The Communication Trust
Every child understood

THE COMMUNICATION COMMITMENT

THE HANDBOOK:
Your guide to making your Commitment

The Communication Commitment is a simple way to develop a whole-school approach to communication that is tailored to the needs of your school. Developed by The Communication Trust in partnership with schools, the Commitment will help you make communication part of your school's policy and practice in order to get the best outcomes for your pupils.

www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/commitment

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Schools which 'turn the dial' on language and communication are able to turn the dial on a number of key school improvement priorities, from raising attainment to narrowing the gap and improving behaviour.

Jean Gross – the former Children's Communication Champion

Communication skills are well known as an area of weakness among many young people.

CBI Report Embedding Employability in Work Experience

Talk is the aspect of teaching which has arguably the greatest influence on learning.

Cambridge Primary Review

Spoken language is central to learning, culture and life.

Cambridge Primary Review

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The Communication Commitment is sponsored by Pearson.

INTRODUCTION

What is The Communication Commitment?

The Communication Commitment is a simple way to develop a whole-school or faculty approach to communication that is tailored to the needs of your school.

What are we asking you to do?

- We're asking you to commit to five simple but effective actions to improve your whole school approach to communication.

- We'll help you create a personalised Action Plan that you will be able to print and share with your colleagues, pupils and wider school community.

- We'll provide lots of free resources and guidance that will help you achieve these actions and you'll also have the chance to share ideas with like-minded schools across England.

Why should you make the Commitment?

- Because communication drives learning and attainment and is embedded in a number of key education policies, including the Ofsted Framework.

- Because strong language skills and communication skills are linked to better outcomes for children and young people in school and beyond.

- Because understanding more about typical language development and communication across all phases will help you to better identify and support pupils with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) - the most prevalent special educational need (SEN) identified by primary schools. This is particularly important in light of the SEND Reforms due to be implemented in September 2014.

- Because your school will be part of the national initiative and you will get support from experts and a good chance to share practice.

WHAT IS THE COMMUNICATION COMMITMENT?

Overview

Of all the skills we develop at school, the ability to communicate effectively is the one that has the most profound and potentially positive impact on our lives. Communication is at the core of everything we do: at home, in work, at school and socially. Strong language skills and good communication are key to whole-school improvement, progression and attainment and beyond school into higher education and the workplace.

Schools have told us that although they know that communication is important, they need a clear way to navigate their way through the information available so they can deliver the best results.

The Communication Commitment is here to help: it's your first step to enabling all the pupils in your school to communicate to the very best of their ability.

The Communication Commitment is a simple approach. It starts from wherever you are now and gives you the small steps you need to help you move forward in making communication a real part of your school's policy and practice, in the way that works best for your school and your pupils. In secondary school, this may meant taking a faculty or phased approach. You will develop your own individual Action Plan that works for your school and your pupils.

And the Commitment will help you plan how to support your pupils with speech, language and communcation needs (SLCN) in light of the SEND Reforms due to be implemented in 2014.

You can undertake the Commitment via our website, www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/commitment, which will take you through each step of the process. This Handbook gives the same information but in a way you can easily print off and share with colleagues.

By addressing communication in your school, academy or federation, you'll be supporting the vital links between language, literacy and learning across the curriculum. This will help drive forward attainment and wider educational outcomes. A greater focus on communication will also enable you to identify pupils who are struggling as soon as possible and provide them with the support they need.

WHAT IS THE COMMUNICATION COMMITMENT?

Who is behind the Commitment?

The Communication Trust is a coalition of nearly 50 voluntary and community organisations with expertise in speech, language and communication. We harness our collective expertise to support the children's workforce and commissioners to support the development of children's communication skills. You can find out more about our work at www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

The Communication Trust is committed to working with practitioners to ensure that all of its resources are as useful and effective as they can be. The Communication Commitment has therefore been developed in partnership with the member organisations of our Communication Consortium. We have also worked closely with a review group of primary and secondary schools and educational experts who have kindly advised on the development of the approach and the detail of the site.

