship-based interaction. While Explore provides early experiences of interaction through play and sensory exploration, Intensive Interaction remains a central and ongoing part of learning for many pupils in Aspire and Engage throughout their school life.

For these learners, Intensive Interaction supports communication, emotional regulation, engagement, and well-being over time, rather than acting as a stepping stone to another approach. By valuing interaction as meaningful in its own right, West SILC ensures that every learner's communication is recognised, respected, and nurtured in ways that are appropriate to their needs, age, and stage of development.



# Intensive Interaction

## Supporting Regulation, Relationships, and Independence

As learners progress and their communication becomes more complex, the principles of Intensive Interaction continue to play an important role. While the approach may be used less explicitly than in earlier pathways, its core values—attunement, responsiveness, and respect for individual communication—remain central to supporting emotional regulation, social connection, and engagement.

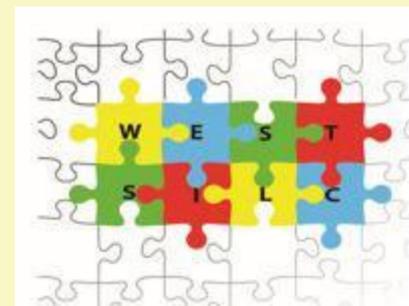
Across these pathways, Intensive Interaction-informed practice supports learners to manage emotions, build confidence, and maintain positive relationships in increasingly demanding learning and social environments.

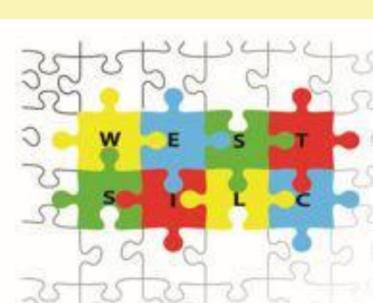
## Connect Pathway

In Connect, Intensive Interaction is used alongside more structured communication strategies to support social communication, emotional regulation, and engagement in learning. Responsive interactions help strengthen attention, turn-taking, and shared communication, particularly within one-to-one and small-group contexts, supporting learners to feel calm, connected, and ready to learn.

## Climb Pathway

In the Climb Pathway, the principles of Intensive Interaction are applied selectively to support emotional wellbeing, confidence, and resilience. Attuned communication is used to support learners during transitions, periods of heightened emotion, or increased cognitive demand, helping pupils regulate emotions and engage successfully within a more formal curriculum structure.





# Intensive Interaction

## **Elevate Pathway**

In Elevate, Intensive Interaction-informed practice supports learners to build trust, self-awareness, and confidence across both partnership and mainstream settings. Responsive communication helps students navigate social interactions, regulate emotions, and engage positively within mixed learning environments, supporting inclusion and independence.

## **PLC**

In PLC, the relational principles of Intensive Interaction underpin communication support as young people prepare for adulthood. Staff use respectful, responsive communication to support self-regulation, confidence, and positive interaction in real-world contexts such as work placements, community settings, and independent living environments. These foundations support self-advocacy, emotional resilience, and effective communication beyond school.

## **Why this matters**

By continuing to apply the principles of Intensive Interaction across later pathways, West SILC ensures that communication remains relational, respectful, and responsive at every stage. This approach supports learners not only to communicate effectively, but to develop the confidence, emotional regulation, and social understanding needed for independence, inclusion, and adulthood.



# Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

**Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)** refers to a range of strategies, systems, and tools that support individuals who experience difficulty with spoken communication. AAC may be used to supplement speech or, for some learners, to provide their primary means of communication.

AAC includes both low-tech approaches—such as signing, symbols, communication books, and visual supports—and high-tech systems, including voice output devices, tablets, and eye-gaze technology. At West SILC, AAC is an integral part of our Total Communication approach and is used flexibly to reflect each learner's communication needs, strengths, and preferences.

AAC is not used in isolation. It is embedded within meaningful interactions, daily routines, learning activities, and real-world experiences to ensure communication is purposeful, functional, and empowering.

## Why do we use AAC?

AAC supports learners to:

- Express needs, preferences, thoughts, and emotions
- Make choices and exercise autonomy
- Participate actively in learning and social interactions
- Develop independence and self-advocacy
- Reduce frustration and anxiety linked to communication barriers
- Access language in a consistent and meaningful way

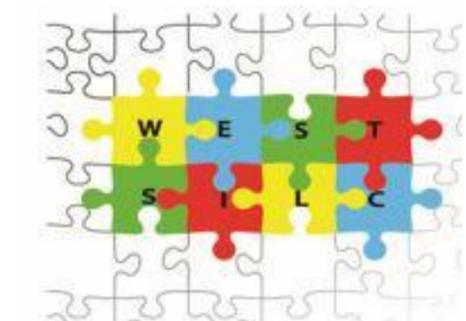
By providing appropriate AAC systems, West SILC ensures that every learner has access to a communication method that allows their voice to be heard and respected.

## What does AAC look like at West SILC?

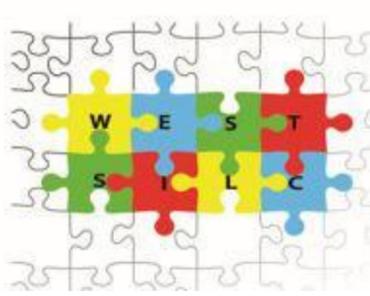
Across the school, AAC is characterised by:

- Consistent modelling of AAC by adults (aided language input)
- AAC being available throughout the school day, including social times
- Systems that are personalised, motivating, and accessible
- A focus on functional communication in real contexts
- Regular review to ensure systems continue to meet learners' needs

AAC systems are introduced, adapted, and developed in response to each learner's communication journey, rather than age or pathway alone.



# How AAC looks across our pathways



## Explore Pathway (EYFS & KS1)

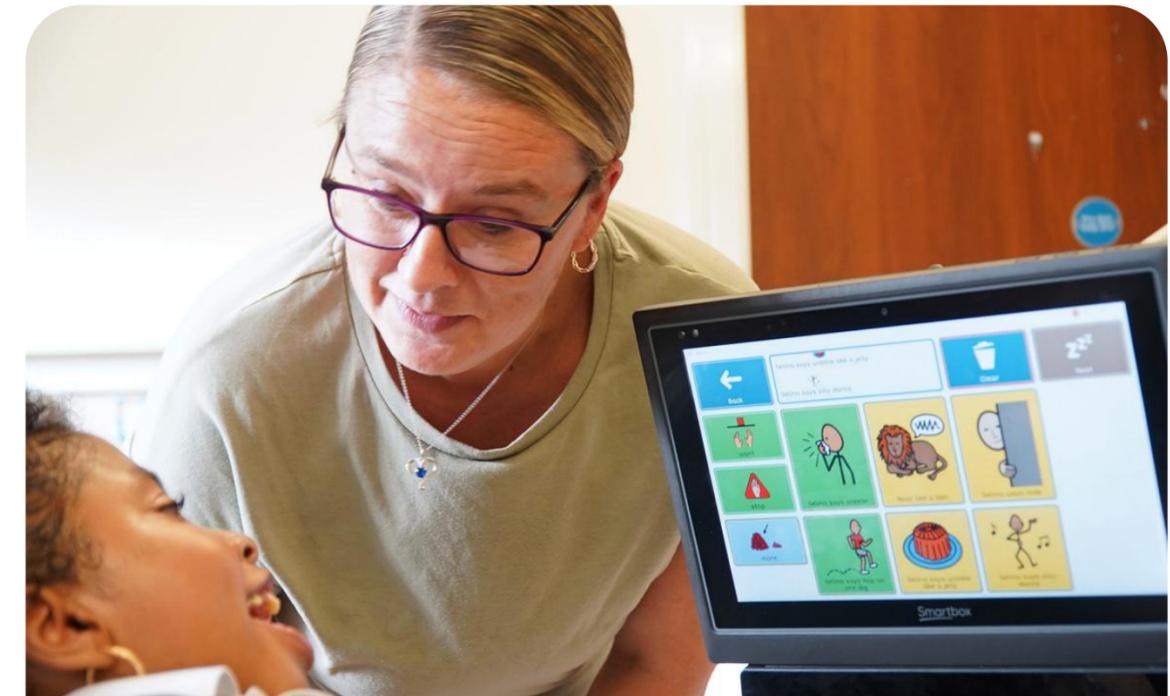
In Explore, AAC is introduced through simple, meaningful systems that support early communication, choice-making, and shared interaction. Learners may use objects of reference, photographs, symbols, or early low-tech AAC to communicate needs and preferences within play, routines, and sensory experiences. Adults model AAC consistently to build understanding and motivation to communicate.

