



Grange Academy

Belong • Believe • Achieve

Article 23: A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and, as far as possible, independence and to play an active part in the community.

Article 28: Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free and different forms of secondary education must be available to every child.

Article 29: Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.

Communication Policy

Policy Status: Other

Review Cycle: 2 Years

Owner: Natasha Cowell –
Communications Lead

Date: June 2025

Approved by: SLT

Date: June 2027

Review Date: June 2027

Introduction

At Grange Academy we believe that communication is at the centre of successful education and independence. It's a life skill not a lesson. Communication can be defined as a meaningful interaction between two or more individuals to request, resist, choose, comment and develop social relationships. Our ultimate vision for all students is that they will establish a system of expressive and receptive communication in whatever form is appropriate to them. The key is consistent use with pupils by all staff. Communication systems must be meaningful, accessible and used purposefully.

For good communication, pupils need a method, a motivation and time.

The method of communication can take many forms and can include one or a combination of the following:

- Body language and body cues
- Facial expressions
- Eye contact
- Gestures and pointing
- Intensive Interaction
- Signing (BSL)
- PODD
- Vocalisations
- Use of objects of reference or photographs
- Use of symbols or drawings
- Use of High-Tech AAC
- Speech

Writing At Grange Academy we adopt a layered approach to communication. This means that all methods of communication are recognised and valued equally as forms of interaction.

Communication underpins all areas of the curriculum and allows students to access learning and develop social relationships. Communication is central to the entire curriculum and to the individual's autonomy. Students are therefore presented with opportunities to develop their communication skills throughout the school day using both planned and spontaneous situations. At Grange Academy we recognise that it is everybody's responsibility to have an understanding of the different methods of communication and to encourage students to support effective communication staff must be effective listeners and observe all classes have access to school wide resources to promote consistency. These include now and next boards, colourful semantics, outline and activity boards and visual timetables. We use a variety of evidence-based approaches to support attention, interaction and social communication. For example, Attention Autism resources, Intensive Interaction and TACPAC.

Core Aims

- To respect the individual's communication style and ability and their right to communicate.
- To meet the communication potential of every student with respect of their cultural, religious or family views.
- To ensure, where possible, that students are provided with an appropriate and consistent communication environment.
- To facilitate the development of successful social communication.
- To give pupils access to personalised communication tools throughout the day.

- To have communication methods used by all communication partners that students come into contact within our school.
- To promote an ethos where all communication methods are nurtured and valued; where pupils recognise and celebrate diverse communication styles.
- To enable our pupils to develop communication skills through a graduated approach, structured teaching and appropriate interventions.
- To support all our pupils to, where possible, achieve BLANKS Level 4 and beyond.

Role of school staff

Staff at Grange Academy are provided with training by the speech and language team and external providers in order to give students a communication rich environment. It is the responsibility of all staff across the school to provide students an environment in which they want to and have the resources to communicate with others. Our aims for school staff are:

- To create an environment conducive to the communication styles of individual students and groups
- To carry over good practice and programmes/activities observed and developed in group SLT sessions to all areas of the curriculum
- To discuss with school senior leaders and SENCO any queries or concerns regarding a pupil's speech and language development.

Role of parents/carers

We also work with parents to develop a shared understanding of the quality and range of communication taking place both at home and school, by:

- Sharing information at Annual Review meetings
- Regular parent/carer discussions
- Training for parents (e.g. Blanks levels)
- Liaising with parents at termly Parents' Evening
- SALTs providing advice on communication development and ideas for activities at home
- Online communication platforms (e.g. Class Dojo, Evidence Me).

Role of Speech and Language Therapists

To ensure the successful communication development of all students at the school it is essential that the Speech and Language Therapist, (SLT), team and school staff work collaboratively. Grange Academy work with professionals from Children's Speech and Language Therapy Luton and Bedfordshire, as well as private Speech and Language therapists.

