



Resources for New Teaching Staff

**Special School Speech and Language Therapy
(SLT) Team**





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Introduction to the Special School (SS) SLT Team

The SS SLT team is primarily based within the special schools in the Southern Trust but also provides input and support to all the Special Provision – Special (SP Special) classes. The Special School SLTs work within a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) alongside Occupational Therapists (OTs), Physiotherapists and Orthoptists.

You will be made aware of which SLT(s) will be supporting your classroom. The purpose of this information and resource pack is to provide you with some immediate advice for getting started.

You might have already seen the Special School's Allied Health Professional (AHP) online resource which holds a lot of great information about the model of service, communication, eating & drinking, motor skills, sensory, postural management, orthoptics. This also includes a useful video explaining the role of AHPs in SP special classes. Please take time to look at this resource and contact the AHP team in your child's school if you want to know more about any of this. There will also be themed, monthly newsletters sent out containing practical tips and resources.

[Special Schools - SLT - 1](#)





Creating a Communication Friendly Environment

A communication friendly environment ensures that children's speech, language and communication needs are planned for and supported throughout the day. It may differ slightly in different environments but generally includes the following;

- The **physical environment**
- The **strategies** that communication partners can use
- The **opportunities** that children can practice their communication skills with other adults and peers

The Physical Environment

It is important to consider how the classroom environment might impact on a child's mood, their capacity and willingness to pay attention and communicate as well as their general well-being. Things to consider are lighting, visual distractions, layout of the room, environmental sounds and room temperature.

Strategies Communication Partners Can Use

The way an adult interacts with a child can have an impact on the child's ability to communicate and engage. Building a connection with a child can be one of the most important strategies you use.

Try to identify what it is about what the child is doing that they are finding meaningful or what is giving them enjoyment.

Tips to achieve this:

- Get down to the child's level
- Follow their lead
- Give time to listen
- Give the child time to respond
- Use simple language and visuals
- Slow down your rate of speech

Creating Opportunities for Communication

Communication partners should create frequent opportunities throughout the school day to use and develop the child's communication skills. Consider the reasons we communicate; often we start with requesting although we should give opportunities to communicate for other functions also.





Examples of what communication partners should do:

- **Pause** during a critical moment e.g. in rough and tumble games and nursery rhymes- build anticipation and fun!
- **Offer** an empty cup, or give small amounts of the drink/snack at a time and wait (watch) for them to request more by looking, pointing, vocalising
- **Choices** - children need to learn to make a choice so that they can tell us what they want, become more independent and less frustrated. Giving a choice also allows your child to listen to new words and begin to learn what they mean. Preferred v non-preferred choices are useful to identify if your child can make a preferred choice.
- **Model** language to expose the children to core words and vocabulary, and repeat this consistency and regularly
- **Use Visuals** – visuals aid understanding and re-enforce what you are saying (see more information below)
- **Reduce your questions** – comment rather than asking questions

Simple everyday routines help children begin to anticipate and learn the familiar words or phrases. They begin to respond to the words and phrases and may attempt to use the words, body movements, looking to start the routine with you. You can tune into their responses and model what you think the message is e.g. **‘Coat on’** (or **‘shoes on’**) – say this when getting ready to go out.

Click the link below for more information about creating a Communication Friendly Environment

<https://view.pagetiger.com/communication-friendly-environment/updatedCommunicationFriendlySchoolsupdatedversion.pdf>



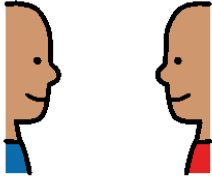
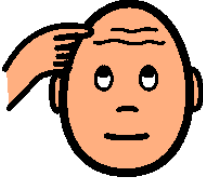
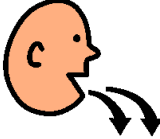

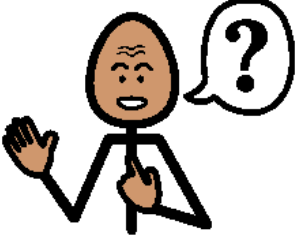
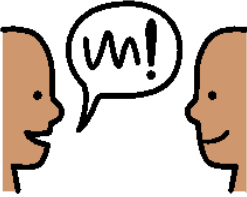




Strategies for Develop Understanding

- Understanding is closely linked to attention, listening and play.
- Understanding is important for learning- everything is taught through language.
- Visuals play a crucial role in helping understanding.

