

Communicate:8 - Practitioner Guide

Supporting the Identification, Understanding and Monitoring of Speech, Language and Communication Needs

Introduction

Communicate:8 is a strengths-based, school-based framework designed to support the identification, understanding and monitoring of speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) in primary-aged children.

The framework enables practitioners to build a rounded picture of a child's communication profile across eight interconnected strands:

1. Receptive Language
2. Expressive Language
3. Listening and Attention
4. Speech Sounds
5. Phonological Awareness
6. Social Communication and Interaction
7. Language for Behaviour and Emotions
8. Executive Functioning

Communicate:8 supports early identification, inclusive practice and collaborative working. It helps schools strengthen universal provision, plan targeted support, monitor progress and gather evidence as part of the graduated approach outlined in the SEND Code of Practice.

Communicate:8 does not diagnose children or replace specialist advice. It is a professional framework that supports informed decision-making alongside observations, pupil voice, family views and other evidence.

Getting Started



Before completing a Communicate:8 profile, practitioners should:

- Discuss concerns with the class teacher and SENCO where appropriate.
- Obtain parent/carer consent.
- Familiarise themselves with the school's safeguarding and data protection procedures.
- Gather a range of evidence from different contexts and people.
- Consider how the child's communication skills compare with age-related expectations.

Communicate:8 works best when viewed as an ongoing process rather than a one-off activity.

Step 1: Parent and Carer Consent

Before gathering information, schools should share the **Parent/Carer Consent, Confidentiality and Data Privacy Agreement**.

This ensures families understand:

- Why information is being collected.
- How it will be used.
- Who may have access to it.
- How it will be stored securely.
- Their rights under UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Obtaining consent encourages transparency and strengthens partnerships with families.

Step 2: Gathering Evidence

Robust evidence gathering is central to Communicate:8.

Practitioners should collect information from multiple sources rather than relying upon a single observation or opinion.



Evidence may include:

Classroom Observation

Observe the child during:

- Whole-class teaching
- Group work
- Independent learning
- Playtimes and lunchtimes
- Structured interventions

Adult Observations

Gather information from:

- Class teachers
- Teaching assistants
- SENCOs
- Intervention staff
- Lunchtime staff

Work Samples

Consider whether communication difficulties impact:

- Reading
- Writing
- Mathematics
- Participation
- Learning behaviours

Parent and Carer Views

Parents often provide valuable insights into:

- Communication at home
- Strengths and interests
- Challenges
- Changes over time

Pupil Voice

The child's own views should always be considered.

Step 3: Using the Pupil Voice Documents

Pupil voice is an important part of the graduated approach.

Communicate:8 includes pupil voice materials which allow children to share their experiences in a way that is accessible and appropriate to their communication needs.

The pupil voice documents help practitioners explore:

What the child enjoys

- Favourite subjects
- Strengths
- Interests

What the child finds difficult

- Listening
- Understanding
- Joining conversations
- Following instructions
- Managing emotions

What helps

- Visual support
- Extra processing time
- Adult prompts
- Structured routines

Wishes and goals

- What they would like to improve
- What support they would find helpful

Practitioners should adapt pupil voice activities according to the child's age, language level and communication profile.

Step 4: Completing the Communicate:8 Profile

The profile is completed using evidence gathered from multiple sources.

For each strand, consider:

- Typical strengths
- Areas of need
- Impact on learning and participation
- Current support
- Emerging patterns

Look for consistency across settings and over time.

Avoid making assumptions based on isolated incidents or limited observations.

The framework is designed to support professional reflection and discussion rather than produce a diagnosis.

Understanding Communicate:8 Outcomes

Communicate:8 uses a graduated scoring system to help practitioners understand the level of support that may be needed in each communication strand. The outcomes are intended to **inform professional judgement**, not to diagnose, label or determine eligibility for services.

No Immediate Concern

Current observations suggest that this area is broadly in line with expectations within the school context. Continue to provide high-quality universal communication support and monitor as part of everyday classroom practice.

Monitor in Class

Some indicators suggest that this area would benefit from continued observation. Strengthening universal provision and gathering additional evidence across different contexts may help determine whether further support is needed.

Targeted Support Recommended

The profile suggests that this area may be affecting the child's learning, participation or communication. A time-limited period of targeted support, alongside effective classroom strategies, should be considered and reviewed through the APDR cycle.

Specialist Discussion May Be Appropriate

The level and persistence of need in this area may warrant discussion with the SENCO. The school may wish to consider whether specialist advice, consultation or referral is appropriate in line with local procedures and the evidence gathered.

Important Note

Communicate:8 outcomes should always be considered alongside professional observations, pupil voice, parent/carer views, classroom evidence and progress over time. The framework supports decision-making within the graduated approach but does not provide a diagnosis or replace specialist assessment.

Communicating Communicate:8 Outcomes to Parents and Carers

Communicate:8 outcomes should always be shared in a **supportive, strengths-based and non-diagnostic way**. The purpose of the framework is to help schools understand a child's communication profile and identify any support that may be helpful. Scores should never be presented as a pass/fail result or a measure of intelligence, ability or future potential.

Key Messages for Parents

When discussing outcomes, practitioners should explain that:

- Communicate:8 provides a snapshot of how a child is currently using speech, language and communication skills in school.
- The framework helps identify strengths as well as areas where additional support may be beneficial.

- Outcomes are based on observations, evidence, professional discussions, pupil voice and parent/carer views.
 - The results do not provide a diagnosis or label.
 - The purpose is to inform support planning and monitor progress over time.
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Suggested Parent-Friendly Explanations

No Immediate Concern

Practitioner explanation:

"At the moment, your child's communication skills in this area appear to be developing as we would expect within the school environment. We will continue to provide high-quality classroom support and monitor progress as part of everyday practice."