To work effectively with students and staff, SALTs deliver therapy and training. SALT aims within the school are:

- To maximise student's communication skills within the scope of their ability.
- To work closely with school staff to promote the optimum environment for developing speech, language and communication; a whole communication approach.
- To discuss and set individual/group targets with teachers.
- To develop and make resources in liaison with class teams.
- To introduce, develop and maintain augmentative and alternative communication systems for individuals as appropriate.
- To provide advice, information and training as appropriate for staff, parents/carers
- To provide a monitoring system to ensure the quality of the work and provide appropriate and effective support.

- To provide students with assessment where necessary.
- To plan and deliver appropriate therapy (group/individual).
- To develop policies for particular areas of therapy.
- To liaise with and make referrals to other professionals.
- To input to Annual Reviews/Transition Plans.

Approaches to Communication

At Grange Academy we focus on functional communication i.e. the student must be able to express their wants, needs, feelings appropriately in everyday situations, this maybe with speech and/or supported by other forms of communication. For some students focused work on speech sounds may not be successful due to their developmental level, difficulties with awareness, motivation and generalisation skills.

Some of our students will require support with their articulation and we work in collaboration with the NHS Speech and language team to deliver this.

Intensive Interaction

Intensive Interaction is a practical approach to interacting with people with learning difficulties who do not find it easy communicating or being social. It is a pre-verbal approach that helps support children to engage with a supporting adult or peer in order to develop their communication skills. By copying the actions or vocalisations of a child, we can help support them to develop the ideas that communication can influence interaction with our environment. This system works well with children with social communication difficulties.

Object Cues and Objects of Reference

The terms Object cues and Objects of Reference (OOR) refer to the use of objects as a means of communication. They can be used to develop understanding, to help anticipation and memory, to develop choice and can be a bridge to other forms of communication. Objects are part of a total communication system and should be used in conjunction with other forms of communication such as signing and speech.



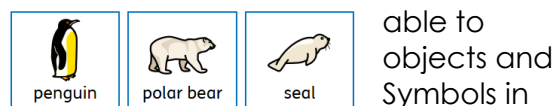
Photographs

Photographs can help students begin to develop their symbolic understanding of the world around them. A photograph supports the students to develop a link between the visual representation of an object or event and the real thing. Photographs not only develop understanding but can also be used to establish expressive communication e.g. choice making or requesting.



Symbols

As symbolic understanding develops students are more able to understand the abstract qualities of symbols in relation to events. At Grange Academy we use Widgit Online colour with the students. Symbols are used throughout the environment e.g. timetables as well as directly during and outside of classroom sessions. Symbols can range from the easily recognisable 'cat' to the more arbitrary connecting words e.g. 'to' and 'but'. Once the symbols are established by the student it is imperative that the same size and the same symbol picture are used consistently. Symbols shown to pupils are always supported by speech.



Symbols can be used with the written word underneath which can support students with their reading and pattern matching skills. Students who use symbols as a means of expressive communication must always have access to their symbols so they can initiate interactions.

However, some students will not naturally progress to using symbols as it can be too abstract for them if this is the case their communication needs should be met through the use of objects and photographs as appropriate.

At Grange Academy our symbols are presented in a way which is individual to the student using them. We strive to use the same symbols consistently throughout the school and year groups. These symbols are used within the classroom environment for universal strategies such as visual timetables, now/next boards, task planners, social stories and display boards etc. Individuals may be advised to use Choice Boards, Activity Boards, Core Boards, Communication Boards, Communication Books and VOCAs (electronic communication aids) by their Speech and Language Therapist.

