



Oaklands School AOL Overviews:

Communication, Interaction & Social Skills Curriculum Overview by Pathway (CISS) 2026 - 2027

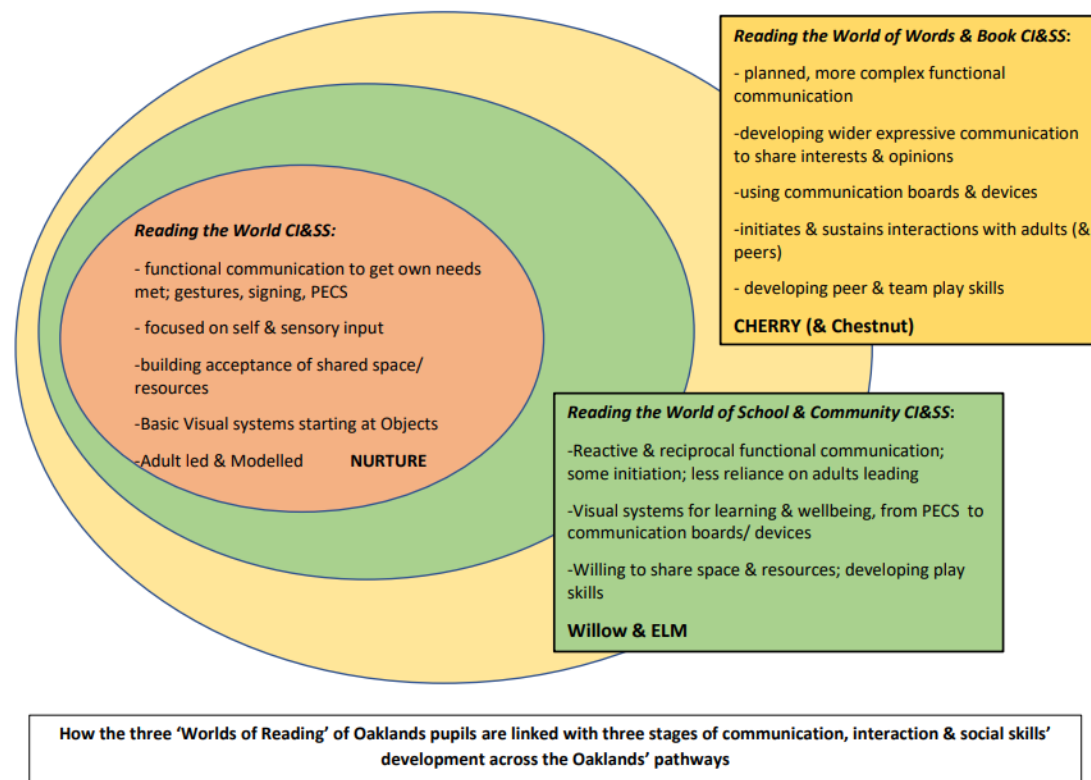
We want to ensure that our curriculum is relevant, meaningful and prepares our unique children for a lifetime of learning and as much independence as possible. Therefore, **Communication, Interaction and Social Skills** underpins all ours of our curriculum and is taught through discrete sessions and teachable moments, both in school and in contextualised learning through real world experiences. Indeed, so central is this AOL that it could be argued that every session should be an opportunity to teach and practice communication skills. As communication is key to any learning, CISS and Literacy are very closely linked AOLs and the concept of the Three Worlds of Reading is central to how we teach communication, interaction & social skills.

Objectives

- To develop communication skills so that all pupils have a voice and to enable self-support.
- To ensure that all pupils are have the means, reasons and opportunities to communicate in all areas of the curriculum.
- To utilise every opportunity to interact and improve social skills.

Linked Curriculum documents

- OPAL and OPEAL
- Literacy
- Independence and Life Skills



Means, Reasons and Opportunities

- Without the means you cannot express yourself.
- Without reasons for communication there is no point or need to communicate.
- Without the opportunities there cannot be any communication.