## Aspire Pathway

In Aspire, AAC is central to supporting learners with autism and complex communication needs. A range of low- and high-tech AAC systems are used to support engagement, emotional regulation, and expressive communication. AAC is embedded within play-based learning, continuous provision, and daily routines, enabling learners to communicate in ways that are meaningful and motivating for them.

## Engage Pathway

In Engage, AAC supports learners with complex and multiple learning needs to interact with others and their environment. Systems may include switches, eye-gaze, symbols, or bespoke communication aids that enable learners to make choices, express preferences, and engage in cause-and-effect communication. AAC is closely linked to sensory regulation, movement, and trusted relationships.



# AAC



## Connect Pathway

In Connect, AAC is used to support access to the curriculum, routines, and life-skills learning. Learners use AAC systems such as symbols, communication books, and electronic devices to express ideas, follow instructions, and participate in lessons. Consistency across subjects and environments supports independence and confidence.

## Climb Pathway

In Climb, AAC supports functional communication, emotional literacy, and independence. Learners may use AAC to manage emotions, ask for support, contribute to learning, and engage in social interactions. Assistive technology and personalised systems are embedded within lessons and everyday activities to reduce barriers and promote self-reliance.

## Elevate Pathway

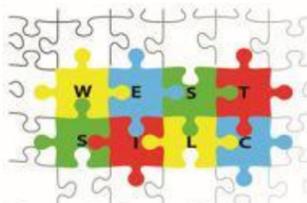
In Elevate, AAC is used to support learners to access learning and communicate effectively across both partnership and mainstream settings. AAC systems enable students to express themselves confidently, advocate for their needs, and participate in social and academic contexts alongside peers. The focus is on increasing independence and self-confidence.

## PLC

In PLC, AAC supports communication for adulthood. Learners use a range of modern and functional AAC tools—including mobile technology—to communicate in community settings, work placements, and independent living contexts. AAC is used to support self-advocacy, workplace communication, social interaction, and independence beyond school.

## Why this matters

AAC enables learners to communicate on their own terms. By providing access to appropriate AAC systems and embedding them consistently across pathways, West SILC ensures that communication is inclusive, respectful, and empowering at every stage of a learner's journey—from early childhood through to adulthood.



# Makaton

Makaton is a language programme that uses signs and symbols alongside spoken language to support communication and understanding. Signs are used with speech, facial expression, and gesture, following spoken word order and focusing on key words to support meaning.

At West SILC, Makaton is used as part of a Total Communication approach. It supports both expressive and receptive communication and is used flexibly to meet individual needs. For some learners, Makaton provides an essential means of expression; for others, it supports understanding, attention, and engagement with spoken language.

## **Why do we use Makaton?**

Makaton supports learners to:

- Understand spoken language more clearly
- Express needs, choices, and emotions
- Develop early communication and interaction skills
- Reduce frustration and anxiety linked to communication difficulties
- Engage more confidently with adults and peers
- Access learning, routines, and social situations

By pairing signs with speech, Makaton provides visual and kinaesthetic support that reinforces language and supports inclusion.

## **What does Makaton look like at West SILC?**

Across the school, Makaton is characterised by:

- Adults consistently modelling signs alongside spoken language
- Use of key signs to support routines, learning, and transitions
- Signs used naturally within play, interaction, and teaching
- Makaton supporting understanding even when learners do not sign expressively
- A shared, inclusive communication environment where signs are valued

Makaton is used purposefully and respectfully, always in response to the individual communication needs of learners.

# Makaton Across our Pathways

## Explore Pathway

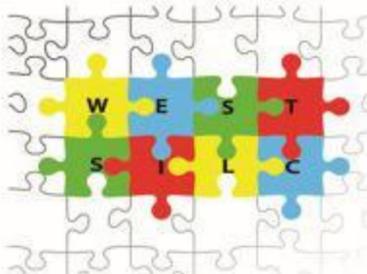
In Explore, Makaton is introduced through play, songs, routines, and shared interaction. Adults model simple, functional signs alongside speech to support early understanding, attention, and communication. Signs are used consistently to support choice-making, transitions, and early social interaction.

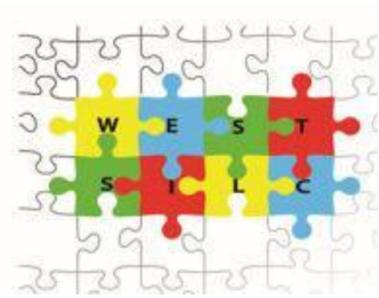
## Aspire Pathway

In Aspire, Makaton is embedded throughout daily practice to support learners with autism and complex communication needs. Signs support understanding, emotional regulation, and expressive communication within play-based learning and continuous provision. For some learners, Makaton provides a key expressive communication method across the school day.

## Engage Pathway

In Engage, Makaton supports learners with complex and multiple learning needs to communicate choices, preferences, and emotions. Signs are used alongside movement, sensory experiences, and trusted relationships to support engagement, cause-and-effect understanding, and meaningful interaction.





# Makaton Across our Pathways

## Connect Pathway

In Connect, Makaton supports access to learning, routines, and social communication. Signs are used alongside spoken language and other communication systems to reinforce understanding, support expressive language, and promote independence across lessons and daily activities.

## Climb Pathway

In Climb, Makaton is used selectively to support understanding, emotional literacy, and communication where appropriate. Signs may be used to reinforce key vocabulary, support regulation, or aid communication during times of increased demand, alongside other communication strategies.

## Elevate Pathway

In Elevate, Makaton may be used to support individual learners' understanding and communication needs, particularly where additional visual support is beneficial. Its use is age-appropriate and focused on supporting access, confidence, and inclusion within partnership and mainstream settings.

## PLC

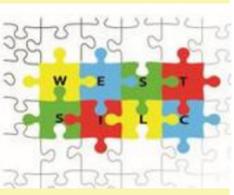
In PLC, Makaton is used where it continues to support effective communication and understanding. Signs may support functional communication, emotional regulation, and interaction in real-world contexts, alongside other AAC and communication tools, in preparation for adulthood and community life.

## Why this matters

By using Makaton as part of a Total Communication approach, West SILC ensures that language is accessible, inclusive, and meaningful. Makaton supports learners to understand others, express themselves, and participate confidently in learning and social life, in ways that respect their individual communication journeys.



# Symbols and Visual Communication



## What are Symbols?

Symbols are visual representations of words, ideas, objects, and actions. They support understanding and expression by providing a clear, consistent visual reference alongside spoken language. At West SILC, we use Widgeit symbols as our agreed symbol set to ensure consistency across the school. Symbols may be used on their own or alongside speech, signing, photographs, or AAC devices. They are an important part of our Total Communication approach and are used to support both receptive (understanding) and expressive (communication) language. For some learners, symbols provide essential access to communication. For others, they reinforce spoken language, support literacy development, or increase independence.

## Why do we use symbols?

Symbols support learners to:

- Understand routines, expectations, and instructions
- Anticipate transitions and reduce anxiety
- Make choices and express preferences
- Develop vocabulary and early literacy skills
- Access learning across subjects
- Communicate independently without relying solely on adult prompts

By providing visual support, symbols make language more concrete, predictable, and accessible

## What does symbol use look like at West SILC?

Across the school, symbols are embedded within daily life and learning. This may include:

- Visual timetables and now/next boards
- Choice boards and communication boards
- Aided Language Displays (ALDs)
- Communication books
- Symbol-supported task plans and instructions
- Symbol-supported writing and literacy activities

Adults model symbol use consistently, ensuring that learners see symbols being used as part of meaningful communication. Symbols are selected carefully to reflect agreed Widgeit vocabulary and are adapted to meet individual visual and cognitive needs.

Photographs may be used instead of symbols where learners are not yet able to interpret symbolic representation, ensuring communication is always appropriate to developmental stage.