Timetable - Acer, Spring 1

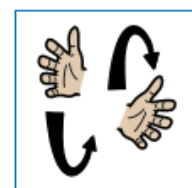
Day	8:40	9:15	10:00	10:45	11:00	12:00	1:00	1:30	2:15	3:30	3:20
Monday	Form	Maths	Maths	Break	Art	Lunch	Form	Topic	Topic	Form	Home
Tuesday	Form	ABC	ABC	Break	Food tech	Lunch	Form	RE	DT	Form	Home
Wednesday	Form	Forest school	Forest school	Break	Music	Lunch	Form	Science	R&PE	Form	Home
Thursday	Form	ABC	PE	Break	ICT	Lunch	Form	Horticulture	Target work	Form	Home
Friday	Form	Maths	Maths	Break	ABC	Lunch	Form	Life skills	Life skills	Form	Home

Sensory cues

We use objects, songs and environment cues such as smells to aid routine understanding. Students will use these cues to help them know what is happening within their day.

BSL

We use signing as a visual support for all students and have specific students who use signing to support their preferred method of communication. We have access to resources such as 'let's sign' and BSL dictionary online so that students and staff can look up words which relate to their curriculum and everyday life. At Grange Academy we promote signing to all students and staff with the Sign of the week which is promoted to classes across the school. Classes are beginning to use signing in assemblies and during performances e.g. the choir use signs when singing.



Spoken Word

(Oro-motor, expressive language skills and understanding language)

Spoken communication is made up of speech sounds, word meanings, putting words into sentences and grammar. The use of speech is always encouraged, and we provide models of clear speech and language for the students. Many of the students at Grange Academy use the spoken word to communicate. They may have difficulties with the organisation, clarity and fluency of speech sounds and words.

Attention Autism

Attention Autism is a highly motivating and creative approach to building attention, interaction and early communication skills. Developed by a specialist speech and language therapist Gina Davies, it is a framework with set strategies and resources used including highly motivating, engaging and fun activities and toys. The aim is that children receive an "irresistible invitation to learn". When making it fun, exciting and interesting, we are more likely to get children's attention and spontaneously join in helping their attention and communication.

Colourful semantics

Colourful semantics is an approach created by Alison Bryan. It is aimed at helping children to develop their grammar but it is routed in the meaning of words (semantics). Some students use colourful semantics to support their understanding of language.

Social Communication Skills

Social communication skills are skills in interacting with other people. E.g. eye contact, turn taking, personal space, volume of voice, negotiating and resolving conflict. We regard these as an essential part of participation in society. Staff use good models of social communication in their interactions with each other and students within the school. At Grange Academy we facilitate the use of social communication skills through direct targeted work and also reinforcing and generalising these throughout the school day. We practice these skills in real life situations such as going to the shops and buying what is needed for snack time, ordering a drink in a café etc.

Visual support systems

We use several visual support systems at Grange Academy to help students to understand what is happening and transition across their day. We use these at the level at which are students are accessing the visual hierarchy:

- Now/ Next
- Rewards Charts
- Choose boards
- Visual timetables

Now/ Next

Now and Next boards are used at Grange Academy to visually communicate instructions or expectations to a student, supporting their understanding of what is happening/going to happen. Now/ Next boards can help reduce anxiety about transitions or changes in routines. They can also reduce the need to regularly repeat verbal instructions.

Visual Timetables

Many of our students at Grange Academy need to know what is happening across the day. We support this by using a visual timetable, for the whole class. Some children also have their own personalised visual timetables.

A visual timetable means placing objects/ photos/symbols/ written words of activities in the order in which they are going to happen. At Grange Academy we follow left to right or top to bottom. The visual supports are moveable so they can be taken off when finished or put into a different order, when needed or at points of change.

Transition

Transition is an important part of a student's life, and we believe in empowering the student. We recognise that it can be a challenging time for students and their families, and we support them to prepare for the changes ahead. We ensure that information on their communication skills is transferred between classes and educational settings in the Summer Term at transition meetings. This is done through sharing student passports, transition meetings between staff and Annual Review reports and previous targets. The students are prepared for transitions through a variety of means, e.g. visits, social stories, discussions, photo books, specific.

