

Total Communication Policy



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Signed

Date

Chairperson schools governing body, on behalf of the Governing Body

Signed

Date

Headteacher

Distribution: Staff, governors, pupils, parents/carers and interested parties

Ysgol Ty Coch Total Communication Policy

Introduction

Ysgol Ty Coch Special School is a Rights Respecting School. As a Rights Respecting School, we aim to embed children's human rights in our ethos and school culture. We base our practice on the principles of equality, dignity, respect, non-discrimination and participation. Working within these principles not only empowers our children and young people, but also leads to enhanced learning, improved standards and better relationships.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the most complete statement of children's rights ever produced and is the most widely-ratified international human rights treaty in history. This policy relates to Articles 23, 29 and 31 of the UNCRC.

Article 23: Children who have any kind of disability should have special care and support so that they can lead full and independent lives.

Article 29: Education should develop each child's personality and talents to the full. It should develop respect for the natural environment

Article 31: All children have a right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of activities.

1. Rationale

Ysgol Ty Coch is a special school committed to meeting the diverse communication needs of all pupils. Many of our learners experience significant and complex communication difficulties, including speech, language, communication, interaction, sensory and cognitive needs. Effective communication is central to learning, wellbeing, behaviour, relationships and safeguarding.

This policy outlines Ysgol Ty Coch's approach to Total Communication, ensuring that every pupil has access to a broad, flexible and inclusive communication environment that enables them to understand others and to express themselves as effectively as possible.

2. Aims

- Develop a robust staff led total communication culture within the school.
- Ensure that all pupils have consistent access to appropriate communication systems.
- Support pupils to develop functional communication, independence and self-advocacy.
- Ensure communication needs are understood and supported by all staff.
- Reduce frustration and anxiety by enabling pupils to communicate wants, needs, choices and feelings.
- Support positive behaviour, emotional regulation and inclusion.
- Work in partnership with families and external professionals to support communication.

3. Core Principles

3.1. Total Communication

Total Communication is an inclusive approach that uses all available and appropriate methods of communication to support understanding and expression. It recognises that no single method suits all pupils and that communication methods may change over time or depending on context.

At Ysgol Ty Coch, Total Communication may include:

- Spoken language
- Gesture and body language
- Facial expression
- Vocalisations
- Objects of reference
- Sensory cues (e.g. sound, touch, smell)
- Photographs and symbols (e.g. Widgit)
- Visual timetables and schedules

- Written communication (where appropriate)
- Intensive interaction
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems, including no, low and high tech systems such as:
 - Signalong
 - E-Tran frames
 - PECs
 - Eye Gaze
 - Specialised high tech AAC devices

Pupils are supported through a range of strategies that form part of the Total Communication approach. This includes support for:

- Expressive Language – how pupils can communicate their own thoughts, needs and feelings
- Receptive language – how pupils understand communication from others

These include spoken language, gestures, body language, facial expressions, and vocalisations, alongside visual and sensory supports such as objects of reference, photographs, and symbols (e.g., Widgit). For example, staff may use a flannel as an object of reference to indicate washing to support pupils understanding of what they are doing. Sensory cues like sound, touch, or smell are also used to reinforce meaning, particularly for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. A member of staff may ensure a pupil has access to symbols such as “Help” or “Wait” on a PECs book that is kept with the pupil for quick access during routines so that pupils are able to effectively express their needs. These methods are layered and adapted to individual needs, ensuring pupils can both understand and express themselves effectively across all environments.

3.2 Supporting Communication Culture

We are committed to an inclusive communication culture where every child can access and express language in ways that work for them. We follow a Total Communication approach,

using spoken language alongside visual, physical, or symbolic supports. Our guiding principle to support receptive communication is ***“Two ways are better than one”***. All staff will pair speech with at least one additional modality, such as gesture, sign, symbols, objects, or AAC, to support pupils’ receptive language. This simple, consistent practice ensures communication is accessible and embedded throughout daily routines.

