THE TOM TOM WAY

FOUR PILLARS SCHOOL EVALUATION TOOLKIT

Plan • Listen • Observe • Reflect • Improve

BRIAN'S

WAVES

CIRCLES

BRIDGES

PRIMARY / SECONDARY / SEND / SPECIALIST SETTINGS

By Counsellor Tomass J. Wood

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Start here

QUICK START

A practical manual for evaluating whether the Four Pillars are usable, inclusive and worthwhile in your own school.

What this toolkit is

A structured set of planning pages, observation tools, feedback forms and reporting templates. It can support a small, ethically run school pilot or a review of an existing trial.

What this toolkit is not

It is not a diagnostic tool, a psychological measure, a safeguarding substitute or evidence that the Four Pillars are an independently validated intervention.

The five actions

- 1. Appoint a named school lead and agree a modest, specific evaluation question.
- 2. Check accessibility, pupil choice, information governance and safeguards before collecting anything.
- 3. Record baseline practice and pupil-relevant outcomes, not labels or assumptions.
- 4. Pilot consistently for six weeks, using the same observation definitions.
- 5. Review positive, negative and mixed findings; adapt, pause or stop where appropriate.

Use the pages you need

Pages include reusable originals. Photocopy blank forms only for authorised school use. Store any completed pupil records securely in approved school systems; do not return identifiable completed forms to Tom Tom Universe.

Contents & working map

NAVIGATION

Part A | Evaluation foundations

- Purpose, theory of change and four-pillar indicators
- Research boundaries and evaluation design
- Safeguarding, data protection and governance
- Inclusion, accessible communication and six-week pilot plan

Part B | School-ready instruments

- Planning and baseline templates; implementation and training checks
- Classroom observation, opportunities log and Wave check-in review
- Primary, secondary and picture-supported pupil feedback
- Family and staff surveys; environment audit and fidelity checklist
- Four Pillars focus sheets, accessibility profile and transition reviews

Part C | Analysis and improvement

- Dashboard, worked calculations and hypothetical examples
- Leadership report, decision meeting, 90-day improvement plan
- Glossary, references and final quality checklist

Suggested pack structure

School copy: planning, blank instruments and reporting. Individual pupil copy: only the forms genuinely needed to support and evaluate that pupil. Public summary: aggregate information only.

01 What are we evaluating?

PART A / FOUNDATIONS

The Four Pillars provide a child-friendly language for understanding individual experiences and adjusting adult responses. An evaluation should ask whether staff and pupils find that language useful and whether changes to teaching or support are practical and acceptable.

BRIAN'S / identity | WAVES / regulation | CIRCLES / security | BRIDGES / connection

Brian's

Are pupils offered meaningful ways to express identity, interests, thoughts and choices?

Waves

Can pupils communicate support needs? Do staff respond appropriately to distress or sensory overload?

Circles

Are routines, changes and comfort supports planned with the pupil rather than imposed?

Bridges

Are preferred communication methods, relationships and special interests used to widen participation?

What success might look like

- More pupils report feeling listened to or able to request support.
- More opportunities are made accessible through pupil-chosen supports.
- Staff respond consistently to communication, refusal and changes in regulation.
- Children participate in learning in ways meaningful to them, without being forced to mask distress.

02 A testable theory of change

PART A / FOUNDATIONS

A working hypothesis for a school pilot. It needs testing, not assuming.

Inputs	Activities	Short-term signals
Staff training; time; symbols; leadership support	Model Four Pillars language; offer choices and visual supports	Staff confidence; pupil access; use of supports
Pupil and family knowledge of preferences	Co-produce a pupil Passport and personal Wave/Circle plan	More accurate support information and choices
Routine reflection time	Review classroom barriers and Bridges to participation	Improved access and acceptable learning experiences

Possible outcomes, not automatic consequences

- Stronger practical communication of needs and preferences.
- Less avoidable distress during predictable school situations.
- Improved experience of transitions and classroom belonging.
- Better perceived consistency between staff and across settings.

Competing explanations matter

Any apparent change may reflect staffing, timetable, maturation, other supports, novelty or measurement bias. A short pilot can inform local improvement but cannot establish causal impact.