We use a range of different communication methods to interact with the students, both low and high tech. We do not follow one approach as the needs of the students vary between classes and age groups. Pupils also need different strategies at different times depending on their sensory needs and cognitive functioning and level of regulation at the time. Best practice highlights that all staff follow agreed strategies consistently and are flexible in their approach to use the most appropriate strategies at that time. We aim to widen and deepen the strategies that their use in all areas of their school life.

Wave 1, 2 and 3 speech, language and Communication strategies at Grange Academy

Wave 1 – Universal Support

Every student will have access to a Communication Friendly Environment to support the development of functional communication skills.

These may include:

- A total communication approach.
- Communication modelled by staff.
- Routine cues including objects, songs and symbols.
- Signing (using BSL).
- Objects, symbols and photographs alongside spoken language.
- Curriculum based differentiation using objects, symbols or photographs e.g. communication boards.
- Structured prompts for attention and listening.

Wave 2 – Targeted Support

Some children at Grange Academy will have access to targeted strategies and interventions.

These children may not need active involvement with the speech and language team.

These may include:

- Attention and listening interventions such as Attention Autism.
- Language interventions such as Blanks levels to support verbal reasoning, shape coding, colourful semantics or Lego therapy to support expressive language.
- Visual schedules choice boards and communication boards.
- Intervention with school staff.

Wave 3 – Specialist Support

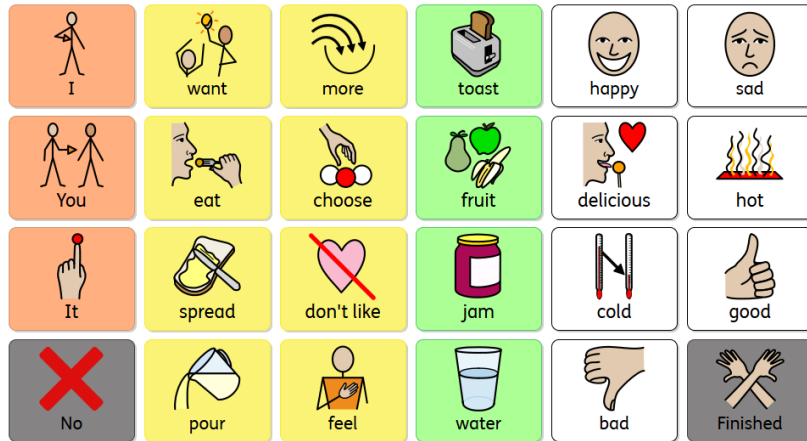
Some children at Grange Academy will have access to specialist strategies and interventions. These children may need active involvement with the speech and language team.

These may include:

- Use of a bespoke form of communication e.g. adapted communication book, voice output communication aid.
- The therapy team will help with access skills needed to support AAC.
- Regular intervention sessions with SALT team

Appendix 1: Examples of communication aids

Communication board - Snack time

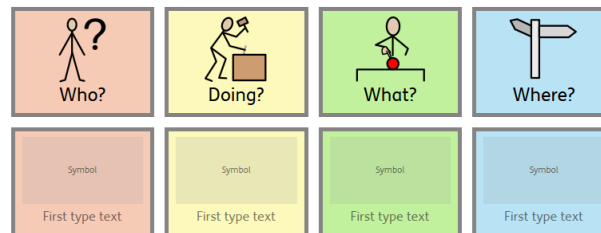


Colourful semantics

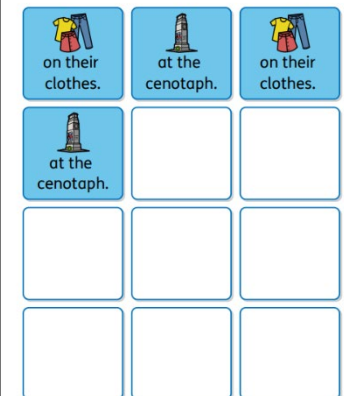
Colourful semantics is an approach created by Alison Bryan. It is aimed at helping children to develop their grammar, but it is rooted in the meaning of words (semantics). Colourful semantics reassembles sentences by cutting them up into their thematic roles then colour codes them.

