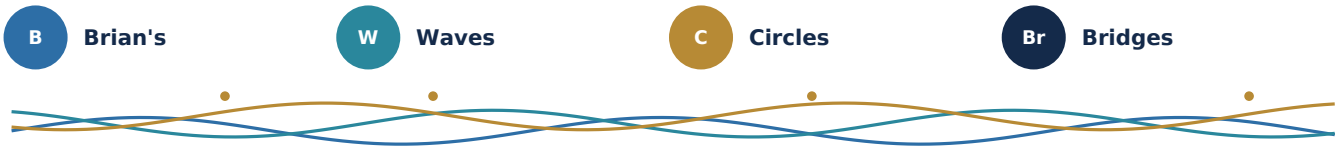
TOM TOM UNIVERSE

The Four Pillars 12-Week Learning Curriculum

A complete, adaptable term of lessons for primary, secondary and pupils with complex communication needs



TEACHER HANDBOOK + 36 LESSON PATHWAYS + PRINTABLE PUPIL RESOURCES
A flexible school programme, with progression, lesson scripts, accessibility adaptations, assessment and end-of-term review.

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How to use this curriculum

This is a 12-week, educational and pastoral curriculum for helping neurodivergent children understand and communicate their learning needs while helping school staff remove barriers. It is designed for mainstream and specialist contexts, individual support and small groups. It is not therapy, diagnosis or an evidence-proven intervention.

> Curriculum promise: Each pupil may participate through speech, AAC, movement, looking, selecting, writing, building, art, observation or a supported refusal. Staff adapt the environment and task; pupils are not required to mask their neurodivergence.

Three parallel pathways

Pathway	Typical lesson	How to use it
Primary	40 minutes	Age-appropriate storytelling, creativity and practical work; shorten or divide as needed.
Secondary	50 minutes	Respectful, age-appropriate enquiry, applied tasks and self-advocacy; avoid childish imagery.
Complex communication needs	15–30 minutes, flexible	Individual or small-group micro-sequences with personalised AAC, sensory preferences and pupil-led pace. Not an age or ability category.

Use alongside—not instead of—existing support

The programme supplements each pupil's SEN support, EHC plan where relevant, individual communication and medical plans, reasonable adjustments, relationships and curriculum teaching. The SENCO coordinates adaptations with families, pupils and relevant professionals. Never delay a required adjustment until its curriculum week.

Recommended weekly pattern

Before	Teach	During the week	After
5–10 min team preparation	One accessible core session	3 short, optional transfers to natural contexts	5–10 min staff reflection

A class can teach one pathway while offering other pathways within it. Adapt content to developmental and sensory access needs without infantilising older pupils. Choose a shorter pace and repeat lessons when useful. There is no requirement to finish all activities.

CORE IDEAS

The four pillars: one shared language

B Brian's W Waves C Circles Br Bridges

Brian’s • How I think

Meaning: Interests, questions, problem-solving, memory, attention, creativity and different ways of processing.

Adult question: “How can I make this task understandable and engaging?”

Examples: Clear worked examples, choice of format, time to process, interest-based tasks.

Waves • How my experience changes

Meaning: Changing comfort, emotions, energy and sensory states. Wave language describes experience, not a diagnosis.

Adult question: “What might make this setting comfortable or difficult, and what does the pupil want?”

Examples: Reduce sensory load, co-regulation, access to movement, chosen quiet space or rest.

Circles • What gives predictability

Meaning: Helpful routines, sequences, planning and warning about change, with room for autonomy.

Adult question: “What does this pupil need to know about what happens next?”

Examples: Now–next, photo timetable, written agenda, advance notice, flexible back-up plan.

Bridges • How I connect and communicate

Meaning: Communication, shared interests, self-advocacy, trust, relationships and respectful boundaries.

Adult question: “Can the pupil express a view or refusal in their preferred way?”

Examples: AAC, written choices, extra wait time, opt-in groups, respect for personal space.

Remember: Pillars overlap. A change to an instruction (Brian’s) may reduce overload (Waves); a visible plan (Circles) may make it easier to ask questions (Bridges). The point is to improve access, not allocate children to four categories.

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

12-week teaching sequence

Week	Pillar focus	Lesson title	Core learning
01	All four pillars	Meet the Four Pillars	Introducing different ways people think, feel, organise and connect
02	Brian’s	My Thinking Can Be Different	Recognising strengths, attention, curiosity and individual ways of processing
03	Brian’s	Questions, Choices and Asking for Help	Finding safe ways to express uncertainty, curiosity and support needs
04	Waves	Noticing My Waves	Understanding that energy, emotion and sensory comfort change through the day
05	Waves	Support During Big Waves	Choosing co-regulation, environmental adjustments and recovery supports
06	Circles	Routines That Help	Making daily sequences understandable while preserving autonomy and flexibility
07	Circles	When the Circle Changes	Preparing for uncertainty with information, choices and compassionate backup plans
08	Bridges	Ways We Communicate	Recognising speech, AAC, writing, gesture, movement and silence as meaningful
09	Bridges	Belonging and Boundaries	Friendship choices, consent, shared interests and safe connections
10	All four pillars	Four Pillars in One Challenge	Applying all pillars to an authentic learning task
11	All four pillars	Transitions and Speaking Up	Preparing for moving class, changes of staff and new activities
12	All four pillars	My Voice, My Learning, Our Next Steps	Reviewing supports, celebrating learning and choosing sustainable changes

Progression: Orientation (Weeks 1–3) → experience and support (Weeks 4–5) → planning (Weeks 6–7) → communication and belonging (Weeks 8–9) → transfer, transition and review (Weeks 10–12).

NON-NEGOTIABLE PRACTICE

Inclusion, rights and safeguarding

Communication access

Keep any established AAC equipment available at all times; check with family and speech-and-language therapy professionals. The generic choice board in this pack is a conversation support, not a replacement AAC programme.

Choice and assent

Invite participation, accept “no”, recognise that stillness is not consent, and offer neutral alternatives. Never use coercion, compulsory eye contact, touch or public disclosure.

Emotional and sensory safety

Do not knowingly induce distress to “teach tolerance”. Respond to pain, distress, overload and possible medical needs using agreed procedures. Activities are not substitutes for mental-health support.

Respectful representation

Do not conflate neurodivergence with intellectual disability. Provide age-respectful tasks and avoid assuming all autistic or ADHD pupils share preferences.

Confidentiality and data protection

Keep profiles, check-ins and evaluation records within school-approved systems. Do not collect diagnoses or share children’s personal stories as classroom examples. Use fictitious case studies.

Safeguarding escalation

Follow the current school child-protection policy and designated safeguarding lead (DSL) process. As of October 2026, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 is in force. Staff must read Part One and report concerns immediately.

Reasonable adjustments

No pupil should have to “earn” sensory supports, communication access or legally required adjustments. Make and maintain adjustments irrespective of curriculum participation.

WEEK ZERO • STAFF AND PUPIL PREPARATION

Before Week 1: prepare your school

Allow 2–3 weeks for preparation where possible. This is not an extra pupil teaching week.

Owner	Preparation action	Check
SENCO	Review existing plans; identify access needs, professionals, family communication and safe storage.	☐
Teacher	Choose the three relevant pathways and appropriate topics without public diagnosis labelling.	☐
TA / support team	Audit AAC access, symbols, sensory/environment adjustments and processing time.	☐
Leadership	Provide materials, timetable slot, short weekly team review and cover for specialist input.	☐
Pupil & family	Invite preferred names, interests, supports and opt-out routes in a suitable format.	☐
DSL	Check staff know safeguarding and recording route; review any foreseeable risks.	☐

Baseline: listen first

- Ask pupils, in accessible formats, “What helps you learn?” and “What should adults stop doing?”. Accept a private or non-response.
- Observe learning access across a familiar lesson: instructions, sensory environment, transitions and communication opportunities.
- Choose one or two context-specific, observable access goals with the learner where possible; avoid goals such as “be less autistic” or “maintain eye contact”.
- Capture what adjustment was offered and whether it was accepted, declined or modified.

Suggested baseline question: “With the supports available today, could the learner understand what was happening, communicate choices and participate in their own way?”

DELIVERY ROUTINE

Planning one accessible lesson

Before	During	After
Preview the theme. Check pupil's AAC, access formats, sensory preferences and any current support plan. Choose no more than two learning objectives.	Start with a non-demand invitation; model the skill; allow choice and varied ways to demonstrate understanding. Respond to feedback in real time.	Ask what worked. Note support offered, the pupil's choice and the environment. Adjust next lesson rather than scoring personal behaviour.

Every lesson should offer

- A way to join, watch or opt out without embarrassment.
- Accessible instructions: spoken plus written/pictured/object-based as individually appropriate.
- Processing time and a reliable, always-available way to say "stop", "help" or "finished".
- An environmental alternative when noise, light, seating, social or movement demands create barriers.
- A real-world use: classroom, playground, library, homework or home if the child wishes.
- A teacher reflection linked to observable adjustments, not "good behaviour".

A sample transfer routine

Monday	Mid-week	Friday
Teach the core lesson and explicitly introduce a helpful adjustment.	Revisit it in an ordinary task, e.g. visual instructions in science or a quiet arrival route.	Collect brief pupil feedback, then review whether staff made the support consistently available.

Materials: Print the linked pupil resource for each week, preferably with original symbols or the child's established communication materials. A printer is optional: adults may use the boards as layouts for paper, classroom objects or digital tools.

ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Assessment without measuring conformity

Assessment is formative, qualitative and improvement-focused. It is not a diagnostic scale and has no validated standardised scoring properties. Staff record the accessibility of teaching and meaningful pupil participation, not an assumed level of emotional maturity or independence.

Domain	Good evidence	Do not use as evidence
Communication access	Pupil's chosen voice, AAC, writing, gesture or refusal is recognised and responded to.	Number of spoken answers or amount of eye contact.
Understanding / options	Learner shows, selects, applies or rejects a support in an accessible way.	Ability to recite pillar definitions.
Environment / adjustments	Required visual, sensory and planning adjustments are made and actually available.	Whether pupil stopped stimming or tolerated overload.
Participation / agency	Child can join, watch, leave, resume or work in a preferred way.	Time spent seated, obedience, or number of friends.
Generalisation	A useful adjustment transfers to another class, setting or staff member.	Unsupported performance after removing support.

Three check points

- Baseline (Week 0): pupil voice and an observation of access with existing supports.
- Midpoint (Week 6): pupil/teacher/family check on which adaptations are being made; revise at least one barrier.
- Endpoint (Week 12): pupil-led "keep/change" reflection plus an agreed practical action for the next term.

Example of a defensible goal: "When a room changes, staff provide written notice and a route map; the pupil confirms preferred support in their chosen format." This can be checked. "Pupil becomes less anxious" may be meaningful to the pupil, but cannot safely be inferred from a single classroom behaviour.

Meet the Four Pillars

Core enquiry: Introducing different ways people think, feel, organise and connect

Intentions and success criteria

Pathway	What successful access can look like
Primary	Identify or explore at least one pillar through a chosen activity.
Secondary	Explain the four pillars as ways of describing support, not labels for pupils.
Complex communication needs	Choose, reject or notice one preferred way to participate.

Before teaching

Keywords: different, choice, support, strengths

Materials: Four pillar signs; four objects (puzzle, wave fabric, ring, bridge blocks); paper and pens; accessible choice board.

Linked printable: Four Pillars Explorer

Teacher opening language

“These four pillars are ways to help us understand what each person needs. Everyone is different, and we will listen to you.”

Look and listen for

Does the pupil indicate a preferred method of participation? Did adults identify an adjustment that improved access?

Family connection (optional)

Invite families to tell the school one interest, one comforting routine and a preferred communication method; participation is optional.

Apply beyond the lesson

Invite pupil or staff to identify the pillar most relevant to a real lesson this week; change one classroom condition and check pupil response.

WEEK 01 • PRIMARY LESSON • 40 MINUTES

Meet the Four Pillars

Learning intention: Identify or explore at least one pillar through a chosen activity.

Timing / phase	Facilitator steps and pupil experience
5 min • Invitation	Display four symbols and say: “People learn in different ways. These are four tools we can use to understand and support each other.”
8 min • Demonstrate	Introduce Brian’s (thinking), Waves (feelings and body states), Circles (routines), Bridges (connections) with one everyday classroom example each.
12 min • Explore	Four optional stations: idea drawing; calming texture; sequence pictures; connecting blocks. Pupils move, point, observe or opt out.
10 min • Make	Create a four-square “What helps me learn?” page; adults scribe without correcting a child’s meaning.
5 min • Share	Invite a chosen form of sharing. Confirm there is no right way to feel or communicate.