03 Indicator bank

PART A / FOUNDATIONS

Choose just two or three indicators that fit your setting. Avoid measuring everything.

Pillar	Pupil-centred indicator	Staff practice indicator
Brian's	Pupil can show a preference, interest or feeling using a chosen mode.	Staff offers a choice and accepts a response or refusal.
Waves	Pupil can signal a need for break, space, help or sensory adjustment.	Staff notices cues, offers preferred supports and does not demand disclosure.
Circles	Pupil can identify a reliable comfort, routine or transition support.	Staff makes adjustments available and gives notice of change.
Bridges	Pupil can access a chosen social or learning connection.	Staff adapts interactions and follows pupil communication preferences.

Primary measurements: quality, access, participation

- Record opportunities offered and whether they were accessible.
- Record whether agreed staff actions actually occurred.
- Record pupil feedback separately from adult interpretation.
- Consider potential harms: embarrassment, over-monitoring, public ratings or pressure to comply.

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04 Design a credible small pilot

PART A / FOUNDATIONS

Choose a manageable evaluation question

Example: “Over six weeks, does adding a private choice-based Wave check-in and a personalised support plan make it easier for pupils to communicate support needs?”

Recommended mixed-method design

- Before: a short baseline week of ordinary practice (not a test of the child).
- During: weekly implementation notes, 1–2 brief observations and optional pupil feedback.
- After: repeat equivalent questions and contexts; ask what should change.
- Interpretation: combine counts with lived experiences and document non-participation and adverse effects.

Select one setting before expanding

- [ ] One tutor group
- [ ] One SEND resource base
- [ ] One classroom
- [ ] One transition routine
- [ ] One small voluntary pupil cohort
- [ ] One visual communication trial

Strength of conclusions

Use wording such as “staff reported”, “the school observed” or “in this pilot”. Do not claim “the approach reduces autism symptoms”, “proves improved wellbeing” or “works for all children”.

05 Ethical and inclusive ground rules

PART A / FOUNDATIONS

Pupil voice and agency. Ask whether pupils wish to take part in feedback. Offer an easy way to decline, stop or change their mind. Do not make support conditional on completing evaluation forms.

No forced emotional disclosure. Children may communicate privately, use AAC, point or decline. A pupil is not required to label a feeling or talk about personal experiences.

Age-respectful materials. Secondary pupils can use neutral language such as “stress”, “load” or “support needs”; do not require cartoon visuals.

Behaviour is communication, not a score. Do not mark down children for stimming, limited eye contact, silence, distress or non-compliance. Explore context and accessibility.

Safeguarding first. If concerns arise, follow the school policy and designated safeguarding lead process. Do not record safeguarding details in this evaluation toolkit.

A non-negotiable

Never use a public name-and-feelings display to infer clinical wellbeing or discipline a pupil. Private, voluntary check-ins are safer for sensitive information.

06 Privacy & information governance

PART A / FOUNDATIONS

Schools decide the lawful basis and data controls

- Identify the school as controller for its own evaluation records and consult its DPO or information governance lead.
- Provide clear, accessible information to pupils and families. Seek relevant consent/assent for optional participation where appropriate, but do not assume consent is necessarily the UK GDPR lawful basis.
- Choose minimum necessary data; prefer anonymous or coded summaries wherever practical.
- Keep the re-identification key separately, with role-based access, an agreed retention period and secure disposal.
- Do not put diagnoses, medical details or incidents in shared dashboards. Record safeguarding issues in approved safeguarding systems.
- Check any photography, external transfers, cloud storage or publication separately before use.

Local sign-off checklist

- [ ] DSL / safeguarding check
- [ ] DPO / privacy review
- [ ] SENDCo / inclusion review
- [ ] SLT sponsor approval
- [ ] Accessible family information
- [ ] Secure location agreed

Information-sharing exception

Immediate safeguarding action follows statutory guidance and the school policy. Data protection should not be used as a reason to delay necessary safeguarding information-sharing.

