

TaSSeLs

Touch is a vital channel of communication for learners at the earliest developmental levels. It has been said that it is "humankind's earliest form of communication" (Gallace and Spence, 2010) and "our most fundamental means of contact with the outside world" (Hart, 2010).

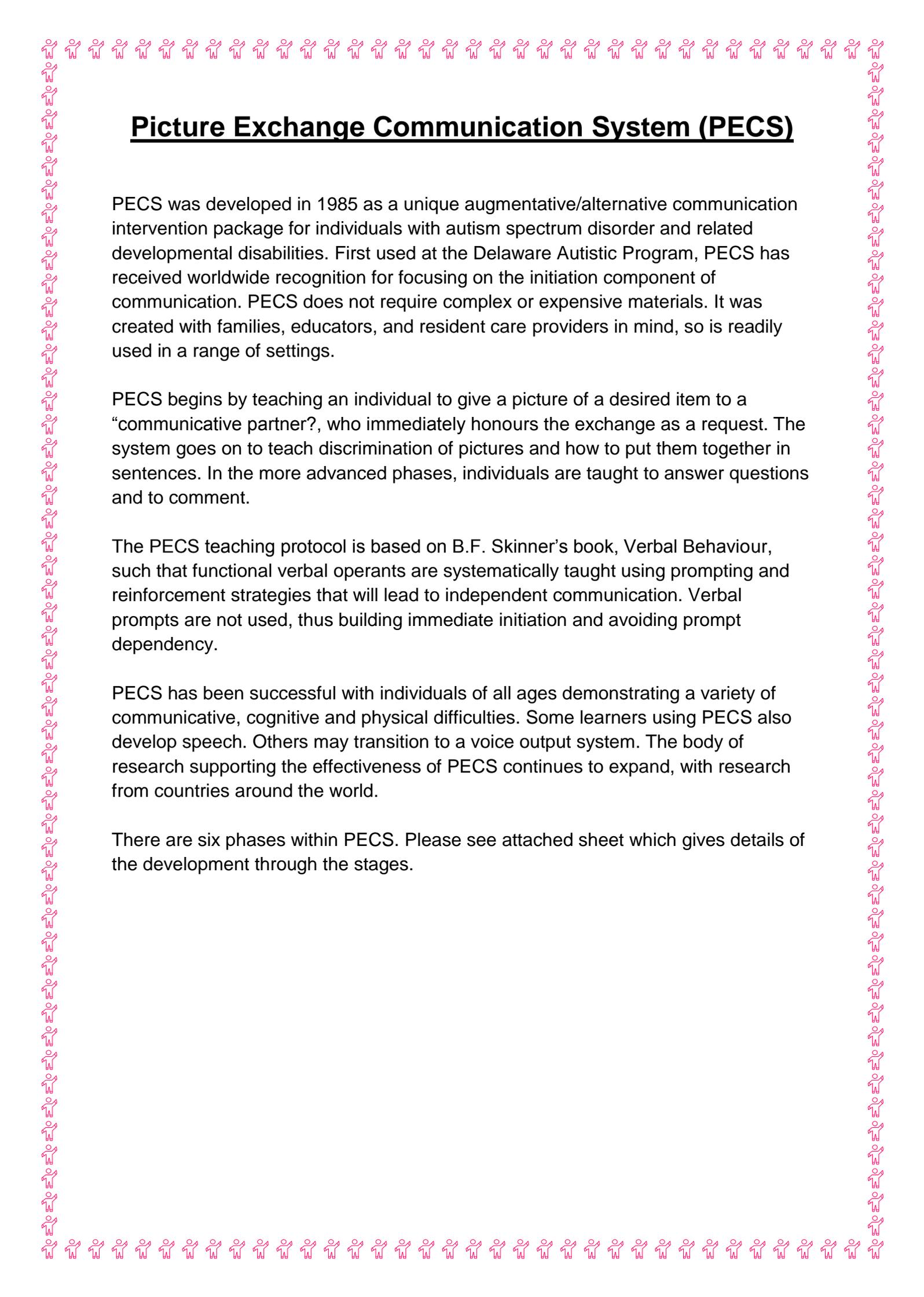
TaSSeLs is a system of touch-speech cues to promote effective communication with people with profound and complex learning disabilities, some of whom may have a visual impairment.