This Commitment is sponsored by Pearson Assessment and supported by the Department for Education. Pearson Assessment is the leading provider of speech and language assessments for children and adults. Their portfolio features a range of reliable, standardised assessments that meet the needs of today's professionals.

PEARSON

Since the launch of the national year of communication, we have been proud supporters of the work carried out by professionals and The Communication Trust to support children with speech, language and communication needs. We are sponsoring the Communication Commitment website as part of our ongoing support for this work, and hope that it will encourage even more schools to put SLCN at the heart of their teaching and learning.

Pearson Assessment

WHAT IS THE COMMUNICATION COMMITMENT?

What's in the Communication Commitment?

The Communication Commitment is divided into five areas, to help you address every aspect of communication development across school. It's based on what we know works in primary and secondary from both research and practice. The five areas are:

School leadership

Staff development

Communication–friendly environment

Supporting pupils with SLCN

Engagement with parents, families or employers

Each area has suggested actions – straightforward and achievable – to move your school forward with communication. You'll choose one from each area to create your own Action Plan to take forward and make your Communication Commitment.

Once you've completed these actions, you may want to take it further. You can do this by returning to the suggested actions and choosing five more to work towards, by working directly with our specialist expert partners, through consultancy or training, programmes of work or moving onto full accreditation.

Whether the ideas and activities are new for your school or you already have lots in place, the Communication Commitment can help you get to where you want to be.

WHAT IS THE COMMUNICATION COMMITMENT?

How does it work?

The Communication Commitment has 3 simple steps to help you work out what you need, decide what comes first, create your individual Action Plan, and signpost you to the most suitable and effective resources to help you on your journey.

STEP 1
Planning

STEP 2
Doing &
Reviewing

STEP 3
Taking it
forward

Step 1: planning:

We'll help you to review what you already do and to decide what you're going to prioritise. You'll select one simple action from each of the five areas explained above and generate your school's personal Action Plan.

Step 2: doing and reviewing:

We'll give you the information and resources you might need for each of your actions. You can find ideas and best practice from other schools too. Step 2 will signpost you to lots of free resources annd guidance to support you. When you've completed your five actions, you'll be able to download your Commitment Certificate. We'd love to know how you've got on and to share this with other schools too. We hope you'll be inspired to carry on – you can use Steps 1 and 2 to choose five more actions, or you can choose to move on to Step 3.

Step 3: taking it further:

If you decide you're ready to take your Communication Commitment further, we'll direct you to our expert member organisations who can offer a range of support to help you build on the work you've done through Step 2, providing training and consultancy services as well as some options for full accreditation programmes in both primary and secondary contexts.

WHY MAKE THE COMMUNICATION COMMITMENT?

Five good reasons to start with...

1. **Because communication drives learning and attainment and is embedded in a number of key education policies, including the Ofsted Framework.**

2. **Because strong language and communication skills are linked to better outcomes for children and young people, in school and beyond.**

3. **Because understanding more about typical language development and communication across all phases will help you to better identify and support pupils with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).**

4. **Because your school will be part of a national initiative and you will get support from experts and a chance to share good practice.**

5. **Because other schools have found the Communication Commitment a useful way to drive whole-school improvement.**

Because communication drives learning and attainment

The quality of spoken dialogue in primary classrooms can significantly improve children's educational attainment, from increasing SAT scores in Maths and Science, to improving reading comprehension, writing and reasoning skills.[1]

In Ofsted's Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools, April 2013, speaking and listening was cited as a key factor in overall literacy attainment in secondary schools.

'Communication skills' are now part of the Ofsted inspection framework which evaluates how well pupils develop their communication skills, how well they apply them across the curriculum and how well teachers develop children's communication skills. There is also a clear focus on narrowing the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEN.

The current Teacher Standards require teachers to 'demonstrate an understanding of and take responsibility for promoting high standards of articulacy', whatever subject they teach.