Pictures, symbols, Makaton, gestures can be used to help your child understand what you are saying. Spoken language 'disappears' as soon as you finish speaking, but Visuals 'remain' for the children to look at/refer to.

use visuals consistently 	Say less.. one piece of information at a time <div style="font-size: 48pt; text-align: center;">1</div>	Don't rush <p style="text-align: center;">pause</p> 
Get .. <p style="text-align: center;">face to face</p> 	Give.. <p style="text-align: center;">processing time</p> 	Repeat.. <p style="text-align: center;">please repeat</p> 
Say the child's name first to gain attention 	Check that they have understood 	Stress important words 

The following link is a video recorded by the SLTs giving you more information about understanding of language. <https://youtu.be/gp7np4Jin40>

Expressive Communication

How we communicate - We all communicate in different ways – verbally and non-verbally through our words, our body language and our facial expressions. We communicate for a wide range of reasons too!



As Speech and Language Therapists we advocate for accepting all forms of communication. Click the link to see our One Page Communication Passport that captures more information about our children who are not verbal communicators.

A **Total Communication** approach involves finding the best method (or combination of methods) of communication for each individual. It's possible to communicate through a variety of methods including verbal language, gesture, body language or text messages. Some children will use other communication systems such as communication books, communication boards, high tech voice output devices or Makaton. In a communication friendly environment, all forms of communication are accepted and celebrated.

[MyOne-PageProfile.pdf](#)

Below are some links to videos for further information and practical ways you can implement strategies to further develop communication skills for the children in your class.

Early Communication – <https://youtu.be/LlxCPgXUgd4>

Engagement and Interaction – <https://youtu.be/sNk1Skh2A0Q>

Communication through Play - <https://youtu.be/ZRIm7j4ky58>



Visuals included in your 'off to a good start' pack include -

- First/then boards
- Countdown strips
- Lanyard symbols
- Classroom symbols for schedules or first/then boards

First/Then Board -

A first and then board can help a child understand what is happening next as well as help them feel prepared and in control. You can use the visual provided to show the child what the next 30 mins might look like for them. For example, *'first snack then outside play'* – we show them the visuals so they know that after snack, they will be going outside to play.

First	Then

We have included several common symbols that you will likely use regularly in your classroom. If there are any symbols not included, please contact the Speech and Language Therapy team.



Countdown Strip – a countdown strip is a visual that can be used to help with transitions, moving from one task to the next. Rather than an activity ending abruptly this will let the child know it is coming to an end soon and to get prepared for this to finish.

Lanyards – Symbols can be added to lanyards to ensure you always have access to relevant symbols on hand to support with transitions and a child's understanding of what is happening.

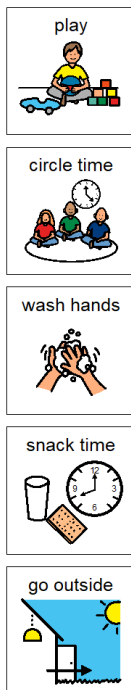




Schedules –

A visual schedule is used in the classroom to give the child information about what is happening, the sequence of events, what changes may be occurring or when it is time to stop an activity and move onto another. This can give the child predictable routines and help manage transition. The schedule can be their full school's day, or part day

while working up to a full day schedule. It is best to prepare the schedule in preparation for the child coming into the class. Children may benefit from prompts to check their schedule; this can be spoken 'check schedule' or using a receiver card that once the child receives this, they know to go check their schedule.