When you speak to a child, add one of the following:

- A gesture (pointing, showing, demonstrating)
- A sign (key word signing)
- A symbol or picture (PECS, visual timetable, communication board)
- An object (real object or object of reference)
- A facial expression or clear body language
- A written word or simple drawing

Ysgol Ty Coch’s Total Communication approach is underpinned by the following principles:

- ‘Two Ways are Better than One’
- Communication is a basic human right.
- Every pupil is a communicator.
- Pupils may communicate in different ways for different purposes.
- Understanding comes before expression.
- Consistency across adults, environments and routines is essential.
- Communication support should be proactive, not reactive.
- Pupils must be given sufficient time and opportunity to communicate.

3.3 Prompt Removal and Independence

While a total communication approach is used, staff at Ty Coch are aware of the importance of developing pupils’ independence, and therefore the need to have a clear understanding

of the total communication strategies that are being used to support learners. As such, staff will need a clear plan for prompt removal when teaching pupils a specific skill. Prompt removal is a structured approach to gradually reducing adult support, enabling pupils to become independent communicators. At Ysgol Ty Coch, this process is guided by our principle **“Two Ways are Better than One”**—pairing speech with an additional modality (sign, symbol, gesture, AAC) to support pupils receptive language, while gradually reducing prompts as pupils gain confidence and competence in skills that are taught.

Cue vs. Prompt

- Cue: A natural signal in the environment that indicates what to do next (e.g., a bell ringing for lunch, a visual schedule, or a teacher pointing to a symbol). Cues are non-intrusive and remain as supports for independence.
- Prompt: An additional layer of adult support provided to ensure success (e.g., physical guidance, verbal instruction, or modelling on AAC). Prompts are temporary teaching aids that must be faded systematically to avoid dependency.

Key Difference:

Cues are part of the learning environment and remain in place, while prompts are temporary and should be reduced over time.

Links to Teaching and Learning Theory

- Behaviourist Principles (Pyramid & PECS):
Prompt removal aligns with errorless learning and reinforcement theory, ensuring pupils experience success before independence. Backward chaining is recommended for complex routines.
- Constructivist Approach:
Learners build understanding through active engagement. Removing prompts allows pupils to take ownership of communication, supporting autonomy and problem-solving.

- Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky):
Prompts act as scaffolds within the learner's ZPD. Gradual removal ensures pupils move from supported to independent performance.
- Cognitive Load Theory
 - Intrinsic Load: Communication tasks can be complex for pupils with ALN. Start with high support to manage this load.
 - Extraneous Load: Avoid unnecessary language or clutter when prompting. Be clear about the prompts that are used.
 - Germane Load: Removing prompts allow pupils to allocate cognitive resources to learning and generalising communication skills rather than processing excessive adult input.

3.4. Curriculum and Learning Environment

Total Communication is embedded across all aspects of school life, including:

- Teaching and learning
- Care routines
- Transitions
- Play and leisure
- Community-based learning

The learning environment will:

- Be visually supportive and structured.
- Use clear, consistent symbols and signage.
- Provide personalised communication supports (e.g. individual timetables, choice boards, communication books/devices).
- Minimise unnecessary language and sensory overload.
- Promote predictability and reduce anxiety.

3.5. Individualised Communication Support

Each pupil's communication needs are identified through:

- Person-centred planning
- Individual Development Plans (IDPs)
- Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) assessment and advice
- Ongoing observation and assessment by staff

Pupils may have:

- An individual communication profile or passport
- Personalised AAC systems
- Specific targets linked to communication, interaction and independence

Communication systems will be reviewed regularly and adapted as pupils' needs change.

3.6. Critical Communication Skills

Ysgol Ty Coch used the nine essential communication skills from the Pyramid Approach.

These will be embedded into the curriculum for learners to support independence, reduce frustration and prevent contextually inappropriate behaviour. Pyramid groups these skills into Speaker Skills (expressive communication) and Listener Skills (receptive communication):

Speaker Skills (Expressive language)

1. Request Reinforcers – Learners ask for desired items, activities, or sensory input using appropriate modality (speech, sign, symbol, AAC).
2. Request Assistance – Learners can seek help (e.g., using a distinct “Help” card), even when frustrated.
3. Indicate “No” – Learners can refuse unwanted items or activities successfully.