# Symbols Across our Pathways



## Explore Pathway

In Explore, symbols and photographs are introduced through play, routines, and structured activities. Visual timetables, simple choice boards, and symbol-supported songs or stories help learners anticipate what is happening and make early choices. For some pupils, photographs are used before symbolic representation is introduced.

## Aspire Pathway

In Aspire, symbols support understanding, emotional regulation, and communication within a play-based, autism-informed environment. Visual timetables, choice boards, and personalised symbol systems help learners navigate routines, reduce anxiety, and express needs. Symbols are embedded within continuous provision and daily interactions.

## Engage Pathway

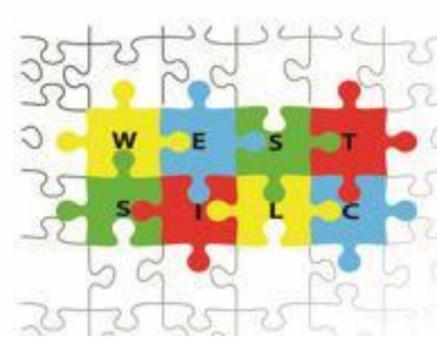
In Engage, symbols are used alongside objects of reference, AAC, and sensory communication strategies. Visual supports may be simplified and highly personalised, ensuring they are meaningful and accessible. Symbols support choice-making, cause-and-effect understanding, and engagement within structured and sensory-rich experiences.

## Connect Pathway

In Connect, Widgit symbols are embedded across the curriculum. Learners use visual timetables, ALDs, and communication books to support understanding, contribute to lessons, and express ideas. Symbol-supported literacy and topic work help bridge communication and academic learning.



# Symbols Across our Pathways



## Climb Pathway

In Climb, symbols support access to learning, emotional literacy, and independence. Visual task plans, structured instructions, and symbol-supported resources help learners organise thinking, manage expectations, and engage confidently in semi-formal learning environments.

## Elevate Pathway

In Elevate, symbols may be used to support organisation, independence, and access within partnership and mainstream lessons. Visual supports are age-appropriate and discreet, helping learners navigate expectations, manage workload, and participate confidently alongside peers.

## PLC (Post-16)

In PLC, visual supports and symbol-based tools may continue to support organisation, communication, and independence. Learners may use visual prompts, digital supports, or functional symbol-based systems to navigate work placements, community activities, and independent living contexts.

## Why this matters

By using a consistent Widgit symbol system across the school, West SILC ensures that visual communication is predictable, accessible, and empowering. Symbols reduce barriers to understanding, support expressive communication, and promote independence at every stage of a learner's journey—from early development through to adulthood.



# Objects of Reference

## What are Objects of Reference?

Objects of Reference are real, tangible objects used consistently to represent a person, place, activity, or event. They support understanding by providing a concrete, sensory link to what is happening now or what will happen next.

At West SILC, Objects of Reference are often paired with double-sided photograph and symbol cards, enabling learners to begin connecting real objects with visual representation. This layered approach supports progression from concrete experience to photographic and symbolic understanding.

For learners who are not yet able to interpret photographs or symbols independently, Objects of Reference offer an accessible and meaningful starting point. They form an important part of our Total Communication approach, particularly within Explore, Aspire, and Engage.

## Why do we use Objects of Reference?

Objects of Reference support learners to:

- Understand and anticipate transitions
- Develop awareness of daily routines
- Reduce anxiety linked to change or uncertainty
- Build memory and recognition
- Make choices between activities
- Develop early symbolic understanding

By pairing the object with spoken language, and where appropriate, a photograph and symbol, learners begin to associate the real experience with visual representation. Over time, this supports anticipation, comprehension, and communication development.



# Objects of Reference across Pathways

Across the school, Objects of Reference are used consistently and purposefully to support transitions and communication.

This may include:

- Presenting the object alongside a double-sided photograph and symbol card
- Allowing the learner time to explore or hold the object
- Pairing the object with clear, consistent language
- Using the same object each time to represent the same activity
- Supporting transitions between environments

Objects are carefully selected to be meaningful, durable, and sensory-rich where appropriate. High-contrast objects and accompanying visual cards are used to support learners with visual impairments, ensuring accessibility for all.

As learners develop, the emphasis may gradually shift from the object to the photograph and symbol, supporting progression in understanding and independence.

## How Objects of Reference look across our pathways

### Explore Pathway

In Explore, Objects of Reference are embedded throughout the day to support early understanding of routines and transitions. Staff carry relevant Objects of Reference at all times to ensure they are immediately available to support movement between activities and environments. Objects are paired with photograph and symbol cards to begin developing early representational understanding.

### Aspire Pathway

In Aspire, staff carry Objects of Reference throughout the day so that transitions are predictable and clearly communicated. Objects are consistently paired with double-sided photograph and symbol cards, supporting learners with autism and complex communication needs to develop understanding, reduce anxiety, and build independence within a structured environment.

# Objects of Reference across Pathways

## Engage Pathway

In Engage, Objects of Reference are central to daily communication practice. Objects, alongside their paired photograph and symbol cards, are positioned consistently at classroom doors and transition points so they are immediately available to support movement between activities. High-contrast and visually accessible designs are used where appropriate to support learners with visual impairments. This structured, sensory-informed approach enables learners to anticipate, engage, and communicate preferences in a meaningful way.

## Individualised Use Across Other Pathways

While Objects of Reference are most commonly used within Explore, Aspire, and Engage, some learners in Connect, Climb, Elevate, or PLC may continue to benefit from their use. In these cases, objects and their accompanying visual representations are implemented in a personalised way to support understanding, regulation, or communication according to individual need.

## Why this matters

Objects of Reference provide a bridge between experience and representation. By combining tangible objects with photographs and symbols, West SILC ensures communication support is developmentally appropriate, progressive, and accessible. This layered approach enables learners to build understanding at their own pace while maintaining consistency and dignity in communication support.



# Colourful Semantics

## What is Colourful Semantics?

Colourful Semantics is a structured approach originally developed to support the development of sentence structure and grammar. It uses a consistent colour-coding system to represent different parts of a sentence, helping learners understand how words work together to create meaning.

At West SILC, Colourful Semantics is embedded within our symbol system across the school. This means that even where it is not taught explicitly as a language intervention, the colour coding is used consistently within visual supports and Widgit symbols to reinforce sentence structure and meaning.

## Why do we use Colourful Semantics?

Colourful Semantics supports learners to:

- Understand sentence structure and word roles
- Develop expressive language and sentence building
- Improve comprehension
- Organise thoughts clearly
- Access literacy and written tasks
- Build confidence in communication

By using consistent colour cues across the school, learners experience a predictable visual structure that supports both spoken and written language development.





# Colourful Semantics

## What does Colourful Semantics look like at West SILC?

Across the school, Colourful Semantics is reflected in:

- Colour-coded Widgit symbols
- Sentence-building activities
- Structured writing supports
- Aided Language Displays
- Visual prompts for speaking and storytelling

In some pathways, Colourful Semantics is delivered as a targeted teaching approach to develop grammar and sentence construction. In others, the colour coding remains present within symbols and visual materials, providing a subtle but consistent reinforcement of language structure.

This whole-school consistency ensures that learners encounter the same visual language cues wherever they are in the school.

### Explore Pathway

In Explore, learners are introduced to simple colour-coded symbols within play and structured communication activities. The emphasis is on exposure and early understanding rather than formal sentence construction.

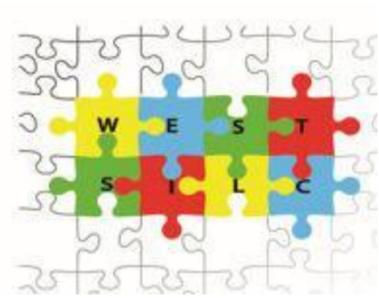
### Aspire Pathway

In Aspire, colour-coded symbols support understanding and expression within play-based and communication-focused learning. While not always delivered as a formal grammar programme, the consistent use of colour within symbols reinforces meaning and sentence structure over time.