WHY MAKE THE COMMUNICATION COMMITMENT?

Because strong language and communication skills are linked to better outcomes for children and young people, in school and beyond

Good spoken language and communication skills are strong predictors of reading, writing and later academic success.[2]

For children who experience social deprivation, strong early spoken language has been shown to be the best indicator of those who can 'buck the trend' and escape poverty in adult life with better long-term employment prospects.[3]

The evidence of impacts on outcomes for children who don't have strong language skills is equally clear. For example in 2011, only 12.9% of pupils with SLCN[4]. achieved 5 or more A*-C GCSEs or equivalent compared to 69.5% of pupils who don't have special educational needs. Research consistently shows that upwards of 60% of young people who offend have SLCN[5], which have often gone undetected.

We have based the Communication Commitment on up to date academic evidence, across all educational phases including the Better Communication Research Programme[6], so our actions are both practical and grounded in current evidence, with outcomes for children and young people our priority.

Because understanding more about typical language development and communication across all phases will help you to better identify and support children with SLCN

Many children are not developing language and communication skills as expected: at the end of the Foundation Stage, more than a third of children are not yet working securely in communication, language and literacy, rising to more than 40% in areas of social disadvantage.[7] These difficulties can prevail through primary, into secondary and beyond.

Although SLCN are common, many children and young people's needs are missed; this can happen even in highly committed teams who don't have easy access to information on the ages and stages of typical language development.[8]

Understanding language development is not a consistently strong focus within initial teacher training and a recent Ofsted report recommended that training should ensure that all primary trainees understand the development of language skills from the early years to year 6.[9]

Despite prevalence figures of at least 5%, fewer than 1% of pupils with SLCN are being entered for GCSEs.

WHY MAKE THE COMMUNICATION COMMITMENT?

Because your school will be part of a national initiative and you will get support from experts and a chance to share good practice

The Communication Commitment has been developed as a partnership between national experts and busy school professionals like you, who know how things work on the ground.

The Commitment is designed to be a user-friendly resource to support you on your journey to improving communication and is full of useful tips, toolkits and resources.

The Commitment takes a systematic and holistic approach to considering communication, but is also flexible to suit the needs of individual schools. Secondary schools can work through faculties and phases.

By telling us what has worked well in your school, you will be helping us to build the resource for other schools to start their journey too.

BEFORE YOU START...

What the Communication Commitment will require from your school

Although the Communication Commitment is designed to be straightforward for schools, it will still require some time and work in order for you to choose and undertake your actions.

This will depend on where you start, what you've already done and what you have in place. Some schools have been able to implement their five actions from their initial plan relatively quickly; others are prioritising specific faculties or departments, whilst others are planning to work with colleagues in other schools to implement the actions over a school year. It all depends on which is the most appropriate path for your school.

There will definitely be some quick wins and there may well be actions that you're already doing in school. You may choose five actions that you know you'll be able to achieve very easily, but after completing those you might want to go back and try others that will be more of a challenge.

It will also depend how far you want to go: the first two steps of the Commitment will help you start on your journey and Step 3 includes more comprehensive advice and support available through our expert Consortium.

Whatever path you take, to get the most from your Communication Commitment, you will need:

- **The understanding and agreement of the school leadership team**

- **Interest and enthusiasm from the staff team**

- **A contact person who will drive forward the work towards the Action Plan**

BEFORE YOU START...

Working out what you're doing already

Before you decide on your Action Plan, it's important to understand what you already do well, and what areas you might need to develop.

We have produced the Commitment Review Checklist, a checklist which you may want to use at the start of the process. It will help you to find out where you're at and take you through some principles of reviewing your current work around communication. You can access this in the Step 1 section of the Communication Commitment website.

In addition, we will signpost you to several more detailed audits that are available and that you might want to undertake in school either now or further along the process.

Many of the approaches that we refer you to in Step 3 will also have some form of audit. This is often supported by specialist staff who can really help you in fully analysing current good practice, helping you build towards full accreditation, or other options dependent on your school and local community.