Means

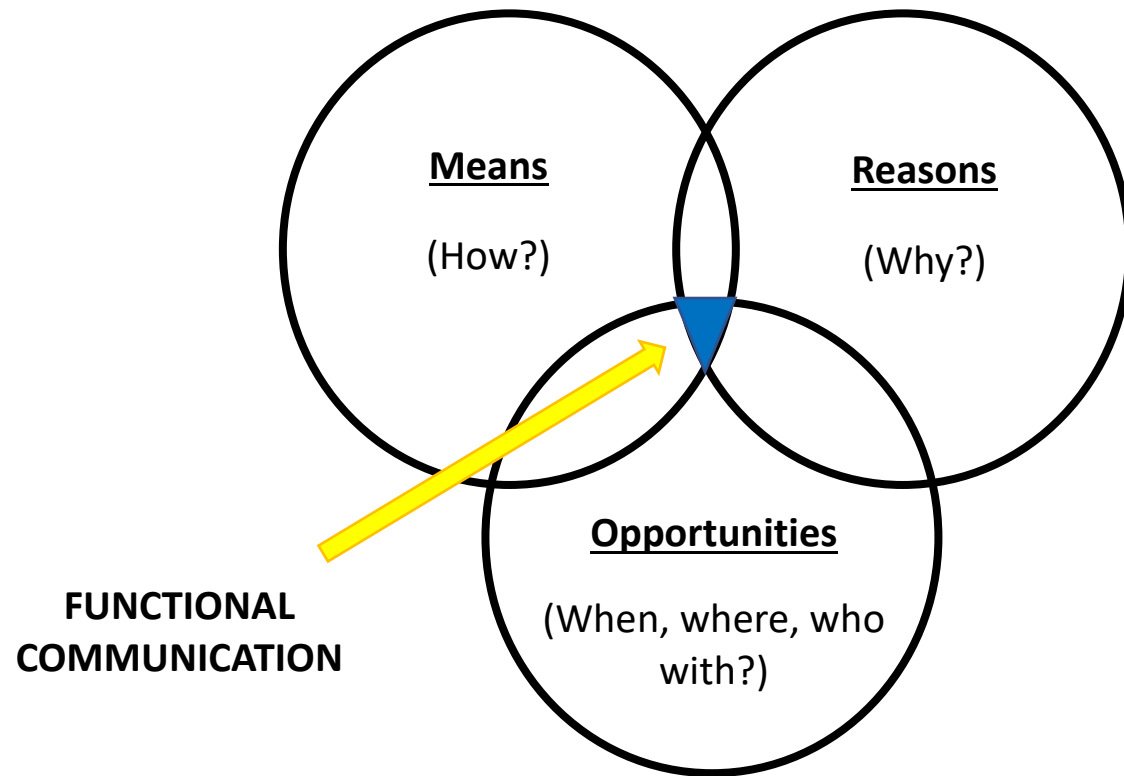
Speech
Gestures
Picture symbols –PECS, communication book
Facial expressions
Signing
Body language
Writing

Reasons

Greetings
Requests/needs/wants
Sharing information
Protest/rejects
Gaining attention
Sharing enjoyment
Commenting
Giving feedback
Expressing feelings
Building relationships

Opportunities

Communication partner
Shared system
Choices
Time
2 way process
Shared topic
Developing shared understanding



Nurture Pathway

Means	Reasons	Opportunities
• Pre-symbolic intentional communication • Talking tins • Follow me boards • Communicate in Print signage around school initially supported by Objects of Reference • Visual aids to support the acquisition of positive learning behaviours • Makaton core vocabulary modelled and supported by adults	• To share space and resources with others • To respond to adults' communication • To communicate wants and needs. • To attend to play-based learning when supported by adults • To develop turn taking skills • To develop learning behaviours that allow them to access mastery approach sessions & whole class learning of 5-10 minutes length • To begin to develop functional communication to convey their needs, preferences and wants • To accept and attend to individual and small group teaching	• AAC – time set aside to find clear motivators and to teach the use of talking tins and for those able to move onto follow me boards. Opportunities throughout the school day to practice using their chose voice. • Makaton – discreet teaching of core vocabulary of the week. Opportunities throughout the school day to practice. • Intensive Interaction – Stages 1-3 by end of Autumn term (Encounter, Awareness, Attention & Response) Stage 4 by Summer Term (Engagement). Most children will show interaction for up to 5 minutes. 1:1 opportunities in spaces in and around the school. • The Curiosity Approach – links to intensive interaction and develops their curiosity and attention through 1:1 session. • Attention Autism – Stage 1 - Bucket (Autumn Term) moving to Stage 1 and 2 – Bucket and Attention Builder (by Summer Term if possible) • Circle Time – opportunity to set up time table, practice behaviours for learning including attention skills and to communicate using their morning book which focuses on day, colour and smell of the week.

