THE TOM TOM WAY

FOUR PILLARS PASSPORT

A pupil-led identity, communication and support resource for schools

PRIMARY • SECONDARY • PICTURE-SUPPORTED

Professional implementation guide + photocopiable templates

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Every child has a world inside

The passport is about identity, agency, understanding and everyday support.

THE CENTRAL IDEA

Before asking how best to teach or support a pupil, learn who they are, how they communicate, what their feelings can look like, what helps them feel secure, and how they want others to connect with them.

The Four Pillars Passport is co-produced with the pupil wherever possible. It is a practical, strengths-based record of what the pupil wants school adults to know and do. It is not a medical record, a behaviour label, a test or a replacement for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

FOUR QUESTIONS BEHIND EVERY PASSPORT

BRIAN'S

Who am I? What matters to me and what might I be thinking or feeling?

WAVES

How do I experience stress, joy, sensory input and emotional intensity?

CIRCLES

What routines, interests, spaces and people help me feel secure?

BRIDGES

How do I express myself, relate and access learning?

A NOTE ABOUT EVIDENCE

The Tom Tom Four Pillars are the author's developing educational language and framework. The passport also draws on established person-centred planning, pupil voice and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) principles. This combined resource has not been independently evaluated as an intervention.

Choose the right pages

This is a modular school toolkit: use the pupil's preferred format rather than completing everything.

PART A • SCHOOL IMPLEMENTATION

Purpose, rights, safety, co-production, usage and worked examples

PART B • PRIMARY PASSPORT

Bright, child-friendly identity, emotions, comfort and classroom pages

PART C • SECONDARY PASSPORT

Age-respectful identity, regulation, boundaries and transitions

PART D • PICTURE-SUPPORTED PASSPORT

Multimodal communication sheets, symbols, visual choices and mapping

PART E • STAFF & FAMILY TEMPLATES

Snapshot, observation, review, handover and implementation

PART F • SOURCES & PERMISSIONS

Practice references, usage conditions and limitations

Printing tip: keep the handbook together; print only the selected passport and relevant card pages for each pupil. Use colour where helpful and check contrast and symbol familiarity with the pupil.

What the Four Pillars mean at school

Use the pillars as supportive questions, not labels attached to pupils.

BRIAN'S

Understand: Identity, interests, beliefs, worries, feelings and competing thoughts.
Staff action: Ask "What matters to this pupil?" before making assumptions.

WAVES

Understand: The felt intensity of emotional, physical and sensory experiences.
Staff action: Notice early signs, offer co-regulation and individualised adjustments.

CIRCLES

Understand: Predictability, routines, safety, familiar people, objects and places.
Staff action: Prepare for change and protect meaningful comfort and choice.

BRIDGES

Understand: Ways into communication, relationships, belonging and learning.
Staff action: Use strengths, interests and accessible communication pathways.

NON-NEGOTIABLE PRINCIPLE

The pupil may refuse, disagree, choose not to answer or change their mind. Respect the response. A missing response is not permission. The passport must never be used to force eye contact, speech, compliance or disclosure.

How to create a passport in seven steps

A repeatable process for teachers, form tutors, SENCOs and support teams.

1. Choose a trusted lead

Name one staff member to coordinate. Explain the purpose in accessible language.

2. Ask the pupil first

Invite their preferences about format, pace, names, symbols and who participates.

3. Choose a version

Primary, secondary or picture-supported; combine pages when useful.

4. Listen to the people who know them

Include family, support staff and specialist professionals without overriding pupil voice.

5. Agree practical actions

Record what adults should do, not only what the pupil finds difficult.

6. Agree who can see it

Separate the shareable front sheet from confidential support information.

7. Trial, review and update

Check whether the stated supports actually work, especially after transitions.

Co-produce: do not speak over the pupil

Access, assent and meaningful choices matter more than completed boxes.

WAYS TO PARTICIPATE

Speaking, writing, drawing, typing, pointing, selecting images, signing, gesture, eye-gaze, partner-assisted scanning, personal AAC devices or supported observation over time. Offer extra processing time and avoid demand for eye contact.

DO

Say what the passport is for; offer real options; demonstrate symbols; acknowledge refusals; check interpretations; make corrections easy.

AVOID

Guessing feelings from behaviour alone; treating silence as agreement; withholding preferred AAC; forcing personal disclosures; writing diagnoses as personality traits.

WHEN THE PUPIL CANNOT CONFIRM AN INTERPRETATION

Mark observations as “staff/family hypothesis - not yet confirmed”. Record how the pupil usually communicates acceptance or refusal. Ask relevant practitioners to review access methods, and keep looking for ways to include the person.