STARTING ON YOUR COMMUNICATION COMMITMENT JOURNEY

Before you begin on your journey, you need a map! This is what you'll find on the Communication Commitment website – a step by step guide on how you can commit to communication in your school, www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/commitment.

Using the Communication Commitment site

From the home page you'll be able to find out more about the Commitment, how it works and why you should get involved. You'll also be able to register and sign in to get more information about the different steps.

Once registered, you will be able to look over all three steps of the Commitment to get an overview of the full process and help decide what you want to work towards ultimately. You'll be guided to choose five actions that best suit your school and the needs of your pupils. These will form your personalised Action Plan and you'll also find lots of resources and information to help complete the Plan.

Once the Action Plan is completed, you will be able to download an official Communication Commitment certificate and move on to Step 3 to find out more about the training, consultancy and accreditation services on offer from our Consortium.

The site will also allow you to share your experiences and get in touch with other schools using the Your Stories function. We're looking forward to hearing from you!

UNDERTAKING THE THREE STEPS

Step 1: planning

The planning stage is the crucial first step on your journey. In this step you'll:

• review what you already do

• decide what comes next

• select one of our simple actions from each of the five areas to generate your school's own individualised Action Plan

In this section, you'll find information to help you think about what you already do well in school and what might come next in plans for the future.

You'll also find an overview of the five areas of the Commitment, an explanation as to why each area is important, what outcomes you will achieve in school and then more information on each of the actions in this area. To find out more about the actions you can choose from, please see the information on each area at the end of this handbook.

When you've discussed this information with your colleagues you'll be in a position to select your five actions and make your school's Communication Commitment!

Once you've selected and submitted your five actions, you will be able to download your own personalised Action Plan to display in school which will show how you are committing to communication, who is involved and when you will have achieved your commitment.

You will also be able to download a poster you can put up in school to show pupils, parents and staff members that you are committing to communication.

STEP 1
Planning

UNDERTAKING THE THREE STEPS

STEP 2
Doing & Reviewing

Step 2: doing and reviewing

During this step you'll undertake your actions, drawing on the information and resources provided for you. Here's what you can do:

- Find the free resources, guidance and information on this part of the website that will help you achieve your actions.

- As a staff team, decide what you are going to do and when. Make sure you timetable in when you will check on progress and use your Progress Journal, provided on the website.

- When you have completed them, tick off your actions in your Action Plan. Don't forget to share with us and other schools anything you've done that you are particularly proud of or any lessons you have learnt on the way.

During Step 2, we will support you to undertake and achieve the five actions you have chosen. Each area has guidance and resources that will help you complete your actions. You will also be able to view ideas and best practice from other Communication Commitment schools.

If at this stage you'd like to get more information on some of the paid for resources available through our Consortium, you'll be able to access the Consortium Catalogue.

We also want to know how you're getting on! You can send us a case study from your school, raise a question or offer up an idea that you think other schools will benefit from. The Your Stories section of the Commitment website will help you share your news.

As you go through Step 2, we will encourage you to review, reflect on and record your progress in your Progress Journal. This journal will be useful to track your progress and to provide evidence for Ofsted to show your school's focus on speech, language and communication.

Remember to tick your actions off as you go. At the end of Step 2, once you've completed your five actions and let us know, you'll be able to download your Communication Commitment certificate. This will show what you have achieved as part of your Commitment and your progress can be celebrated in school. Our Celebrating Communication Toolkit will help you with ideas on how to celebrate your achievements in school.

We hope you'll be inspired to carry on. If you're ready for some new challenges, you can use Step 1 and Step 2 to help you choose your next five actions to move your school forward even more. You can also suggest some other actions specific to your school and share them with other schools using the Your Stories function on the site. If you decide your school is ready to invest more in your Commitment you can choose to move on to Step 3 and benefit from specialist support and expertise available through our expert partner organisations.