07 People, roles & decisions

PART A / FOUNDATIONS

Role	Responsibility
Senior sponsor	Agree aims, time, resources, decision criteria and response to concerns.
Evaluation lead	Coordinate baseline, coding, collection quality and interpretation.
SENDCo / inclusion lead	Check individual adjustments, access, transitions and EHCP alignment.
Teachers / support staff	Apply agreed supports and log implementation briefly, factually.
Pupil / young person	Choose communication route, say what helps and decline feedback.
Family / carers	Offer contextual information only where appropriate and wanted.
DSL / DPO	Support safeguarding and information governance boundaries.

Decisions to agree before launch

Evaluation lead / deputy / responsible senior leader:

Specific stop / pause escalation route:

08 Six-week school pilot

PART A / DELIVERY

Week	School action	Evidence to gather
0 | Prepare	Agree purpose, access arrangements, privacy and baseline definitions.	Readiness checklist; survey baseline; indicator plan
1 | Listen	Introduce Four Pillars with no pressure to disclose.	Accessible pupil preferences; staff reflection
2 | Brian's	Offer identity, choice and communication activities.	Opportunity log; short pupil feedback
3 | Waves	Trial private check-ins and pupil-chosen regulation supports.	Use and accessibility of supports
4 | Circles	Improve routines, transitions and predictability.	Transition observation; staff implementation
5 | Bridges	Trial communication and participation adjustments.	Participation opportunities and pupil voice
6 | Review	Repeat comparable feedback; decide what to retain or change.	Follow-up; mini-dashboard; leadership summary

A flexible sequence

The school may introduce Pillars in another order or select just one. Adaptations must reflect pupils' priorities and existing provision, not an arbitrary timetable.

09 Pilot readiness checklist

PRINTABLE / SCHOOL LEAD

- [ ] Purpose is written clearly
- [ ] Existing practice mapped
- [ ] Accessible modes agreed
- [ ] Indicators and definitions set
- [ ] Support remains available regardless
- [ ] Privacy/retention agreed
- [ ] Pupil group and setting identified
- [ ] Pupil choice/opt-out explained
- [ ] No intrusive disclosure required
- [ ] Baseline dates fixed
- [ ] Safeguarding lead consulted
- [ ] Review date and owner named

School / pilot setting:

Evaluation question:

Pilot lead / senior sponsor:

Important risks and planned mitigations:

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10 Baseline & target planner

PRINTABLE / SCHOOL LEAD

Setting / group code:

Baseline period / follow-up period:

Selected pupil-centred outcome (one concrete behaviour or accessible experience):

Opportunity definition (when could it occur?):

Agreed staff action / accessible adjustment:

What counts as evidence? (observation + pupil perspective):

Other factors likely to influence change:

Target: describe a realistic improvement in provision or access rather than a fixed emotional score.

11 Consistent rating anchors

PRINTABLE / STAFF REFERENCE

Rate provision and access, not how “typical” a pupil looks

Code	Meaning	Evidence example
N/O	No genuine opportunity or not observed.	Support was irrelevant that day; pupil was absent.
0	Accessible offer was not made when needed.	Visual choice agreed but not offered.
1	Offer made inconsistently or with a barrier.	Choice offered verbally only; pupil usually uses pictures.
2	Agreed accessible offer made in that context.	Visual choice accessible; refusal respected.
3	Agreed offer made consistently across sampled contexts.	Choice accessible in lesson and transition, pupil preference used.

Interpretation rules

- N/O is missing opportunity information, not a failure.
- Include a short note about what staff actually did and what the pupil communicated.
- Do not average codes across unrelated pupils without accounting for context and opportunity.
- Use counts and descriptive patterns first; these codes are local audit anchors, not a validated scale.

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12 Classroom observation record

PHOTOCOPY / PRINTABLE

Date / time / observer / setting code:

Pupil code (only if necessary):

Context, activity and communication mode:

Choose the most relevant Pillar

- [ ] Brian's: preference/identity
- [ ] Waves: support communication
- [ ] Circles: predictable access
- [ ] Bridges: participation

Opportunity presented (what was the pupil invited to do?):

Staff adjustment / offer made (describe, do not infer intent):

What the pupil did, said, selected or declined:

- [ ] N/O
- [ ] 0
- [ ] 1
- [ ] 2
- [ ] 3

Pupil perspective / what we should do differently next time:

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13 Opportunity-count log

PHOTOCOPY / PRINTABLE

Example indicator: “When a pupil signals need for a break, staff make the agreed accessible break option available.” Count opportunities, not children or emotional episodes.