PUPIL CHOICE SCRIPT

“This can help people at school understand what is important to you. We can do it in pictures, words or another way. You can skip anything, tell me to change something, or say stop. Which part would you like to start with?”

Privacy, dignity and secure sharing

Schools should use their own lawful basis, policies and safeguarding processes.

- Decide what truly needs to be recorded. A pupil-friendly shareable snapshot may be enough for many staff.
- Keep medical details, personal care information, family circumstances and safeguarding records within the school's appropriate secure systems. Avoid copying sensitive histories into portable passports.
- Explain to pupils and families what the passport contains, why, who can access it, how it will be stored, and when it will be reviewed. Record permission or the applicable legal basis through school procedures.
- Share on a need-to-know basis with relevant school staff. Do not put identifiable pupil information on open walls or public websites.
- Before transferring to another setting, follow the organisation's data-protection and transition policies. Review information for accuracy and remove anything no longer necessary.
- A pupil can object to particular wording or sharing: hear and document their views, while recognising that safeguarding duties may sometimes require necessary sharing without agreement.

SAFEGUARDING BOUNDARY

A passport is not a substitute for a child protection record, healthcare plan, emergency protocol or EHCP. If a concern arises, follow the setting's safeguarding policy and designated safeguarding lead processes.

Practice reference: Department for Education, Data protection in schools - Sharing personal data (updated July 2026). See source list at the back.

When and how adults should use it

The passport earns its place by changing practice.

Beginning of a school year

Read the pupil-approved snapshot before the first day. Prepare routines and accessible communication in advance.

Lesson planning

Use learning interests, preferred instructions, processing time and supports to reduce avoidable barriers.

Transitions

Share agreed information before timetable changes, room moves, supply cover, exams or a new school.

During distress

Offer the agreed Wave strategies and help without demanding an explanation during overwhelm. Check for pain or unmet needs.

After a difficulty

Review what the environment, communication, expectations or support changed - rather than simply recording “behaviour”.

Review meeting

Ask the pupil what still fits, what changed and which supports staff actually provide.

Identity, feelings and self-advocacy

A strengths-first opportunity to know oneself and communicate needs.

WHY IDENTITY MATTERS

When a pupil can describe interests, sensory preferences, values and their own communication style, adults have a more accurate starting point for relational support and reasonable adjustments. Identity is more than a list of difficulties.

WHY EMOTION RECOGNITION MATTERS

Gently noticing internal experiences can support language for needs and choices. For some pupils, naming an emotion is hard or inaccessible; a physical sensation, Wave number, activity preference or “I need a break” may communicate more effectively.

WHY SELF-MANAGEMENT NEEDS SUPPORT

The aim is not to require pupils to suppress distress. Adults can offer co-regulation, quieter spaces, predictable routines, preferred communication and options for self-advocacy. Many pupils will continue to need substantial adult support.

HOW TO NOTICE USEFUL CHANGE

Look for practical, individual outcomes: the pupil accesses a preferred communication method; staff respond accurately to requests; transitions are more predictable; the pupil participates with less unnecessary pressure. Do not infer that a reduced visible reaction means the pupil is more comfortable.

Example: Asha, Year 4

Fictional illustration. Replace with the pupil’s own words, preferences and real observations.

BRIAN’S | “I love drawing birds.”

Asha likes birds and nature facts. In group activities, she sometimes worries about getting an answer wrong. Staff ask whether she prefers drawing, pointing or speaking; they avoid defining her as shy.

WAVES | “The dining hall gets too loud.”

Early signs: holding ears and moving towards the door. Helpful choices: ear defenders if wanted, predictable lunch arrangements, a quiet option and access to a trusted adult. Staff do not insist on a Wave rating.

CIRCLES | “Tell me if the plan changes.”

A visual daily timetable and a five-minute warning are reassuring. Asha carries a small bird drawing she made. Staff ask rather than remove the comfort item.

BRIDGES | “Show me first, then I’ll try.”

Asha engages through short demonstrations and shared nature topics. Her preferred start is one adult showing the first example while she watches.

CHECK AFTER TWO WEEKS

Ask Asha whether the profile still fits. Record whether lunch supports were available and whether Asha could choose ways of participating in group activities. Do not treat a completed passport as proof that support was delivered.

Example: Eli, Year 10

Fictional illustration. Designed to show dignity, choice and age-respectful language.