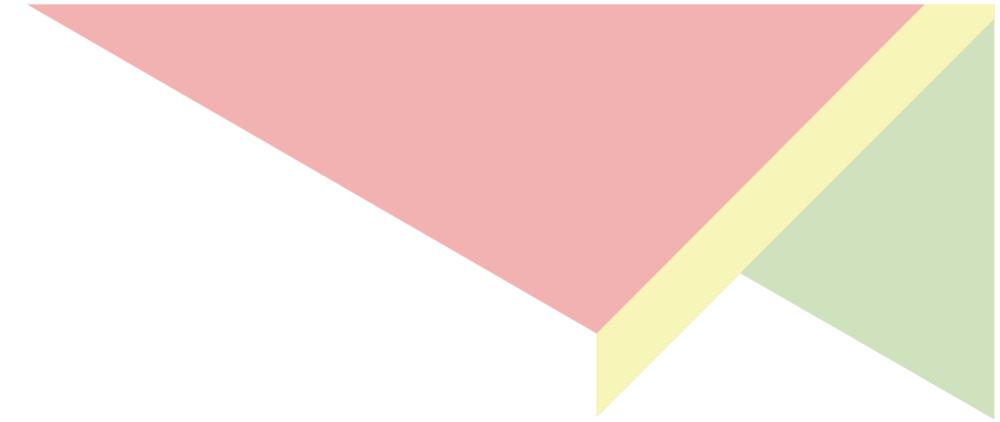
### Engage Pathway

In Engage, colour coding within symbols supports clarity and consistency in communication materials. The focus remains on engagement and meaningful interaction, with colour providing an accessible visual structure.





# Colourful Semantics



## **Connect Pathway**

In Connect, Colourful Semantics may be used more explicitly to support sentence building, comprehension, and literacy development. Colour-coded symbols help learners organise ideas and develop expressive language within structured learning contexts.

## **Climb Pathway**

In Climb, Colourful Semantics supports learners in developing grammar, sentence structure, and written communication. It may be used as a targeted intervention or integrated into literacy lessons to promote clarity and confidence.

## **Elevate Pathway**

In Elevate, colour-coded symbol systems support access to learning and structured communication tasks. Where appropriate, Colourful Semantics may be used to strengthen written expression and comprehension in partnership and mainstream settings.

## **PLC (Post-16)**

In PLC, the principles of structured language support may continue where beneficial, particularly for learners developing functional communication and written skills for adulthood. The consistent use of colour-coded visual language throughout their school journey provides continuity and familiarity.

## **Why this matters**

By embedding Colourful Semantics within our symbol system across the school, West SILC ensures consistency in visual language structure. This supports learners to build understanding gradually and confidently, while maintaining a cohesive communication approach across all pathways.

# Explore Communication Principles

Within the Explore Pathway, communication development is at the heart of all learning. Our approach recognises that every child communicates in different ways and at different stages of development. Staff prioritise responsive, relationship-based communication, ensuring that every attempt to communicate—whether verbal, pre-verbal, through gesture, facial expression, or a communication system—is noticed, valued, and responded to.

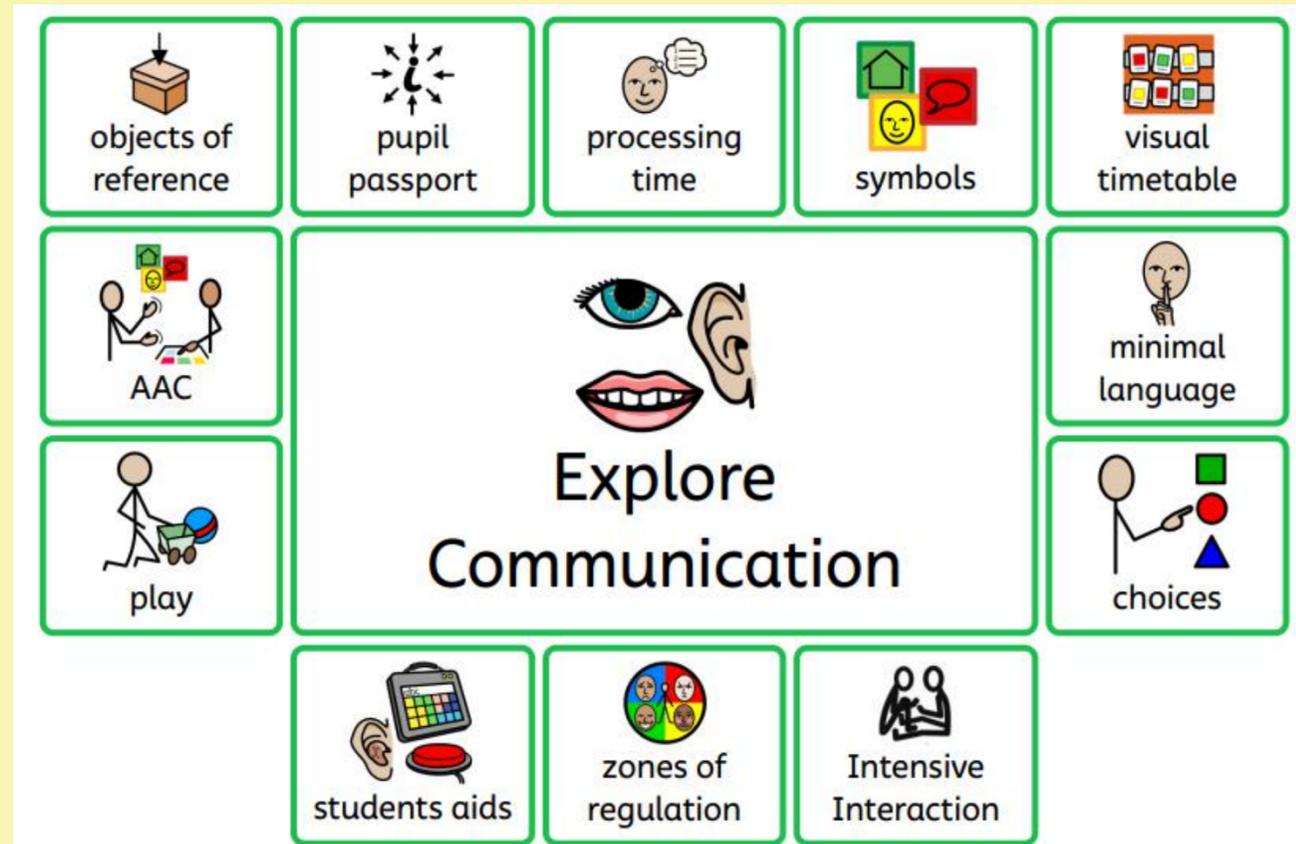
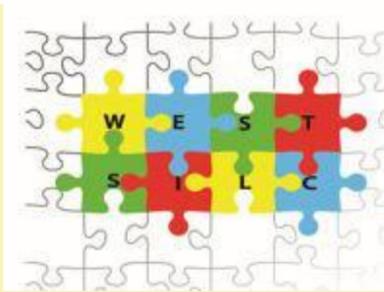
Adults work closely with children to build positive and engaging communication experiences. Interaction is playful, warm, and motivating, using smiles, laughter, shared attention, and meaningful activities to encourage children to communicate and connect with others. Celebrating every effort and success in communication helps build confidence and encourages children to continue exploring how they can express themselves.

Communication is carefully modelled by adults throughout the day. Staff use clear, simple language that is appropriate to each child's communication strategy, and they consistently model the use of symbols, objects of reference, and other communication supports. Repetition and consistent modelling help children develop understanding and familiarity with these systems. Adults also provide meaningful choices and scaffold communication opportunities by breaking activities into manageable steps and checking understanding as children engage with tasks.

A key principle of the Explore Pathway is child-led interaction. Staff follow each child's interests and curiosity, responding to their communication in real time and allowing time for processing and responses. Through play, routines, and daily experiences, children are encouraged to initiate communication, make choices, and express their needs and preferences. Activities are adapted to match each child's engagement and developmental level, with communication opportunities embedded naturally across the curriculum.