4. Indicate “Yes” – Learners express consent or desire beyond nonverbal cues (e.g., grabbing).
5. Request Break – Learners communicate a need for a break (e.g., using a “Break” card), including clear parameters for how and when to return.

Listener Skills (Receptive Language)

6. Respond to “Wait” – Learners understand and manage the difference between “wait” and “no,” using visual supports (e.g., “Wait” card) initially.
7. Follow Functional Directions – Learners follow everyday instructions like “Stop,” “Come here,” or “Give it to me,” with visual support as needed.
8. Transition Between Activities – Learners move successfully between preferred and non-preferred tasks with support.
9. Follow a Schedule – Learners recognise and use visual schedules—from simple to multi-day formats—independently or with fading support.

Why These Matter

- Encourage independent advocacy, so learners can express needs before staff intervene.
- Promote **happier, more independent learners** by reducing frustration-driven behaviours.
- Applicable across all communicative modalities—PECS, AAC, signing, or speech.

Staff Guidance

- Embed these skills into IDPs and class-based targets
- Plan prompts and removal strategies—ensure learners initiate critical skills before prompts are reduced.
- Use visual supports (e.g., Help/Break/Wait cards, schedules) across routines and settings.
- Monitor progress systematically and update teaching priorities every 6 months as per Pyramid guidance.

3.7. Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

AAC refers to methods of communication that support individuals who have little or no clear speech. These systems either augment spoken communication or provide an alternative means of expression. AAC can also enhance comprehension, enabling pupils to participate more fully in learning and social interaction.

Purpose and Principles

- Communication is a basic human right.
- Every pupil is a communicator, regardless of ability.
- AAC systems must be personalised, accessible, and reviewed regularly.
- AAC should be integrated across all environments and routines.
- Staff must model and respond to all communication attempts consistently.

Why AAC is Needed

Children and young people with Speech, Language and Communication Difficulties that impact their expressive language may require AAC to:

- Develop communication and language skills
- Express needs, wants, feelings, and opinions
- Share ideas, recall information, and hypothesise
- Build social closeness and self-expression
- Access education through shared learning and discussion

Types of AAC

- Unaided AAC: Communication methods that do not require additional equipment, such as body language, facial expressions, gestures, vocalisations, pointing and signing systems (e.g., Signalong).
- Aided AAC: Communication methods that require tools or devices, ranging from low-tech options (e.g., picture exchange systems, communication books) to high-tech solutions (e.g., speech-generating devices, tablet-based apps).

Learners at Ysgol Ty Coch will likely employ a combination of unaided and aided methods to meet their receptive and expressive communication needs. These may be directed by Speech and Language Therapists or identified by school staff.

Staff Responsibilities

- Ensure AAC systems are available and used consistently across settings.
- Embed AAC strategies into teaching, care routines, and transitions.
- Work collaboratively with Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT) and families to maintain consistency.
- Monitor and adapt AAC systems as pupils' needs evolve.

Intensive Interaction

Intensive Interaction is an unaided communication approach used to support pupils at the earliest stages of development, including those with autism, severe, profound, or complex learning difficulties. It focuses on building the foundations of communication through shared enjoyment and interaction. The approach develops early skills such as eye contact, facial expressions, vocalisations, and turn-taking, promoting engagement and reciprocity. Staff mirror pupils' actions (e.g., pupil waves, staff member waves) and follow the pupil's lead to create positive, motivating experiences. Intensive Interaction is embedded within daily routines and aims to build trust, develop pre-verbal communication, and increase confidence in interaction.

Signalong

Signalong is used throughout the school as a key-word sign-supported communication system based on British Sign Language. It follows spoken word order and combines speech, sign, body language, facial expression, and voice tone to reinforce understanding. Signalong supports language development by using one sign per concept and one concept per sign, enabling clarity and consistency. The school has a trained Signalong instructor who provides staff training and resources to ensure effective implementation. Signalong offers an extensive vocabulary, making it a highly effective tool for supporting pupils with communication and learning disabilities.

