

Rachel Madocks



Approaches to Speaking & Listening



For learners at Rachel Madocks School 'speaking and listening' can take many different forms. Learners may not always communicate verbally or respond in a conventional manner for a number of different reasons so additional systems may need to be put in place to enable learners to develop their expressive and receptive language skills.

Learners may have little or no spoken language or may become frustrated if they are not understood due to difficulties with articulation and it is therefore essential that a system is put in place for that learner that enables them to 'speak' clearly and for those around them to understand what they are saying.

Staff and learners in Rachel Madocks School have access to speech and language therapy support to aid development in this area and specific students may work on a 1:1 or small group basis with the speech and language therapist.

For some students, verbal speech will not provide them with an appropriate method of communication so additional and alternative communication systems will be put in place. AAC means ANY other means of communication other than direct speech. This will include:

- Objects of reference
- Photos
- Symbols
- Signing, body signing and Makaton signing, TaSSeLs
- Yes / no bands
- Communication aids - from very simple low tech single message systems to complex computer based technology e.g. Proxtalker

Objects of reference, object cues, multi-sensory referencing.

Objects of reference or object cues are to be used for learners who are not able to access symbols or photos through visual impairment or who are not yet able to comprehend the meaning of photos or symbols or 2D representations. There may also be other multi-sensory cues that are used alongside object cues for example, music or auditory cues, tactile cues and olfactory cues using the learner's sense of smell.

- Object cues should be introduced one at a time and for activities that are going to be highly motivating for the individual learner.
- Object cues can be used to form a visual and tactile timetable for both groups and individuals.
- They should be used consistently by learners to inform them of what they are doing and where they are going.
- Learners should be encouraged to look at, touch, and hold the objects prior to the activity taking place.
- When pupils are moving around to key areas in the school they should be taking their objects with them as a reminder of where they are going and then to match the objects to the area they have arrived at.

Photos and symbols

Photo and symbol cues are used by pupils who need a visual reminder or as a support to verbal instructions. They are used in a similar way to objects of reference and cues.

- a) To inform a pupil or group of pupils what is about to happen or where they are going.
- b) For pupils to use as a visual reminder as they move around school.
- c) As an aid in recall of the day's activities
- d) To communicate their needs and wants to the people around them.

Photo symbols also provide visual prompts for interactions with both adults and more especially peers. This enables them to develop play and leisure skills, form purposeful relationships and develop communicative confidence by communicating with a wide range of different people.

They can also be used to give instructions to pupils who find it difficult to listen or co-operate as the visual prompts give additional information and security in the learner's comprehension of the task.

PECS, TEACCH, PODD, AAC and Makaton

PECS is used by learners in school to aid the development of their communication skills.

PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) is a system that initially encourages students to initiate interactions through the use of exchanging a symbol for a motivational item. As the students are taken through the phases of PECS it encourages them to gain attention appropriately, request wanted items, form sentences through the use of symbols and on some occasions verbally, make comments about their environment, use a range of adjectives and extended sentences. PECS opens up a world of communication for anyone that has difficulties communicating verbally; the only requirement for someone being taught to use PECS is that there must be something tangible that they want.

TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication Handicapped Children) is a system of visual timetables/schedules that let the students know what is happening now and next at its most basic level. Students are encouraged to follow a TEACCH schedule as independently as possible using the pictures or symbols as instructional cues of where they need to go next to further their learning.

TEACCH schedules are in place for some learners in school who have been assessed as needing a visual prompt to enable them to access the school curriculum effectively.

PODD (Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display). PODD books are a low tech communication system that are used as part of a school wide approach to enhance the communicative environment. It provides opportunities for pupils to express themselves using a wide vocabulary whilst using a variety of other communication tools, i.e. speech, gesture, PECS, writing etc.

AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) systems are communication devices that allow people to use a machine to have a voice. Examples used in school include ProxTalkers and Big Mack Switches. PODD and PECS are also examples of AAC.

Makaton is a unique language programme that uses symbols, signs and speech to enable people to communicate. It supports the development of essential communication skills such as attention and listening, comprehension, memory, recall and organisation of language and expression.