TaSSeLs is an on body communication system where adults and learners work together.

TaSSeLs can be carried out on –body if the learners have physical disabilities or hand under hand. You can conduct the signs using hand over hand if this is the best option for the learner. Learners will change as they develop so ensure you change the way you sign with them according to their needs.

The aim of TaSSeLs is to communicate with the learner what activities they will be involved in, where they will be moved to and which direction, movement around home, school, community and personal and medical care.

Through using TaSSeLs we have seen a decrease in behaviours and anxieties with our pupils, proving that communication is a vital part of everyday life for all.



Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

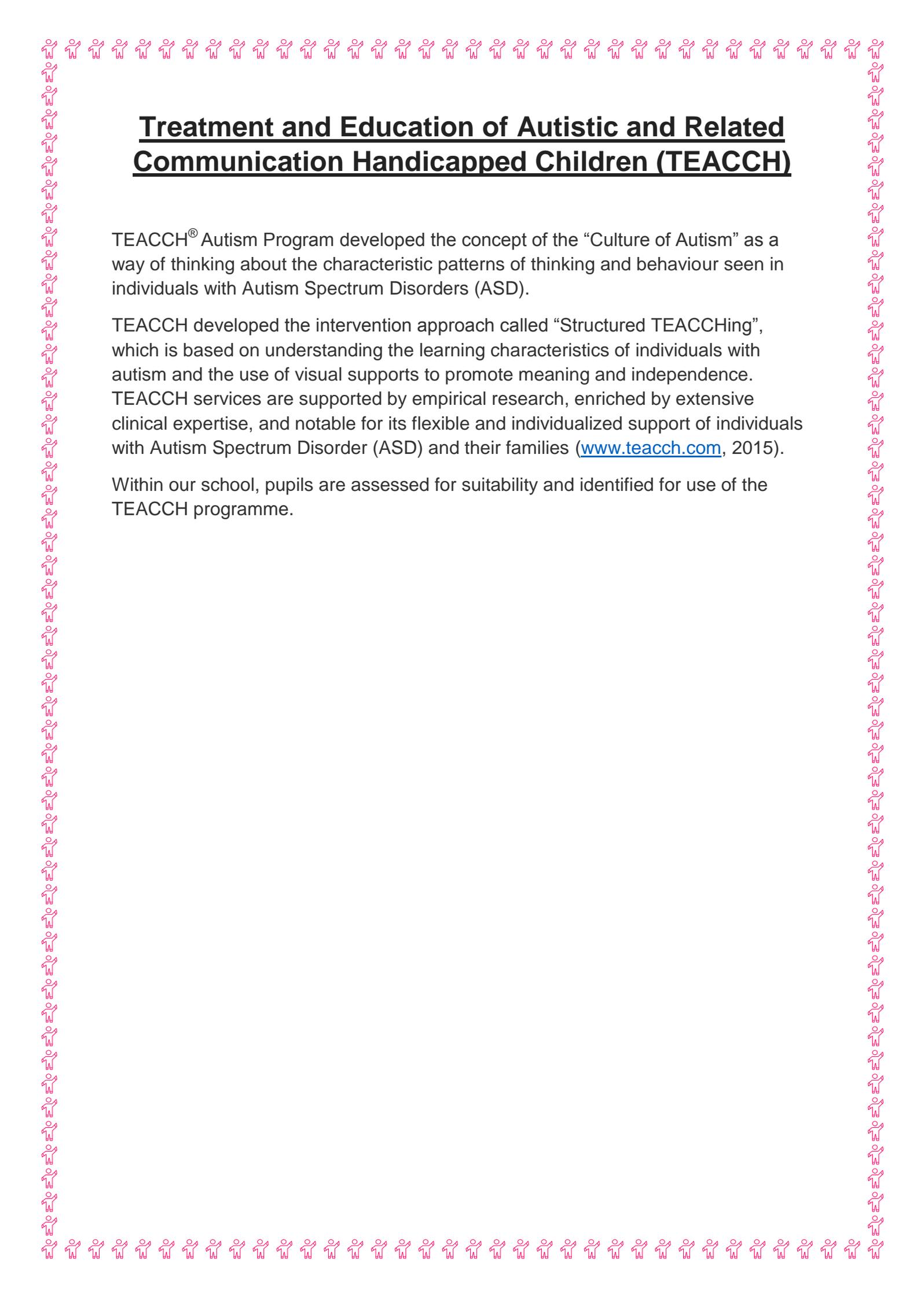
PECS was developed in 1985 as a unique augmentative/alternative communication intervention package for individuals with autism spectrum disorder and related developmental disabilities. First used at the Delaware Autistic Program, PECS has received worldwide recognition for focusing on the initiation component of communication. PECS does not require complex or expensive materials. It was created with families, educators, and resident care providers in mind, so is readily used in a range of settings.