E-Tran Frames

Pupils have access to E-Tran frames as a low-tech AAC option to support communication and choice-making. An E-Tran frame is a clear Perspex board that displays symbols or words, enabling pupils to indicate selections through eye pointing. These frames are particularly effective for individuals with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD), providing a structured and accessible means of interaction. E-Tran frames can be adapted to meet individual needs and are used to promote engagement, participation in classroom activities, and inclusivity. Staff ensure frames are positioned appropriately and paired with other communication strategies to maximise effectiveness.

PECS

PECS is a widely used low-tech AAC approach that enables pupils to initiate communication by exchanging pictures or symbols for desired items, activities, or information. It is structured around a developmental sequence that begins with simple exchanges and progresses to constructing sentences and commenting. PECS promotes functional communication, independence, and social interaction, particularly for pupils with autism or severe communication difficulties. Staff are trained to implement PECS consistently, following agreed protocols and pairing picture exchange with speech and other communication strategies to support language development.

Eye Gaze

Eye Gaze is a high-tech AAC system used within the school to support pupils who benefit from adapted technology for communication. Eye Gaze enables access to computers or communication aids by controlling an on-screen pointer with eye movements. The school uses Tobii and Gridpad systems, which track eye movements with high accuracy and allow pupils to interact with communication software such as Grid 3 and Widgit. These programs provide symbol and text-based vocabularies, configured to snap to buttons for ease of use. Eye Gaze promotes independence and engagement for pupils with complex needs and may be complemented by alternative access methods such as switches or light pointers where appropriate. Staff ensure devices are set up correctly and integrated into learning activities to maximise communication opportunities.

High Tech devices

Some pupils are assigned individual communication devices to promote independence and functional communication. These may include dedicated AAC devices provided by external agencies (e.g., Rookwood Hospital) or school-issued iPads configured with specialist communication software such as LAMP, Proloquo, or Grid 3.

- LAMP (Language Acquisition through Motor Planning) supports language development through consistent motor patterns, enabling pupils to learn and retain vocabulary effectively.
- Grid 3, developed by AAC specialists at Smartbox Technology, offers a complete communication solution for individuals with complex communication or access needs. It provides symbol and text-based vocabularies and allows control via touch, switch, eye gaze, or pointing devices, promoting independence and environmental control.

Staff ensure these devices are personalised, maintained, and integrated into daily routines to maximise communication opportunities.

3.8. Inclusion, Equality and Safeguarding

All staff must value all communication attempts as part of a trauma informed communication approach.

Staff must be aware of each pupil's optimum communication modality or tool and use this effectively. They may reinforce this up by using speech, sign or another or another tool to support the pupils access to communication.

Total Communication supports inclusion by enabling pupils to:

- Express preferences, consent and refusal
- Communicate discomfort, pain or safeguarding concerns
- Participate in decisions about their lives

All staff must be vigilant to changes in communication that may indicate distress or safeguarding issues, in line with the school's Safeguarding Policy.

3.9. Visual Schedules and Structured Supports

Visual schedules are a core component of Ysgol Ty Coch's Total Communication approach. They support pupils' understanding, predictability, emotional regulation and independence by making routines, transitions and expectations clear.

Visual schedules are used consistently across the school and are carefully matched to each pupil's stage of communication development. Staff use a progression model, moving from the most concrete supports to more abstract representations as pupils' understanding develops.

- Visual schedules must match the pupil's current level of understanding.
- Pupils may use different types of schedules for different contexts.
- Schedules should be used proactively, not only when pupils are distressed.
- All adults must use schedules consistently and refer to them throughout the day.
- Visual schedules should always be paired with other communication methods (speech, signing, gesture, AAC).

Visual schedules (whole-class and individual) must be visible, accessible, and used consistently throughout the day. The Visual Schedule Progression in Appendix 1 supports staff in selecting appropriate schedules.

Staff Guidance

- Begin with concrete supports and move gradually towards abstract representations.
- Layer communication by pairing schedules with speech, Signalong/Makaton, gesture or AAC.

- Ensure symbol consistency across classes and environments.
- Encourage pupil ownership (e.g. moving symbols, marking tasks as finished, accessing schedules independently).

Further guidance, templates and examples are provided in the school's Visual Schedule Progression Document (Appendix 1).