Willow Pathway

Means	Reasons	Opportunities
• Visual hierarchy from Now & Next boards onwards using symbols and words • Communication boards • Communication books • Built in persistence & distance practice to reinforce/ refresh initiation of communication as children develop more complex utterances	• To share space and resources and turn take with others • To respond to adults and initiate interactions with adults • To communicate wants and needs. • To access mastery approach sessions & whole class learning of at least 10 minutes length • To develop play skills with peers supported by adults	• AAC – time set aside to teach how to use a communication board and the core vocabulary. As they progress children may move onto using a communication book. Opportunities throughout the school day to practice their current stage. • Makaton – discreet teaching of core vocabulary of the week. Opportunities throughout the school day to practice. • Intensive Interaction - Stages 5-7 (Participation, Involvement, Initiating Interactions). Most children will interact with an adult for more than 10mins. 1:1 opportunities in spaces in and around the school.

- Visual signage around school supports independence in moving around - Makaton core vocabulary modelled and supported by adults	- To attend to play-based learning when guided by adults - To develop turn taking skills	Attention Autism – Stage 1 and 2 - Bucket and Attention Builder (Autumn Term) moving to Stage 1, 2 and 3 – Bucket, Attention Builder and The Interactive Game (by Summer Term if possible) Circle Time – opportunity to set up time table, practice behaviours for learning including attention skills, to say or sign hello to the teacher and to communicate using their morning book which focuses on matching photos of their peers, day, colour and smell of the week and the weather.
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Elm Pathway

Means	Reasons	Opportunities
- Visual hierarchy from Now, Next & Then boards onwards using symbols and words - Communication books - Electronic AAC - Spoken language - Built in persistence & distance practice to reinforce/ refresh initiation of communication as children develop more complex utterances - Visual signage around school supports independence in moving around - Makaton core vocabulary plus some subject specific words	- To share space, resources and adult time with others - To respond to adults' communication and begin to initiate longer interactions - To develop turn taking skills with peers as well as adults - To develop learning behaviours that allow them to access mastery approach sessions & whole class learning of 10-15 minutes length - To begin to play alongside and show an interest in their peers	Communication Books - time set aside to teach how to use the book. Opportunities throughout the school day to practice their current stage. Makaton – discreet teaching of core vocabulary of the week. Opportunities throughout the school day to practice. Play Interaction – Structured sessions starting with 1:1 and then 2 or 3 children with 2 adults. Understanding visuals and Makaton, 'my turn, wait, finished'. Simple turn taking activities such as building with blocks. Attention Autism –Stage 1, 2 and 3 – Bucket, Attention Builder and The Interactive Game Moving to all stages (by Summer Term if possible) Circle Time – opportunity to set up time table, practice behaviours for learning including attention skills, to say or sign hello to the teacher and to communicate using their morning book which focuses on naming their peers, day, colour and smell of the week, the month and the weather.

Cherry Pathway

Means	Reasons	Opportunities
- Visual hierarchy from coloured symbols onwards - Communication books - Electronic AAC	- To readily share space, resources and time with adults - To do this with peers for 5-10 minutes	Communication Books - time set aside to teach how to use the book. Opportunities throughout the school day to practice their current stage. Electronic AAC - time set aside to teach how to use the device. Opportunities throughout the school day to practice their current stage.