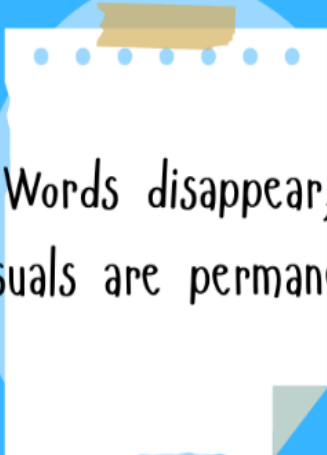


Something's Wrong Board -

A something's wrong board is an additional useful symbol-based tool that children can use to tell you when something is wrong. This visual aid should help you find out more information about why the child might be upset and also help you to know what to do to make them feel better.

Let us know if you would like any more guidance/advice on how to use these visuals in your classroom. There is also lots more information on the AHP Page tiger (online resource).

REASONS TO USE VISUALS



Words disappear,
visuals are permanent



Benefit everyone



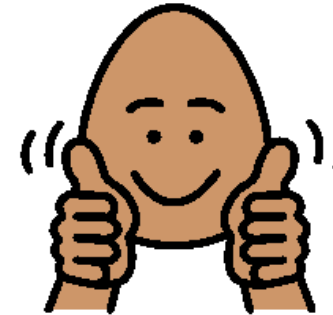
not available



help



good



finished



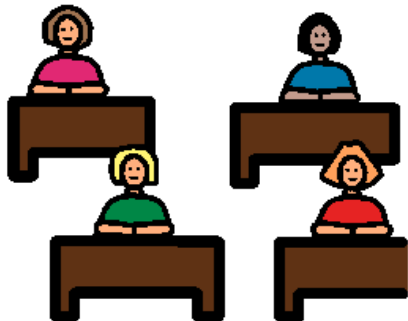
toilet