Ready-to-run practical example

Set out the four objects as a “museum”. Give children a choice of entry route: visit each object, choose a favourite, or watch an adult demonstrate. A teacher scribes the reason for a choice only when offered by the pupil. Finish by putting each object next to its pillar label.

Differentiation in a primary classroom

- For pupils who prefer concrete materials: use objects, photographs, modelled actions and fewer steps. Keep appropriate complexity in ideas while reducing language load.
- For confident writers/readers: invite reflection, “what if?” questions, or choice of a linked real classroom challenge.
- For movement or sensory needs: enable flexible seating, a known quiet option, ear defenders where appropriate and movement without penalty.
- For speech differences: accept drawing, gestures, typing, AAC, adult scribing or observing; the child may decline to share publicly.

Teacher asks

“What helped you participate today? Is there something I should do differently next time?”

Worked classroom example: A Year 4 learner observes the Bridges station rather than joining a group. Observation is participation; staff offer a later one-to-one option.

WEEK 01 • SECONDARY LESSON • 50 MINUTES

Meet the Four Pillars

Learning intention: Explain the four pillars as ways of describing support, not labels for pupils.

Timing / phase	Teaching sequence; student agency
5 min • Open	Ask: “What makes a lesson accessible?” Offer anonymous response or written reflection.
10 min • Framework	Co-define each pillar with age-respectful examples: planning, overload, deadlines, belonging.
15 min • Challenge	Teams analyse a fictional crowded school day and map potential barriers across the four pillars.
12 min • Design	Create a one-page “learning conditions that work for me” profile, shared only if chosen.
8 min • Debrief	Distinguish helpful adjustments from expectations to appear ‘normal’.

Ready-to-run secondary task

Give students a fictional timetable (assembly, science lab, busy lunch, group project). Ask them to annotate where a Brian’s, Wave, Circle or Bridge support could remove a barrier. Accept typed annotations, individual work or a quick sketch rather than requiring a group presentation.

Make it age-respectful

- Connect the theme to authentic adolescent settings: subject changes, examinations, deadlines, online groups, clubs, transport or post-16 choices.
- Give students the option of private written contributions and independent completion; never require personal disclosure.
- Treat pupil proposals as actionable feedback. Tell students which staff member will consider them and when they will hear back.
- For students with high literacy demand barriers, offer graphic organisers, recorded responses, worked examples or scribing without reducing the intellectual goal.

Formative exit prompt

“Name one teaching or environmental change that would improve access, and explain how we would know.”

Review risk

Do not ask pupils to disclose diagnoses or private family circumstances.

Meet the Four Pillars

Flexible 15–30 minute micro-sequence: Use with pupils who have complex communication needs, including non-speaking pupils. This is an access pathway, not a measure of age or cognitive potential. Begin with the child's existing support and AAC systems.

Accessible purpose: Choose, reject or notice one preferred way to participate.

Step	Adult approach and child-led access
1. Set up	Offer four tactile/visual objects or familiar symbols at comfortable distance.
2. Model	Show one at a time; use the learner's established vocabulary and AAC.
3. Offer control	Let the child look, touch, move away, choose, stay still or end.
4. Respond	Acknowledge communication; do not demand matching, speech or pointing.
5. Capture	Record a preference or access barrier, not a correctness score.

Real access opportunity

Offer the four pillar objects one at a time with predictable pauses. For a learner using eye-gaze, use their established selection position and confirm choices naturally. If none is preferred, record "not accessible or not interesting today" rather than "did not engage".

Partner practice checklist

- Position any established AAC where the learner can access it; respect positioning and access method advice.
- Observe spontaneous interaction; model language naturally. Avoid repeated testing questions or hand-over-hand prompting unless an individual clinical plan explicitly justifies a safe method.
- Allow substantial processing time, communicate in a low-demand manner and honour refusal.
- Offer an alternative when a task, symbol or sensory material is not accessible.
- Consult pupil and familiar partners when meaning is unclear; avoid treating behaviour as proof of a particular emotion.

Observation and next step

Evidence of access: Does the pupil indicate a preferred method of participation? Did adults identify an adjustment that improved access?

Important guardrail: Do not ask pupils to disclose diagnoses or private family circumstances.

My Thinking Can Be Different

Core enquiry: Recognising strengths, attention, curiosity and individual ways of processing

Intentions and success criteria

Pathway	What successful access can look like
Primary	Name, draw or select one learning strength and one useful support.
Secondary	Compare multiple learning strategies and identify which contexts favour them.
Complex communication needs	Show engagement in an interest-based task using an accessible response.

Before teaching

Keywords: strength, curious, focus, notice, think

Materials: Interest pictures, building materials, drawing tools, access to AAC, example cards.

Linked printable: My Brian's Strengths

Teacher opening language

"Every Brian's can notice, wonder and learn in different ways. We can change the task or support to help."

Look and listen for

Which task and presentation mode did the pupil choose? Was a support helpful in another context?

Family connection (optional)

At home, notice one moment of interest or persistence; adults can describe it without requiring a written report.

Apply beyond the lesson

Trial one chosen teaching format in a second curriculum subject and ask whether it helps there too.

WEEK 02 • PRIMARY LESSON • 40 MINUTES

My Thinking Can Be Different

Learning intention: Name, draw or select one learning strength and one useful support.

Timing / phase	Facilitator steps and pupil experience
5 min • Start	Teacher models a mistake kindly: “My Brian’s sometimes needs a picture and a second try.”
10 min • Story	Read a short invented scenario about a pupil who remembers pictures but finds spoken directions hard.
12 min • Choice stations	Puzzle, drawing, construction or sorting. Pupils choose one and may change.
8 min • Reflect	Complete “My Brian’s likes ... / It helps when ...” with words, images or objects.
5 min • Check	Adults read back learner meaning accurately and celebrate different preferences.

Ready-to-run practical example

Make a “different routes to the same answer” activity: show a shape pattern as a photograph, as a spoken description and with physical blocks. Pupils choose one route. The task is not a competition: record which format made understanding easier.

Differentiation in a primary classroom

- For pupils who prefer concrete materials: use objects, photographs, modelled actions and fewer steps. Keep appropriate complexity in ideas while reducing language load.
- For confident writers/readers: invite reflection, “what if?” questions, or choice of a linked real classroom challenge.
- For movement or sensory needs: enable flexible seating, a known quiet option, ear defenders where appropriate and movement without penalty.
- For speech differences: accept drawing, gestures, typing, AAC, adult scribing or observing; the child may decline to share publicly.

Teacher asks

“What helped you participate today? Is there something I should do differently next time?”

Worked classroom example: A Year 9 pupil solves a diagram quickly but needs written instructions for the next task; both observations inform teaching.

WEEK 02 • SECONDARY LESSON • 50 MINUTES

My Thinking Can Be Different

Learning intention: Compare multiple learning strategies and identify which contexts favour them.

Timing / phase	Teaching sequence; student agency
6 min • Poll	Quietly rate which contexts help concentration: silent, collaborative, active, visual. Permit non-response.
10 min • Teach	Explain that learning differences vary by task, sensory environment and available support.
15 min • Experiment	Try the same short problem via spoken, diagrammatic and practical formats. No public ranking.
12 min • Analyse	Draft a personalised strategy card for two subjects, including how to request clarification.
7 min • Exit	Submit one adjustment teachers can offer to everyone.

Ready-to-run secondary task

Use a real school task (analyse a short paragraph or interpret a chart). Offer an annotated model, an oral explanation, and independent reading. Ask students to compare the supports they chose and how a teacher might offer multiple formats in a busy classroom.

Make it age-respectful

- Connect the theme to authentic adolescent settings: subject changes, examinations, deadlines, online groups, clubs, transport or post-16 choices.
- Give students the option of private written contributions and independent completion; never require personal disclosure.
- Treat pupil proposals as actionable feedback. Tell students which staff member will consider them and when they will hear back.
- For students with high literacy demand barriers, offer graphic organisers, recorded responses, worked examples or scribing without reducing the intellectual goal.

Formative exit prompt

“Name one teaching or environmental change that would improve access, and explain how we would know.”

Review risk

Avoid describing strengths as fixed types of brains or treating every autistic pupil as identical.

My Thinking Can Be Different

Flexible 15–30 minute micro-sequence: Use with pupils who have complex communication needs, including non-speaking pupils. This is an access pathway, not a measure of age or cognitive potential. Begin with the child's existing support and AAC systems.

Accessible purpose: Show engagement in an interest-based task using an accessible response.

Step	Adult approach and child-led access
1. Prepare	Choose a familiar special interest, safe manipulative or preferred visual stimulus.
2. Connect	Adult joins the child's focus without redirecting it immediately.
3. Model	Name the action with simple spoken words and aided language where appropriate.
4. Choose	Offer more, finished, different and help using the established system.
5. Capture	Record observable engagement and which support allowed participation.

Real access opportunity

Use the pupil's favourite theme as the learning medium—for example trains for ordering, music for pattern noticing or garden objects for sorting. Adult models chosen vocabulary and waits; the learner controls when to continue or change.

Partner practice checklist

- Position any established AAC where the learner can access it; respect positioning and access method advice.
- Observe spontaneous interaction; model language naturally. Avoid repeated testing questions or hand-over-hand prompting unless an individual clinical plan explicitly justifies a safe method.
- Allow substantial processing time, communicate in a low-demand manner and honour refusal.
- Offer an alternative when a task, symbol or sensory material is not accessible.
- Consult pupil and familiar partners when meaning is unclear; avoid treating behaviour as proof of a particular emotion.

Observation and next step

Evidence of access: Which task and presentation mode did the pupil choose? Was a support helpful in another context?

Important guardrail: Avoid describing strengths as fixed types of brains or treating every autistic pupil as identical.

Questions, Choices and Asking for Help

Core enquiry: Finding safe ways to express uncertainty, curiosity and support needs

Intentions and success criteria

Pathway	What successful access can look like
Primary	Practise two ways to request help, a pause or a different explanation.
Secondary	Create and rehearse a respectful self-advocacy request for a learning barrier.
Complex communication needs	Access and use or reject an established "help / stop / more / finished" option.

Before teaching

Keywords: help, wait, explain, choice, no

Materials: Choice cards; prompt strips; worked examples; familiar AAC; scenario slips.

Linked printable: My Help and Choice Card

Teacher opening language

"Questions and requests are welcome. You can use speech, signs, writing, pictures, AAC or a signal."

Look and listen for

Can the adult identify and respond to the pupil's own help signal? Does requesting help lead to a meaningful change?

Family connection (optional)

Send home a menu of optional help phrases and symbol equivalents; ask families what wording or signs the child already uses.

Apply beyond the lesson

Place the learner's own help route on a second desk, in PE or at lunchtime—where they want it—and ensure all relevant adults know how to respond.

WEEK 03 • PRIMARY LESSON • 40 MINUTES

Questions, Choices and Asking for Help

Learning intention: Practise two ways to request help, a pause or a different explanation.

Timing / phase	Facilitator steps and pupil experience
5 min • Notice	Show two unfamiliar puzzle instructions, one clear and one confusing; ask how a person might feel.
8 min • Model	Teacher models: “Please show me”, “I need time”, and using a help card.
12 min • Practice	Pupils try role-play with puppets, drawings or written speech bubbles. Participation may be observational.
10 min • Apply	Use a real low-stakes class challenge; help requests must be honoured.
5 min • Review	Invite children to pick a help method to place on their own desk or profile.

Ready-to-run practical example

Place “show me”, “another example”, “wait” and “finished” cards by a simple construction task. Adults demonstrate asking for help themselves. When a child chooses a card, respond immediately and positively. Do not artificially withhold pieces or information.

Differentiation in a primary classroom

- For pupils who prefer concrete materials: use objects, photographs, modelled actions and fewer steps. Keep appropriate complexity in ideas while reducing language load.
- For confident writers/readers: invite reflection, “what if?” questions, or choice of a linked real classroom challenge.
- For movement or sensory needs: enable flexible seating, a known quiet option, ear defenders where appropriate and movement without penalty.
- For speech differences: accept drawing, gestures, typing, AAC, adult scribing or observing; the child may decline to share publicly.