Date / context	Eligible opportunities	Accessible supports offered	Notes / confounders

Summarise

Total genuine opportunities / accessible offers:

What still blocked access?

Rate or percentage can be computed as accessible offers ÷ eligible opportunities × 100 where counts are adequate. Report numbers alongside percentages.

14 Daily Wave check-in review

PHOTOCOPY / PRINTABLE

This measures whether the board is safe and useful—not whether pupils have “calmer” feelings. A high Wave is not a failure. Offer private or nonverbal options and allow pupils to opt out.

- [ ] Pupil could opt out
- [ ] Private alternative available
- [ ] Non-speaking response accepted
- [ ] Staff response matched preference
- [ ] Support action followed signal
- [ ] No public comparison or reward

Short observation, one context

Where and when was check-in offered?

Which communication methods were genuinely available?

What happened after a pupil requested support? (do not record sensitive disclosure)

Pupil response (asked privately and optionally):

- [ ] Helpful
- [ ] Not helpful
- [ ] Not sure
- [ ] Prefer not to say

What would make the check-in safer or more accessible?

15 Pupil feedback | primary

PHOTOCOPY / PUPIL VOICE

You can tick, circle, point, draw or tell someone. You do not have to answer. There are no right or wrong feelings.

How did this feel for you?

I got to choose how to join in.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes ☐ No ☐ I do not want to answer

Grown-ups listened to how I communicated.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes ☐ No ☐ I do not want to answer

I could ask for a break, help or something different.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes ☐ No ☐ I do not want to answer

I knew what would happen next when I needed to know.

☐ Yes ☐ Sometimes ☐ No ☐ I do not want to answer

Something that helped me

Something I would change

Adults: accept a child's own communication route. Do not alter answers into adult interpretations.

16 Pupil feedback | secondary

PHOTOCOPY / YOUNG PERSON VOICE

You can complete this privately, use AAC or skip any item. These answers help the school improve its support; you are not being assessed.

I had meaningful choices about how I communicated or participated.

☐ Agree ☐ Not sure ☐ Disagree ☐ Skip

Staff respected my boundaries, including when I declined an activity.

☐ Agree ☐ Not sure ☐ Disagree ☐ Skip

I could access appropriate support without being singled out.

☐ Agree ☐ Not sure ☐ Disagree ☐ Skip

The approach felt age-respectful and relevant to me.

☐ Agree ☐ Not sure ☐ Disagree ☐ Skip

What has improved, if anything?

What should adults stop, start or change?

17 Accessible feedback board

PHOTOCOPY / MULTIMODAL VOICE

Use the child's existing AAC system first. The options below are a generic supplemental choice board, not a replacement for individually assessed AAC. Never assume that eye gaze, movement or silence has one fixed meaning.

YES	NO	NOT SURE
STOP	HELP	BREAK
AGAIN	DIFFERENT	I LIKE
I DISLIKE	NOT NOW	MY WAY

Record the communication partner's method

How did the pupil show a choice? What confirmation was used?

Respect refusal

A child who points to "STOP" or turns away may be declining the activity. Pause and check with the pupil and familiar communication partners. Do not interpret distress as a request for more prompts.

18 Family / carer feedback

PHOTOCOPY / OPTIONAL

This short questionnaire is voluntary. It is about school communication and useful adjustments, not about family problems or diagnoses.

- ☐ I understand the school's Four Pillars approach
- ☐ School routines and changes are explained appropriately
- ☐ I know how to share feedback or ask for a change
- ☐ The school respects my child's communication preferences
- ☐ My child's strengths and interests are recognised

Please choose the response that fits best

For each statement above: Agree / Partly / Disagree / Prefer not to answer. Add a number or note beside the statement if useful.

What support has worked well for your child?

What should the school change or avoid?

Optional: preferred way for school to discuss this feedback: _____

19 Staff confidence survey

PHOTOCOPY / PRE & POST

Complete at baseline and at week 6. Use the same questions both times. Confidence is not the same as competence; triangulate with actual practice.