The approach has 4 key colour coded stages. There are further stages for adverbs, adjectives, conjunctions, and negatives.

1. WHO – Orange
2. WHAT DOING – Yellow
3. WHAT – Green
4. WHERE – Blue



Remembrance Day



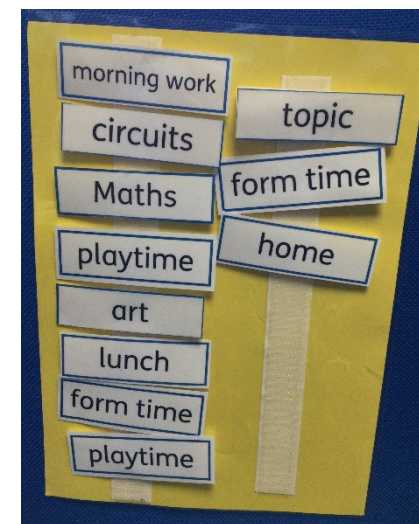
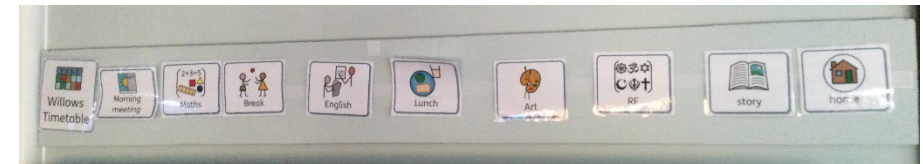
and

Individual timetables

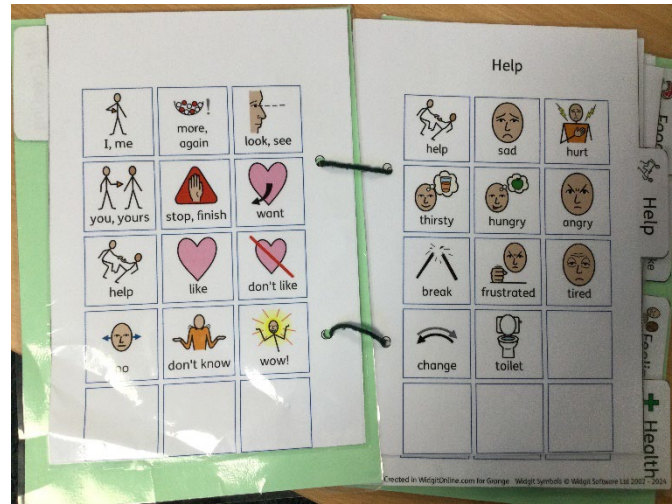
Timetable - Acer, Spring 2

Day	8.40	9.15	10.00	10.45	11.00	12.00	1.00	1.30	2.15	3.10	3.20
Monday	Form	Maths	Maths	Break	Art	Lunch	Form	Topic	Topic	Form	Home
Tuesday	Form	English	English	Break	Food tech	Lunch	Form	RE	DT	Form	Home
Wednesday	Form	Animal care	Animal care	Break	Music	Lunch	Form	Science	RSHE	Form	Home
Thursday	Form	English	PE	Break	ICT	Lunch	Form	Horticulture	Target work	Form	Home
Friday	Form	Maths	Maths	Break	English	Lunch	Form	Life skills	Life skills	Form	Home