PECS begins by teaching an individual to give a picture of a desired item to a “communicative partner”, who immediately honours the exchange as a request. The system goes on to teach discrimination of pictures and how to put them together in sentences. In the more advanced phases, individuals are taught to answer questions and to comment.

The PECS teaching protocol is based on B.F. Skinner’s book, Verbal Behaviour, such that functional verbal operants are systematically taught using prompting and reinforcement strategies that will lead to independent communication. Verbal prompts are not used, thus building immediate initiation and avoiding prompt dependency.

PECS has been successful with individuals of all ages demonstrating a variety of communicative, cognitive and physical difficulties. Some learners using PECS also develop speech. Others may transition to a voice output system. The body of research supporting the effectiveness of PECS continues to expand, with research from countries around the world.

There are six phases within PECS. Please see attached sheet which gives details of the development through the stages.

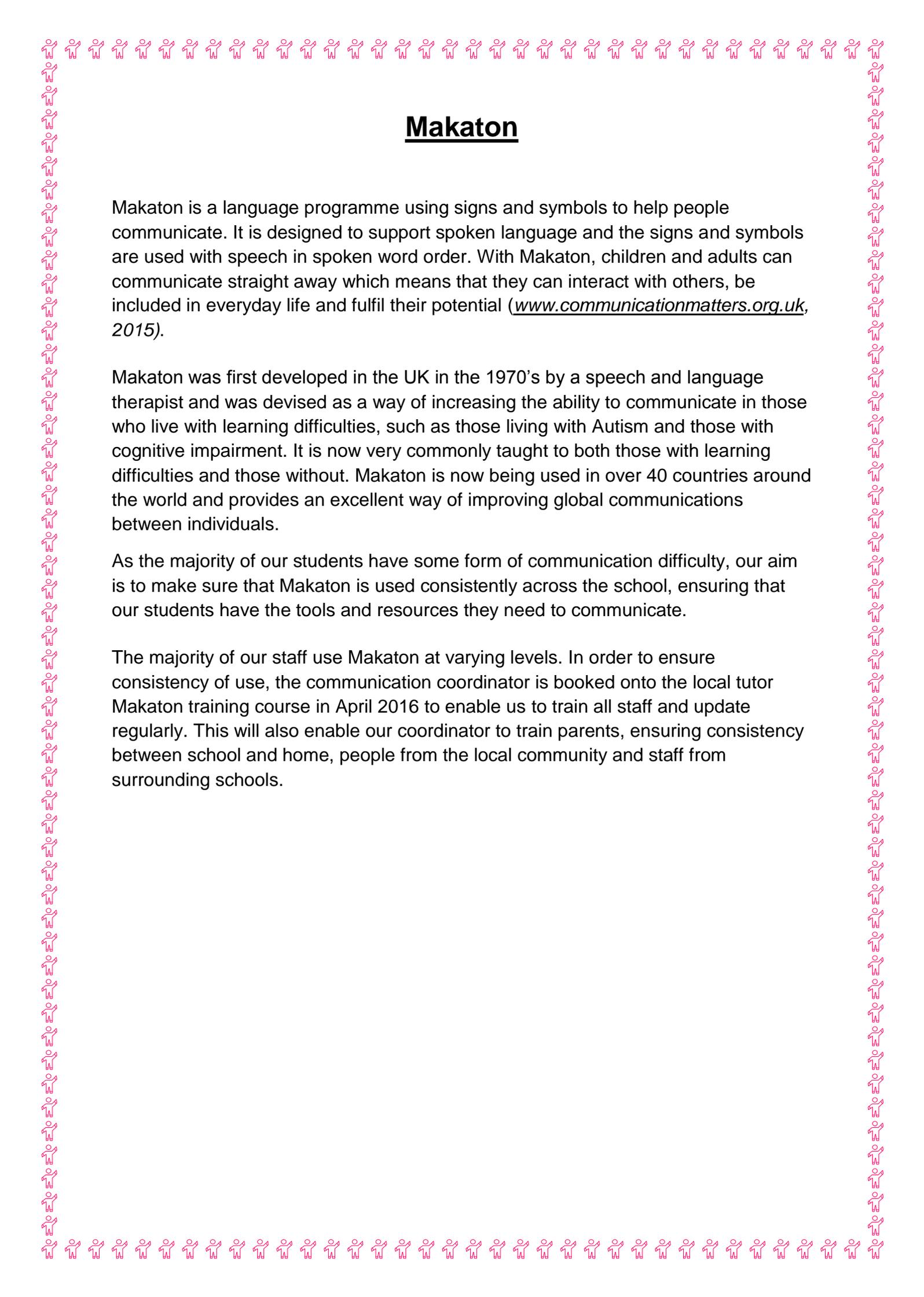


Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH)

TEACCH® Autism Program developed the concept of the “Culture of Autism” as a way of thinking about the characteristic patterns of thinking and behaviour seen in individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

TEACCH developed the intervention approach called “Structured TEACCHing”, which is based on understanding the learning characteristics of individuals with autism and the use of visual supports to promote meaning and independence. TEACCH services are supported by empirical research, enriched by extensive clinical expertise, and notable for its flexible and individualized support of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families (www.teacch.com, 2015).

Within our school, pupils are assessed for suitability and identified for use of the TEACCH programme.