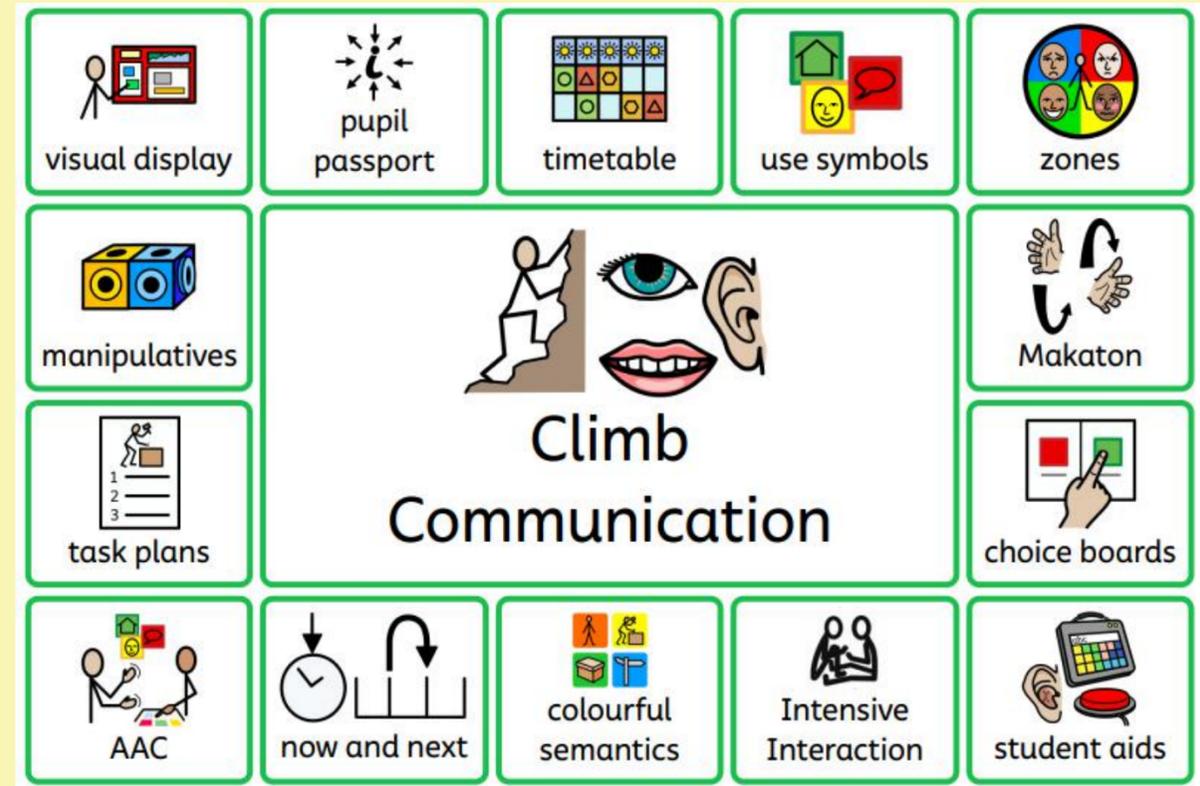
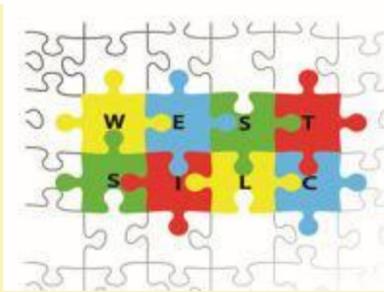
Communication also plays an important role in supporting emotional regulation and social understanding. By responding sensitively and modelling effective communication, adults help children develop the skills they need to express themselves, connect with others, and participate meaningfully in their learning environment.

Through this responsive and nurturing approach, the Explore Pathway lays strong foundations for communication, confidence, and engagement in learning.



# Climb Communication Principles

In Climb, improving our pupils' communication and literacy skills so they are literate communicators is essential to them leading as independent lives as possible. Using a range of resources, strategies and intervention techniques we support our pupils to develop their ability to engage in social communication, express their emotions and make progress with their communication skills. Communication covers the ability and motivation to communicate in a widening range of situations, interacting, cooperating and working with other people. Speaking and listening/ signing and watching covers the development of receptive and expressive language through speech and/or Makaton sign/or PCS symbols/ or Communication aids. Literacy combines the skills of reading and writing, including, exploring, enjoying and learning about sounds, words and text and experiencing a rich variety of books. We use a variety of appropriate packages including the Read, Write Inc synthetic phonics scheme, colourful semantics and appropriate ICT programmes to support pupils' progress in reading. We have a private Speech and Language Therapist who supports inhouse to ensure we are meeting the communication needs of all our students. Speech and language specific interventions are in place for students who benefit from these and have a personalised programme. We also receive additional support from NHS speech and language following individual referrals. Each pupil has their own pupil passport which includes details on their own personal communication style and how to support them. Pupils take part in circle time on a daily basis which further develops relationships between adults-peers, peers-peers. In addition, it develops pupil confidence to communicate in a wider context, giving opportunities to share news and achievements/concerns.



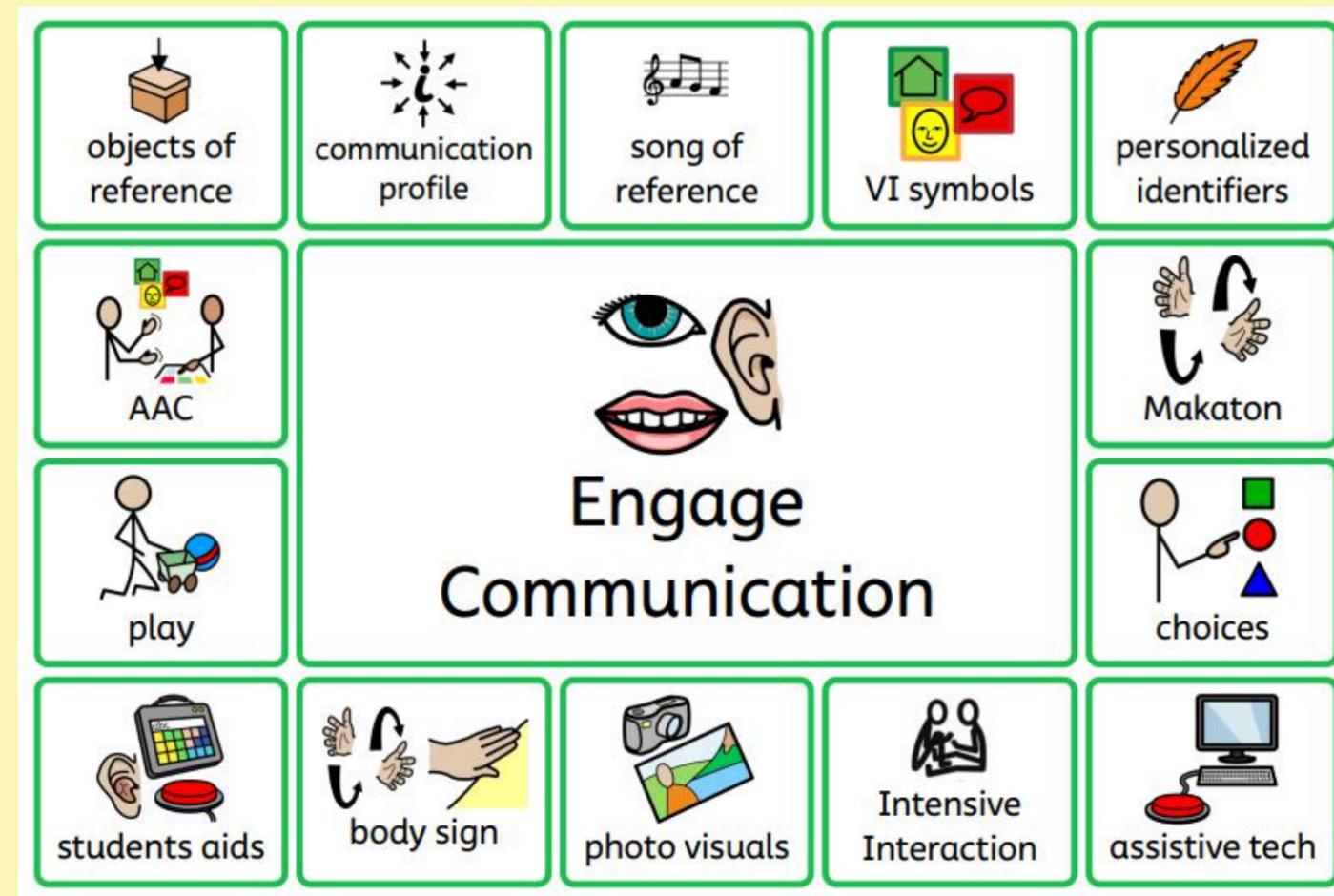
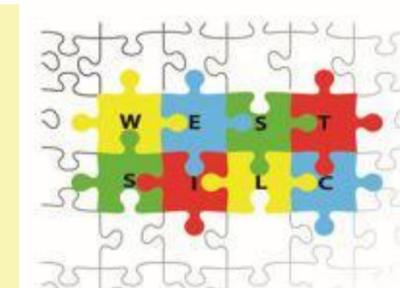
# Engage Communication Principles

In Engage, developing and improving our students' communication skills is essential to them leading inclusive meaningful lives. Using Intensive Interaction techniques, we support our students to develop the Fundamentals of Communication, their ability to engage in social communication, express their emotions and communicate wants and needs, including how to say 'no'!