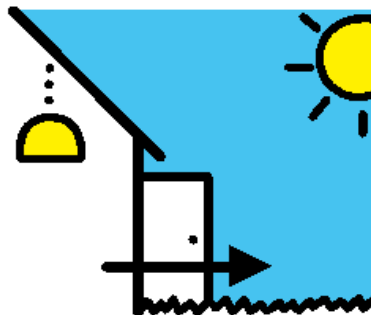
stop



classroom



outside



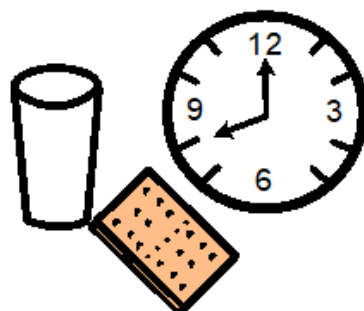
walk



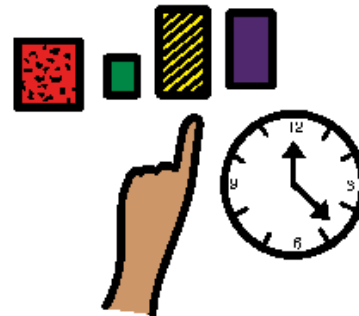
circle time



snack time



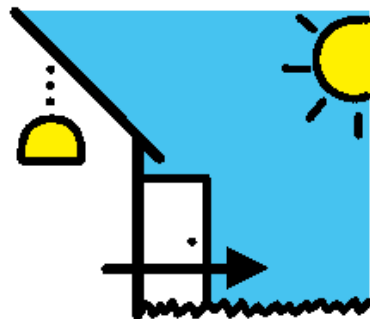
choice time



toilet



go outside



work



work tray



group



walk



art



cooking



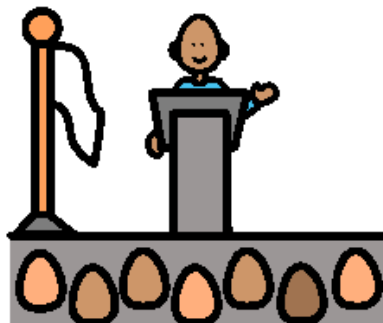
park



lunchtime



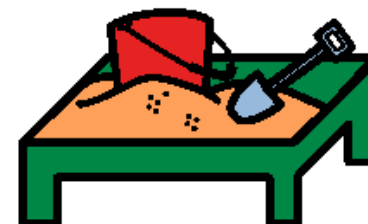
assembly



water play



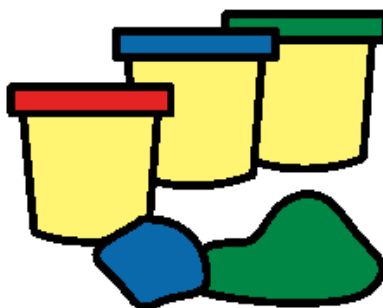
sand table



play



play dough



music



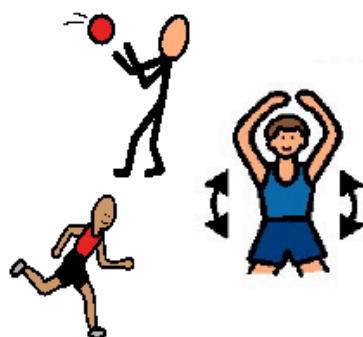
relax



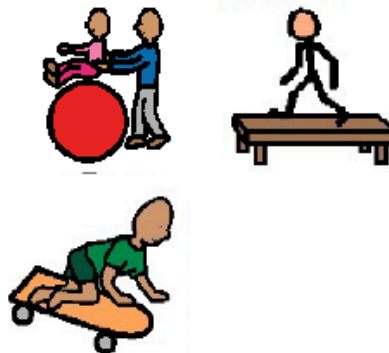
white board



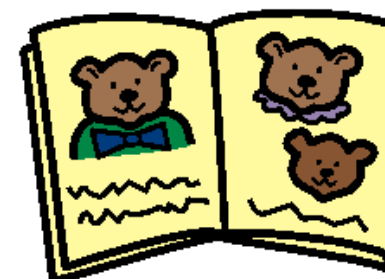
PE



Sensory circuit

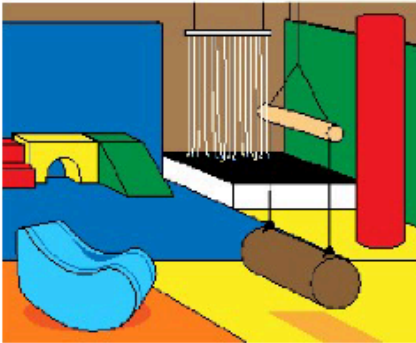


book