Symbol Consistency

Consistency in the use of symbols is essential to support pupils' understanding, reduce cognitive load, and promote independence. At Ysgol Ty Coch, all visual schedules and symbol-based communication support follow agreed standards to ensure clarity and predictability across the school (Appendix 1).

- Pupils benefit from seeing **the same symbols presented in the same way**, regardless of class, adult or location.
- Consistent presentation supports generalisation of skills and reduces anxiety.
- Any deviation from the standard format must be based on **individual pupil need**, agreed by the class team and the lead for communication and Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT) where appropriate.

3.10. Agreed Standards for Visual Schedules

Symbols

- All symbol-based schedules must use **Widgit symbols** unless an alternative system is specified in a pupil's Individual Development Plan (IDP) or communication profile. Any adjustments must be purposeful, robust and quality assured by the schools communication leads.

- The **same symbol** must be used consistently to represent the same activity across the school.

Board and Symbol Presentation

- Pyramid vertical wall schedules are used to ensure schedules are visually clear and consistent throughout the school. Individual schedules are blue, and class schedules are yellow. The school aims to move all pupils onto vertical schedules, but some pupils will progress to horizontal schedules in the continuum.
- Symbols must be:
 - Clear
 - Uncluttered
 - Appropriately sized for the learner's visual and processing needs. A standard size for schedule symbols at Ysgol Ty Coch is produced on Widgit Online on a 3x4 grid (in Flashcards and Vocabulary). If pupils require a different size, this decision would be based on their learning and processing needs by the class team, taking advice from relevant external professionals as required. This would be recorded in the schedule section of a pupils Total Communication and Sensory Profile (TCSP).

Borders

- All schedule symbols must use a **consistent border** across the school
- Border colour and thickness are agreed centrally to ensure uniformity – **1.94mm, black, square-edged**
- The font used should be **Comic Sands**
- The same border colour is used for:
 - Vertical schedules
 - Horizontal schedules
 - Now and Next / Now, Next, Then boards
- 'Finished' or 'Done' sections use the same agreed format across all classes.

Layout

- **Vertical schedules** are used before horizontal schedules, as vertical discrimination develops prior to left–right sequencing. Vertical Schedules must be used in all classrooms and be positioned on the left or right of the class screen – a Pyramid yellow wall schedule would be used for the class schedule where a physical schedule is used.
- **Horizontal schedules** are used for pupils that have progressed beyond the vertical schedule
- Layouts should not be mixed for the same pupil.

Finished / Completed Systems

- All schedules must include a clear start and end, and pupils should understand which activities are in progress, completed and which are happening next.
- Where appropriate, pupils are actively involved in:
 - Moving symbols
 - Removing symbols
 - Placing symbols into the finished section
 - Writing and adapting own schedules
- This supports understanding of completion and transition.

Individualisation

- While consistency is essential, schedules may be adapted for:
 - Visual impairment
 - Motor needs
 - Sensory sensitivity
 - Cognitive processing differences
 - Any adaptations must be recorded in the pupil's communication profile or IDP and approved by the school's communication lead

Responsibility

- All staff are responsible for maintaining symbol consistency in accordance with this policy and the guidelines set out within it.
- Class teams must ensure new resources follow the agreed standards.
- SLT and senior staff support consistency through monitoring, modelling and training.

3.11. Pupil Voice

At Ysgol Ty Coch, we believe that every pupil has the right to express their thoughts, feelings, and preferences in a way that is meaningful to them. Through a Total Communication approach, we ensure that all pupils are provided with the tools and strategies they need to communicate effectively, whether through speech, sign, symbols, objects, or technology. We actively listen to and value pupil contributions, using their input to inform decisions about their learning, wellbeing, and school experience. By promoting a culture of respect and inclusion, we empower pupils to have a voice in shaping their environment and achieving their full potential.