UNDERTAKING THE THREE STEPS

Step 3: taking it further

If you decide you're ready to take your Commitment further, we'll help you on the way...

– Consider any immediate or medium priorities raised through your work so far

– Go back and choose another five actions

– Find out about the expert member organisations who can offer a range of support to help you build on the work you've done in Step 2, providing training and consultancy services as well as options for full accreditation programmes.

To fully evaluate everything you do in school around communication and to thoroughly embed good practice, you may well need to invest in external specialist input to challenge and support.

This is where The Trust's expert member organisations can help. In Step 3, you'll find a summary of all the specialist organisations and the range of support, consultancy, awards and accreditation services that they can offer. We know each school is unique and the support you need will differ. This step will help you find what will be most useful to you and will signpost you onto the most relevant contacts.

Don't forget to let us and the other schools undertaking the Commitment know how you are doing so that they can learn from your best practice using the Your Stories section of the site.

STEP 3
Taking it forward

READY TO GET GOING? READ ABOUT THE FIVE AREAS OF THE ACTION PLAN...

Over the next few pages you can find out a bit more about each of the areas of the Action Plan that you will commit to at the end of Step 1.

You can read about what you would need to do to achieve each action to help you decide what is most appropriate for your school. This is also available as a separate download so you can share it with staff members across the school.

Each of the tables contains information or guidance that will help you achieve that particular action. If you log onto the Communication Commitment site, you will find hyperlinks to the documents mentioned in this section.

Once logged on please go to Step 2, What Support Is Available and you'll also find extra resources to support each area.

Priority area one: School Leadership

Why is this priority area important?

We all know that leadership influences everything in school. By ensuring your Commitment is driven from the leadership team, we will ensure policy and practice cascade throughout the school and to the wider community.

What is the overall outcome for this area?

Our school leaders are making a commitment to communication.

What are the principles we are trying to achieve?

- Our school leadership team understand that communication is important.
- Our school leadership team know that there are strategies to support communication.
- Our school leadership team is committed to embedding policy and practice within our school that reflects the importance of communication.

The four actions for School Leadership - Choose one of the actions for this area:

Our action (What are we going to do?)	Our aim (Why are we doing it?)	To help you fulfil your commitment
1.1 Appoint Communication Champions on the senior leadership team and governing body.	Our senior leadership team and governors prioritise communication.	• Read the Communication Champion Toolkit (with further information on the role, why it's important, practical examples of what the Champions can do and where you can find further information). • Appoint a member of senior leadership team as Communication Champion. • Appoint a Link Governor as Communication Champion.
1.2 Include actions around communication in the school development plan.	We plan for communication as part of our on-going improvement.	• Read the guidance on putting communication in your development plan. • Identify as a leadership team your communication priorities for your school development plan. • Share your stories and ideas on practical ways to include communication in your school development plan.
1.3 Dedicate a senior leadership team meeting to communication.	Our school has a strategic approach for communication.	• Use the presentation as a basis for discussing communication. • Ask all senior leadership to read A Generation Adrift before the meeting to help them come prepared with ideas around communication. • Identify an action you might want to take forward as a senior leadership team.
1.4 Adopt a strategy for identifying pupils who are struggling with communication.	We are committed to identifying pupils who are struggling with communication.	• Read the guidance on early identification and why it's important. • Read the factsheet on national prevalence levels and compare your own levels of identification. • Read the information on different ways to identify pupils who are struggling with communication. • Develop and agree your school strategy.

Why is this priority area important?

Staff are the greatest resource in any school. We know many teachers don't feel confident in supporting communication, particularly when pupils are struggling. There is evidence from research and practice reporting positive outcomes when teachers are able to weave speaking and listening into their day to day practice. By providing professional development and supporting greater knowledge and development of skills, staff can be supported to enable pupils to communicate to the very best of their ability.

What is the overall outcome for this area?

Our staff are making a commitment to communication.

What are the principles we are trying to achieve?