I feel able to...	Before 1–4	After 1–4
Offer a way for pupils to show preferences or feelings.		
Notice possible overload without guessing a diagnosis.		
Use predictable, flexible supports with pupil choice.		
Adapt communication so pupils can participate.		
Respect refusal or a request for a break.		
Explain the Four Pillars without making clinical claims.		

Scale: 1 = not yet confident; 2 = somewhat; 3 = usually; 4 = very confident. This is a locally created feedback scale, not a validated instrument.

What training or practical changes would help?

20 Classroom environment audit

PHOTOCOPY / STAFF

Mark Yes / Partly / No / N/A. Prioritise changes to environments and adult practice over attempts to change pupils.

Environment check	Mark	Priority / action
Pupils have private ways to request support.		
Relevant visual and AAC options remain accessible.		
Changes to plans are communicated in time.		
Breaks and regulation supports can be accessed without stigma.		
Noise, light, crowding and transitions have been considered.		
Pupil preferences influence grouping and participation.		
Adults respond consistently across lessons and spaces.		

Top two changes we will make this half-term:

21 Implementation fidelity check

PHOTOCOPY / WEEKLY

Fidelity means delivering the intended supportive actions while adapting to pupil needs. It does not mean scripting pupils' responses.

- [ ] Staff know purpose and boundaries
- [ ] Planned routine actually offered
- [ ] Pupil has accessible communication choices
- [ ] Refusal and privacy respected
- [ ] Support plan adjusted when needed
- [ ] No punitive use of Wave data
- [ ] Staff receive useful coaching
- [ ] Concern/escalation route understood

Week / staff team / context:

One element delivered well:

One element not delivered, and why:

Adjustment agreed / person responsible / date:

Any unintended effects, concerns or pupil objections?

22 Coaching & practice reflection

PHOTOCOPY / STAFF

Date / observed context / supportive colleague:

What happened?

A precise description of one staff action:

How accessible was it?

Pupil’s communication, choice or refusal; avoid assumptions:

What will change?

One practical improvement and a review date:

Coaching principle

Describe and improve adult practice. Avoid rating an individual pupil’s “normality”, facial expression, eye contact or compliance.

23 Brian's | identity & agency

FOUR PILLARS / INDICATOR SHEET

Aim: help pupils express who they are, what they like, what they think and what they need, without making verbal disclosure a requirement.

Look for

- Choices are genuine; an adult can act on the answer.
- A pupil's strengths, interests and identity appear in planning.
- Visual, written, signed, gesture, speech or AAC responses are valued equally.
- "No", "different" and "not now" are treated as meaningful communication.

Avoid

Demanding an emotion label, interpreting silence as agreement, reducing identity to diagnosis, or judging preferred communication as less capable.

Agreed practice indicator:

Genuine opportunities seen / accessible offers made:

What did pupils tell us? What needs to change?

24 Waves | regulation & access

FOUR PILLARS / INDICATOR SHEET

Aim: ensure pupils can signal needs and access support safely, rather than rewarding a particular emotional state.

Look for

- A private, optional way to request space, a break, help or a sensory adjustment.
- Staff identify and remove avoidable environmental demands.
- Individual plans describe supports preferred by the pupil.
- Adults co-regulate, respond proportionately and revisit the experience only when appropriate.

Avoid

Publicly displaying pupil emotional data, requiring “calm” as a condition for returning to learning, or counting distress as a child’s failure.

Agreed practice indicator:

Number of authentic requests / helpful responses:

What did pupils find helpful or unhelpful?

25 Circles | routines & security

FOUR PILLARS / INDICATOR SHEET

Aim: provide predictable routines and meaningful flexibility around change, shaped by each pupil's preferences.

Look for

- Transitions are previewed using a format pupils understand.
- Familiar resources, objects and routines are not removed arbitrarily.
- A change plan includes choices and a named adult when helpful.
- Adult support is predictable across rooms, staff and school activities.

Avoid

Turning predictability into inflexibility; telling pupils to "just cope"; denying access to comfort objects without an individual safety reason.

Transition or routine selected:

What advance notice / choice was provided?