BRIAN'S | "I'm interested in engineering."

Eli wants teachers to notice his practical strengths and future goals rather than see only his difficulties. He dislikes being questioned about his feelings in front of peers.

WAVES | "Noise and uncertainty stack up."

The corridor after lunch and unexpected lesson changes can increase stress. Eli asks for access to a quiet work area and a discreet help message. Staff check that the choice is available without punishment.

CIRCLES | "A clear plan lowers uncertainty."

A digital timetable, predicted homework deadlines and notice of room changes are useful. Eli wants to know who will cover if the usual teacher is absent.

BRIDGES | "Send instructions in writing."

Written steps and extra processing time work better than rapid spoken instructions. Eli wants staff to ask privately whether he needs clarification.

CHECK BEFORE EXAMS

Confirm agreed access arrangements through the school's separate procedures. Ask Eli which adjustments work, and avoid assuming a particular strategy applies to every assessment.

Example: Rowan, Year 7

Fictional illustration, with communication interpreted cautiously and collaboratively.

COMMUNICATION

Rowan uses a speech-generating device, pointing to photographs, some gestures and body movement. The school speech and language therapist has advised the team about vocabulary, positioning and partner modelling. Device access is never conditional on behaviour.

BRIAN'S / WAVES

Rowan selects "music" and "more" regularly. During noisy transitions Rowan may push away materials or move towards a quieter place; staff do not assume one emotional meaning without checking context, preferences and possible physical discomfort.

CIRCLES / BRIDGES

The pupil's routine includes a clear first/then board and familiar music in an optional break area. Partner-supported interaction uses a wait time agreed with the team and the pupil's existing AAC system.

WHAT STAFF RECORD

"At 10:15 the pupil selected BREAK on their device; adult offered the agreed space." Avoid "Rowan was attention seeking." Note uncertainty where a gesture could mean more than one thing.

REMINDER

These pages are supplementary picture supports; they do not replace a personalised AAC system, vocabulary assessment or staff training by a speech and language therapist.

SECTION B

PRIMARY PASSPORT

For primary-aged pupils. Draw, write, select pictures or tell a trusted adult what to record. Bright pages may be used independently or with support.

- Focus on strengths and interests before needs and difficulties.
- Use small, supportive conversations rather than a formal interview.
- Let the pupil choose what stays private and what adults may share.

Photocopy the pages you need. You do not need to use every page.

Ask the pupil which format and words feel right for them.

My Four Pillars Passport

This passport is mine. I can change my answers or skip any part.

My name / name I like to use: _____

My class / year: _____

Here is a picture of me (or a symbol that represents me)

You can draw, stick a photograph or leave this space blank.

Three things that make me ME

My interests, my strengths, the things I like or value.

_____

_____

_____

BRIAN'S | WAVES | CIRCLES | BRIDGES

This passport belongs to me. An adult can help me write it, but they should check that it sounds like me.

Brian's: my inside world

Not all thoughts are facts, and no feeling is wrong.

MEET MY BRIAN'S

Sometimes I have a Curious Brian, Worry Brian, Safety Brian, Hope Brian or another Brian of my own. I can name or draw mine. I do not have to share private worries.

A Brian who helps me

Draw or describe a thought, feeling or strength that supports you.

A Brian who needs kindness

What might help when you feel worried, unsure or stuck?

My strengths and favourite things

Things I am proud of, interested in, or enjoy doing.

Waves: feelings and sensations

My feelings can be different sizes. I do not have to choose a number.

A WAVE IS A DESCRIPTION, NOT A SCORE

Small, growing or strong Waves might feel different in different places. Adults should listen to my description and notice my preferred way of communicating.

- [ ] Little ripple
- [ ] Getting bigger
- [ ] Big Wave
- [ ] Not sure
- [ ] I do not want to say
- [ ] Something else

What my Wave might look or feel like

Maybe I move more, get quiet, need space, get excited or ask for help.

What grown-ups can notice early

Only write things you and a trusted adult agree might be helpful to notice.

What I want people NOT to do

For example: do not crowd me, rush me, touch me unexpectedly or insist I speak.

Waves: my help plan

Choose what helps. Everyone’s Waves are different.

- [ ] Quiet time
- [ ] Movement
- [ ] My music
- [ ] A drink of water
- [ ] A trusted adult
- [ ] A comfort object
- [ ] Drawing
- [ ] Written instructions
- [ ] I need something else

When my Wave gets bigger, please...

Write one or two things you want a grown-up to do.

Things that do NOT help me

It is okay to say no to a strategy.