• Our staff are aware of the importance of speech, language and communication.

• Our staff are building their understanding of speech, language and communication.

• Our staff are developing their practice in supporting speech, language and communication.

The four actions for Workforce Development - Choose one of the actions for this area:

Our action (What are we going to do?)	Our aim (Why are we doing it?)	To help you fulfil your commitment
2.1 Run an all staff briefing on speech, language and communication in school or at a faculty meeting.	We know about communication.	• Share copies of Don't Get Me Wrong as part of the briefing • Find out about any external agencies, such as speech and language therapy services, relevant charities or other organisations who may be willing to come and talk at your meeting. • Show a video as part of the briefing to show what life can be like for young people with SLCN - 'The Way We Talk' or 'One in A Million' - both on The Communication Trust website.
2.2 Identify key members of staff who will undertake professional development activities focussing on communication.	Our staff are more confident in supporting pupils communication.	• Visit the Speech, Language and Communication Framework (SLCF) site, and find out about what it can offer you individually and as a staff team. • Ensure key staff complete their own self-evaluation on the SLCF. • Download the universal and enhanced handbooks on positive practice and plan which professional development activities staff will try.
2.3 Implement a classroom strategy to support communication across school and reflect on it as a staff team.	We are changing our practice around communication as part of our everyday practice.	• Use Elklan's free download on practical activities to support listening and attention and the activity ideas from Commtap. • Organise a planning activity to select strategies to try. Share information and arrange activities for staff to learn about and understand strategies. • Discuss with the whole staff team how strategies might be used, how you'll know if they're useful and how they might be rolled out across school and used in planning.
2.4 Set up a Communication Innovation Bank where staff share activities and ideas they find useful.	We share our good ideas about communication.	• Read the guidance on starting a Communication Innovation Bank. • Set up a 'place' in school for the Bank to share activities and ideas. • Take the best ideas from your Bank and share them with other schools undertaking the Communication Commitment. Choose activities and ideas from other schools to share in your Communication Innovation Bank.

Why is this priority area important?

Creating a communication friendly environment for pupils in our schools encourages the development of good communication skills in all pupils and creates a more inclusive environment for those who struggle. This is best done by the way we talk as adults, through the opportunities we give pupils to communicate and by the physical environment we work within.

What is the overall outcome for this area?

Our school is working at being communication friendly.

What are the principles we are trying to achieve?

• We give each other time to communicate.

• We all have opportunities to communicate in our school.

• We want all our pupils to be able to communicate to the best of their ability.

The four actions for Communication - Friendly schools

Choose one of the actions for this area:

Our action (What are we going to do?)	Our aim (Why are we doing it?)	To help you fulfil your commitment
3.1 Implement the 'think time rule' in classrooms.	We give each other time to talk.	• Read the information on how to use the 'think time rule' and what difference it can make. • Decide when and how you'll try it out. • Try it out and share your findings across your school.
3.2 Introduce a visual support strategy in classrooms (visual timetables, talking frames, symbol support)	Our physical environment supports communication.	• Read guidance on including visual support on the Symbols Inclusion Project (SIP) website. • Choose one or more examples to try in your school. • Share your examples, and what you notice from them, across your school and with other schools undertaking the Communication Commitment.
3.3 Include speaking and listening activities explicitly in lesson plans for example by running *No Pens Day Wednesday* (for primary and secondary).	Speaking and listening are on our teaching and learning agenda.	• Have a staff discussion on the best ways to include speaking and listening in your planning. Have a look at some *No Pens Day Wednesday* materials to give you some ideas. • Trial a way to include speaking and listening in your planning and discuss how well it works. • Use some of the activity ideas from Commtap to think about the sorts of activities your plans could include for the early years, primary classes and secondary classes.
3.4 Run a competition about communication (for our pupils or the most communication friendly classroom. The RCSLT's Voice Box is a good example of this.	We recognise and celebrate our communication friendliness.	• Look at the information about the key features of a communication friendly environment. • Think about planning a whole school competition around communication. Have a look at the Giving Voice Campaigns Voice Box competition and the National Literacy Trust's Write On poetry slam toolkit. • Run your competition and share your successes across school, and with other schools in the Communication Commitment.