Teacher asks

“What helped you participate today? Is there something I should do differently next time?”

Worked classroom example: A pupil who silently places a red card on the table is asking for space; staff make the pre-agreed response.

WEEK 03 • SECONDARY LESSON • 50 MINUTES

Questions, Choices and Asking for Help

Learning intention: Create and rehearse a respectful self-advocacy request for a learning barrier.

Timing / phase	Teaching sequence; student agency
6 min • Example	Present a fictional timetable change without notice; consider what information is missing.
10 min • Mini-lesson	Distinguish question asking, boundary setting and self-advocacy.
15 min • Role scenarios	Pairs or solo write school emails, notes or speech scripts asking for reasonable adjustments.
12 min • Refine	Make requests specific: barrier, useful change, how to check it worked.
7 min • Close	Students choose a private takeaway strategy.

Ready-to-run secondary task

Provide a flawed assignment brief: ambiguous deadline, missing marking criteria and unclear group roles. Students draft a concise request for clarification, choosing email, in-person script or a private note. Then rewrite the task brief as teachers might to prevent the barrier.

Make it age-respectful

- Connect the theme to authentic adolescent settings: subject changes, examinations, deadlines, online groups, clubs, transport or post-16 choices.
- Give students the option of private written contributions and independent completion; never require personal disclosure.
- Treat pupil proposals as actionable feedback. Tell students which staff member will consider them and when they will hear back.
- For students with high literacy demand barriers, offer graphic organisers, recorded responses, worked examples or scribing without reducing the intellectual goal.

Formative exit prompt

“Name one teaching or environmental change that would improve access, and explain how we would know.”

Review risk

Never withhold essential help, objects, movement or AAC devices to force a request.

Questions, Choices and Asking for Help

Flexible 15–30 minute micro-sequence: Use with pupils who have complex communication needs, including non-speaking pupils. This is an access pathway, not a measure of age or cognitive potential. Begin with the child's existing support and AAC systems.

Accessible purpose: Access and use or reject an established "help / stop / more / finished" option.

Step	Adult approach and child-led access
1. Prime	Ensure a working way to indicate "no", "help", "more", "different" and "finished".
2. Model	Adult uses the child's established AAC to model "help" during play or class activity.
3. Pause	Create an authentic opportunity to request a change; do not deliberately frustrate or withhold items.
4. Respond	Honour stop/refusal and requests as promptly as possible.
5. Note	Record whether access to communication was available, not whether a prescribed symbol was used.

Real access opportunity

Set up a meaningful activity with ready access to all materials. Model "help" if a lid is naturally tight or something genuinely needs assistance; do not manufacture frustration. Follow the child's signal or choice and immediately demonstrate that their communication changes the adult response.

Partner practice checklist

- Position any established AAC where the learner can access it; respect positioning and access method advice.
- Observe spontaneous interaction; model language naturally. Avoid repeated testing questions or hand-over-hand prompting unless an individual clinical plan explicitly justifies a safe method.
- Allow substantial processing time, communicate in a low-demand manner and honour refusal.
- Offer an alternative when a task, symbol or sensory material is not accessible.
- Consult pupil and familiar partners when meaning is unclear; avoid treating behaviour as proof of a particular emotion.

Observation and next step

Evidence of access: Can the adult identify and respond to the pupil's own help signal? Does requesting help lead to a meaningful change?

Important guardrail: Never withhold essential help, objects, movement or AAC devices to force a request.

Noticing My Waves

Core enquiry: Understanding that energy, emotion and sensory comfort change through the day

Intentions and success criteria

Pathway	What successful access can look like
Primary	Use a chosen scale, colour or sensory metaphor to reflect on comfort.
Secondary	Identify how environment, uncertainty and body signals can affect regulation.
Complex communication needs	Show a preference or discomfort and have it acknowledged without assumptions.

Before teaching

Keywords: wave, energy, feeling, comfort, change

Materials: Wave line graphic; blank scale; pictures of noisy/quiet spaces; calm options.

Linked printable: My Wave Check-In

Teacher opening language

“Waves are a way to talk about how our comfort or energy changes. Nobody has to share a private feeling.”

Look and listen for

What does the learner’s chosen representation indicate? Did adult action improve comfort or access?

Family connection (optional)

Offer family a non-demand check-in question: “What helps when the day feels too much?”

Apply beyond the lesson

Check whether the school’s usual check-in method offers private and non-verbal options; add one choice a pupil requests.

WEEK 04 • PRIMARY LESSON • 40 MINUTES

Noticing My Waves

Learning intention: Use a chosen scale, colour or sensory metaphor to reflect on comfort.

Timing / phase	Facilitator steps and pupil experience
5 min • Opening	Show a drawn wave and say, “Our energy and feelings can change, just like a wave.”
10 min • Stories	Compare fictional calm, excited and overwhelmed experiences; do not ask for personal disclosures.
12 min • Make	Children choose waves, weather, numbers or images to make a private feelings scale.
8 min • Practice	Consider which classroom adjustments might help at different moments.
5 min • Finish	Offer a private check-in using the chosen format.

Ready-to-run practical example

Tell a fictional story about a child experiencing a calm library and a noisy dining hall. Give pupils four blank wave lines and invite them to draw how the environment could change the fictional character’s energy. Let pupils offer different possible answers rather than “correct” emotions.

Differentiation in a primary classroom

- For pupils who prefer concrete materials: use objects, photographs, modelled actions and fewer steps. Keep appropriate complexity in ideas while reducing language load.
- For confident writers/readers: invite reflection, “what if?” questions, or choice of a linked real classroom challenge.
- For movement or sensory needs: enable flexible seating, a known quiet option, ear defenders where appropriate and movement without penalty.
- For speech differences: accept drawing, gestures, typing, AAC, adult scribing or observing; the child may decline to share publicly.

Teacher asks

“What helped you participate today? Is there something I should do differently next time?”

Worked classroom example: In assembly a student covers their ears; the priority is to address noise and offer exit, not require them to rate a wave.

WEEK 04 • SECONDARY LESSON • 50 MINUTES

Noticing My Waves

Learning intention: Identify how environment, uncertainty and body signals can affect regulation.

Timing / phase	Teaching sequence; student agency
5 min • Check-in	Anonymous choice of words describing energy; no forced personal sharing.
10 min • Explain	Discuss sensory load, uncertainty and varying energy levels without equating all distress with autism.
15 min • Map	Create a fictional “school day energy graph” with possible environmental influences.
12 min • Plan	Identify two realistic adjustments such as quieter workspaces, movement or advance information.
8 min • Debrief	Discuss privacy: who may need to know a support preference?

Ready-to-run secondary task

Students compare a fictional day with a loud assembly, consecutive tests and a quiet art lesson. They mark possible load points, then propose adjustments across environment, information and recovery. Emphasise that people can experience excitement and discomfort at the same time.

Make it age-respectful

- Connect the theme to authentic adolescent settings: subject changes, examinations, deadlines, online groups, clubs, transport or post-16 choices.
- Give students the option of private written contributions and independent completion; never require personal disclosure.
- Treat pupil proposals as actionable feedback. Tell students which staff member will consider them and when they will hear back.
- For students with high literacy demand barriers, offer graphic organisers, recorded responses, worked examples or scribing without reducing the intellectual goal.

Formative exit prompt

“Name one teaching or environmental change that would improve access, and explain how we would know.”

Review risk

A colour or facial expression cannot reliably diagnose a child’s internal emotional state.

Noticing My Waves

Flexible 15–30 minute micro-sequence: Use with pupils who have complex communication needs, including non-speaking pupils. This is an access pathway, not a measure of age or cognitive potential. Begin with the child's existing support and AAC systems.

Accessible purpose: Show a preference or discomfort and have it acknowledged without assumptions.

Step	Adult approach and child-led access
1. Read access	Check lighting, noise, posture, pain and familiar communication supports.
2. Present	Offer two preferred/less preferred environmental options where feasible.
3. Notice	Observe voluntary approach, withdrawal or changes in engagement without labelling emotional state as fact.
4. Adapt	Make a practical change (less sound, more space, reposition).
5. Confirm	Watch for acceptance or refusal and update the support plan.

Real access opportunity

Use real preference trials, not assumed emotion cards: perhaps a familiar lamp on/off, a change in distance from a sound source or different seating. Record approach, refusal and sustained engagement with context. Consult family if signals are uncertain or a change could increase distress.

Partner practice checklist

- Position any established AAC where the learner can access it; respect positioning and access method advice.
- Observe spontaneous interaction; model language naturally. Avoid repeated testing questions or hand-over-hand prompting unless an individual clinical plan explicitly justifies a safe method.
- Allow substantial processing time, communicate in a low-demand manner and honour refusal.
- Offer an alternative when a task, symbol or sensory material is not accessible.
- Consult pupil and familiar partners when meaning is unclear; avoid treating behaviour as proof of a particular emotion.

Observation and next step

Evidence of access: What does the learner's chosen representation indicate? Did adult action improve comfort or access?

Important guardrail: A colour or facial expression cannot reliably diagnose a child's internal emotional state.

Support During Big Waves

Core enquiry: Choosing co-regulation, environmental adjustments and recovery supports

Intentions and success criteria

Pathway	What successful access can look like
Primary	Select or practise an optional support that helps when learning feels difficult.
Secondary	Build a personal regulation menu and distinguish prevention from recovery.
Complex communication needs	Experience a child-selected support without forced breathing, touch or compliance.

Before teaching

Keywords: pause, space, safe, recover, support

Materials: Optional sensory supports, quiet area diagram, choice menu, recovery scenario.

Linked printable: My Regulation Menu

Teacher opening language

“There is more than one way to feel comfortable. You can choose, reject or change a support.”

Look and listen for

Did the learner have genuine choice? Could staff describe a proactive and a recovery adjustment?

Family connection (optional)

Share an optional calm-menu template; avoid imposing school techniques on family routines.

Apply beyond the lesson

Audit whether a favourite support is available in corridors, lunch, assemblies and other non-classroom settings.

WEEK 05 • PRIMARY LESSON • 40 MINUTES

Support During Big Waves

Learning intention: Select or practise an optional support that helps when learning feels difficult.

Timing / phase	Facilitator steps and pupil experience
5 min • Safety	Make clear that no one has to share private upsetting events.
8 min • Model	Teacher uses a fictitious loud-classroom example and tries a quiet seat or short movement break.
12 min • Explore	Choice stations: draw, look outside, use a fidget, sit quietly, stretch; no one activity suits everyone.
10 min • Menu	Children develop a “When my wave grows...” menu with adult support.
5 min • Check	Teacher asks which options should be available in school.

Ready-to-run practical example

Make a real “regulation menu” display with movable cards: headphones, walk, water, fidget, quiet corner, stretch or trusted adult. Each child may choose, reject or add an option. Staff should make at least one frequently chosen support accessible during ordinary lessons.

Differentiation in a primary classroom

- For pupils who prefer concrete materials: use objects, photographs, modelled actions and fewer steps. Keep appropriate complexity in ideas while reducing language load.
- For confident writers/readers: invite reflection, “what if?” questions, or choice of a linked real classroom challenge.
- For movement or sensory needs: enable flexible seating, a known quiet option, ear defenders where appropriate and movement without penalty.
- For speech differences: accept drawing, gestures, typing, AAC, adult scribing or observing; the child may decline to share publicly.

Teacher asks

“What helped you participate today? Is there something I should do differently next time?”

Worked classroom example: A Year 6 pupil declines a breathing exercise but asks to walk with an adult. The chosen walk is a valid regulation support.

WEEK 05 • SECONDARY LESSON • 50 MINUTES

Support During Big Waves

Learning intention: Build a personal regulation menu and distinguish prevention from recovery.

Timing / phase	Teaching sequence; student agency
5 min • Entry	Discuss differences between stress, excitement and overload using fictional situations.
10 min • Teach	Explain proactive supports, co-regulation, recovery time and post-incident repair.
15 min • Sort	Sort strategies into before, during and after a difficult moment.
12 min • Design	Students create an optional personal plan including how adults should approach them.
8 min • Review	Identify school-wide barriers to using helpful strategies.

Ready-to-run secondary task

Using a fictional student entering a loud examination corridor, create three columns: prevent, support in the moment, recover afterwards. Require the class to identify an adult/system responsibility in each column. Optional personal plans remain private and must not be graded.