Pupil experience and change to implement:

26 Bridges | belonging & participation

FOUR PILLARS / INDICATOR SHEET

Aim: create communication and learning pathways that respect interests, boundaries and different ways of connecting.

Look for

- The pupil's interests are used as a route to learning or shared connection.
- Peer activities have accessible entry, exit and alternative participation routes.
- Adult communication style matches the individual pupil.
- Belonging is defined with pupil input, not by compulsory socialising.

Avoid

Forced eye contact, unwanted touch, compulsory pair work, pressuring friendship or rewarding masking.

Participation opportunity / accessible option:

How did the pupil communicate a preference?

What made participation possible or more difficult?

27 Individual accessibility plan

PHOTOCOPY / RESTRICTED PUPIL COPY

Pupil code / reviewer / last review date:

Existing communication system(s) and partner(s):

Reliable ways the pupil indicates yes, no, stop, help or uncertainty:

Preferred sensory/physical environment and adjustment:

What staff should do when uncertain about a response:

Which evaluation tasks the pupil has declined or adapted:

Keep the pupil’s existing AAC arrangements and any SLT guidance in place. Review with family, pupil and professionals where appropriate.

28 Individual support & outcome plan

PHOTOCOPY / RESTRICTED PUPIL COPY

Pupil code / school role holding the plan:

Strengths, interests and what matters to the pupil:

One specific pupil-chosen aim for the trial:

Adult action / environmental adjustment:

How the pupil can say “this helps” or “change it”:

How and when this will be reviewed:

Make outcomes personal

A useful outcome may be “can access a preferred transition support” or “has a reliable way to request a break”, not “makes eye contact” or “is always calm”.

29 Transition review sheet

PHOTOCOPY / YEAR OR SETTING CHANGE

Transition being reviewed / date / lead:

Pupil’s chosen communication route and trusted contacts:

Four Pillars prompts

Brian's: interests, agency, worries and choices:

Waves: likely load points and preferred responses:

Circles: familiar routines and what must be predictable:

Bridges: communication routes and positive connections:

Review date / what changed after pupil feedback:

30 Review meeting agenda

PHOTOCOPY / SIX-WEEK MEETING

Recommended attendees: school sponsor, teacher, SENDCo, pupil or accessible representative, parent/carer where appropriate, evaluation lead. Invite specialists where relevant.

1 | Pupil experience — What did pupils enjoy, reject or want changed?

2 | Delivery — Were the intended adjustments consistently available?

3 | Access — Who could not participate and why?

4 | Outcomes — What did the same indicators show before and after?

5 | Safety — Any unintended harm, pressure, stigma or privacy concerns?

6 | Decision — Keep, adapt, repeat, pause or discontinue?

Key decision and named owner:

Next review date and information to return to pupils:

31 Pilot mini-dashboard

PHOTOCOPY / AGGREGATE DATA

Use aggregate or coded data. Record how many opportunities were actually observed. Suppress small groups in externally shared reports where individuals might be identified.

Indicator	Baseline count	Follow-up count	Interpretation / limits
Accessible communication opportunities			
Agreed Wave supports offered			
Predictable transitions supported			
Participation options offered			
Pupils reporting “helpful”			
Staff reporting confidence			

Context changes / data not available:

Do not add these rows into a single overall “Four Pillars score”. They measure different things.

32 How to calculate & interpret

PART C / ANALYSIS

Worked example: support availability

Baseline: accessible support was offered in 8 of 20 genuine opportunities = 40%. Follow-up: it was offered in 17 of 22 opportunities = 77%. Difference = +37 percentage points.

What that means

In this fictional example the provision was more consistently available in sampled situations. It does not show that the Four Pillars caused improved mental health or improved attainment.

Report counts, not just percentages

- 8/20 and 17/22 contain context that 40% and 77% alone would hide.
- If opportunities differ in complexity, explain the difference.
- Use identical observation definitions and similar contexts where possible.
- For very small numbers, prioritise narrative and individual experiences over averages.
- Compare positive reports with negative or uncertain pupil feedback.

Examples of accurate claims

“The class reported that staff use of visual transitions became more consistent during the pilot.”

“Three pupils preferred not to use the board; the school therefore added a private alternative.”