Priority area four: Supporting pupils with SLCN

Why is this priority area important?

It can be difficult to spot children and young people's speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and teachers report they are often not too confident in knowing how best to support these pupils. Often we can see poor literacy skills, difficulties with aspects of learning, or even poor behaviour, though it can be poor language that is the foundation of these difficulties.

We know a lot about what works to support SLCN; the new What Works database can help practitioners find the right evidence-based interventions and specialists can advise on the most appropriate strategies. Pupils themselves tell us that what makes a huge difference to them is when the adults around them understand the nature of their difficulties.

What is the overall outcome for this area?

We want to make things better for children who are struggling.

What are the principles we are trying to achieve?

• We're all watching out for children with SLCN.
• We're checking out what we are doing already for pupils with SLCN.
• We're working towards best ways to support pupils with SLCN.

The four actions for supporting pupils with SLCN - Choose one of the actions for this area:

Our action (What are we going to do?)	Our aim (Why are we doing it?)	To help you fulfil your commitment
4.1 Raise awareness of speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) by disseminating factsheets on SLCN to all staff.	We know about SLCN.	• Share copies of Don't Get Me Wrong with your staff team. • Use and share these free downloads from Elklan - Practical activities to support listening and attention, Helpful hints for unclear speech, Practical strategies to help children understand describing words. • Watch The Way We Talk video on The Communication Trust website that shows what life can be like for young people with SLCN. • Discuss with the whole staff team about what simple changes could be made outside of the classroom to support pupils with SLCN in their day to day school lives
4.2 Use identification guidance, tools and checklists in our classrooms.	We watch out for pupils with SLCN.	• Share and circulate the Universally Speaking publications with your staff. • Display the milestone posters (primary / secondary) in the staff room or workrooms. • Read the guidance on early identification and why it's important.
4.3 Collate the interventions across school or through the SEN department that we are usingto support pupils with speech, language and communication needs.	We capture what we do and what else we might want to do	• Arrange a forum to discuss the interventions you are using to support children with SLCN. • Complete a matrix showing what interventions are being used, how and why. Look them up on the What Works database. • Discuss these at a staff meeting and identify areas where you may want further information / support.
4.4 Read guidance on commissioning specialist speech and language support and discuss your actions as a leadership team.	We recognise the role of speech and language therapy support.	• Read the What Works commissioning guidance and the report on schools as commissioners by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists. • Discuss and agree your school's approach to commissioning speech and language therapy support.

Priority area five: Engagement with parents, families and employers

Why is this priority area important?

We know from research how important parental engagement is for children and young people's school life. Schools are often the centre of the community, with local employers as key partners. Families and employers often value good communication skills as being important for the prospects for children and young people whilst in school and beyond. To ensure that we are addressing communication effectively for our pupils, we need to address it together in order to get the best results.

What is the overall outcome for this area?

We're telling our community about communication.

What are the principles we are trying to achieve?

- Our community knows communication is important to us.
- We're asking our community to get involved.
- We're finding out what our community thinks.

The four actions for engagement with parents, families and employers

Choose one of the actions for this area:

Our action (What are we going to do?)	Our aim (Why are we doing it?)	To help you fulfil your commitment
5.1 Share information on communication with parents.	We talk about talk.	• Put some information in your newsletter and signpost to the Talking Point parents section • Discuss and choose the channels which work best for sharing information with your families, parents and carers. • Download and order free resources from The Communication Trust and share with parents. • Sign up to The Communication Trust newsletter to get the latest information on communication and the work of our members to share with your wider community.
5.2 Invite employers and FE and HE providers into school to discuss communication	We know what our community thinks about the importance of communication.	• Discuss as a staff team the most important things that you need to know from your community about communication. • Read the guidance on working with employers around communication skills. • Discuss what the best ways are to ask your parents or local employers about communication. • Discuss your findings with them and across the school.
5.3 Focus on interview skills by inviting people from the community into your school to ask them about communication skills	We involve our community in thinking about communication.	• Use the BT Talk Gym online resource to help pupils understand how important their communication skills are for interview skills and employability. • Build in time for pupils to prepare and practise. • Download the template for inviting parents, grandparents or other community members to be interviewed. • Download the template for inviting employers into school to be interviewed by pupils. Share the findings from your interviews locally and with other Communication Commitment schools.
5.4 Include communication as a topic at parent's evenings and in transition meetings for new parents.	Communication is part of our discussions with parents.	• Use the guidance on talking to parents about talk. • Share information with your parents, carers and families about how and why you're including a focus on communication. Get feedback from your families. • Share your experiences with other schools undertaking the Communication Commitment.

PASS IT ON!

We know how important it is to take the whole school with you on The Communication Commitment journey - so we want to help support you to spread the word about what you are doing, with materials to let pupils and parents know.

We also want as many children and young people as possible to be supported to develop their communication skills. So, we need as many schools as possible to commit to communication like you. We know how busy teachers are and how important the recommendation of a trusted fellow professional is. By telling other schools and school staff about your experience you can help us get even more schools to commit to communication.

Here are some suggestions for ways you can help spread the word:

Around school:

- Display copies of your Action Plan poster around the school to remind everyone you're committing to communication.

- Make your own or get the pupils to design posters or leaflets in art or design technology lessons to place around the school.

- See if every class can think of ways they can get involved in the Commitment.

- Identify 'budding photographers' in your school who can take pictures of people in your school making their Commitment and then share these pictures on a notice board that everyone can see.

- Include in media lessons, developing video footage of talking activities.

To parents:

- Send information home to each family to explain what you're doing and why.
- Include an article in your newsletter.
- Share information on your school website.
- Have information available for parents and carers who want to find out more.

PASS IT ON!

To other local schools

- Share information or this Handbook with teachers and head teachers at meetings for schools in your area.

- If you have a forum where you speak to other teachers such as cluster group meetings, websites or a LinkedIn profile, share information or the website link there.

- Contact other schools you're in touch with and send them an e-mail with the link to the website and explain how you're involved in the Commitment.

- Get the pupils to record a podcast or start writing a blog which can be shared with other schools.

To other Commitment schools

- Share what you're doing with other schools taking the Commitment using the Your Stories page on our website. Other schools who are taking part in the Commitment will be able to view these and also share their ideas.

- Don't forget to let us know what you're doing as well! Please e-mail enquiries@thecommunicationtrust.org.uk or go to Your Stories to upload your story about what you're going to be doing or what you've completed already. Then we can share this information with other schools to give them ideas and inspiration.

MORE INFORMATION

To start your Commitment, if you haven't already, please go to: www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/commitment and register today to start your journey.

For more information about The Communication Trust please visit our website at www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

For more information about our Consortium members please visit the Our Partners page of our website at www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/partners

If you have any questions which haven't been answered in the Handbook please contact us on enquiries@thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

The Communication Trust is extremely grateful to everyone who has been involved in the development of the Communication Commitment. We are also keen to hear your feedback as you go through the process. Please share your story using the Your Stories section of the website or you can email us directly on enquiries@thecommunicationtrust.org.uk.

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The Communication Trust
Every child understood

The Communication Trust is a coalition of nearly 50 voluntary and community organisations with expertise in speech, language and communication. We harness our collective expertise to support the children's workforce and commissioners to support all children and young people's communication skills, particularly those with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

We do this by raising awareness, providing information and workforce development opportunities, influencing policy, promoting best practice among the children's workforce and commissioning work from our members.

The Trust was founded in 2007 by children's charities Afasic and I CAN together with BT and the Council for Disabled Children.

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