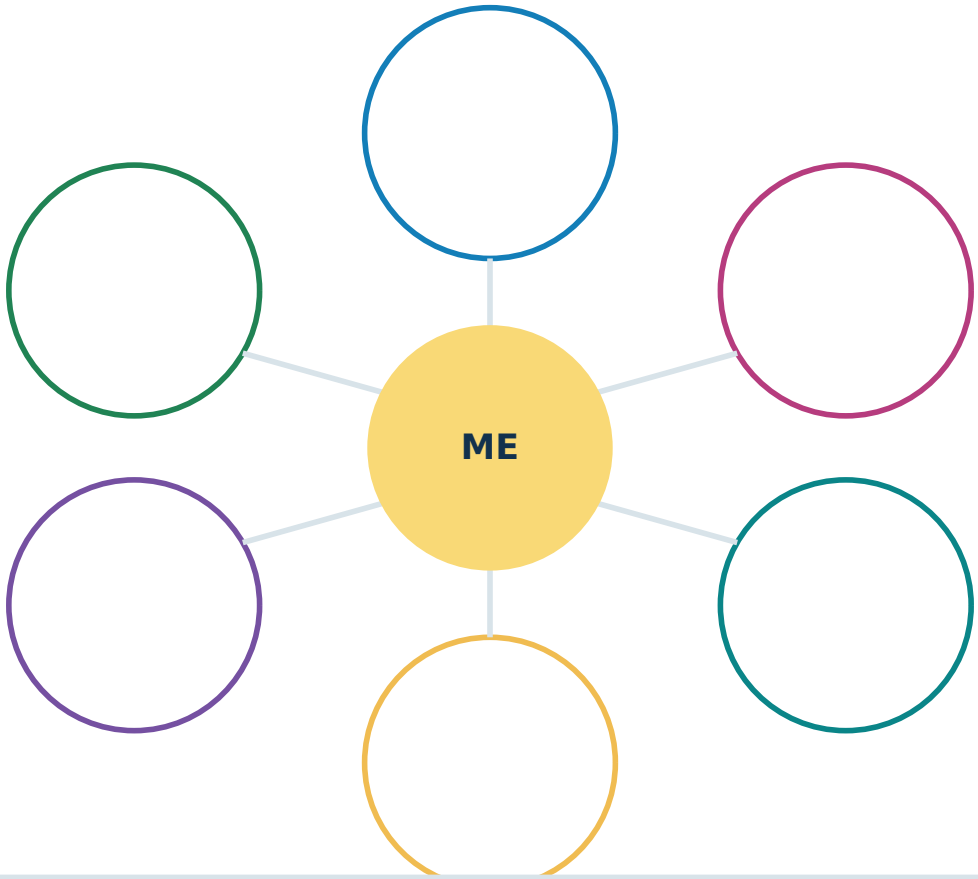
My ways to ask for help

Words, signs, picture cards, gestures, a device or a quiet signal.

Circles: my safe and familiar things

Everyone has different comfort Circles.

Draw or write things that make you feel safe or settled in the six circles.



The important routine I want adults to know

What happens first? What helps me prepare for change?

If something changes, please tell me by...

A picture, a spoken warning, a message, a countdown or another way.

Bridges: how I connect

There is more than one way to communicate.

- [ ] Talking
- [ ] Writing / typing
- [ ] Pictures
- [ ] Pointing / gesture
- [ ] Signing
- [ ] AAC device
- [ ] Drawing
- [ ] Playing together
- [ ] Something else

A Bridge into my learning

What interests, people or activities help me join in?

A Bridge I do not enjoy

For example: being called on suddenly or being made to speak in a group.

How to check that I understood

Show me, give me time, ask privately, write it down or another way.

My best way to learn

Teachers: please ask, rather than guess.

- [ ] See an example
- [ ] Try it myself
- [ ] Work with a buddy
- [ ] Listen
- [ ] Read instructions
- [ ] Use pictures
- [ ] Move around
- [ ] Take small steps
- [ ] Have extra time

A thing I love learning about

How could adults use this to make learning interesting?

What makes learning harder for me

Only share what you want staff to know.

One change that would help tomorrow

Make this something practical adults can provide.

When my day changes

A planning page for new teachers, trips, rooms and routines.

- [ ] Show my timetable
- [ ] Tell me early
- [ ] Let me ask questions
- [ ] Keep my comfort item
- [ ] Show me the new room
- [ ] Offer a quiet arrival

When something new is coming, I want...

The information, person or reminder that would help me.