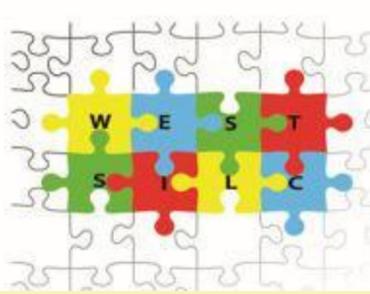
Detailed observations, recording and moderating takes place to ensure all staff are able to recognise and respond appropriately to the communication signals of those students at the earliest communication levels and staff use 'warm and cool feedback sessions' to ensure their practice is of the highest possible standard to support learning.

As students develop the Fundamentals of Communication we introduce the skills needed to indicate choices and make requests using more conventional systems used though the SILC including photographs, symbols and augmented communication systems (AAC). Many of our students are unable to access these communication aids independently due to their physical disabilities therefore bespoke and innovative ways are created to enable students to attract the attention of others to provide the support they need.

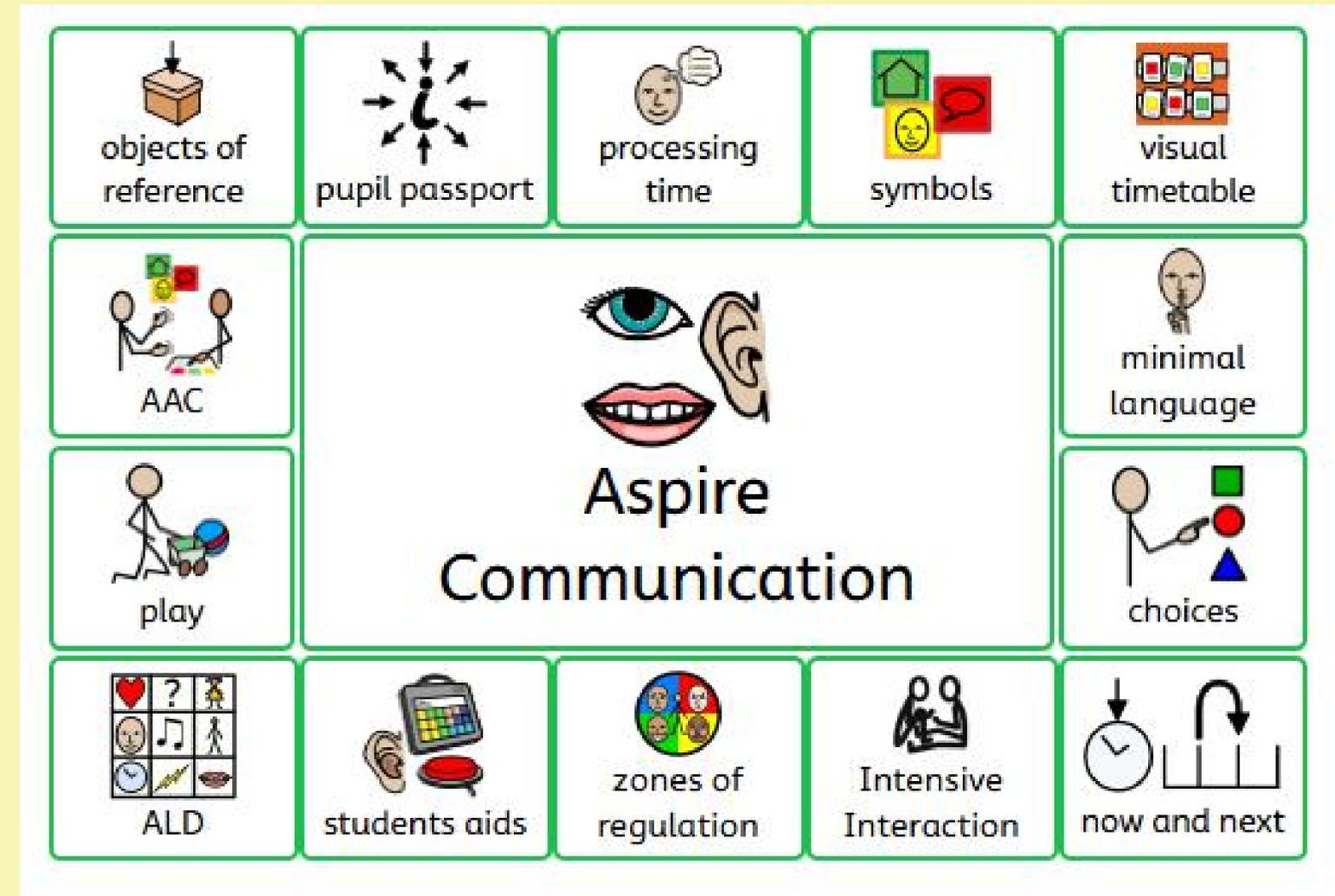
It is essential that students with CMLN have the desire and ability to initiate communication, therefore any attempt by them to do so takes priority within any task.



# Aspire Communication Principles

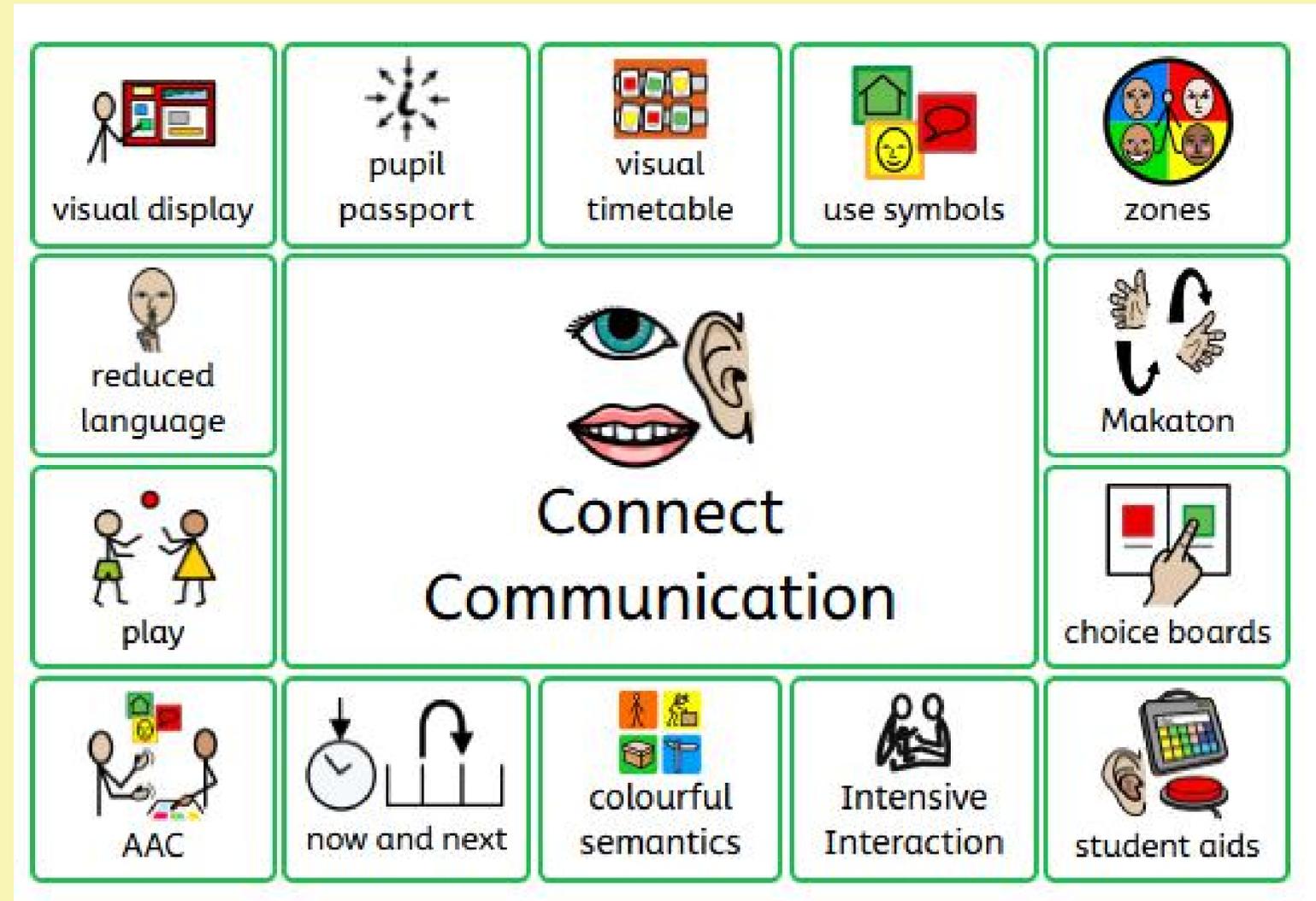
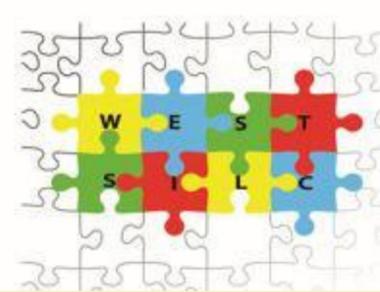