Claims to avoid

“Four Pillars therapy cures overwhelm”, “our autism method is proven”, or “all pupils became more regulated”.

33 Worked case | primary

ILLUSTRATIVE CASE / NOT REAL DATA

Situation

A Year 4 pupil enjoys drawing but finds noisy starts to the day difficult. The school considers introducing an optional, private Wave check-in and a visual first/then Circle.

Pilot question

Does the pupil experience the morning transition as more predictable, and are preferred supports available when needed?

What the school collects

- Staff log whether the agreed quiet-entry choice was available on 10 sampled mornings.
- The pupil draws or selects “helpful / not helpful / different” when they wish.
- Staff record any changes in staffing, assemblies or transport routines.

Illustrative finding

The quiet-entry option was available on 4/10 baseline mornings and 9/10 follow-up mornings. The pupil chose “helpful” but asked for fewer spoken questions. Staff agreed to reduce verbal prompts.

Interpret with care

This would justify continuing the quiet-entry adjustment and revisiting it with the pupil; it would not establish a causal effect on emotional wellbeing.

34 Worked case | secondary

ILLUSTRATIVE CASE / NOT REAL DATA

Situation

A Year 9 student dislikes public emotion ratings and reports finding open-ended group work socially exhausting. The Four Pillars are offered using age-respectful language such as “load”, “routines” and “connection”.

Pilot question

Can the student choose a communication method and participation route without unwanted attention?

What the school collects

- Anonymous student feedback on privacy, choice and relevance.
- Two staff observations of group-work choice being genuinely offered.
- Student-led review of the Bridge option and what support feels patronising.

Illustrative finding

The student rejected the visual Wave poster but used an agreed private exit card and joined some group tasks through written contributions. The evaluation records both the rejection of one tool and the usefulness of another.

A successful outcome can be “no”

A pupil identifying what does not work and staff changing their practice is valuable evidence of agency and accessibility.

35 Worked case | complex communication

ILLUSTRATIVE CASE / NOT REAL DATA

Situation

A nonspeaking Key Stage 2 pupil uses an established AAC device, gestures and consistent partner-assisted choices. Staff want to evaluate how well transition supports honour existing communication preferences.

Pilot question

Do staff present advance notice and options in accessible formats, and do they notice refusals or requests to pause?

What the school collects

- A specialist-informed definition of a valid choice or refusal.
- Opportunities when the visual schedule was genuinely accessible.
- Records of staff confirming interpretation rather than assuming what movement means.
- Parent and pupil communication-partner feedback when appropriate.

Illustrative finding

The school finds that the standard printed cards are too small. Staff use enlarged symbols aligned to the pupil's existing AAC vocabulary and revise the transition plan. They discontinue an unreliable "mood inference" method.

Clinical boundary

Generic Four Pillars symbols do not replace an established AAC system, SLT advice or individual communication assessment.

36 Leadership report template

PHOTOCOPY / ONE-PAGE SUMMARY

School / pilot dates / accountable lead:

Evaluation question and setting:

Number of pupils invited / participating / declining (aggregated):

Main findings — data and pupil voice:

Limitations, missing data and alternative explanations:

Any unintended harms and steps taken:

Decision, resource implications and review date:

37 Decision & improvement matrix

PART C / ACTION

Decision	When it fits	Action
Keep	Useful and acceptable; accessible for intended pupils.	Document the helpful elements and ownership.
Adapt	Mixed or age-inappropriate; access barriers found.	Change one feature; retest the revised practice.
Repeat	Insufficient data; interrupted period.	Extend with clear definitions and lighter burden.
Pause	Pressure, poor privacy, uncertain safety or capacity.	Resolve concerns before any further trial.
Stop	Pupil opposition, continued harm or no feasible benefit.	Return to established support; record rationale.

Decision record

☐ Keep ☐ Adapt ☐ Repeat ☐ Pause ☐ Stop

What led to this decision? Include dissenting views:

38 Next 90 days | sustain or change

PART C / ACTION

Timing	Action	Owner / evidence
Days 1–15	Share a pupil-accessible “you said, we did” summary; address urgent barriers.	
Days 16–30	Update Passport templates, check-in practice and staff coaching.	
Days 31–60	Observe whether changes still happen across staff and spaces.	
Days 61–90	Review inclusion, staffing burden and whether to trial in another setting.	