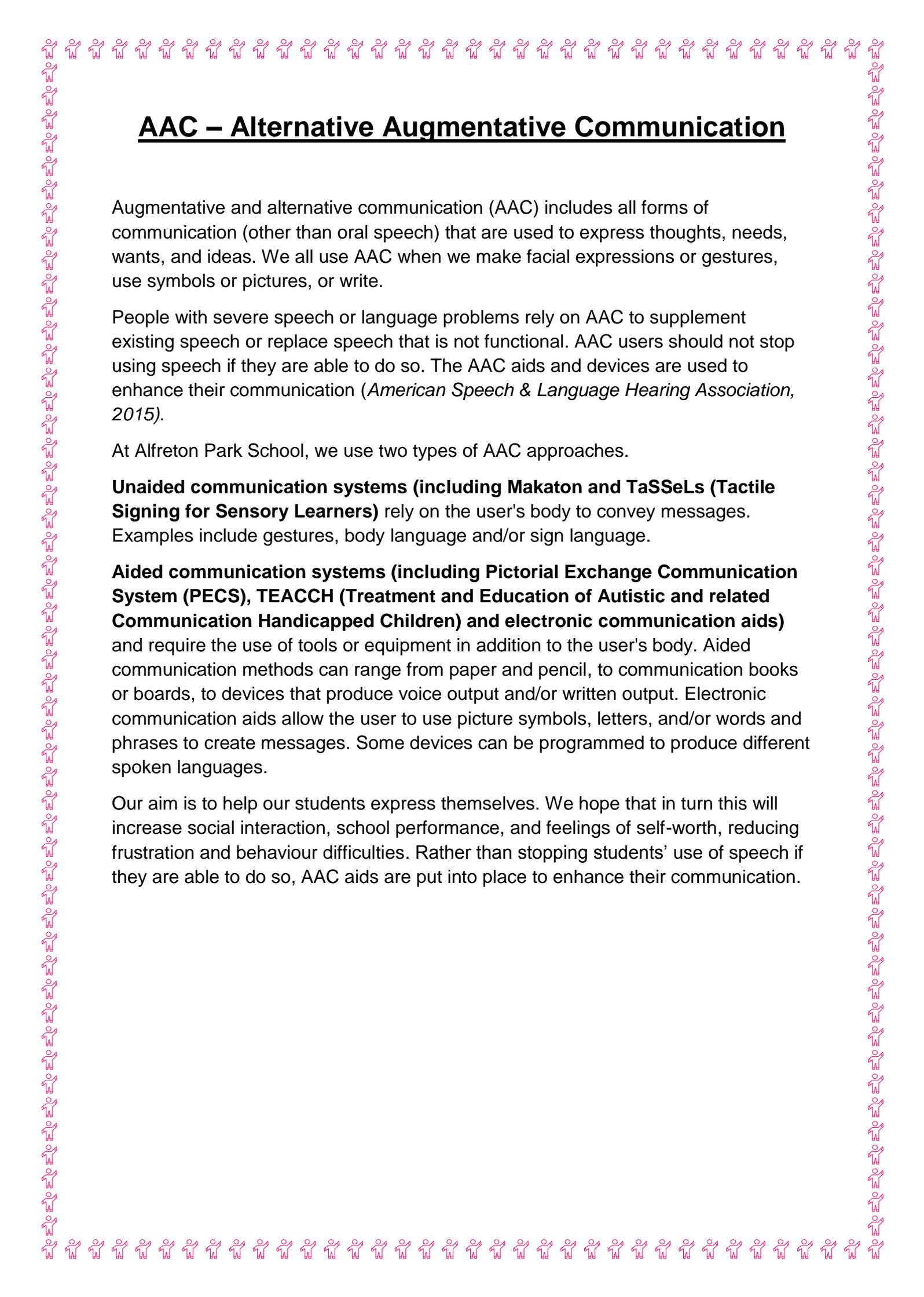
Makaton

Makaton is a language programme using signs and symbols to help people communicate. It is designed to support spoken language and the signs and symbols are used with speech in spoken word order. With Makaton, children and adults can communicate straight away which means that they can interact with others, be included in everyday life and fulfil their potential (www.communicationmatters.org.uk, 2015).

Makaton was first developed in the UK in the 1970's by a speech and language therapist and was devised as a way of increasing the ability to communicate in those who live with learning difficulties, such as those living with Autism and those with cognitive impairment. It is now very commonly taught to both those with learning difficulties and those without. Makaton is now being used in over 40 countries around the world and provides an excellent way of improving global communications between individuals.

As the majority of our students have some form of communication difficulty, our aim is to make sure that Makaton is used consistently across the school, ensuring that our students have the tools and resources they need to communicate.

The majority of our staff use Makaton at varying levels. In order to ensure consistency of use, the communication coordinator is booked onto the local tutor Makaton training course in April 2016 to enable us to train all staff and update regularly. This will also enable our coordinator to train parents, ensuring consistency between school and home, people from the local community and staff from surrounding schools.



AAC – Alternative Augmentative Communication

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) includes all forms of communication (other than oral speech) that are used to express thoughts, needs, wants, and ideas. We all use AAC when we make facial expressions or gestures, use symbols or pictures, or write.