A trusted person who can help

Write a role or first name only, if appropriate for a shareable copy.

A good first step on a new day

What can an adult do or say to make starting easier?

My voice: does this still fit?

The pupil can choose, point, draw or tell an adult.

- [ ] YES - it sounds like me
- [ ] SOME PARTS
- [ ] NO - please change it

One thing adults are doing well

Something that makes school better for me.

One thing I would like to change

Staff should agree a practical action with the pupil.

Who I want to see my passport

The lead staff member should apply school information-sharing rules.

Reviewed with: _____ Date: _____

SECTION C

SECONDARY PASSPORT

For students aged 11–18. Written as an age-respectful self-advocacy tool, not a childlike feelings worksheet. Combine with subject-specific supports when useful.

- Use preferred name and language; allow independent completion if wanted.
- Prioritise privacy, independence, sensory autonomy and future goals.
- Keep practical accommodations clear to subject teachers and tutors.

Photocopy the pages you need. You do not need to use every page.

Ask the pupil which format and words feel right for them.

My profile at a glance

What I want staff to understand about me. The wording should be mine.

Name / preferred name

Year group / tutor

Pronouns (optional)

Preferred contact method

Three things that describe me well

Interests, strengths, skills, values, goals or something distinctive.

People often misunderstand this about me

What would you prefer them to know instead?

What I want from adults at school

Keep requests realistic and specific.

Brian's: identity and inner dialogue

Thoughts, concerns and aspirations are not the same as behaviour.

Strengths, identities and interests I choose to share

Things that matter beyond grades or labels.

Thoughts that make school harder

Only share what is useful for support. You can leave this blank.

What helps when I doubt myself

A teacher response, strategy, person, interest or helpful phrase.

Please do not assume...

For example, quiet does not always mean calm, or speaking does not always mean I am comfortable.

Waves: recognise before overwhelm

A personal guide to stress and sensory experiences.

Early signs I notice

Signs others may notice

Common triggers / barriers

Situations that make things easier

The most helpful adult response

What should staff offer or avoid at the earliest stage?

How I will communicate I need support

Email, card, symbol, short phrase, gesture, device or agreed signal.

My regulation and recovery plan

Support should preserve dignity and never depend on “earning” a break.

- [ ] Quiet place
- [ ] Walk / movement
- [ ] Fewer words
- [ ] Written instruction
- [ ] Music / headphones
- [ ] Time to process
- [ ] Trusted adult
- [ ] Change of task
- [ ] Other agreed support

Before I reach overload, please...

List 2–3 steps adults can realistically take.

During overload, please avoid...

Possible examples: questioning repeatedly, unexpected touch or public attention.

Afterwards, I would prefer...

Time, practical repair, written discussion, private follow-up or no immediate debrief.

Circles: control and predictability

Planning is a support, not a requirement to become inflexible.

Routines that matter to me

Changes I need warning about

Helpful environmental adjustments

People / spaces that feel reliable

When school plans change, the best way to tell me is...

Include notice periods if helpful and realistic.

A Circle I want to protect

Examples: an agreed break, access to a familiar space, or a trusted check-in.

Bridges: communication and boundaries

A good Bridge is accessible and respects autonomy.

- [ ] Speak privately
- [ ] Write it down
- [ ] Email / message
- [ ] Show an example
- [ ] Allow processing time
- [ ] Offer a choice
- [ ] No public questioning
- [ ] Use my AAC
- [ ] Other

The most reliable way to communicate with me

Include how staff should check understanding without putting me on the spot.

Boundaries staff should respect

Examples: no unexpected touch, no public discussion of my support plan.

A shared interest that helps me connect

This can be a strength, not an obligation to socialise.

Learning, workload and assessment

Useful supports should be specific enough to deliver.

How I learn a new task best

Instructions that work

What happens when tasks pile up

How staff can help me start

Assessment and exam support to discuss

This page does not authorise arrangements; refer to the school’s formal processes.

A reasonable short-term learning goal

What support do I need from staff to make progress?

My transitions and next steps

Between lessons, year groups, key stages and post-16 options.

Changes I am preparing for

Information I need in advance

Who I want involved

The communication method I prefer

What a successful transition would feel like

Focus on access, control and support - not simply “coping quietly”.

My first agreed action, and an adult action

Both sides should have a realistic next step.

Review after the transition: ask whether the agreed Circle and Bridge supports were actually available.

My review and sharing choices

This page can be updated without rewriting the whole passport.