4. Implementation

4.1 Monitoring and Evaluation

- Learning walks and lesson observations will assess the effectiveness of total communication using the Nautilus system.
- Feedback from staff, pupils, and families will inform ongoing improvements.
- IDP monitoring will track progress against communication and interaction IDP outcomes

4.2 Professional Learning Offer

Staff will receive training and ongoing professional development through external providers and internal INSET and micro training including:

- Total Communication
- AAC
- Signalong
- Autism-friendly communication strategies
- Supporting communication and behaviour
- Pyramid and PECs
- Intensive Interaction

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Headteacher**
 - Strategic oversight.
- **SLT and WLT**
 - Monitoring implementation and supporting staff.
- **Class Teachers**
 - Using agreed communication systems consistently.
 - Modelling appropriate communication methods.
 - Responding to all communication attempts.
 - Allowing adequate processing and response time.
 - Working closely with SLT and other professionals.
 - Embedding advice from therapists and external professionals to ensure communication support is functional and meaningful
 - All classrooms will follow the agreed layout principles outlined in the communication section of Department Blueprints (appendix 1).
 -
- **Governors**
 - Monitoring impact through the Quality-of-Life Committee.
- **Pupils**
 - Contributing feedback through the School Senedd.
- **Speech and Language Therapy**
 - Assessing pupils' communication needs

- Recommending appropriate communication strategies and systems
- Supporting staff training and modelling
- Contributing to IDPs and reviews
- **Parents and Carers**
 - Ysgol Ty Coch recognises parents and carers as key partners in communication development. We aim to:
 - Share information about pupils' communication systems.
 - Promote consistency between home and school.
 - Provide guidance and resources where appropriate.
 - Value and respect family knowledge of the pupil.

6. Linked Policies

- Environment Policy
- Assessment and Progression Policy
- Positive Behaviour Support Guide
- Safeguarding Policy
- IDP and Target Setting Protocols
- ALN Policy

7. Review and Development

This policy will be reviewed biennially or in response to significant changes in pupil need, site development, or Estyn recommendations.

Appendix 1

Ysgol Ty Coch

Visual Schedule Toolkit

Schedule Progression

Staff Guide – Aligned with the Total Communication Policy

This progression helps staff select the most appropriate visual schedule for each learner, moving from the most concrete supports to the most abstract. Each stage is directly linked to the Total Communication Policy.

1. Objects of Reference

Learners: Very early communication development.

Practice: Use real/tactile objects (e.g., cup = drink, towel = swimming).

Next step: once pupils are secure in using objects, introduce a symbol/picture to use alongside the object to support understanding. This can take time and if a pupil is able to understand the concept of several steps, these can be used alongside a schedule or a now and next board.

Total Communication integration: Pair with gesture, Signalong, and facial expressions.

2. Photo-Based Transition Support

Learners: Pupils who recognise familiar people, places, and activities.

Practice: Use photos to represent transitions (e.g., photo of bus = home time).

Next Steps: Begin to use photos on a now and next board to support transition.

Total Communication integration: Combine with vocal intonation, pointing, and signing.

3. Single picture direction following:

Learners: Pupils who recognise familiar places and activities.

Practice: use symbols and pictures to represent transition and places. (Hall symbol for hall). Classrooms should use coloured zones for areas of the classroom. TEACCH stations should be coloured “Red” and Sensory Rooms/Spaces in the classroom should be coloured “Blue”. Begin by showing the picture with no verbal prompt to assess whether the pupil understands the visual cue. If needed, physically prompt the pupil to the object/area. Repeat the activity and reduce physical prompt.

Next steps: Symbol based schedule

Total communication approach: combine with physical prompt when needed can take the symbol to match it to an identical symbol in the area.

4a. Symbol-Based Schedules Vertical (Widgit Symbols)

Learners: Pupils with symbol recognition.

Practice: Once the learner is able to follow 4 visual directions then combine these into a schedule. Use a vertical schedule as vertical discrimination is required before left-

right sequencing. The purpose is to follow a schedule and transition independently from one activity to another. Physical prompts can be used in the beginning to support this and the Backward Chaining teaching strategy should be followed. (p 268) PECS Manual.

Next Steps: If pupils are able to master this independently and would prefer to have a schedule that they can travel with, they can use a left to right smaller schedule.

Total Communication integration: Reinforce with Signalong, speech, or PECS exchange.

4b. Symbol Based Schedules Horizontal (Widgit Symbols)

Learners: Pupils with symbol recognition.

