



Wren Spinney School
Total Communication Policy



About this document:

Wren Spinney School is a secondary special school where all students have severe or complex learning difficulties. The school has a private Speech Therapist, who works with our students for a day every fortnight.

Purpose

Wren Spinney School is committed to building an enriched and embedded Total Communication environment, so that all students can communicate their wants and needs and to access a wide range of life opportunities and to participate and contribute as fully as they can.

Complied by: Mihaela Shoebridge	Date: September 2025
Committee:	Date agreed by Trustees:
Review Cycle: annually	Review Date: October 2026

Wellbeing in our Trust

We are all affected by poor physical and mental health at times during our lives and it is important the appropriate support is available in a timely manner.

Health and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility and we encourage an open and honest culture whereby anyone can discuss any issues they may have.

The Trustees of Creating Tomorrow take the health and wellbeing of all employees seriously and are committed to supporting our staff. The Trustees ensure that support for staff is available through:

- Effective line management
- Commitment to reducing workload
- Supportive and professional working environments
- Employee support programs
 - Health Assure (confidential counselling support available through Perkbox account).
 - Education Support: telephone number 08000 562561 or website www.educationsupport.org.uk

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Intent

Total Communication is a holistic view of communication.

At Wren Spinney School, we aim to give students the foundations of communication for life, without which we are restricting their potential to communicate with people beyond their immediate home or school environment. Total Communication helps our students to make choices and be involved in making decisions about their life, increasing their independence.

Communication profiles are completed for all students and quality assured.

Numeracy is reflected in the communication offer, and it is offered through the use of PECS at phase IV and it is consolidated after this phase. During PECS phase IV, our students learn concepts related to space, shape, measure, numbers, and their quantity. The use of adjective with references to colour, shape, size numbers are used when using Communication Boards in various sessions. Play schemas supported during play, are focusing on concepts such as orienting, trajectory, positioning, rotation, transforming, enveloping etc., which are the early maths concepts.

Implementation

At Wren Spinney School we provide a range of strategies and approaches, which aim to enable all students to develop communication strategies most appropriate to them. We have a tiered approach to our communication strategies with our Tier 1 (see diagram 1). This ensures every student has access to appropriate strategies related to their stage of development, including Intensive Interaction, objects of reference, etc. Total Communication approaches can be high tech, low tech or no tech. Training for staff is planned for in a structured and appropriate way.

Opportunities to develop communication skills are facilitated throughout the curriculum.

Our private SaLT will work closely with pupils in classes in order to assess and implement communication programs. This involves contributions to the whole classroom environment as well as supporting the teachers and families in their understanding of the students' communication needs.

Wren Spinney School recognises the importance of regular liaison with SaLT and the Leadership Team is committed to this through the identification of training, development and any student-centred issues.

Working with Parents and Carers

Wren Spinney School is committed to supporting Parents and Carers in the development of their child's communication.

Wren Spinney School Tier 1 aims to:

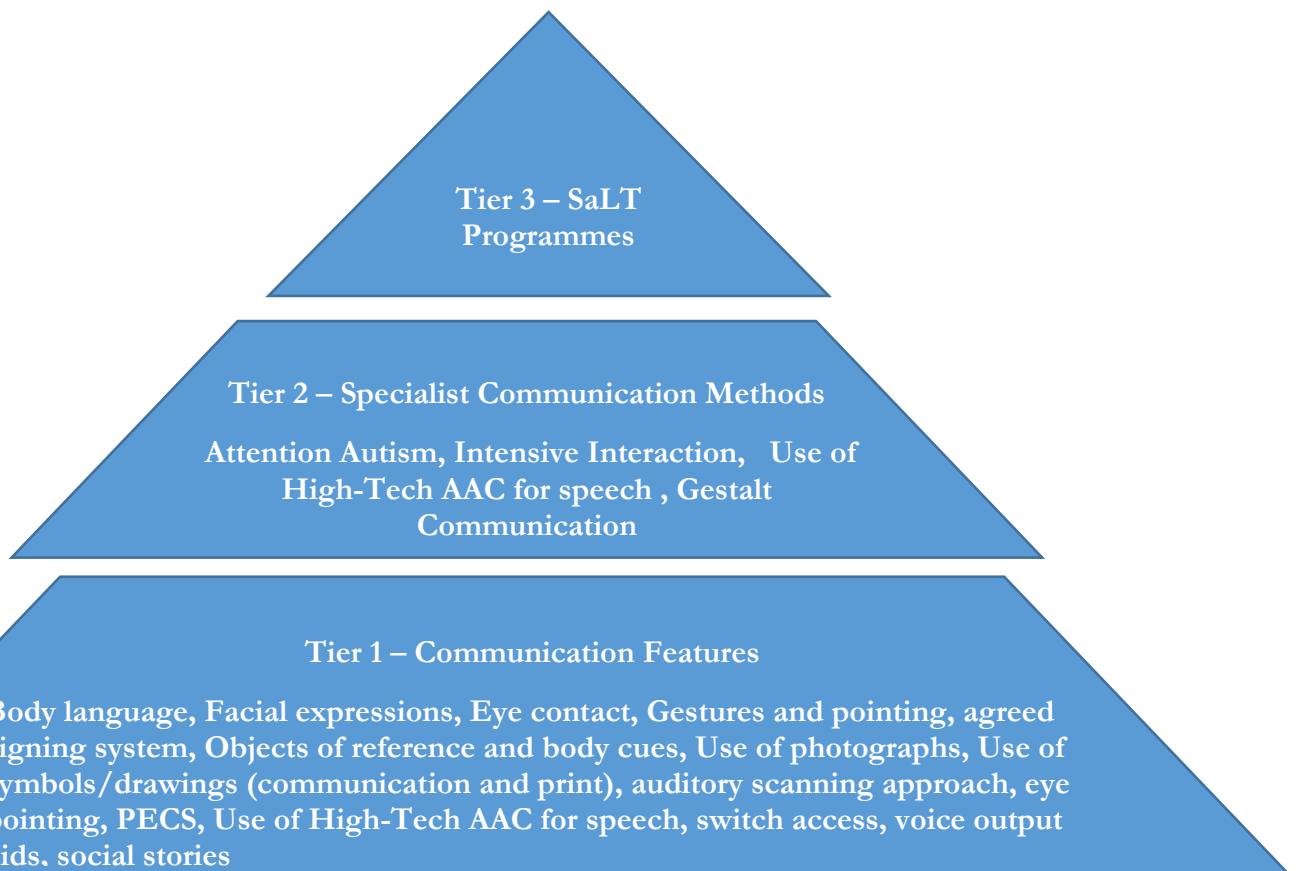
- Provide opportunities for students to develop a meaningful and functional system of Total Communication using verbal and/or nonverbal communication. This may include:

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- gestures, body language, vocalisation, eye pointing and facial expression - use of photographs/pictures/symbols/schedules/first and next board
 - Consistent use of the agreed signing system
 - Objects of Reference
 - PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System)
 - Communication boards and communication books
 - Switch access and use
 - Voice output communication aids
 - Social stories
- Ensure that all students feel included with their preferred method of communication which facilitates the opportunity to be understood, responded to and to make decisions; this is indicated on the Communication Profile of the student.
 - Integrate fully our approach to communication within all aspects of the curriculum, with particular regard to literacy and its elements of speaking and listening.
 - Enable access to the curriculum through a Total Communication approach.

Diagram 1: Structure of Total Communication at Wren Spinney School



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School Improvement Planning

Communication is a priority within the School Improvement Plan to maintain and further improve teaching. This will be done by extending the consistent use of Communication Profiles throughout the school which are reflective of the needs of the students. The Speech and Language Therapist liaise with and provides support for the strategic priorities of the school through audits of provision and resource.

Impact

- 1. Parents and Carer** - are aware of our 'open door' policy and are welcome to visit school to discuss any aspect of their child's approach to communication. Where it is considered appropriate, and in consultation with the Parents & Carers, Wren Spinney School will provide resources to support the student in the home environment (e.g. symbols, communication books).
Sign of the week videos shared on Class dojo.
- 2. Student outcomes** - Assessment, recording and reporting. Initial assessment of a student's speech and language will be completed and may be supported by the SaLT. This could involve individual work with the student, consultation with class staff, student observation and parental liaison. Ongoing assessment is then facilitated by class staff as part of their agreed curriculum monitoring, MAPPs and EHCP. A formal report is provided for each student's annual review of their EHCP, which indicates progress towards the communication targets. Furthermore, mid-year reports as well as the end of year reports, do provide parents/cares with the progress that their child has made. All students have a communication profile which gives clarity to methods of communication to strengthen the approach used for each individual student.
- 3. Classroom Environment** – Classrooms have a visual timetable, using a standardised set of symbols, which may be adapted according to the needs of the student. Wren Spinney School uses a bank of symbols to support individual students and these are taken from the PECS© system, Sign-a-long©, Communicate-In-Print packages. The most appropriate symbol according to the needs of the individual student is used, rather than dictating one specific system. This allows for flexibility and responds to the individual need of the student. Sign-a-long signing is used as a system of communication in Wren Spinney School. All staff are provided with training opportunities to develop their skills in this area and its use is tailored to individual need. The classroom environment encapsulates the Tier 1 provision as illustrated on Diagram 1.

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