- [ ] This still describes me
- [ ] Some parts need changing
- [ ] I want a new version

What staff should KEEP doing

Describe a helpful action or adjustment.

What staff should CHANGE

Describe what did not work and an alternative.

What I do / do not want included in the shared version

Sensitive details belong in secure school records as appropriate.

Agreed reviewer: _____ **Next review date: _____**

SECTION D

PICTURE-SUPPORTED PASSPORT

For pupils who communicate through pictures, objects, gesture, eye-pointing, signing, AAC devices or a combination. Age, access and symbol choice must be personalised.

- All communication counts. Do not assume little or no speech means little understanding.
- Use the pupil's existing AAC plan and preferred symbols as the first choice.
- Introduce pages as optional aids, not as a test or compliance system.

Photocopy the pages you need. You do not need to use every page.

Ask the pupil which format and words feel right for them.

Before using picture supports

For families, SEND teams and trained communication partners.

START WITH THE PERSON

Identify how the pupil currently shows interest, acceptance, refusal, discomfort, preference and “not now”. Ask the pupil, family and speech and language therapist (SLT) how access should work.

MATCH THE REPRESENTATION

Some pupils understand photographs, real objects, written words or familiar symbols more easily than generic pictures. Replace these cards where needed. Use consistent positioning and meaningful vocabulary.

MODEL - WAIT - RESPOND

Model language on the pupil’s own AAC system if this is part of their established plan. Offer sufficient processing time. Accept no response or refusal. Respond promptly when the pupil selects STOP, NO, HELP, BREAK or PAIN.

ACCESS FIRST

Check vision, motor access, position, fatigue, hearing and language needs. Pointing is not the only access method. Seek specialist guidance before using eye-gaze or partner-assisted scanning.

NOT A FULL AAC SYSTEM

The following simple cards are supplementary school resources. They do not provide robust vocabulary, clinical assessment or a complete AAC pathway. Never remove or replace a pupil’s existing system with this pack.

This is me

Personalise with photographs, real objects or the pupil’s own symbols.

My photo, chosen picture or preferred symbol

Ask whether the pupil wants an image here; never require a photograph.

My name / name I use

Important things I enjoy

Things I choose not to do

People I trust

How I show “I like this”

Describe observable signals without guessing what they always mean.

How I show “not this / stop”

Adults must respond to refusal and check whether support is needed.

My communication methods

Complete with the pupil, family and relevant communication specialists.

- [ ] Speech / sounds
- [ ] Gesture / movement
- [ ] Eye-pointing
- [ ] Photographs / objects
- [ ] Signs
- [ ] Paper symbols
- [ ] Typing / writing
- [ ] AAC device
- [ ] Partner scanning

My strongest ways to communicate

What methods work reliably and in which situations?

How to give me a genuine choice

Position, waiting time, number of items, yes/no reliability, access supports.

How adults should check their interpretation

Record the agreed method for confirming a message without repetitive questioning.

My choices: essential messages

Cut out and adapt. Keep YES, NO, STOP and HELP consistently accessible.



YES



NO



STOP



HELP



BREAK



MORE



WAIT



NOT SURE



FINISHED



PAIN



WATER



TOILET

Brian's: my thoughts and feelings

Cards are optional. The pupil may prefer different labels, images or words.



HAPPY



WORRIED



SAD



EXCITED



FRUSTRATED



CALM



UNSURE



TIRED



ANGRY



CURIOUS



I LIKE IT



NOT NOW

Waves: what I need

Do not require a pupil to label their internal state. Choices can be enough.

POSSIBLE COMMUNICATION

Show the pupil a preferred symbol, word or device vocabulary for a state or support request. A request such as “QUIET” or “BREAK” may be more useful than asking for an emotion rating.



OKAY



BIG WAVE



BREAK



QUIET



MOVE



HELP



PAIN



TOO MUCH



NOT SURE

Circles: comfort and routines

Choose only the pictures relevant to the pupil’s actual life.



HOME



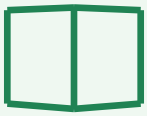
SCHOOL



MY SPACE



MUSIC



BOOKS



OUTSIDE



QUIET



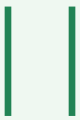
WAIT



CHANGE



BREAK



REST



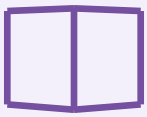
FRIEND

Bridges: connection and access

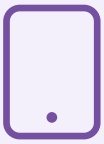
These are ways of reaching a person - not expectations to socialise.