Monitor in Class

Practitioner explanation:

"We've noticed a few areas that we'd like to keep an eye on. This doesn't necessarily mean there is a significant difficulty, but we want to continue observing how your child manages in different situations and ensure they receive the right support within the classroom."

Targeted Support Recommended

Practitioner explanation:

"The information we've gathered suggests this area may sometimes make learning, communication or participation more difficult for your child. We'd like

to put some additional support in place for a short period and then review how things are progressing."

Specialist Discussion May Be Appropriate

Practitioner explanation:

"The evidence suggests that your child may benefit from further discussion with the SENCO about whether specialist advice would be helpful. This does not mean there is a diagnosis or that a referral will automatically be made. It simply helps us consider whether additional expertise may support our understanding and planning."

Ending the Conversation

Every discussion should conclude with:

1. **Strengths first** - what the child does well.
2. **Areas being monitored or supported** - explained clearly and positively.
3. **What the school will do next** - support, strategies or monitoring.
4. **How parents can contribute** - sharing information and reinforcing strategies at home.
5. **Review arrangements** - when progress will be reviewed together.

Example closing statement:

"Communicate:8 has helped us build a fuller picture of your child's communication strengths and needs. We're pleased to see strengths in several areas and have identified some aspects we'd like to support further. We'll work together to monitor progress and review the impact of any support over the coming weeks."

This approach keeps discussions collaborative, transparent and aligned with the SEND Code of Practice's graduated approach.

Step 5: APDR Planning

Following completion of the profile, findings should be used within the school's graduated approach.

Communicate:8 includes an **Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR) Form**.

The APDR form helps practitioners move from identification to action.

Assess

Summarise:

- Strengths
- Areas of need
- Evidence gathered
- Pupil voice
- Parent views

Include evidence such as:

- Observation notes
 - Learning records
 - Intervention data
 - Communication samples
 - Feedback from staff
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Plan

Agree:

- Desired outcomes
- Support strategies
- Reasonable adjustments
- Intervention approaches

- Review dates

Plans should be specific, measurable and achievable.

Do

Implement the agreed support.

Record:

- Interventions delivered
- Classroom adaptations
- Frequency of support
- Staff involved

Maintain evidence throughout implementation.

Review

Evaluate:

- Progress towards outcomes
- Impact of support
- Child's views
- Family feedback
- Next steps

Possible outcomes may include:

- Continue support
 - Adapt provision
 - Increase support
 - Seek specialist advice
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Evidence Collection Throughout the APDR Cycle



Evidence gathering should continue throughout the support process.

Useful evidence includes:

Universal Provision Evidence

- Visual timetables
- Instructions broken into steps
- Vocabulary support
- Communication-friendly classrooms

Targeted Support Evidence

- Intervention records
- Attendance records
- Session notes
- Progress measures

Child Outcomes

- Participation levels
- Confidence
- Independence
- Communication behaviours
- Curriculum access

Evidence should help demonstrate the impact of support rather than simply describe activities completed.

Safeguarding Responsibilities

The welfare of children is paramount.

During observations, pupil voice activities, parent discussions or reviews, information may emerge that raises a safeguarding concern.

If concerns arise:

- Follow school safeguarding procedures immediately.



- Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- Record concerns using school systems.
- Do not delay reporting concerns while gathering further evidence.

Communicate:8 is not a safeguarding framework or risk assessment but may contribute to a wider understanding of a child's needs and wellbeing.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Information gathered through Communicate:8 should be treated as confidential educational information.

Access should be restricted to:

- Relevant teaching staff
- SENCOs
- School leaders where appropriate
- Professionals directly supporting the child

Information should only be shared where:

- Consent has been obtained, where required.
 - There is a lawful basis for sharing.
 - A safeguarding obligation exists.
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Data Protection

All Communicate:8 records must be managed in accordance with:

- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- School data protection policies
- Local authority information governance procedures

Practitioners should ensure:

- Information is relevant and proportionate.

- Records are accurate and up to date.
 - Documentation is stored securely.
 - Access is restricted appropriately.
 - Retention and disposal follow school policies.
 - Information sharing is lawful and necessary.
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Professional Use Statement

Communicate:8 is a strengths-based framework that supports the identification, understanding, monitoring and review of speech, language and communication needs within educational settings.

The framework promotes:

- Early identification
- Inclusive practice
- Collaborative working
- Evidence-informed planning
- Graduated response decision-making

Communicate:8 supports professional judgement but does not replace it.

It does not diagnose speech, language and communication needs, learning difficulties, developmental conditions or medical conditions. Decisions regarding support, referrals and specialist involvement should always be based on a range of evidence and, where appropriate, advice from qualified professionals.

Good Practice Checklist

Before Completing a Profile

- ☐ Parent/carers consent obtained.
- ☐ Relevant staff informed.



- ☐ Existing records reviewed.
- ☐ Pupil voice completed where appropriate.
- ☐ Evidence gathered from multiple sources.
- ☐ Data protection procedures followed.
- ☐ Safeguarding procedures understood.

After Completing a Profile

- ☐ Findings discussed with relevant staff.
- ☐ APDR form completed.
- ☐ Outcomes agreed.
- ☐ Review date set.
- ☐ Family informed.
- ☐ Evidence collection continues.
- ☐ Progress reviewed regularly.

Communicate:8 is most effective when used as part of an ongoing cycle of observation, discussion, planning, implementation and review, with the child and family placed at the centre of the process.