Practice: If a learner requires a schedule that they need to transition with them, a vertical schedule can be introduced. This can also support pupils that find moving to and from a schedule challenging. These can be full mornings/or afternoons or whole days. As above, they must be able to follow 6-8 visual directions before trying this. A Physical Prompter can be used to support pupils to move the symbol to the finished section.

Next Steps: Where appropriate, pupils can move on to a written schedule.

Total Communication integration: Reinforce with Signalong, speech, or PECS exchange.

4c. Digital / High-Tech AAC Schedules

Learners: Pupils using high tech AAC devices.

Practice: Daily schedules created using Choiceworks to support pupils who respond well to AAC devices. These can include embedded videos to show pupils what is happening next. For example, dinner time, could show a video of dinner time in the hall.

Next Steps: Choiceworks can be used with pupils who are learning to wait as it has timers built in that provide pupils with alternative choices while they wait for desired item.

Total Communication integration: Reinforce with Signalong, speech

5. Written Word / Checklist Schedules

Policy link: “Visual schedules... can be made with... the written word.”

Learners: Pupils with literacy skills, including older learners.

Practice: Lists or timetables with boxes to tick/cross off. Use of a diary or day planner to support their learning and engagement. This helps to provide predictability for pupils and supports understanding of time.

Total Communication integration: May be paired with timers, gestures, or digital prompts.

Teacher Guidance

- Start concrete → move abstract: Always match to the learner's current stage.
- Layer communication modes: Pair schedules with speech, Signalong, gesture, and AAC. 'Two ways are better than one'
- **Consistency matters:** Use the same approach across the school. Symbols should be the same across all classes. Please see Appendix 1.
- **Promote pupil voice:** Encourage learners to take ownership (moving symbols, marking off tasks, or using AAC independently).