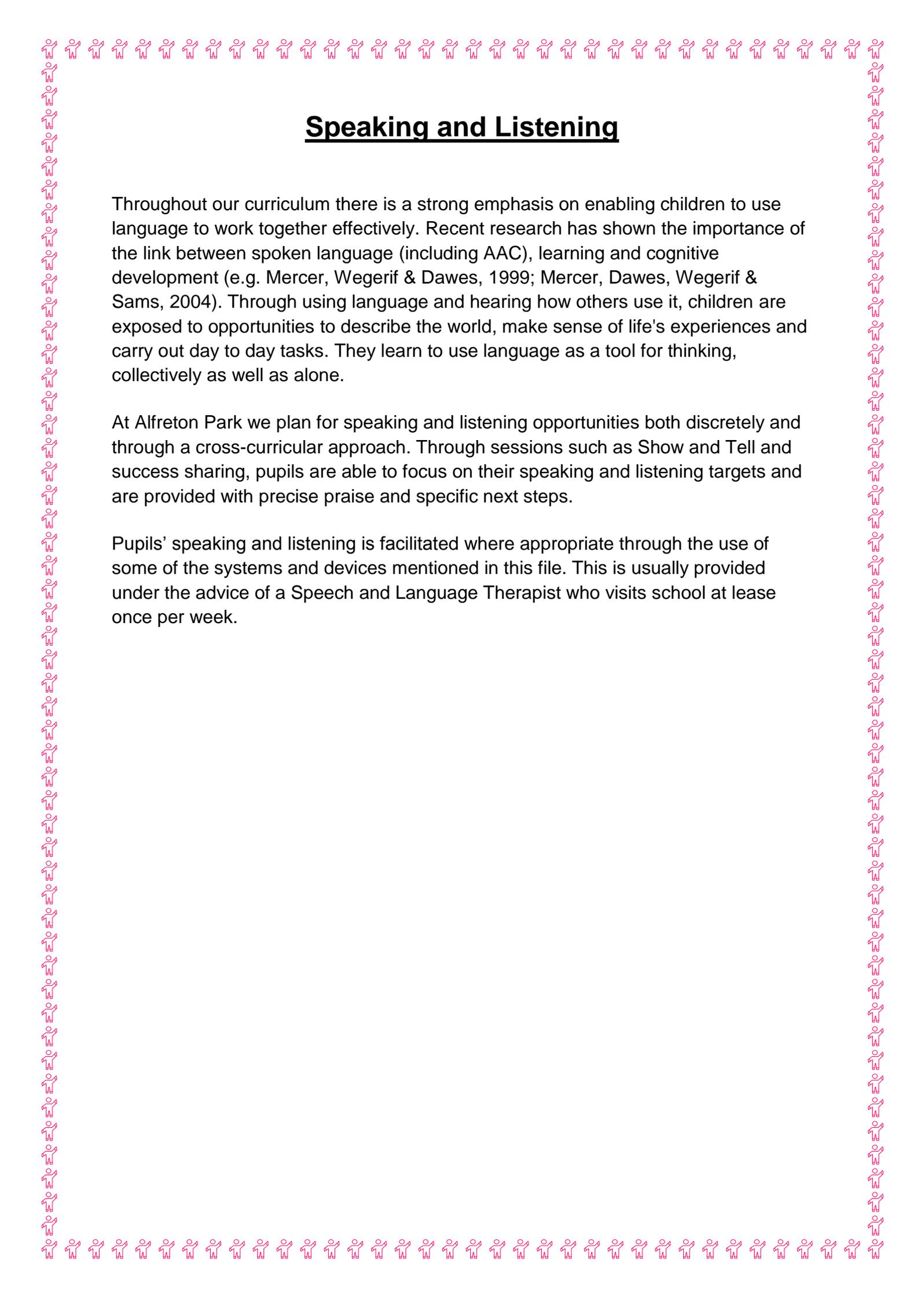
People with severe speech or language problems rely on AAC to supplement existing speech or replace speech that is not functional. AAC users should not stop using speech if they are able to do so. The AAC aids and devices are used to enhance their communication (*American Speech & Language Hearing Association, 2015*).

At Alfreton Park School, we use two types of AAC approaches.

Unaided communication systems (including Makaton and TaSSeLs (Tactile Signing for Sensory Learners)) rely on the user's body to convey messages. Examples include gestures, body language and/or sign language.

Aided communication systems (including Pictorial Exchange Communication System (PECS), TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication Handicapped Children) and electronic communication aids) and require the use of tools or equipment in addition to the user's body. Aided communication methods can range from paper and pencil, to communication books or boards, to devices that produce voice output and/or written output. Electronic communication aids allow the user to use picture symbols, letters, and/or words and phrases to create messages. Some devices can be programmed to produce different spoken languages.

Our aim is to help our students express themselves. We hope that in turn this will increase social interaction, school performance, and feelings of self-worth, reducing frustration and behaviour difficulties. Rather than stopping students' use of speech if they are able to do so, AAC aids are put into place to enhance their communication.



Speaking and Listening

Throughout our curriculum there is a strong emphasis on enabling children to use language to work together effectively. Recent research has shown the importance of the link between spoken language (including AAC), learning and cognitive development (e.g. Mercer, Wegerif & Dawes, 1999; Mercer, Dawes, Wegerif & Sams, 2004). Through using language and hearing how others use it, children are exposed to opportunities to describe the world, make sense of life's experiences and carry out day to day tasks. They learn to use language as a tool for thinking, collectively as well as alone.

At Alfreton Park we plan for speaking and listening opportunities both discretely and through a cross-curricular approach. Through sessions such as Show and Tell and success sharing, pupils are able to focus on their speaking and listening targets and are provided with precise praise and specific next steps.

Pupils' speaking and listening is facilitated where appropriate through the use of some of the systems and devices mentioned in this file. This is usually provided under the advice of a Speech and Language Therapist who visits school at least once per week.