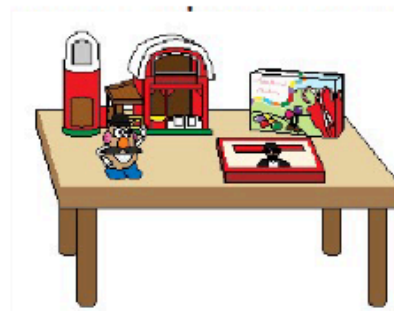
engine room



tacpac



table top activities



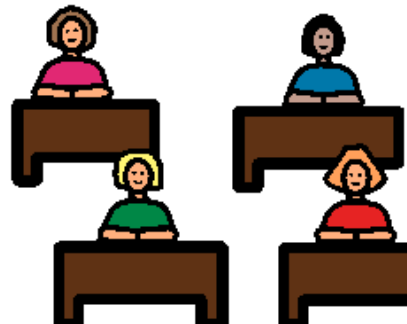
wash hands



home



classroom



sad



something
hurts



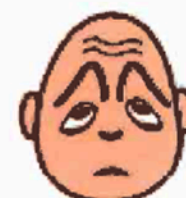
something's
changed



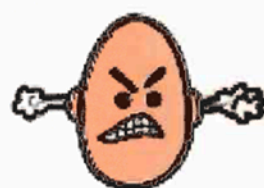
don't want to



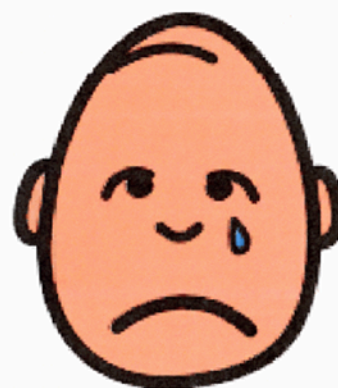
tired



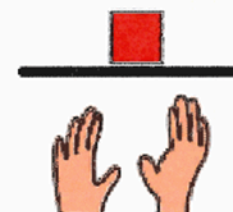
mad



Something's wrong



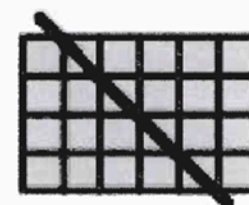
want something



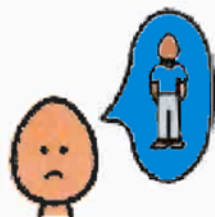
I don't understand



not on this board



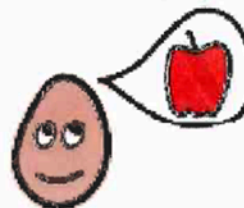
miss someone



too noisy



hungry

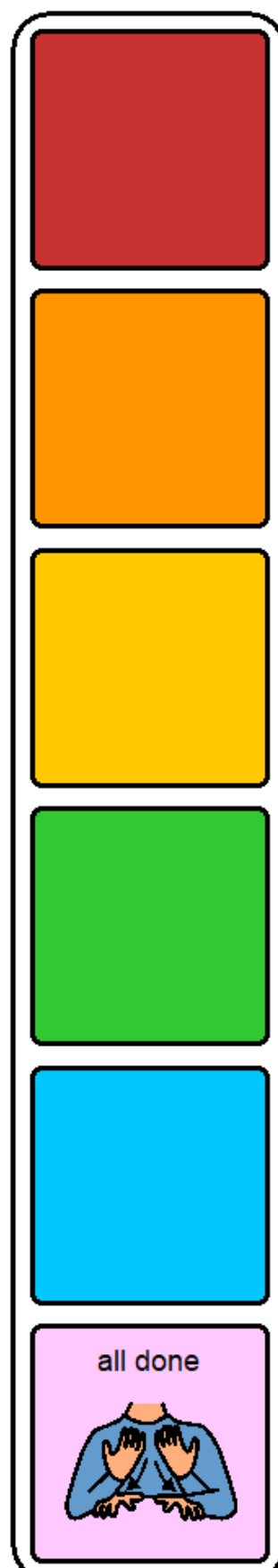
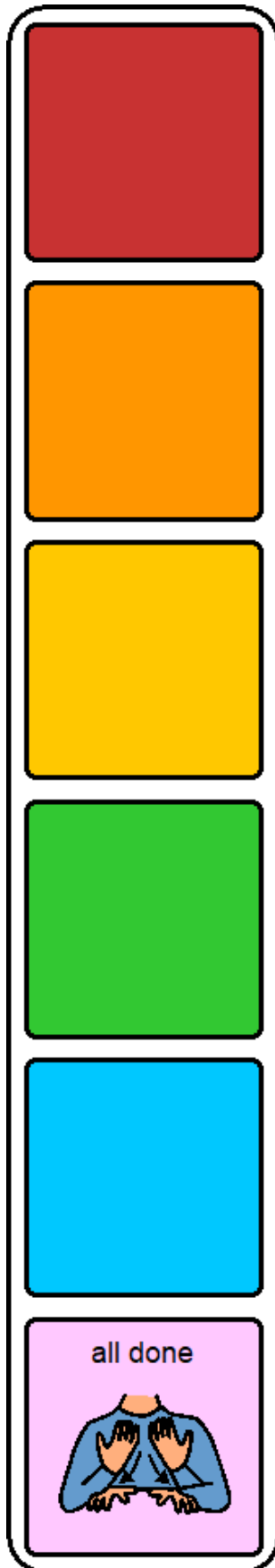


thirsty



I don't know





First	Then

Notes