- Spoken language - Communicate in Print signage around school initially supported by visuals - Makaton core vocabulary plus 20+ subject specific words	- To respond to adults' communication and initiate longer interactions - To have good turn taking skills with peers as well as adults - To access mastery approach sessions & whole class learning of 15 minutes+ length - To play alongside and show an interest in their peers	Makaton – discreet teaching of core vocabulary of the week. Opportunities throughout the school day to practice. Play Interaction – Children to begin understanding rules to simple games such as 'What time is it Mr Wolf', Snakes & Ladders'. Learning to take turns with their peers and beginning to learn how to cope when they don't win. Opportunities during Oakey boost and Outdoor Learning. Attention Autism – Stage 1, 2, 3 and 4 - Bucket, Attention Builder and The Interactive and Individual Activity Circle Time – opportunity to set up time table, to say or sign hello to the teacher and to communicate using their morning book which focuses on knowing who is here or not here and counting how many pupils are present, day of the week, the date, the month, the weather and how they are feeling.
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Strategies to support CISS learning by Pathway

Strategy summary	Nurture	Willow	Elm	Cherry
AAC – Talking Tins and Follow me/Communication boards A Talking Tin is a practical device designed to assist individuals to communicate using single words for example more. These devices allow users to record and playback audio messages so that when the pupil touches the photo or symbol a voice verbalises the word for them. A follow me board or communication board is a type of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device designed to support people who have difficulty speaking or are nonverbal. It displays images, symbols, or photos that the user can point to, gesture at, or blink at to convey messages, express needs, or share thoughts with others. The core vocabulary is displayed on the left-hand side and the fringe vocabulary on the right.	Talking Tins: focusing on more, finished and familiar nouns. Follow me boards: 4 cells using more, finished, object and action.	Communication Boards: Building on the core vocabulary more and finished and adding want, see/look, help and different to create meaningful communication combining up to 3 words at a time.		

AAC – Communication Books and Electronic Devices A Communication Book provide pages of symbols, usually organised by topic. Depending on the age, cognitive and physical abilities of the user, the page may have anything from one to many symbols on a page. The topics depend on the age, ability and interest of the AAC speaker. Some users also have an electronic system and, in that case, it is helpful to print out all the pages from the electronic system so that the user has access to their vocabulary when the electronic device breaks down or in situations where it is inappropriate to use it, such as the swimming pool.		Communication Books: Focusing on stages 1 – 3.	Communication Books: Focusing on Stages 3 - 5 Electronic Devices: If children are using a communication book fluently and there are identified reasons why paper based AAC is insufficient to meet the child’s communication needs then with the agreement of SALT we can apply for an EATS referral to get a communication device.	
Visual timetable systems can help to: • Provide structure and routine • Encourage independence – they can be used to help pupils follow routines for dressing, making snacks, completing learning activities, managing their day etc. • Build confidence • Improve understanding • Support transitions • Avoid frustration and anxiety – when pupils are aware of their routine and what is coming next it helps to support self and co-regulation • Provide opportunities to interact with others • Motivation – pupils can see a reward on their timetable and are motivated to complete the activities leading up to the reward • Behaviour management – certain preferred activities are visually scheduled at certain times of the day. This teaches pupils that they can do motivating activities, but only at certain times. It teaches them to look forward to something and can help to avoid challenging behaviour once understanding has been developed.	Levels: • Objects of reference with real photographs • Large real photographs with small symbols and written words • Teacher shows visual and object of reference to individuals at transition points moving to children and teacher using now and next board when ready. Skills: • Touches item to make request • Requests item/ activity by ‘taking’	Levels: • Large real photographs with small symbols and written words • Large symbol with small real photograph and written words • Coloured symbols with written words • Children using now and next moving to now, next and then. Teacher uses the same visual system as the most able in the class. Skills: • Touches item to make request • Requests item/ activity by ‘taking’	Levels: • Large symbol with small real photograph and written words • Coloured symbols with written words • Black and white line drawing symbols with written words • Children using now, next and then moving on to morning/afternoon session. Teacher uses the same visual system as the most able in the class. Skills: • Selects and recognises or reads a small number of words or symbols	Levels: • Coloured symbols with written words • Black and white line drawing symbols with written words • Written words- either laminated or self-written. • Children using smaller morning/afternoon session moving to whole day. Teacher uses the same visual system as the most able in the class. Skills: • Reads common letter patterns fluently • Reads accurately words that contain the common