In Aspire, we follow a student centred, play based curriculum to develop skills in the 'Fundamentals of Communication' through Intensive Interaction. The activities students engage in are used as a vehicle to promote communication and interaction and to ensure positive relationships between students and staff. All staff have had appropriate training on how to be good communicators and they use these skills to engage the pupils in 'Intensive Interaction' sessions. We use a playful approach with a focus on the students' interests to ensure they are motivated to join us in activities. We have input from NHS and private Speech and Language Therapists who support staff to create communication targets, resources and strategies to help our pupils' communication skills. These include Attention Autism sessions, Makaton, symbols, sequencing, communication and PODD books, AAC, communication aids and aided language displays. The SCERTS framework underpins planning and assessment and prioritises learning and development of Social Communication and Emotional Regulations skills. These skills are essential to enable our pupils to access the curriculum and wider world.



# Connect Communication Principles

In Connect, communication and literacy skills are at the heart of the curriculum. We support our pupils to develop their ability to engage in social communication through 1-1 and small group interventions, express their emotions and use a variety of communication tools such as Makaton, symbols or communication devices to support them in being as independent as possible. These tools are embedded throughout the curriculum. Teachers use different strategies to help our pupil's communication skills such as Attention Autism, Zones of Regulation, communication groups, task plans and symbol use. Pupils take part in daily circle times which further develop relationships between peers and adults working with them. Teachers use NHS and private speech and language referral input to further support pupils. Communication covers the ability and motivation to communicate in a widening range of situations, interacting, cooperating and working with other people.



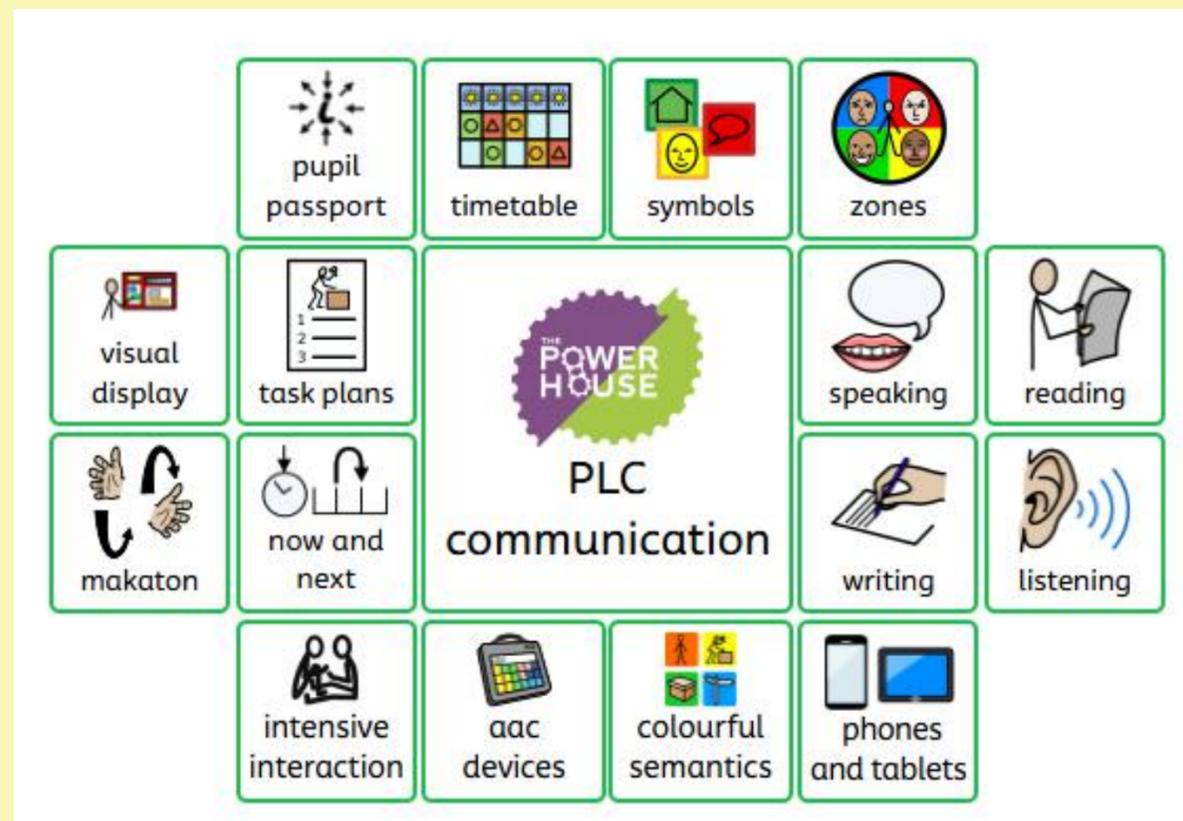
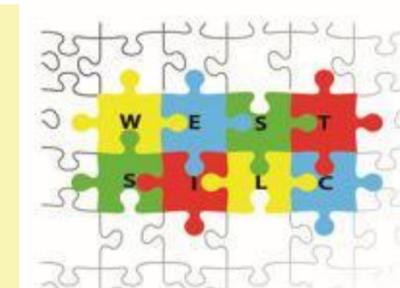
# PLC Communication Principles

Across Post-16 and the Powerhouse provision, we support approximately 70 students with a diverse range of special educational needs and abilities. Communication, and the ability to apply communication skills in real-world contexts, sits at the heart of all our learning.

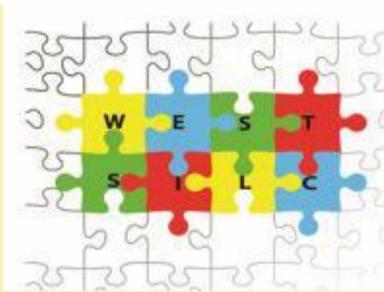
As part of our provision, we provide a range of simulated learning environments that replicate real-world settings. These include The Hub and The Foundry, which feature facilities such as our own supermarket, post office, Amazon warehouse and barista training area. These environments enable students to practise practical skills in meaningful contexts. Our learners also regularly access the local community, and an increasing number take part in independent work placements. Where appropriate, students are supported to develop the skills needed to become independent travellers. For learners working at earlier developmental levels, including those who are pre-verbal, we use a range of communication supports including visual timetables, symbols, Makaton and AAC devices. These approaches help students develop life skills, access learning, participate in social opportunities and make meaningful choices. We are also actively developing the use of modern technology, such as college mobile phones, to support functional communication when students are accessing the community.