Make it age-respectful

- Connect the theme to authentic adolescent settings: subject changes, examinations, deadlines, online groups, clubs, transport or post-16 choices.
- Give students the option of private written contributions and independent completion; never require personal disclosure.
- Treat pupil proposals as actionable feedback. Tell students which staff member will consider them and when they will hear back.
- For students with high literacy demand barriers, offer graphic organisers, recorded responses, worked examples or scribing without reducing the intellectual goal.

Formative exit prompt

“Name one teaching or environmental change that would improve access, and explain how we would know.”

Review risk

Never make pupils earn breaks, remove regulation tools as punishment or assume deep breathing works for everybody.

Support During Big Waves

Flexible 15–30 minute micro-sequence: Use with pupils who have complex communication needs, including non-speaking pupils. This is an access pathway, not a measure of age or cognitive potential. Begin with the child's existing support and AAC systems.

Accessible purpose: Experience a child-selected support without forced breathing, touch or compliance.

Step	Adult approach and child-led access
1. Ask	Use the person's established communication method to offer comfort choices.
2. Reduce load	Lower demands and avoid unnecessary speech, light or proximity.
3. Support	Provide chosen regulation items and a trusted adult if wanted.
4. Wait	Allow processing and recovery without a timed compliance deadline.
5. Learn	Later, check with the learner and family what genuinely helped.

Real access opportunity

Offer regulation supports without turning them into sensory tests. For a child who may dislike touch, keep objects within sight and let them initiate exploration. For another child who seeks movement, plan safe movement access instead of requiring sitting quietly. Confirm preferences with pupil and familiar team.

Partner practice checklist

- Position any established AAC where the learner can access it; respect positioning and access method advice.
- Observe spontaneous interaction; model language naturally. Avoid repeated testing questions or hand-over-hand prompting unless an individual clinical plan explicitly justifies a safe method.
- Allow substantial processing time, communicate in a low-demand manner and honour refusal.
- Offer an alternative when a task, symbol or sensory material is not accessible.
- Consult pupil and familiar partners when meaning is unclear; avoid treating behaviour as proof of a particular emotion.

Observation and next step

Evidence of access: Did the learner have genuine choice? Could staff describe a proactive and a recovery adjustment?

Important guardrail: Never make pupils earn breaks, remove regulation tools as punishment or assume deep breathing works for everybody.

Routines That Help

Core enquiry: Making daily sequences understandable while preserving autonomy and flexibility

Intentions and success criteria

Pathway	What successful access can look like
Primary	Build and use a visual or written 3–5 step activity plan.
Secondary	Analyse where a routine makes a school task accessible and where it becomes restrictive.
Complex communication needs	Access an individual first–then / now–next representation if useful.

Before teaching

Keywords: first, next, plan, routine, ready

Materials: Picture schedule cards; blank timetable; now/next boards; symbols or objects of reference.

Linked printable: My Circle Routine

Teacher opening language

“A Circle is a helpful pattern. We can use a plan, and we can change the plan when needed.”

Look and listen for

Can a learner use a sequence in the format that suits them? What happened when the plan changed?

Family connection (optional)

Optional: share a routine already working at home; ask school to mirror useful wording and symbols.

Apply beyond the lesson

Use the same sequencing convention across a second classroom or transition so adults, not the pupil alone, create consistency.

WEEK 06 • PRIMARY LESSON • 40 MINUTES

Routines That Help

Learning intention: Build and use a visual or written 3–5 step activity plan.

Timing / phase	Facilitator steps and pupil experience
5 min • Story	Tell a fictional story of a learner receiving five instructions at once.
10 min • Model	Break a familiar school task into four pictured steps; show that a step can be adjusted.
12 min • Build	Pupils make a routine for packing bag, science investigation or morning arrival.
8 min • Test	Use the plan with a real task, changing it if something unexpected occurs.
5 min • Review	Discuss: “What made the task easier?”

Ready-to-run practical example

Invite pupils to photograph, draw or arrange the steps for a familiar practical task. Use removable cards and explicitly model “change the order” when a step no longer fits. For early readers, pair one object of reference with each step as appropriate.

Differentiation in a primary classroom

- For pupils who prefer concrete materials: use objects, photographs, modelled actions and fewer steps. Keep appropriate complexity in ideas while reducing language load.
- For confident writers/readers: invite reflection, “what if?” questions, or choice of a linked real classroom challenge.
- For movement or sensory needs: enable flexible seating, a known quiet option, ear defenders where appropriate and movement without penalty.
- For speech differences: accept drawing, gestures, typing, AAC, adult scribing or observing; the child may decline to share publicly.

Teacher asks

“What helped you participate today? Is there something I should do differently next time?”

Worked classroom example: A Year 1 child prefers a photo timetable; a Year 10 child uses a calendar app for exactly the same planning purpose.

WEEK 06 • SECONDARY LESSON • 50 MINUTES

Routines That Help

Learning intention: Analyse where a routine makes a school task accessible and where it becomes restrictive.

Timing / phase	Teaching sequence; student agency
5 min • Reflect	Ask why a predictable sequence can reduce uncertainty.
10 min • Demonstrate	Model a complex homework/assignment task breakdown, including time estimates and rest.
15 min • Apply	Students create a workflow for a week of independent study or practical lesson.
12 min • Stress test	Introduce a benign change and revise the workflow without blaming the planner.
8 min • Exit	Students choose a reusable planning tool.

Ready-to-run secondary task

Take a multi-stage task such as writing a science conclusion. Produce a checklist with a time estimate, worked example, self-check and a place to ask questions. Discuss which parts should be fixed and which should be personally flexible.

Make it age-respectful

- Connect the theme to authentic adolescent settings: subject changes, examinations, deadlines, online groups, clubs, transport or post-16 choices.
- Give students the option of private written contributions and independent completion; never require personal disclosure.
- Treat pupil proposals as actionable feedback. Tell students which staff member will consider them and when they will hear back.
- For students with high literacy demand barriers, offer graphic organisers, recorded responses, worked examples or scribing without reducing the intellectual goal.

Formative exit prompt

“Name one teaching or environmental change that would improve access, and explain how we would know.”

Review risk

Routines should support safety, not turn into inflexible controls or prevent child-led change.

Routines That Help

Flexible 15–30 minute micro-sequence: Use with pupils who have complex communication needs, including non-speaking pupils. This is an access pathway, not a measure of age or cognitive potential. Begin with the child's existing support and AAC systems.

Accessible purpose: Access an individual first–then / now–next representation if useful.

Step	Adult approach and child-led access
1. Prepare	Use photographs, objects of reference or established symbols.
2. Show	Introduce a short now-next sequence before starting; allow longer processing time.
3. Do	Pair each step with the real activity, not a compliance demand.
4. Adjust	When the child signals distress, modify or stop the sequence.
5. Notice	Record whether predictability improved access.

Real access opportunity

Photograph the learner's own materials or use consistent objects of reference. Introduce a small now/next sequence before the real activity, then update it when the activity genuinely changes. Do not insist the pupil complete a step after they have clearly refused.

Partner practice checklist

- Position any established AAC where the learner can access it; respect positioning and access method advice.
- Observe spontaneous interaction; model language naturally. Avoid repeated testing questions or hand-over-hand prompting unless an individual clinical plan explicitly justifies a safe method.
- Allow substantial processing time, communicate in a low-demand manner and honour refusal.
- Offer an alternative when a task, symbol or sensory material is not accessible.
- Consult pupil and familiar partners when meaning is unclear; avoid treating behaviour as proof of a particular emotion.

Observation and next step

Evidence of access: Can a learner use a sequence in the format that suits them? What happened when the plan changed?

Important guardrail: Routines should support safety, not turn into inflexible controls or prevent child-led change.

When the Circle Changes

Core enquiry: Preparing for uncertainty with information, choices and compassionate backup plans

Intentions and success criteria

Pathway	What successful access can look like
Primary	Create a simple “change of plan” support card.
Secondary	Plan responses to real school changes with choice, lead time and safe options.
Complex communication needs	Receive advance accessible notice of a small, non-threatening change.

Before teaching

Keywords: change, notice, backup, choice, safe

Materials: Change card; two timetables; social scenario; now-next supports.

Linked printable: My Change-of-Plan Card

Teacher opening language

“Changes can be hard. Adults can explain what changes, what stays the same and what choices you have.”

Look and listen for

Was notice accessible and early enough? Did the student have an actionable choice?

Family connection (optional)

Offer a blank change note that staff can use for events; families may add their preferred format.

Apply beyond the lesson

Ask an actual school office or timetable team to trial a better notice format for one forthcoming change.

WEEK 07 • PRIMARY LESSON • 40 MINUTES

When the Circle Changes

Learning intention: Create a simple “change of plan” support card.

Timing / phase	Facilitator steps and pupil experience
5 min • Preview	Tell class what will and will not change in today’s session.
10 min • Model	Fictional example: rain moves PE indoors; adult names the change, what stays, what choices exist.
12 min • Practice	Use pretend changes to rebuild a timetable with the option of observing rather than joining.
8 min • Create	Make “When something changes, please...” cards (tell/show, time, place, person).
5 min • Close	Confirm next lesson plan and where changes will be announced.

Ready-to-run practical example

Use moveable “today’s plan” cards. Show a gentle fictional change such as a different reading book; highlight one familiar part of the routine, provide notice, and offer an alternate book. Ask pupils what information the adult should have shared earlier.

Differentiation in a primary classroom

- For pupils who prefer concrete materials: use objects, photographs, modelled actions and fewer steps. Keep appropriate complexity in ideas while reducing language load.
- For confident writers/readers: invite reflection, “what if?” questions, or choice of a linked real classroom challenge.
- For movement or sensory needs: enable flexible seating, a known quiet option, ear defenders where appropriate and movement without penalty.
- For speech differences: accept drawing, gestures, typing, AAC, adult scribing or observing; the child may decline to share publicly.

Teacher asks

“What helped you participate today? Is there something I should do differently next time?”

Worked classroom example: The hall is unavailable: staff offer a photo of the new room and explain the route before the lesson.

WEEK 07 • SECONDARY LESSON • 50 MINUTES

When the Circle Changes

Learning intention: Plan responses to real school changes with choice, lead time and safe options.

Timing / phase	Teaching sequence; student agency
5 min • Frame	Discuss timetable disruptions as barriers requiring support, not personal failures.
10 min • Strategies	Teach early notice, written confirmation, alternatives and checking understanding.
15 min • Scenario	Groups redesign a last-minute room change, substitute teacher or trip timetable for access.
12 min • Advocating	Write concise adjustment requests and alternative routes to participation.
8 min • Reflect	Identify what schools must organise, not simply pupils tolerate.

Ready-to-run secondary task

Provide a sample email announcing a sports hall closure five minutes before a practical lesson. Students rewrite it for accessibility, including a clear revised location, route, equipment, known staff member and a way to request an alternative.

Make it age-respectful

- Connect the theme to authentic adolescent settings: subject changes, examinations, deadlines, online groups, clubs, transport or post-16 choices.
- Give students the option of private written contributions and independent completion; never require personal disclosure.
- Treat pupil proposals as actionable feedback. Tell students which staff member will consider them and when they will hear back.
- For students with high literacy demand barriers, offer graphic organisers, recorded responses, worked examples or scribing without reducing the intellectual goal.

Formative exit prompt

“Name one teaching or environmental change that would improve access, and explain how we would know.”

Review risk

Do not deliberately create distressing surprises as an exposure exercise.

When the Circle Changes

Flexible 15–30 minute micro-sequence: Use with pupils who have complex communication needs, including non-speaking pupils. This is an access pathway, not a measure of age or cognitive potential. Begin with the child's existing support and AAC systems.

Accessible purpose: Receive advance accessible notice of a small, non-threatening change.

Step	Adult approach and child-led access
1. Start safe	Do not simulate sudden overwhelming changes to test tolerance.
2. Show	Give notice of a small real change using the learner's established format.
3. Anchor	Show one element that will remain familiar, and a known support person if possible.
4. Offer	Provide opt-in alternative or extra processing time.
5. Review	Check pupil's response before proceeding; avoid forced desensitisation.

Real access opportunity

Use the learner's familiar change cue, a photo of the new location and a known adult when there is a real small change. For children who rely on physical objects, prepare the substitute object in advance. Do not test resilience with an unannounced disruption.