Visual timetable systems can also be in calendar or checklist form to help warn pupils of and prepare them for changes in normal routine.	adult to object, place or symbol/picture - Expresses choice from familiar items, activities or object of reference presented - Responds appropriately to simple requests which contain one key word, sign or symbol in familiar situations. - Discriminates and chooses between at least 2 symbols/pictures when requesting a desired item (PECS) - Labels/names familiar objects. - Matches objects to pictures.	adult to object, place or symbol/picture - Expresses choice from familiar items, activities or object of reference presented - Responds appropriately to simple requests which contain one key word, sign or symbol in familiar situations. - Discriminates and chooses between at least 2 symbols/pictures when requesting a desired item (PECS) - Labels/names familiar objects. - Matches objects to pictures.	linked to a familiar vocabulary. - Matches letters and short words. - Distinguishes between print or symbols and pictures in texts. - Understands that words, symbols and pictures convey meaning. - Recognises or reads a growing repertoire of familiar words or symbols	graphemes for all 40+ phonemes - Sounds out words accurately and closely matched to the known GP correspondences - Reads accurately by blending the sounds in words with up to five known graphemes - Reads some common exception words - Uses phonic knowledge to decode regular words and read them aloud. - Sounds out many unfamiliar words accurately
Attention Autism is an intervention model designed by Gina Davies, Specialist Speech and Language Therapist. It aims to develop natural and spontaneous communication through the use of visually based and highly motivating activities. It works to develop joint attention, a skill seen as essential in the development of language, social communication skills and learning. http://ginadavies.co.uk/	Stage 1: The Bucket to Focus Attention A bucket is filled with visually engaging objects and toys, aiming to gain the shared attention of the group. The adult leader shows each item to the group and uses simple repetitive vocabulary to comment on the various objects.	Stage 1: The Bucket to Focus Attention Stage 2: The Attention Builder Visually stimulating activities are shown to the group by the adult leader, aiming to sustain attention for a longer period. The activities are fun, visually engaging and can often involve delightful mess!	Stage 1: The Bucket to Focus Attention Stage 2: The Attention Builder Stage 3: Turn taking & Re-engaging Attention The adult leader demonstrates a simple activity, often modelled with another adult in the group. Some children are then invited to have a turn but only if they are	Stage 1: The Bucket to Focus Attention Stage 2: The Attention Builder Stage 3: Turn taking & Re-engaging Attention Stage 4: Shifting & Re-engaging Attention Stage 4 aims to develop the skill of engaging and shifting attention. The adult leader demonstrates a

			comfortable to do so. Not every child in the group will get a turn, which then teaches important emotional regulation skills, as well as the essential skills of waiting, turn-taking and learning through modelling.	simple creative task, and then gives each child an individual kit to copy the task. The children take their kits to a table, complete the task independently, and then everyone returns to the group to show their completed tasks.
Intensive Interaction works on early interaction abilities - how to enjoy being with other people - to relate, interact, know, understand and practice communication routines. Intensive Interaction teaches and develops the 'Fundamentals of Communication'. It is a 1:1 session intended to develop early communication skills through mirroring by a staff member to encourage responses and interactions through positive feedback to a child.	It is most effective for children who: are pre-verbal; whose cognitive and communicative development is significantly delayed so that they do not use and understand the fundamentals of communication as listed above; there is some research to suggest that it may be helpful for people who have profound communication problems, people with sensory problems, dementia, stroke and even brain injury.			
	Stages 1-4 Stage 1 Encounter: The child will allow adults to be near them in their personal space but does not respond to them. Stage 2 Awareness: The child will show some awareness of adults being near them and give fleeting glances. They will show awareness of what is happening around them. Stage 3 Attend and Respond: The child will look at the adult for 1-3 seconds during their play (e.g. eye contact, a smile,	Stages 5-7 Stage 5: Participation: The child will allow the adult to take at least 4 turns in your play together (e.g. sound making, tapping, body movements). Stage 6 Involvement: The child will prompt the adult to restart the interaction when the adult pauses which shows that the child wants the interaction to continue with the adult (e.g. repeats a sound). Stage 7 Initiation: The child will independently		