A core theme across our curriculum is communication beyond the classroom. Students are supported to develop their communication skills in real-life contexts, including within the community and during work placements. This is modelled and reinforced through our work-related learning team. Key aspects of social communication—including body language, appropriate tone, informal and formal language, and effective interactions with peers and members of the public—are explicitly taught and embedded throughout our curriculum. Students ready for additional challenge also work towards Speaking and Listening units as part of their Functional Skills accreditation.

We support students to use a range of modern technologies to engage with and communicate in the world around them. Communication is developed in preparation for adulthood and includes interacting with peers and friends, working collaboratively within the classroom, and engaging in group community activities. Our aim is to remove barriers wherever possible so that all students can lead engaged, independent and fulfilling lives.



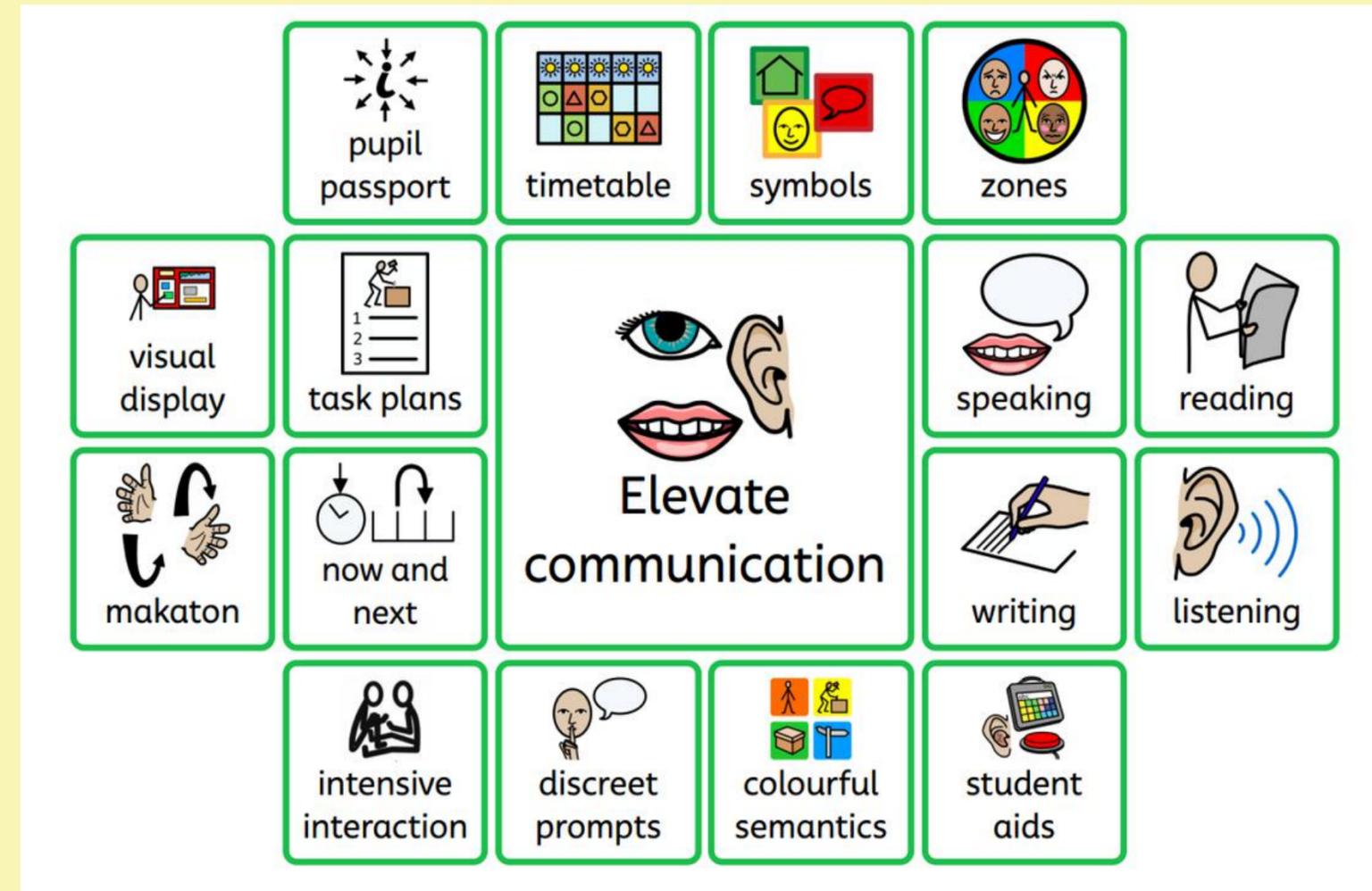
# Elevate Communication Principles



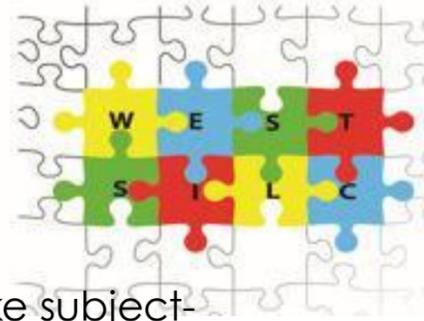
In our Elevate Pathway we have a very bespoke way of communicating with the pupils we work with (depending on each pupil's receptive and expressive communication strengths and needs). This supports our pupils to develop their communication and literacy skills, enabling them to access their learning, and to help them be as independent as possible, ready for further education and adulthood. We use a range of resources, strategies and intervention techniques to support our pupils to develop their ability to engage in social communication, expressing and understand their own emotions. These include the Zones of Regulation, PCS symbols /use of visuals, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) such as aided language displays. We also use visual timetables and task plans to support independence.

We have input from NHS and private speech and language therapists who support staff to create communication targets, resources and strategies for staff to implement with our pupils. Each pupil has a 1:1 intervention with their key worker to put these strategies into place and provide additional support where needed.

We use a range of educational resources, including the Read, Write Inc synthetic phonics scheme, colourful semantics and ICT programs to support pupils' progress in reading and writing activities.



# Assessment



At West SILC, assessment in Communication reflects the individual and developmental nature of each learner's communication journey. Unlike subject-based assessment frameworks, communication progress is personalised, continuous, and closely aligned to each learner's EHCP outcomes.

Most learners have identified communication targets within their EHCP. These are reviewed annually and broken down into meaningful, achievable small steps. Progress towards these targets is monitored throughout the year using observation, structured assessment opportunities, and recorded evidence. Across the school, we use Evidence for Learning to capture and document communication progress. This enables staff to record significant moments of interaction, emerging skills, independence in communication systems, and developmental milestones. Evidence may include photographs, video clips, annotated observations, and examples of learner-initiated communication.

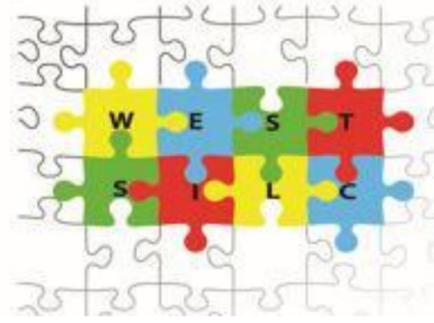
Assessment in communication may include:

- Development of expressive and receptive communication
- Increased independence in using AAC, symbols, signing, or other communication systems
- Growth in social communication and interaction
- Progress in emotional regulation linked to communication
- Learner initiation and purposeful communication

In pathways such as Explore and Engage, communication progress may also be reflected through the Engagement Model, focusing on responsiveness, persistence, anticipation, initiation, and exploration. In other pathways, assessment places greater emphasis on functional communication, independence, literacy-linked communication skills, and self-advocacy.

Across all pathways, assessment is formative, reflective, and responsive. Regular reviews of progress against EHCP communication outcomes—supported by multidisciplinary input, including Speech and Language Therapists where appropriate—ensure that communication development remains holistic and meaningful.

Through this approach, we ensure that every learner's communication growth is recognised, celebrated, and used to inform carefully planned next steps in learning.



***For further information  
please contact Hannah  
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Communication***