TALK



SHOW ME



MY DEVICE



PLAY



DRAW



MUSIC



WORK TOGETHER



ON MY OWN



WAIT



YES



NO



HELP

My visual sequence

Use photos, objects or agreed symbols. Flexibility and refusal still matter.

NOW

Place the pupil’s chosen photo / card here:

NEXT

Place the pupil’s chosen photo / card here:

LATER

Place the pupil’s chosen photo / card here:

Changes happen. Offer an accessible explanation and allow time to respond.

What my communication may mean

An adult hypothesis must be checked with the pupil wherever possible.

What I notice

Possible meaning

What adults should do

How we check

Signals that mean “I want to continue”

Describe a reliable pattern and how it was confirmed.

Signals that mean “stop / I need something different”

Listen to refusal, check comfort, consider pain and the environment.

A communication method we need to improve access to

Referral or coordination with SLT / OT if appropriate.

Make your own picture cards

Photograph objects, use existing AAC symbols appropriately or draw an image.

Label: _____	Label: _____	Label: _____
Label: _____	Label: _____	Label: _____
Label: _____	Label: _____	Label: _____
Label: _____	Label: _____	Label: _____

My personalised support page

Co-produce and review; do not confuse staff observations with pupil wishes.

My chosen ways to say yes

My chosen ways to say no

My best ways to ask for help

My available AAC tools

Circles I need every day

Waves support I accept

Bridges I want adults to offer

How we will review this page

SECTION E

STAFF & FAMILY TOOLS

Photocopiable professional templates for implementation, review and transitions. Keep confidential versions in school-approved systems.

- Share the agreed support actions with the people who need them.
- Record which supports were actually available, not just written down.
- Use feedback to improve the system instead of scoring the child.

Photocopy the pages you need. You do not need to use every page.

Ask the pupil which format and words feel right for them.

One-page staff support snapshot

Share only through school-approved channels with authorised staff.

Pupil preferred name / year

Lead staff member / review date

BRIAN'S • strengths and interests

WAVES • early signs and helpful response

CIRCLES • predictable supports

BRIDGES • communication / learning

DO • practical actions to take

AVOID • actions that make things harder

Keep this brief and actionable. Do not include unnecessary medical, family or safeguarding history.

Four Pillars support agreement

Turn ideas into specific school commitments.

Support action agreed with pupil

Where and when it will happen

Who will provide it

How the pupil can ask for it

What we will do if the support is not available

Provide an equivalent option and tell the pupil promptly.

How we will know it is helping

Use a meaningful, pupil-centred sign of access or comfort.

Agreed with pupil / supporter: _____ Review date: _____

Situation and response observation

Observe context and support, not a pupil’s character.

Date / time / setting

What was happening beforehand

Communication or sensory barriers

What the pupil communicated

Adult response / adjustment

What happened afterwards

Was the planned support available?

What should staff change?

PRACTICE POINT

Use factual, non-judgemental descriptions. For example, record “the pupil selected BREAK and left with their support adult” rather than “the pupil refused to cooperate”. Do not use this sheet to replace safeguarding or incident records.

Pupil-centred review meeting

A collaborative conversation, not a scorecard.

What the pupil says / selects

What family notices (optional)

What staff have changed

What support has worked

What has not worked or has been unavailable

Be specific about barriers that adults can change.

One practical action for the next two weeks

Named owner, start date and an agreed follow-up.

Review date: _____ **Lead staff:** _____

Transition and handover sheet

Update this with the pupil before a change of setting or staff.

Next setting / class / year

Who will introduce the new adults

Important Circles to preserve

Important Bridges to arrange

How we will prepare the pupil

Visual visit, map, trusted meeting, photographs or an agreed alternative.

What the receiving staff need to do on day one

Three observable, practical actions.

Information-sharing check

Who agreed, lawful basis / policy process, authorised recipient, secure transfer.

Family and pupil contribution

Invitation to provide knowledge without overriding the young person’s voice.

MESSAGE TO FAMILIES

“We are putting together a brief Four Pillars Passport with your child or young person. It records strengths, communication preferences and the practical supports that help school go well. We will ask for their views in an accessible way and agree what needs to be shared.”

What brings out this young person’s strengths?

Interests, favourite ways of learning and successful approaches.

What helps when a situation becomes overwhelming?

Please share approaches that the young person accepts.

What should new adults know about communication?

Ways the pupil asks, refuses, chooses and indicates comfort.

Launch and quality-assurance checklist

For SENCOs, school leaders and staff teams.