Whole class schedules



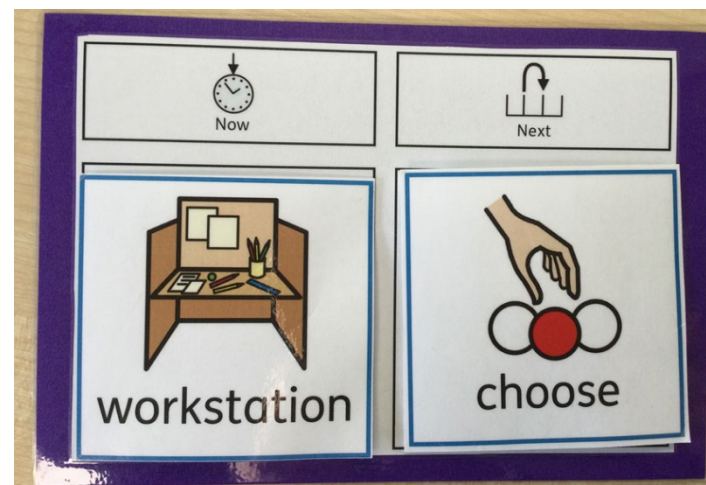
Communication book



PODD book

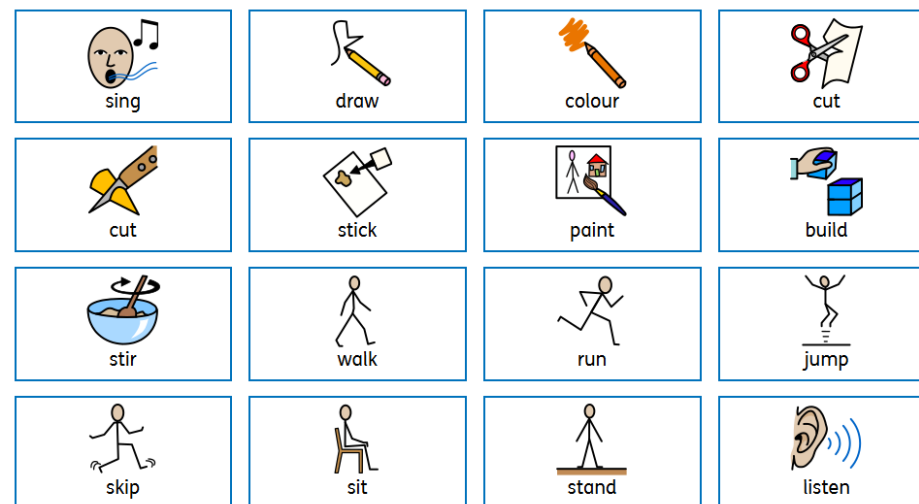
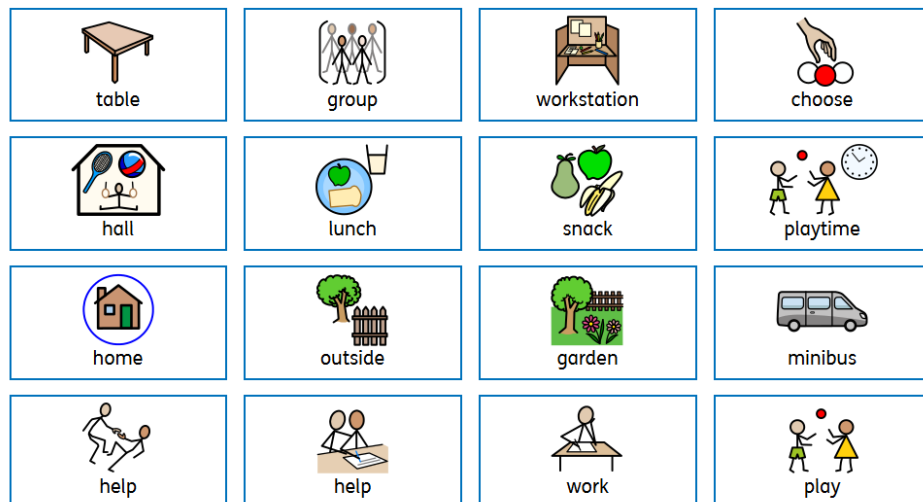