Partner practice checklist

- Position any established AAC where the learner can access it; respect positioning and access method advice.
- Observe spontaneous interaction; model language naturally. Avoid repeated testing questions or hand-over-hand prompting unless an individual clinical plan explicitly justifies a safe method.
- Allow substantial processing time, communicate in a low-demand manner and honour refusal.
- Offer an alternative when a task, symbol or sensory material is not accessible.
- Consult pupil and familiar partners when meaning is unclear; avoid treating behaviour as proof of a particular emotion.

Observation and next step

Evidence of access: Was notice accessible and early enough? Did the student have an actionable choice?

Important guardrail: Do not deliberately create distressing surprises as an exposure exercise.

Ways We Communicate

Core enquiry: Recognising speech, AAC, writing, gesture, movement and silence as meaningful

Intentions and success criteria

Pathway	What successful access can look like
Primary	Identify two respectful ways of communicating or connecting.
Secondary	Design communication-friendly group work with consent and alternatives.
Complex communication needs	Use a personally accessible method to express a preference or refusal.

Before teaching

Keywords: listen, show, write, ask, respect

Materials: Speech bubble cards; picture/written choice boards; AAC; example dialogue.

Linked printable: My Communication Bridge

Teacher opening language

“There are lots of ways to communicate. All respectful ways count, including saying no.”

Look and listen for

Does the activity offer more than speech? Does the adult respond to the child’s own communication?

Family connection (optional)

Invite families to share how their child shows agreement, refusal and interest; avoid sending home unapproved symbol systems.

Apply beyond the lesson

Introduce an accessible response route in another subject assessment and check that marks reward the learning rather than the communication mode.

WEEK 08 • PRIMARY LESSON • 40 MINUTES

Ways We Communicate

Learning intention: Identify two respectful ways of communicating or connecting.

Timing / phase	Facilitator steps and pupil experience
5 min • Open	Demonstrate asking with speech, writing and pointing; all count.
10 min • Model	Puppets show how a person may need time to answer or prefer not to speak.
12 min • Explore	Children try optional communication stations: draw, gesture, type, talk, symbol choice.
8 min • Create	Make a classroom agreement: “Give time, ask before helping, accept no.”
5 min • Close	Offer an exit response in any accessible format.

Ready-to-run practical example

Create “same question, different response” stations: circle a choice, speak, write, use a symbol or show with objects. The teacher responds to each as equally meaningful. Close by practicing how to wait without guessing what a classmate means.

Differentiation in a primary classroom

- For pupils who prefer concrete materials: use objects, photographs, modelled actions and fewer steps. Keep appropriate complexity in ideas while reducing language load.
- For confident writers/readers: invite reflection, “what if?” questions, or choice of a linked real classroom challenge.
- For movement or sensory needs: enable flexible seating, a known quiet option, ear defenders where appropriate and movement without penalty.
- For speech differences: accept drawing, gestures, typing, AAC, adult scribing or observing; the child may decline to share publicly.

Teacher asks

“What helped you participate today? Is there something I should do differently next time?”

Worked classroom example: A teenager submits a typed group reflection while peers speak; teacher assesses the same learning objective.

WEEK 08 • SECONDARY LESSON • 50 MINUTES

Ways We Communicate

Learning intention: Design communication-friendly group work with consent and alternatives.

Timing / phase	Teaching sequence; student agency
5 min • Question	Ask: “Who is excluded by a rule that everyone must speak in front of class?”
10 min • Teach	Explore access, communication partners, processing time, multimodal participation.
15 min • Redesign	Rework a fictional presentation assessment to include written, recorded, AAC or supported methods.
12 min • Demonstrate	Use partner roles that protect autonomy and avoid finishing others’ sentences.
8 min • Commit	Agree two inclusive communication norms.

Ready-to-run secondary task

Students redesign a classroom debate so that spoken contributions, typed notes, AAC, question cards and asynchronous responses can all meet the learning intention. Compare how assessment criteria must focus on reasoning instead of performance style.

Make it age-respectful

- Connect the theme to authentic adolescent settings: subject changes, examinations, deadlines, online groups, clubs, transport or post-16 choices.
- Give students the option of private written contributions and independent completion; never require personal disclosure.
- Treat pupil proposals as actionable feedback. Tell students which staff member will consider them and when they will hear back.
- For students with high literacy demand barriers, offer graphic organisers, recorded responses, worked examples or scribing without reducing the intellectual goal.

Formative exit prompt

“Name one teaching or environmental change that would improve access, and explain how we would know.”

Review risk

Do not introduce a replacement AAC system without specialist/family agreement or remove existing communication supports.

Ways We Communicate

Flexible 15–30 minute micro-sequence: Use with pupils who have complex communication needs, including non-speaking pupils. This is an access pathway, not a measure of age or cognitive potential. Begin with the child's existing support and AAC systems.

Accessible purpose: Use a personally accessible method to express a preference or refusal.

Step	Adult approach and child-led access
1. Access first	Check AAC is charged, in reach, suitably positioned and not removed.
2. Model	Use aided language in a natural activity with the established vocabulary.
3. Wait	Allow adequate processing and do not insist on eye contact.
4. Honour	Respond to "stop", "no", "help", "more" and spontaneous communication.
5. Reflect	Consult child, family and speech-and-language professionals on what works.

Real access opportunity

Support communication in the actual pupil context: access method, vocabulary placement and wait time come from their established programme. A communication partner models a relevant word during play and recognises a spontaneous refusal without adding a test question.

Partner practice checklist

- Position any established AAC where the learner can access it; respect positioning and access method advice.
- Observe spontaneous interaction; model language naturally. Avoid repeated testing questions or hand-over-hand prompting unless an individual clinical plan explicitly justifies a safe method.
- Allow substantial processing time, communicate in a low-demand manner and honour refusal.
- Offer an alternative when a task, symbol or sensory material is not accessible.
- Consult pupil and familiar partners when meaning is unclear; avoid treating behaviour as proof of a particular emotion.

Observation and next step

Evidence of access: Does the activity offer more than speech? Does the adult respond to the child's own communication?

Important guardrail: Do not introduce a replacement AAC system without specialist/family agreement or remove existing communication supports.

Belonging and Boundaries

Core enquiry: Friendship choices, consent, shared interests and safe connections

Intentions and success criteria

Pathway	What successful access can look like
Primary	Recognise that being a friend includes respecting “no” and personal space.
Secondary	Explore boundaries and supportive peer relationships without demanding social conformity.
Complex communication needs	Experience a respectful interaction with real control over joining and ending.

Before teaching

Keywords: friend, space, no, connect, respect

Materials: Fictional friendship cards; shared interest pictures; boundary cards.

Linked printable: My Bridges and Boundaries

Teacher opening language

“Belonging means being respected. You can join in, take space or connect in your own way.”

Look and listen for

Was refusal respected? Were peer activities accessible without demanding eye contact, speech or touch?

Family connection (optional)

Families may share a favourite connection activity; do not ask for friendship reports.

Apply beyond the lesson

Review a lunchtime or playground structure: is safe solitary choice genuinely available as well as optional group activity?

WEEK 09 • PRIMARY LESSON • 40 MINUTES

Belonging and Boundaries

Learning intention: Recognise that being a friend includes respecting “no” and personal space.

Timing / phase	Facilitator steps and pupil experience
5 min • Start	Model a kind invitation and accepting “not now”.
10 min • Story	Use fictional characters who connect through shared drawing, parallel play or talking.
12 min • Activity	Children select cooperative, parallel or solo stations; all are valued.
8 min • Cards	Finish sentence options: “You can ask me... / Please don’t...”
5 min • Close	Praise respecting choices rather than the number of friends made.

Ready-to-run practical example

Offer three play invitations: build together, build beside one another or build alone. Each pupil may switch. Practise invitation language (“Would you like to join?”) and the accepting response (“That’s okay”). Never assign a friendship score.

Differentiation in a primary classroom

- For pupils who prefer concrete materials: use objects, photographs, modelled actions and fewer steps. Keep appropriate complexity in ideas while reducing language load.
- For confident writers/readers: invite reflection, “what if?” questions, or choice of a linked real classroom challenge.
- For movement or sensory needs: enable flexible seating, a known quiet option, ear defenders where appropriate and movement without penalty.
- For speech differences: accept drawing, gestures, typing, AAC, adult scribing or observing; the child may decline to share publicly.

Teacher asks

“What helped you participate today? Is there something I should do differently next time?”

Worked classroom example: A learner prefers parallel Lego building to group conversation; an adult invites peers to connect alongside them.

WEEK 09 • SECONDARY LESSON • 50 MINUTES

Belonging and Boundaries

Learning intention: Explore boundaries and supportive peer relationships without demanding social conformity.

Timing / phase	Teaching sequence; student agency
5 min • Reflect	Discuss what belonging can look like for quiet, highly social and online-connected pupils.
10 min • Teach	Distinguish consent, pressure, teasing, inclusion and support.
15 min • Scenarios	Review fictional conflicts about group chats, physical contact or forced group tasks.
12 min • Design	Co-create inclusive group agreements and private routes for seeking help.
8 min • Exit	Name an adult or system for raising a concern.

Ready-to-run secondary task

Use fictional messages: a group chat pressure to reply, someone sharing another pupil’s photo, and a friend demanding physical contact. Students identify consent, boundaries, options for safe support and when safeguarding or anti-bullying rules apply.

Make it age-respectful

- Connect the theme to authentic adolescent settings: subject changes, examinations, deadlines, online groups, clubs, transport or post-16 choices.
- Give students the option of private written contributions and independent completion; never require personal disclosure.
- Treat pupil proposals as actionable feedback. Tell students which staff member will consider them and when they will hear back.
- For students with high literacy demand barriers, offer graphic organisers, recorded responses, worked examples or scribing without reducing the intellectual goal.

Formative exit prompt

“Name one teaching or environmental change that would improve access, and explain how we would know.”

Review risk

Do not treat solitary play, stimming or fewer friendships as problems in themselves; follow safeguarding procedures for bullying.

Belonging and Boundaries

Flexible 15–30 minute micro-sequence: Use with pupils who have complex communication needs, including non-speaking pupils. This is an access pathway, not a measure of age or cognitive potential. Begin with the child's existing support and AAC systems.

Accessible purpose: Experience a respectful interaction with real control over joining and ending.

Step	Adult approach and child-led access
1. Invite	Offer join/watch/alone/finished choices without pressure.
2. Follow	Let pupil choose whether activity is parallel, shared or solo.
3. Respect	Attend to touch and personal-space boundaries.
4. Model	Show peers how to wait, ask and accept refusal.
5. Record	Note the pupil's choices and effective access supports, not social frequency.

Real access opportunity

Make a shared-interest activity available beside peers without pressuring eye contact or speech. Offer symbols for join, alone, stop and finished; model peers asking and waiting. Recognise the child choosing solitude as an appropriate exercise of autonomy.

Partner practice checklist

- Position any established AAC where the learner can access it; respect positioning and access method advice.
- Observe spontaneous interaction; model language naturally. Avoid repeated testing questions or hand-over-hand prompting unless an individual clinical plan explicitly justifies a safe method.
- Allow substantial processing time, communicate in a low-demand manner and honour refusal.
- Offer an alternative when a task, symbol or sensory material is not accessible.
- Consult pupil and familiar partners when meaning is unclear; avoid treating behaviour as proof of a particular emotion.

Observation and next step

Evidence of access: Was refusal respected? Were peer activities accessible without demanding eye contact, speech or touch?

Important guardrail: Do not treat solitary play, stimming or fewer friendships as problems in themselves; follow safeguarding procedures for bullying.

Four Pillars in One Challenge

Core enquiry: Applying all pillars to an authentic learning task

Intentions and success criteria

Pathway	What successful access can look like
Primary	Identify at least one support from two pillars while completing a chosen project.
Secondary	Plan, undertake and adapt a project using all four pillars.
Complex communication needs	Participate in a multi-step meaningful task with personalised supports.

Before teaching

Keywords: choose, plan, check, connect, reflect

Materials: Project menu: make a poster, build a model, solve a practical problem, produce audio; pillar cards.

Linked printable: My Four Pillars Project Plan

Teacher opening language

“Today our four pillars will help us make something meaningful, with choices and adjustments.”

Look and listen for

Can staff describe how at least two pillars changed access? What did the learner choose to alter?

Family connection (optional)

Optional: tell a family member about one project support that helped; written communication is not required.