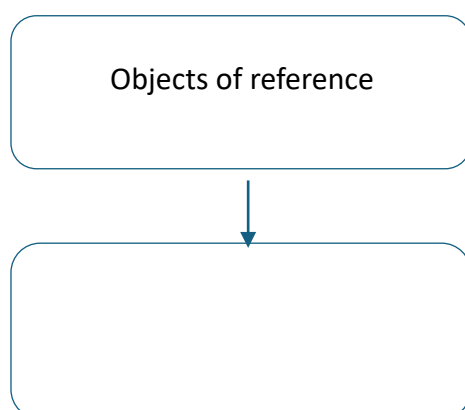
Schedule Progression

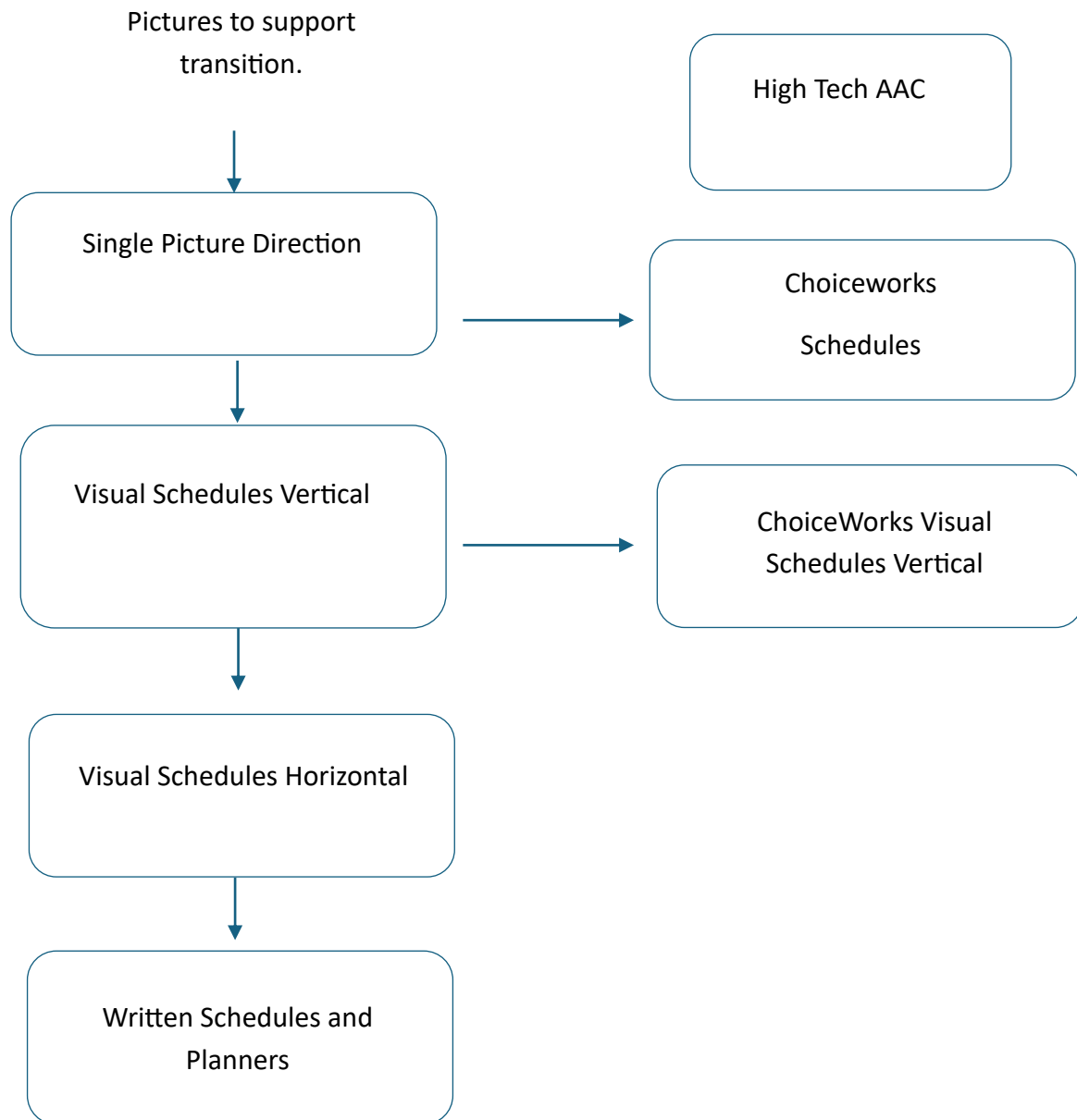
This progression helps staff select the most appropriate visual schedule for each learner, moving from the most concrete supports to the most abstract. Each stage is directly linked to the Total Communication Policy.

- 1. Objects of Reference – Real items, tactile cues.
- 2. Photo Based Transition Support
- 3. Single picture direction following
- 4a. Symbol Based Schedules (Vertical)
- 4b. Symbol Based Schedules (Horizontal)
- 4c. AAC Devices
- 5. Written Schedules and Planners

Flow Chart Overview

The following flow chart visually represents the progression of schedules aligned with the Total Communication Policy. It demonstrates progression from the most concrete to the most abstract support, helping staff match the right strategy to each learner's communication needs.





Objects of reference examples

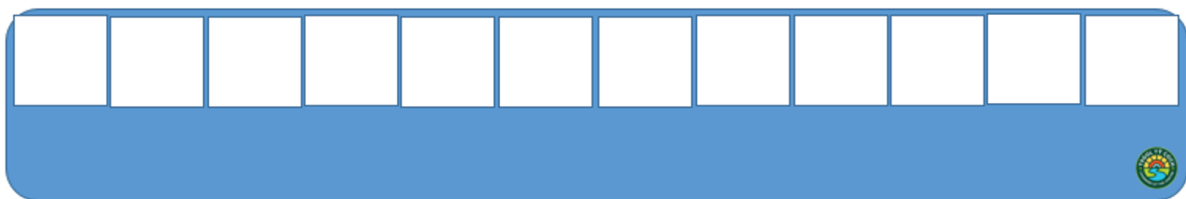
Objects of reference resource bag.

Activity	Object of reference
Breakfast	Spoon
Dinner	Fork
Toilet	Toilet roll
Play	Toy bike
Fire Alarm	Fire Truck
Sensory room	Fidget toy
Work	Block
Hydro Pool	Small piece of towel



Visual Schedules Horizontal.

If appropriate for the pupil a horizontal schedule will be used or an adapted version.



High-tech Schedules Choiceworks