- [ ] A named passport lead
- [ ] Pupil choice of format
- [ ] Family views where helpful
- [ ] AAC access reviewed
- [ ] Agreed supports are realistic
- [ ] Privacy and sharing checked
- [ ] Staff know where to find it
- [ ] Pupil knows how to amend it
- [ ] Support actions are allocated
- [ ] Review date recorded
- [ ] Transition use planned
- [ ] Pupil feedback is sought

First three steps our school will take

Name the staff leads and timescales.

How we will check it is useful

Ask pupils whether adults understand them better and record actual support delivery.

Team reflection: two situations

Discuss before use in a 15-minute staff briefing.

SITUATION A | PRIMARY

A pupil becomes distressed after their timetable changes. A staff member says “You were fine yesterday.” How might Brian’s, Waves, Circles and Bridges help adults improve what happens next?

Our agreed response

Include advance information, preferred communication and choice of support.

SITUATION B | SECONDARY

A student uses very little speech in lessons but contributes detailed work in writing. Staff describe them as “not participating”. How could the passport change what counts as participation?

Our agreed response

Include pupil identity, modes of contribution, agency and privacy.

The adult response in four moves

A compact reminder to share during induction and cover.

1 NOTICE

What is the pupil communicating? What do I know, and what am I only assuming?

2 CHECK

Offer their preferred language, symbols, device or quiet option. Honour refusal.

3 ADJUST

Change the environment, demand, timing or support rather than asking for compliance first.

4 REVIEW

Ask whether the adjustment helped. Update the passport, not a label about the child.

A USEFUL SENTENCE

“I want to understand what would help you. You can tell me in your own way, or we can come back to it later.”

Safeguarding and professional boundaries

A school-ready passport must protect pupils as well as describe them.

- Respond to disclosures or indications of harm in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education and local safeguarding arrangements. Record concerns through the correct system, not on the portable passport.
- A change in movement, sound, sleepiness or behaviour may reflect pain, illness, stress, inaccessible communication or a combination. Avoid automatically assuming “an emotional Wave”.
- Never withhold AAC, reasonable adjustments, comfort items or agreed access to help as a punishment. Seek clinical or specialist input for decisions requiring it.
- Do not place full pupil profiles on an open classroom wall or distribute them publicly. Use a separately agreed pupil-safe visual support where a display is appropriate.
- Avoid deficit labels, unverified diagnostic claims, private trauma history and comments about families that do not directly support access in school.
- The passport does not constitute an assessment of competence, cognitive ability, consent capacity or a clinical treatment plan.

IMPORTANT

If there is immediate danger, follow the school’s emergency response. No passport procedure should delay urgent safeguarding or medical action.

Practice foundations and useful guidance

These inform good practice; they are not validation of the Four Pillars.

Department for Education & Department of Health and Social Care

SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years (updated 2024)
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25

Department for Education

Data protection in schools - Sharing personal data (updated 2026)
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/data-protection-in-schools/sharing-personal-data

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) guidance (May 2024)
https://www.rcslt.org/members/clinical-guidance/augmentative-and-alternative-communication/augmentative-and-alternative-communication-guidance/

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists

AAC overview for families and communication partners (May 2024)
https://www.rcslt.org/speech-and-language-therapy/clinical-information/augmentative-and-alternative-communication/

Autism Education Trust

Early Years Transitions Toolkit: Communication Passport factsheet
https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-09/early_years_transitions_parent_guide_-_part_3.pdf

For school safeguarding practice, use the latest statutory Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance and school policies. Review relevant updates before adopting the resource.

Using and adapting this resource

Created for schools and families by Counsellor Tomass J. Wood.

AUTHOR AND PURPOSE

Tom Tom Universe is a story-led educational project inspired by the author's neurodivergent childhood experiences. The Four Pillars - Brian's, Waves, Circles and Bridges - are intended to offer accessible language for identity, emotional and sensory understanding, familiarity and human connection.

PERMISSION FOR EDUCATIONAL USE

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LIMITATIONS AND REVIEW

This is a complementary, developing school resource and is not independently validated as an intervention. Schools remain responsible for accessibility, safeguarding, data protection, individual assessments, professional support plans and the delivery of reasonable adjustments. Seek SLT advice for personalised AAC decisions.

ABOUT AI ASSISTANCE

The creator uses AI as an accessibility aid for language, structure and editing. The Four Pillars concepts, purpose and creative direction originate with Counsellor Tomass J. Wood.

FOUR PILLARS. ONE PUPIL. THEIR VOICE. THEIR WORLD.

www.tomtomuniverse.co.uk