Apply beyond the lesson

Choose one small pupil proposal that the class or school can actually implement and set a review date.

WEEK 10 • PRIMARY LESSON • 40 MINUTES

Four Pillars in One Challenge

Learning intention: Identify at least one support from two pillars while completing a chosen project.

Timing / phase	Facilitator steps and pupil experience
5 min • Choose	Offer simple projects such as building a paper bridge or planning a garden corner.
8 min • Plan	Teacher models Brian’s idea, Wave check, Circle steps, Bridge help options.
17 min • Make	Pupils work with flexible partners or individually, checking chosen supports.
5 min • Adjust	Allow a pause or change in method; praise adaptive choices.
5 min • Review	Children annotate a four-pillar project strip.

Ready-to-run practical example

Use the “build a paper bridge” challenge: sketch or choose a model (Brian’s), plan steps (Circles), check comfort and breaks (Waves), and decide who to ask or work alongside (Bridges). The bridge need not stand up for the learning to count.

Differentiation in a primary classroom

- For pupils who prefer concrete materials: use objects, photographs, modelled actions and fewer steps. Keep appropriate complexity in ideas while reducing language load.
- For confident writers/readers: invite reflection, “what if?” questions, or choice of a linked real classroom challenge.
- For movement or sensory needs: enable flexible seating, a known quiet option, ear defenders where appropriate and movement without penalty.
- For speech differences: accept drawing, gestures, typing, AAC, adult scribing or observing; the child may decline to share publicly.

Teacher asks

“What helped you participate today? Is there something I should do differently next time?”

Worked classroom example: A Year 8 pupil makes a quiet-space proposal using diagrams and typed notes while the teacher accommodates a sensory break.

WEEK 10 • SECONDARY LESSON • 50 MINUTES

Four Pillars in One Challenge

Learning intention: Plan, undertake and adapt a project using all four pillars.

Timing / phase	Teaching sequence; student agency
5 min • Brief	Present a genuine school improvement question, such as improving quiet study access.
10 min • Plan	Teams or individuals map thinking tasks, sensory access, timelines and communication.
22 min • Project	Create a realistic proposal with options, consultation and accessibility checks.
8 min • Test	Stress-test who may be excluded and alter the plan.
5 min • Reflect	Highlight adjustments that enabled participation.

Ready-to-run secondary task

Set an authentic brief: make the library more accessible for different sensory and communication preferences. Students choose a written proposal, physical model, annotated map or short recording. Require consultation, budget realism and a test of unintended barriers.

Make it age-respectful

- Connect the theme to authentic adolescent settings: subject changes, examinations, deadlines, online groups, clubs, transport or post-16 choices.
- Give students the option of private written contributions and independent completion; never require personal disclosure.
- Treat pupil proposals as actionable feedback. Tell students which staff member will consider them and when they will hear back.
- For students with high literacy demand barriers, offer graphic organisers, recorded responses, worked examples or scribing without reducing the intellectual goal.

Formative exit prompt

“Name one teaching or environmental change that would improve access, and explain how we would know.”

Review risk

The product is less important than access, agency and safe participation.

Four Pillars in One Challenge

Flexible 15–30 minute micro-sequence: Use with pupils who have complex communication needs, including non-speaking pupils. This is an access pathway, not a measure of age or cognitive potential. Begin with the child's existing support and AAC systems.

Accessible purpose: Participate in a multi-step meaningful task with personalised supports.

Step	Adult approach and child-led access
1. Choose	Offer two familiar purposeful projects, e.g. sensory story or supported construction.
2. Sequence	Use now-next or a preferred task sequence.
3. Regulate	Provide access to breaks and preferred environment throughout.
4. Communicate	Model and honour choices using established AAC.
5. Collect	Keep a short record of meaningful participation, choice and supported completion.

Real access opportunity

Use a preferred purposeful project with at least two meaningful child choices. For example, a tactile picture story can have chosen sequence pictures, a quiet space and AAC options for more/stop. Record agency and changes in support rather than product quality.

Partner practice checklist

- Position any established AAC where the learner can access it; respect positioning and access method advice.
- Observe spontaneous interaction; model language naturally. Avoid repeated testing questions or hand-over-hand prompting unless an individual clinical plan explicitly justifies a safe method.
- Allow substantial processing time, communicate in a low-demand manner and honour refusal.
- Offer an alternative when a task, symbol or sensory material is not accessible.
- Consult pupil and familiar partners when meaning is unclear; avoid treating behaviour as proof of a particular emotion.

Observation and next step

Evidence of access: Can staff describe how at least two pillars changed access? What did the learner choose to alter?

Important guardrail: The product is less important than access, agency and safe participation.

WEEK 11 • OVERVIEW • ALL FOUR PILLARS

Transitions and Speaking Up

Core enquiry: Preparing for moving class, changes of staff and new activities

Intentions and success criteria

Pathway	What successful access can look like
Primary	Create a next-step transition card identifying information and support.
Secondary	Create a learner-led transition or self-advocacy plan for a realistic upcoming change.
Complex communication needs	Identify or demonstrate one useful transition cue and trusted support.

Before teaching

Keywords: next, change, prepare, ask, support

Materials: Mock transition schedule; photo/video route options; transition card; familiar AAC.

Linked printable: My Transition Passport Page

Teacher opening language

“When something new is coming, you can ask for information and help. Adults will work with you.”

Look and listen for

Does the plan belong to the pupil? Have staff prepared the environment and information rather than demanding tolerance?

Family connection (optional)

Offer families an optional transition planning conversation in accessible formats.

Apply beyond the lesson

Agree with the receiving adult exactly what adjustment they will provide on the first day and confirm it happens.

WEEK 11 • PRIMARY LESSON • 40 MINUTES

Transitions and Speaking Up

Learning intention: Create a next-step transition card identifying information and support.

Timing / phase	Facilitator steps and pupil experience
5 min • Safe start	Show a fictional upcoming trip to a library or unfamiliar classroom.
10 min • Map	Who, where, when, what happens first, and who helps?
12 min • Create	Children make a five-panel transition guide with chosen details.
8 min • Rehearse	Practise walking the route or explore photos rather than simulating distress.
5 min • Close	Ask what adults should explain in advance.

Ready-to-run practical example

Make a five-panel story for a real, consented school transition: where I go, who will be there, what I will do, what stays familiar and what I can ask. Older primary pupils can create a map or slideshow rather than a cartoon.

Differentiation in a primary classroom

- For pupils who prefer concrete materials: use objects, photographs, modelled actions and fewer steps. Keep appropriate complexity in ideas while reducing language load.
- For confident writers/readers: invite reflection, “what if?” questions, or choice of a linked real classroom challenge.
- For movement or sensory needs: enable flexible seating, a known quiet option, ear defenders where appropriate and movement without penalty.
- For speech differences: accept drawing, gestures, typing, AAC, adult scribing or observing; the child may decline to share publicly.

Teacher asks

“What helped you participate today? Is there something I should do differently next time?”

Worked classroom example: Before a teacher change, staff send a photograph and timetable home, and arrange a short optional familiarisation visit.

WEEK 11 • SECONDARY LESSON • 50 MINUTES

Transitions and Speaking Up

Learning intention: Create a learner-led transition or self-advocacy plan for a realistic upcoming change.

Timing / phase	Teaching sequence; student agency
5 min • Prompt	Name legitimate transition concerns around GCSE subjects, rooms or post-16 options.
10 min • Framework	Use all pillars to map information needs, change impact, planning and communication.
15 min • Draft	Create a one-page transition profile: what works, what does not, who needs to know.
12 min • Refine	Practise requesting a visit, a timetable, materials or agreed check-in.
8 min • Exit	Choose what, if anything, may be shared with future staff.

Ready-to-run secondary task

Students draft a future-setting access profile: how teachers should give instructions, how changes should be communicated, what sensory supports matter, what contact route feels safe and what information can be shared with consent.

Make it age-respectful

- Connect the theme to authentic adolescent settings: subject changes, examinations, deadlines, online groups, clubs, transport or post-16 choices.
- Give students the option of private written contributions and independent completion; never require personal disclosure.
- Treat pupil proposals as actionable feedback. Tell students which staff member will consider them and when they will hear back.
- For students with high literacy demand barriers, offer graphic organisers, recorded responses, worked examples or scribing without reducing the intellectual goal.

Formative exit prompt

“Name one teaching or environmental change that would improve access, and explain how we would know.”

Review risk

Do not share sensitive profiles without appropriate school processes or ignore significant distress.

WEEK 11 • COMPLEX COMMUNICATION ACCESS PATHWAY

Transitions and Speaking Up

Flexible 15–30 minute micro-sequence: Use with pupils who have complex communication needs, including non-speaking pupils. This is an access pathway, not a measure of age or cognitive potential. Begin with the child's existing support and AAC systems.

Accessible purpose: Identify or demonstrate one useful transition cue and trusted support.

Step	Adult approach and child-led access
1. Start	Use familiar trusted people and the child's existing transition routine.
2. Preview	Provide tangible object, photographs, video or a simple route supported by AAC.
3. Offer pace	Shorten, postpone or repeat preview according to preference.
4. Validate	Treat distress or refusal as information and adapt rather than push through.
5. Prepare adults	Share essential adjustments through approved school systems.

Real access opportunity

Use real photographs of the route or object cues from an actual upcoming transition. Allow the learner to approach the new place gradually and stop when needed. If distress rises, treat the plan as wrong for now and change the environment or pace.

Partner practice checklist

- Position any established AAC where the learner can access it; respect positioning and access method advice.
- Observe spontaneous interaction; model language naturally. Avoid repeated testing questions or hand-over-hand prompting unless an individual clinical plan explicitly justifies a safe method.
- Allow substantial processing time, communicate in a low-demand manner and honour refusal.
- Offer an alternative when a task, symbol or sensory material is not accessible.
- Consult pupil and familiar partners when meaning is unclear; avoid treating behaviour as proof of a particular emotion.

Observation and next step

Evidence of access: Does the plan belong to the pupil? Have staff prepared the environment and information rather than demanding tolerance?

Important guardrail: Do not share sensitive profiles without appropriate school processes or ignore significant distress.

WEEK 12 • OVERVIEW • ALL FOUR PILLARS

My Voice, My Learning, Our Next Steps

Core enquiry: Reviewing supports, celebrating learning and choosing sustainable changes

Intentions and success criteria

Pathway	What successful access can look like
Primary	Share, in a chosen format, one helpful learning condition or future request.
Secondary	Evaluate which changes improved access and propose realistic next steps.
Complex communication needs	Confirm or reject a support preference in an accessible manner.

Before teaching

Keywords: reflect, keep, change, next, proud

Materials: Baseline notes; learner work samples; four pillar reflection; pupil voice form.

Linked printable: My End-of-Term Voice

Teacher opening language

“You can tell us what to keep or change. Your voice matters, whatever way you communicate.”

Look and listen for

Which adjustments were accepted or rejected? What pupil evidence, family feedback and staff reflection supports the next decision?

Family connection (optional)

Share a strengths-and-support summary with families through agreed channels, inviting correction.

Apply beyond the lesson

Put agreed adjustments into ordinary school planning for next term rather than storing reflections in a separate unused folder.

WEEK 12 • PRIMARY LESSON • 40 MINUTES

My Voice, My Learning, Our Next Steps

Learning intention: Share, in a chosen format, one helpful learning condition or future request.

Timing / phase	Facilitator steps and pupil experience
5 min • Recall	Show pillar images and return to Week 1 contributions.
10 min • Notice	Adults describe specific supports adopted, not supposed changes in personality.
12 min • Choose	Child selects a favourite learning support, activity or future change.
8 min • Celebrate	Create a class display or private keepsake only with consent.
5 min • Next	Agree one adjustment to keep and a date to check it.

Ready-to-run practical example

Lay out a small display of the pupil's own chosen work or photos. Invite them to select "keep", "change" or "not yet" for two classroom practices. Adults should respond with a concrete next-step promise and return to it later.

Differentiation in a primary classroom

- For pupils who prefer concrete materials: use objects, photographs, modelled actions and fewer steps. Keep appropriate complexity in ideas while reducing language load.
- For confident writers/readers: invite reflection, "what if?" questions, or choice of a linked real classroom challenge.
- For movement or sensory needs: enable flexible seating, a known quiet option, ear defenders where appropriate and movement without penalty.
- For speech differences: accept drawing, gestures, typing, AAC, adult scribing or observing; the child may decline to share publicly.