Now and Next board



Appendix 2: Key symbols to be used at Grange Academy

Key symbols for Grange - every day symbols



Key symbols for Grange Academy - lessons

 English	 Maths	 Topic	 Art
 Music	 DT	 Horticulture	 Gardening
 RSE	 Life skills	 Food Tech	 Animal care
 Forest school	 Music media	 Science	 ICT

 PE	 Swimming	 Horse riding	 Circuits
 Isabelle room	 TacPac	 Assembly	 trampoline
 Phonics	 Humanities	 Morning work	 animals
 climbing frame	 swing	 toilet	 trip

Key symbols for Grange - Feelings and Emotions

 I feel	 happy	 sad	 angry
 excited	 tired	 OK	 confused
 surprised	 upset	 sick	 hungry
 hurt	 hot	 cold	 thirsty

Appendix 3: Attention Autism

Attention Autism is a learning approach that aims to develop natural and spontaneous communication skills for autistic children through the use of visually based and highly motivating activities.



The origins of the approach are in the idea that successful communication is dynamic, engaging and joyful. People learn best when they are filled with enthusiasm, motivation and creativity. The Attention Autism approach should provide children with a learning experience that they want to communicate about.

The Aims of Attention Autism:

As well as the ultimate goal of developing natural and spontaneous communication skills in children with autism, there are several other aims that Attention Autism strives to achieve. These include:

- To engage attention.
- To improve joint attention.
- To develop shared enjoyment in group activities.
- To encourage spontaneous interaction in a natural group setting.
- To increase non-verbal and verbal communication through commentary.
- To build a wealth and depth of vocabulary.
- Most importantly, to have fun in doing so!



Appendix 4: Intensive interaction

Intensive interaction is a communication approach aimed at developing interaction and communication abilities between children and adults with communication needs and the people in their environment. This approach is based on the interactions seen between caregivers and their babies - who respond to the actions and noises that babies make and interpret this as communication.



What is Intensive Interaction?

The Intensive Interaction approach involves interacting with people with communication needs by imitating their behaviour, responding to them in a very highly responsive way, and mirroring what they do as a basis to communication and interaction. Therefore, this does not necessarily mean interaction will be verbal. Intensive Interaction focuses on teaching the 'fundamentals of communication' – the communication that precedes any speech or language development. The fundamentals of communication are:

- Attention and concentration span;
- Enjoying interaction or being with another person;
- Turn taking in behaviour exchanges;
- Sharing personal space;
- Using and understanding touch or physical contact;
- Using facial expressions;
- Using vocalisations with meaning;
- Understanding/using eye contact;
- Using non-verbal communication;
- Regulating arousal levels.

Appendix 5: Blanks Level Questioning

Blank's levels of questioning is a technique used to help children with their verbal reasoning and abstract language skills. It is also known as 'language of learning' model, Blank's Levels or Blank questions.

Blank's Levels of Questioning can be used to:

- assess the level of abstract language the child can understand
- help you to pick right the words so that the child can understand
- help the child develop abstract reasoning skills such as 'what might happen next?'
- set appropriate language targets

Level 1

Blank's level 1 focuses on naming objects. Staff will be asking the child about objects that are or were in front of them. The child may not say a lot and may point instead of speaking. Encourage the child to give a short response or complete a command.

Level 2

Blank's level 2 focuses on describing objects. Staff will be asking the child about things that are directly in front of them. They will be able to describe a object by talking about what it looks like or what it does. These questions will encourage them to think about the object or environment in more detail.

Level 3

Blank's level 3 focuses on encouraging the child to think about objects and what may happen. This is when the child should begin telling stories, sequencing events, making predictions and defining words.

Level 4

Blank's level 4 focuses on reasoning. Staff will be asking questions that encourage the child to talk about cause and effect. They will be able to answer questions using what they know from past experiences and what they learned from other places. Answering these questions accurately will require problem-solving skills. The answer will not be in front of the child.