	reaching out, making a sound, pushing away). Stage 4 Engagement: The child will look at the adult for 3 or more seconds. They may give a sequence of responses (e.g. repeated sounds or person gives objects to adult, hand leading, or holding hands).	initiate an interaction or play with the adult.	
Play interaction is structured time 1:1 or in a small group. Through play children learn how to interact with the world and with others. They learn to understand the world and to manage their own behaviour and emotions. It is a core part of high quality EYFS practice.		It is most effective for children who: need support to play either alone or with peers; children who need support to engage with activities and give attention for longer than a few seconds; children who need support with turn-taking, sharing and imaginative play behaviours and language	
		Structured 1:1 sessions and moving on to adult led sessions with a small group of children (2-4). Every structured session to include: Hello song, goodbye song and visuals; wait, my turn, your turn, finished. Sessions will move on to choice board for children to choose from a small range of games with simple rules and play. Children to begin communicating their feelings about the sessions and their peers, e.g. fun, happy, sad.	Structured play sessions with a group of children (4-6) working on turn taking play and games with more complex rules. Moving on to larger groups of children and then whole class team games. Children will communicate their feelings, e.g. empathy and acceptance (losing) and praise (winning).

Colourful Semantics is a system for colour coding sentences according to the role of different words. It can help children to break down sentences and understand the individual meaning of each word and its role in the sentence. It can help children to better understand word order. Children can use colourful semantics to build up meaningful, well-structured sentences. Colourful Semantics teaches children about the different parts of a sentence by giving each one a colour (or sometimes a shape) associated with a question prompt: • Who? Orange • What doing? Yellow • What? Green • Where? Blue • When? Brown • To whom? Pink • What like? Cloud shape • Whose? Spiky cloud shape • How? Black line • Why? Purple arrow • Joining words - Purple rectangle When introducing colourful semantics to a child, a limited number of these should be used initially.		Colourful Semantics can be used as an intervention or within literacy-based activities. It is particularly useful for children who find the following difficult • Ordering and sequencing their language • Correctly answering wh- questions • Constructing more complex language • Children who use chunks of language but don't appear to be able to use the individual words meaningfully
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Makaton is a unique language programme that uses symbols, signs and speech to enable people to communicate. It supports the development of essential communication skills such as attention and listening, comprehension, memory, recall and organisation of language and expression.

With Makaton, signs are used, with speech, in spoken word order. This helps provide extra clues about what someone is saying. Using signs can help people who have no speech or whose speech is unclear. Using symbols can help people who have limited speech and those who cannot, or prefer not to sign.

Makaton is the UK's leading language programme for adults and children with learning or communication difficulties. It is also used by everyone who shares their lives, for example, parents and other family members, friends and carers, and education and health professionals. Makaton is used for teaching communication, language and literacy skills with children who are at an early stage of communication and language development. This structured approach can also help people who are learning English as an additional language, helping them to communicate straightaway, while also supporting their learning.

Makaton is used across the school in everything we do – we have two signs of the week which are learnt by staff and pupils and shared with parents – these are generally taken from our tiered vocabulary.

What are the vocabulary tiers?

Beck and McKeown's 'Tier 2' and 'Tier 3' are commonly used terms when describing ambitious or subject-specific vocabulary. Created by education researchers Isabel Beck and Margaret McKeown, the idea of categorising words into three tiers came as a response to a particular conundrum: out of the countless words in the English language, which are the most useful to teach our learners?

To answer this question, Beck and McKeown identified how words have "different levels of utility." They created the three tiers, with each tier characterising a different 'type' of word with different practical applications.

Tier 1 words: The simplest tier – these are words that most learners will pick up through natural, everyday conversation. They include common nouns like 'clock', 'chair' or 'house', verbs like 'walk' and 'run', or adjectives like 'sad' and 'happy.' These words don't normally require explicit teaching.

Tier 2 words: If your goal is to improve learners' literacy, Tier 2 words are the words you want to focus on. They are ambitious words, such as 'emerge', 'analyse', 'peculiar' and 'context', that learners are likely to come across in a variety of contexts and across all subjects, but aren't used much in everyday conversation. As Beck and McKeown say, these words "are not the most basic or common ways of expressing ideas, but they are familiar to mature language users as ordinary as opposed to specialised language."

For example, the Tier 2 word 'soar' can add more sophistication and specificity to a learner's understanding of the word 'fly'. They will be able to understand that soaring isn't just flying, but flying very high in the air.

Tier 3 words: Tier 3 words are subject-specific, used within a particular field. This is the language of scientists, mathematicians, historians, and literary critics. For maths, this includes words like 'denominator', while science lessons might require learners to understand 'homeostasis'. Often, these words are integral to teaching content for certain subjects.