Teacher asks

"What helped you participate today? Is there something I should do differently next time?"

Worked classroom example: A student's principal recommendation is "write classroom changes on the board"; school implements this immediately.

WEEK 12 • SECONDARY LESSON • 50 MINUTES

My Voice, My Learning, Our Next Steps

Learning intention: Evaluate which changes improved access and propose realistic next steps.

Timing / phase	Teaching sequence; student agency
5 min • Revisit	Return to the original accessibility questions from Week 1.
10 min • Audit	Compare planned adjustments with pupil experience and teacher observation.
15 min • Evaluate	Students select useful supports and identify gaps or unintended problems.
12 min • Recommend	Make an achievable proposal using the four pillars and who is responsible.
8 min • Close	Clarify which learner feedback will be acted on and when.

Ready-to-run secondary task

Run a student-led mini-audit: which supports exist in policy, which are available in practice and which feel intrusive? Students may submit anonymous feedback. School leaders respond with no more than three realistic commitments and dates.

Make it age-respectful

- Connect the theme to authentic adolescent settings: subject changes, examinations, deadlines, online groups, clubs, transport or post-16 choices.
- Give students the option of private written contributions and independent completion; never require personal disclosure.
- Treat pupil proposals as actionable feedback. Tell students which staff member will consider them and when they will hear back.
- For students with high literacy demand barriers, offer graphic organisers, recorded responses, worked examples or scribing without reducing the intellectual goal.

Formative exit prompt

“Name one teaching or environmental change that would improve access, and explain how we would know.”

Review risk

Do not describe lack of verbal response as lack of insight; do not treat programme completion as a diagnostic or therapy outcome.

WEEK 12 • COMPLEX COMMUNICATION ACCESS PATHWAY

My Voice, My Learning, Our Next Steps

Flexible 15–30 minute micro-sequence: Use with pupils who have complex communication needs, including non-speaking pupils. This is an access pathway, not a measure of age or cognitive potential. Begin with the child's existing support and AAC systems.

Accessible purpose: Confirm or reject a support preference in an accessible manner.

Step	Adult approach and child-led access
1. Prepare	Present familiar samples of successful activities or chosen objects.
2. Offer	Allow like/dislike, keep/change, more/stop using existing methods.
3. Watch	Use careful observation; do not infer consent from stillness.
4. Confirm	Check with child and communication partners where meanings are uncertain.
5. Transfer	Document working adjustments and schedule review with the SENCO.

Real access opportunity

Present two real examples of familiar supports and offer keep/change choices using the established system. Ask the pupil what should not be shared. Where a response is uncertain, seek corroborating observations rather than deciding meaning on their behalf.

Partner practice checklist

- Position any established AAC where the learner can access it; respect positioning and access method advice.
- Observe spontaneous interaction; model language naturally. Avoid repeated testing questions or hand-over-hand prompting unless an individual clinical plan explicitly justifies a safe method.
- Allow substantial processing time, communicate in a low-demand manner and honour refusal.
- Offer an alternative when a task, symbol or sensory material is not accessible.
- Consult pupil and familiar partners when meaning is unclear; avoid treating behaviour as proof of a particular emotion.

Observation and next step

Evidence of access: Which adjustments were accepted or rejected? What pupil evidence, family feedback and staff reflection supports the next decision?

Important guardrail: Do not describe lack of verbal response as lack of insight; do not treat programme completion as a diagnostic or therapy outcome.

PART THREE • PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Case-study discussion bank

All six examples are fictional composites. Use them for staff discussion; they are not pupil records. Suggested facilitation: read 2 minutes; four-pillar map 4 minutes; identify an adult change 4 minutes; safeguarding/reflection 3 minutes.

STAFF CASE STUDY • FICTIONAL

1 • Primary classroom overload

Year 3 • Unnamed pupil (fictional)

The situation

A pupil engages well with practical science but becomes distressed after long spoken instructions and the class bell. An adult interprets leaving the carpet as non-compliance.

Four Pillars analysis

Brian’s: show the task as pictures; Waves: explore sound and notice warning signs without guessing emotion; Circles: provide a short visual sequence; Bridges: agree a quiet help signal.

Suggested response

Before activity: consult pupil and family, show 3 pictured steps, permit alternative seating and bell preparation. During: reduce verbal load, respond to help signal and offer a quiet route. After: gather preference feedback and note access.

Discussion questions

Which step changed access most? Did the pupil have genuine choice? What safeguarding concern would be escalated if there were unexplained injuries or disclosures?

What will the adults change?

STAFF CASE STUDY • FICTIONAL

2 • Secondary school transition

Year 8 • Unnamed student (fictional)

The situation

A student with ADHD traits has strong ideas in history but misses deadlines after last-minute room changes and multiple online homework platforms.

Four Pillars analysis

Brian’s: visible instruction and reminders; Waves: notice demands and fatigue; Circles: one assignment sequence with checkpoints; Bridges: private written clarification and teacher coordination.

Suggested response

Offer consistent assignment templates and due-date visibility. Conduct a student-led review after two weeks; note whether instructions and deadlines became accessible rather than blaming lateness.

Discussion questions

How can staff avoid an infantilising visual system? Who ensures subject teachers use a consistent approach?

What will the adults change?

STAFF CASE STUDY • FICTIONAL

3 • Complex communication needs

Year 5 • Non-speaking AAC user (fictional)

The situation

A learner’s device is sometimes placed on a high shelf during messy art. Adults ask yes/no questions but give little processing time.

Four Pillars analysis

Brian’s: access interest in colour and pattern; Waves: monitor environment choices; Circles: show familiar stages; Bridges: AAC device always available and modelled.

Suggested response

Position AAC safely and accessibly; liaise with SaLT and family; provide protected device access during the activity, suitable alternative access and adequate wait time. Honour stop/finished.

Discussion questions

Which school practice is blocking communication? How would the team make the improvement sustainable?

What will the adults change?

STAFF CASE STUDY • FICTIONAL

4 • Secondary friendship boundaries

Year 10 • Unnamed pupil (fictional)

The situation

A pupil has friends online but prefers solitary lunchtime. Adults schedule compulsory group social-skills games; student reports feeling exposed.

Four Pillars analysis

Brian’s: recognise interest and autonomy; Waves: provide low-demand lunch setting; Circles: predictable choice of clubs; Bridges: respect social boundaries and offer optional connection.

Suggested response

Invite student input in preferred channel. Stop compulsory social activity; address any actual bullying through safeguarding/behaviour policies, not peer-pressure tactics.

Discussion questions

What does belonging mean if a learner chooses fewer interactions? How can the school measure access, not friendship count?

What will the adults change?

STAFF CASE STUDY • FICTIONAL

5 • Early-years change

Reception • Unnamed child (fictional)

The situation

A child is unsettled when an outdoor-play plan is cancelled due to rain; adults repeatedly insist “it’s fine” and move on.

Four Pillars analysis

Brian’s: reduce language; Waves: recognise distress signals; Circles: show what changed and what remains; Bridges: present a choice between safe indoor activities.

Suggested response

Use a now-next board, acknowledge disappointment without forced explanation, provide predictable person and sensory-adjusted space.

Discussion questions

What advance information could adults provide? How will the child indicate they need more time?

What will the adults change?

STAFF CASE STUDY • FICTIONAL

6 • Pupil voice and implementation

Whole-school pilot • Fictional staff team

The situation

Staff report that the check-in board has been used daily, but several pupils say it feels public and pressure to select a “happy” colour.

Four Pillars analysis

Brian’s: understand diverse preferences; Waves: create private and optional methods; Circles: predictable non-punitive check-in timing; Bridges: pupils choose when and how to share.

Suggested response

Revise implementation: private check-ins, no forced disclosure, responsive follow-up, co-design with pupils and families. Reassess acceptability rather than counting completed check-ins alone.

Discussion questions

How will leadership distinguish fidelity to principles from rigid fidelity to a public board?

What will the adults change?

Print-ready pupil resources

The following original templates can be printed on A4 or recreated digitally. Use each alongside the pupil's own preferred format; replace generic words with their established photographs, symbols, objects or AAC vocabulary where appropriate. Personal information should be stored according to school policy.

Resources W01–W12 correspond with the 12 weekly lessons; R01–R08 are reusable resources. The appendix is also supplied as a separate PDF for easy printing.

PRINTABLE RESOURCE • W01

Four Pillars Explorer

Choose your own way to explore these four ideas. Draw, write, point or use your communication system.

Pupil’s chosen name (optional): _____ Date (optional): _____

Choose or point to ideas, or write/draw your own

I want to share this with an adult | Keep this private for now | I want help completing it

My Brian’s: I learn or enjoy ...

My Waves: I feel most comfortable when ...

My Circles: a helpful routine is ...

My Bridges: I connect or ask for help by ...

My way to finish or give feedback: ☐ Share ☐ Keep private ☐ Ask for help ☐ Not today

PRINTABLE RESOURCE • W02

My Brian’s Strengths

Different thinking strengths can show up in different places. You do not need to be good at everything.

Pupil’s chosen name (optional): _____ Date (optional): _____

Choose or point to ideas, or write/draw your own

Picture instructions	More time	A worked example
Hands-on activity	Quiet space	My own idea

I enjoy thinking about ...

A task I like is ...

When learning feels difficult, it helps when ...

Adults can help me by ...

My way to finish or give feedback: ☐ Share ☐ Keep private ☐ Ask for help ☐ Not today

PRINTABLE RESOURCE • W03

My Help and Choice Card

These are choices and requests I may use. The adult must honour my communication and agreed support.

Pupil’s chosen name (optional): _____ Date (optional): _____

Choose or point to ideas, or write/draw your own

HELP	STOP	MORE TIME
SHOW ME	BREAK	FINISHED
DIFFERENT	YES	NO

My chosen signal for help is ...

When I use the signal, adults will ...

When I say or show STOP, adults will ...

My way to finish or give feedback: ☐ Share ☐ Keep private ☐ Ask for help ☐ Not today

PRINTABLE RESOURCE • W04

My Wave Check-In

A Wave is a way to notice changing comfort or energy, not a test of happiness.

Pupil’s chosen name (optional): _____ Date (optional): _____

Choose or point to ideas, or write/draw your own

Calm	Busy	Unsure
Need space	Need movement	Don’t want to say

Today I choose to describe my wave using ...

A place that feels comfortable is ...

A thing that may increase my wave is ...

A support I would like is ...

My way to finish or give feedback: ☐ Share ☐ Keep private ☐ Ask for help ☐ Not today

PRINTABLE RESOURCE • W05

My Regulation Menu

Supports must be chosen with me and adapted to my sensory preferences.

Pupil’s chosen name (optional): _____ Date (optional): _____

Choose or point to ideas, or write/draw your own

Quieter space	Different light	Movement
Fidget	Trusted adult	No talking
Water	My own idea	

Before the wave grows, it helps to ...

When things are too much, please ...

After a difficult moment, I need ...

A support I do NOT want is ...

My way to finish or give feedback: ☐ Share ☐ Keep private ☐ Ask for help ☐ Not today

PRINTABLE RESOURCE • W06

My Circle Routine

A Circle is a helpful pattern. I can change the plan if I need to.

Pupil’s chosen name (optional): _____ Date (optional): _____

Choose or point to ideas, or write/draw your own

Show me	Write it	Use photos
Use objects	Remind me	I’ll choose

My activity is ...

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4

My way to finish or give feedback: ☐ Share ☐ Keep private ☐ Ask for help ☐ Not today

PRINTABLE RESOURCE • W07

My Change-of-Plan Card

Changing a plan may be easier when I know what is different, what stays the same and what I can choose.

Pupil's chosen name (optional): _____ Date (optional): _____

Choose or point to ideas, or write/draw your own

Tell me quietly	Write it	Show a photo
Extra time	Visit first	An alternative

What is changing?

What is staying the same?

Who can help?

What choices do I have?

How much warning helps me?

My way to finish or give feedback: ☐ Share ☐ Keep private ☐ Ask for help ☐ Not today

PRINTABLE RESOURCE • W08

My Communication Bridge

I have the right to communicate in a way that works for me, including saying no.

Pupil’s chosen name (optional): _____ Date (optional): _____

Choose or point to ideas, or write/draw your own

Speech	Type	Write
Symbols/AAC	Point	Gesture
Draw	My own way	

I prefer to communicate using ...