Review questions

- Are pupils still able to opt out or change their preferred support?
- Is this manageable without creating surveillance or excessive staff paperwork?
- Does the approach complement existing EHCP, SEND, PSHE and safeguarding arrangements?
- What further independent evaluation or specialist feedback is needed?

39 A route to stronger evidence

PART C / DEVELOPMENT

Stage 1 | Feasibility and acceptability

Use this pack in a small local trial. Check whether the language, forms and staff actions are practical, accessible and acceptable across settings.

Stage 2 | Refine measures

Work with educators, young people, families, SEND specialists, AAC/SLT professionals and evaluators to revise vague items and check whether different observers interpret definitions consistently.

Stage 3 | External scrutiny

Ask an independent academic or evaluation partner to advise on comparison groups, consent and governance, outcome selection, ethics and adequate sample sizes.

Stage 4 | Transparent reporting

Publish the protocol, changes made, missing data, mixed or negative feedback, implementation costs and limitations. Avoid selectively reporting only positive anecdotes.

Core statement for publications

“The Tom Tom Four Pillars are a developing author-created educational framework. This toolkit supports school-led feasibility and implementation reviews; it does not establish independent evidence of effectiveness.”

40 Glossary & interpretation cautions

REFERENCE

AAC — Augmentative and alternative communication: communication methods that supplement or replace speech.

Assent — A child or young person’s willingness to take part, shown through an accessible method, including the right to decline.

Baseline — A description of the relevant situation before a new practice is introduced.

Fidelity — Whether planned supportive actions were offered as intended, with appropriate adaptation.

Implementation outcome — Whether staff could deliver an approach, rather than whether it produced a pupil outcome.

Outcome indicator — A clearly defined, observable or reported sign related to an evaluation question.

Pupil voice — A pupil’s own preferences and experience, communicated in any reliable, accessible way.

Triangulation — Considering several different forms of evidence without treating them as interchangeable.

N/O — No opportunity or not observed; must not be scored as a pupil or staff failure.

The ethical test

If a form rewards compliance, encourages masking, pressures emotional disclosure or makes a pupil less safe, change the form or stop using it.

41 Evidence & guidance references

REFERENCE / ENGLAND / OCTOBER 2026

Education Endowment Foundation (2024) — A School’s Guide to Implementation: explore, prepare, deliver, sustain.
https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/implementation/process/

Education Endowment Foundation (2019) — Improving Social and Emotional Learning in Primary Schools.
https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/primary-sel

Education Endowment Foundation (2020) — Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools.
https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/SEND/

Department for Education (2026) — Keeping children safe in education 2026, effective September 2026.
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2

Information Commissioner’s Office — Children’s information and UK GDPR guidance.
https://ico.org.uk/childrensprivacy

Information Commissioner’s Office — Lawful bases and children’s personal information.
https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/uk-gdpr-guidance-and-resources/childrens-information/children-and-the-uk-gdpr/how-do-the-lawful-bases-apply-to-children-s-personal-information/

Relationship to existing evidence

The references inform ethical implementation and general educational practice; they do not independently endorse or validate the Four Pillars model. Check current local policies and guidance before starting a pilot.

42 Final quality checklist

PRINTABLE / SCHOOL SIGN-OFF

- [ ] Pupil purpose is clear
- [ ] Child can decline evaluation
- [ ] No public personal emotion data
- [ ] Safeguarding route understood
- [ ] Primary + young person views included
- [ ] AAC routes verified individually
- [ ] Small-number privacy considered
- [ ] Accessible information shared
- [ ] Existing supports continue
- [ ] School DPO consulted
- [ ] Measures are operationally defined
- [ ] Secondary materials are age-respectful
- [ ] Mixed or negative findings retained
- [ ] Decision and review date agreed

School lead sign-off / role / date:

Privacy and safeguarding sign-off routes checked by:

Conditions or adaptations required before wider use:

The Tom Tom promise

Begin with the child, not the score. Listen before interpreting. Adjust the environment before blaming the learner. Treat each pupil’s identity, communication and choices with dignity.