Please give me time to ...

I do not like when adults ...

I will ask for help by ...

My way to finish or give feedback: ☐ Share ☐ Keep private ☐ Ask for help ☐ Not today

PRINTABLE RESOURCE • W09

My Bridges and Boundaries

Belonging can include being together, working side by side or spending time alone.

Pupil’s chosen name (optional): _____ Date (optional): _____

Choose or point to ideas, or write/draw your own

Join	Watch	Parallel activity
Time alone	No touch	Ask first

I enjoy connecting by ...

Please ask before ...

When I say NO, I need ...

A safe adult I can go to is ...

My way to finish or give feedback: ☐ Share ☐ Keep private ☐ Ask for help ☐ Not today

PRINTABLE RESOURCE • W10

My Four Pillars Project Plan

Use your pillars to plan a project that matters to you.

Pupil’s chosen name (optional): _____ Date (optional): _____

Choose or point to ideas, or write/draw your own

Make	Write	Draw
Build	Record	Present another way

PROJECT: My chosen idea is ...

BRIAN’S: My idea and thinking support ...

WAVES: Comfort or sensory support ...

CIRCLES: My steps and check-ins ...

BRIDGES: Communication or teamwork support ...

My way to finish or give feedback: ☐ Share ☐ Keep private ☐ Ask for help ☐ Not today

PRINTABLE RESOURCE • W11

My Transition Passport Page

This page can help adults make a change or new place more accessible.

Pupil’s chosen name (optional): _____ Date (optional): _____

Choose or point to ideas, or write/draw your own

Photos	A visit	Written plan
Map	Known adult	Quiet start

Where I am going or what is changing ...

I would like to know ...

A familiar routine or person is ...

Please contact or show me ...

If I feel unsure, please ...

My way to finish or give feedback: ☐ Share ☐ Keep private ☐ Ask for help ☐ Not today

PRINTABLE RESOURCE • W12

My End-of-Term Voice

You are the expert in your own experience. You can keep this private or share it with chosen adults.

Pupil’s chosen name (optional): _____ Date (optional): _____

Choose or point to ideas, or write/draw your own

Keep	Change	More
Less	Need help	I don’t know yet

One support I want to KEEP ...

One thing I want to CHANGE ...

My favourite activity was ...

One thing adults should understand ...

Next term, please ...

My way to finish or give feedback: ☐ Share ☐ Keep private ☐ Ask for help ☐ Not today

PRINTABLE RESOURCE • R01

Pupil Choice and Access Board

Print, adapt and use alongside the pupil's established AAC. This generic board is NOT a replacement communication system.

Pupil's chosen name (optional): _____ Date (optional): _____

Choose or point to ideas, or write/draw your own

YES	NO	HELP
STOP	MORE	FINISHED
BREAK	DIFFERENT	LOOK
WAIT	QUIET	MOVE

A personalised word, picture or sign I use for YES ...

A personalised word, picture or sign I use for NO ...

My familiar stop/help signals ...

My way to finish or give feedback: ☐ Share ☐ Keep private ☐ Ask for help ☐ Not today

PRINTABLE RESOURCE • R02

Daily Optional Wave Check-In

Private check-ins are optional; select another format or decline. Never use as a compliance chart.

Pupil’s chosen name (optional): _____ Date (optional): _____

Choose or point to ideas, or write/draw your own

Comfortable	Growing wave	Overwhelmed
Unsure	Private	Not today

At the start of the day ...

The support I may need today ...

After a break ...

At the end of the day ...

My way to finish or give feedback: ☐ Share ☐ Keep private ☐ Ask for help ☐ Not today

PRINTABLE RESOURCE • R03

Now / Next / Later Board

Attach photographs or existing symbols. This is a flexible preview, not a demand to finish regardless of distress.

Pupil’s chosen name (optional): _____ Date (optional): _____

Choose or point to ideas, or write/draw your own

Keep plan	Show me	Different order
Need break	More information	Stop

NOW: This is happening ...

NEXT: What follows ...

LATER: If this is useful ...

My way to finish or give feedback: ☐ Share ☐ Keep private ☐ Ask for help ☐ Not today

PRINTABLE RESOURCE • R04

Pupil Learning and Support Profile

Use pupil-directed language. Share only with authorised people through school policy.

Pupil’s chosen name (optional): _____ Date (optional): _____

Choose or point to ideas, or write/draw your own

I want to check this first	Share with chosen staff	Please update this

Things I enjoy and care about ...

What helps me understand instructions ...

Comfort and sensory adjustments ...

My useful routines ...

How I communicate agreement and refusal ...

Adults should avoid ...

My way to finish or give feedback: ☐ Share ☐ Keep private ☐ Ask for help ☐ Not today

PRINTABLE RESOURCE • R05

Family and Pupil Feedback

Families may respond via email, phone, paper or a preferred communication route. Feedback is optional.

Pupil’s chosen name (optional): _____ Date (optional): _____

Choose or point to ideas, or write/draw your own

- Call or message me first
- Written feedback
- Meeting if requested
- No response required

What has worked well for access?

What has not worked or caused concern?

Which supports should remain?

What would you change next term?

My way to finish or give feedback: ☐ Share ☐ Keep private ☐ Ask for help ☐ Not today

PRINTABLE RESOURCE • R06

Adult Observation / Adjustment Log

Record practical access and support, not speculative emotions or a diagnosis.

Pupil’s chosen name (optional): _____ Date (optional): _____

Choose or point to ideas, or write/draw your own

Environment	Instructions	Routine
Communication	Peer context	Unknown

Date / lesson / context ...

Access barrier observed (facts only) ...

Support offered and pupil response ...

Pupil voice or AAC evidence ...

Next action and responsible adult ...

My way to finish or give feedback: ☐ Share ☐ Keep private ☐ Ask for help ☐ Not today

PRINTABLE RESOURCE • R07

Weekly Teacher Implementation Review

A short reflection at the end of each week. Do not judge pupils on compliance.

Pupil’s chosen name (optional): _____ Date (optional): _____

Choose or point to ideas, or write/draw your own

Offer choice	Model access	Reduce barriers
Accept refusal	Review with pupils	

Week / class / adult ...

Which choice/access strategies were offered?

Whose voices were missing?

One change we will make next week ...

Who will follow this up and when?

My way to finish or give feedback: ☐ Share ☐ Keep private ☐ Ask for help ☐ Not today

PRINTABLE RESOURCE • R08

End-of-Term School Evaluation

Use a small, anonymous and consent-aware sample to understand feasibility and improve delivery.

Pupil’s chosen name (optional): _____ Date (optional): _____

Choose or point to ideas, or write/draw your own

Sustain	Adapt	Stop
Investigate further		

What was delivered as planned?

Which supports were actually available?

What do pupils report helped or hindered?

What do families report?

What should be stopped, adapted or sustained?

My way to finish or give feedback: ☐ Share ☐ Keep private ☐ Ask for help ☐ Not today

Midpoint check and end-of-term review

Week 6 team review: 25 minutes

- Five minutes: Look at pupil access rather than completed worksheets. Who could not participate and why?
- Five minutes: Ask what pupils (including AAC users) say is helping or hindering.
- Five minutes: Check whether agreed classroom adjustments were actually available.
- Five minutes: Select one barrier to remove and identify its owner.
- Five minutes: Set a date to check whether that change happened.

Week 12 school review: 45 minutes

Evidence stream	Useful questions
Pupil voice	Which supports do pupils want to keep, change or reject? Were response formats truly accessible?
Family voice	Did families have optional, convenient channels to share perspectives? What concerns were raised?
Staff reflection	Which curriculum activities were deliverable? What workload, training or resource barriers emerged?
Learning access	Were supports used across more than one class, staff member or context?
Safeguarding / privacy	Were records appropriate, and were any concerns reported through ordinary procedures?
Decision	What will the school sustain, adapt or stop next term, with named owners and review dates?

Evaluation cautions

A pre/post count of check-ins, attendance or incidents alone cannot establish that the Four Pillars caused change. Interpret trends alongside the school context, pupil choice and existing provision. Do not publish identifiable stories or claim clinical validation.

LEADERSHIP CHECKLIST

School implementation and quality assurance

Phase	Leader action	Practical evidence
Explore	Check compatibility with the school's SEND priorities, pupils' priorities and existing provision.	Pupil-family consultation summary; potential risks/barriers.
Prepare	Train staff, schedule lessons, select accessible resources and appoint a programme lead.	Timetable, key staff, communication plan, resource audit.
Deliver	Offer weekly coaching; monitor meaningful access, not worksheet completion.	Anonymous lesson notes, pupil feedback and improvement actions.
Sustain	Review after Week 12; preserve effective adjustments and stop unhelpful components.	Revised support plans, next-term targets and a review date.

Programme quality signals

- Children can decline to share private feelings and still participate meaningfully.
- Staff do not remove AAC, sensory supports or pre-existing reasonable adjustments.
- A primary and a secondary teacher can show a realistic adaptation without changing the core purpose.
- The SENCO can show what changed in teaching practice because of pupil feedback.
- Families are invited, but not obliged, to contribute.
- An adult can name what they did differently when a learner found a task inaccessible.

Suggested school pilot positioning: a 12-week feasibility and acceptability pilot of a new educational framework. Any future effectiveness study would need a more robust design and independent evaluation.

OPTIONAL HOME–SCHOOL LETTER

Family communication: example text

Subject: Our Four Pillars 12-Week Learning Curriculum

Dear Parent or Carer,

This term our school is using the Tom Tom Four Pillars Educational System to help pupils understand their learning preferences and help adults make learning more accessible. The pillars are Brian’s (thinking), Waves (changing comfort and energy), Circles (predictability and routines) and Bridges (communication and connections).

Children will be offered flexible learning activities, including a way to watch or opt out of personal reflection. Some children may use visuals, objects, writing or communication technology instead of spoken answers. We will continue every pupil’s existing support and reasonable adjustments.

We welcome any information you choose to share about helpful routines, interests, communication and sensory access. You do not have to share medical details or complete homework. Please tell us your preferred contact method if you would like to discuss the programme.

At the end of the term, we will review pupil and family feedback and decide which teaching adjustments to keep or improve. The Four Pillars is a new educational framework; it is not a diagnostic or therapeutic assessment.

Yours sincerely,
School curriculum / SEND team

Translation and accessibility: offer this letter in large print, plain language, a translated format or an accessible digital copy where required. Ask whether families prefer written, telephone or face-to-face contact rather than assuming.

PROFESSIONAL NOTES

Curriculum glossary and references

AAC: Augmentative and alternative communication: systems and methods used to support or replace speech; existing personalised systems take precedence.

Co-regulation: A responsive adult helps adjust demands, environment and interaction so a child can feel safer and more able to participate.

Access barrier: A feature of a task, environment, communication format or practice that prevents or limits participation.

Pupil voice: A learner's view as expressed through their chosen or accessible communication, including rejection and non-response.

SENCO: Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, responsible for coordinating support in school.

DSL: Designated Safeguarding Lead; first point for school safeguarding concerns under local policy.

Source and standards reading

Sources below inform inclusive principles and safeguarding context. They do not establish that this particular Four Pillars curriculum has been independently tested. Links checked October 2026.

1. Department for Education / DHSC: SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years (2015; GOV.UK page last updated 2024)
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25

2. Department for Education: Keeping children safe in education 2026 (effective 1 September 2026)
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2

3. Department for Education: Equality Act duties and reasonable adjustments: disability rights in education
https://www.gov.uk/rights-disabled-person/education-rights

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

5. Education Endowment Foundation: Five-a-day: supporting high-quality teaching for pupils with SEND
https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/supporting-high-quality-teaching-for-pupils-with-send

6. Education Endowment Foundation: A School's Guide to Implementation (2024)
https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/implementation

7. National Autistic Society: Reasonable adjustments for autistic pupils' sensory differences (reviewed 2025)
https://www.autism.org.uk/learn/knowledge-hub/professional-practice/adjustments-sensory

8. Communication Matters: AAC and use of phones and mobile devices in school (2026)
https://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/aac-and-use-of-phones-and-mobile-devices-in-school/

9. Communication Matters: Publications and AAC resources
https://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/publications/

Publisher and authorship: Tom Tom Four Pillars Educational System — concept and curriculum commissioned by Counsellor Tomass J. Wood. Educational draft for adaptation by qualified school professionals. References and guidance may change; verify before implementation.