

TRANSCRIPT: AAC

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The children are of varying ages and they're in that class to practise using their communication aids, so they're able to communicate effectively when they move up into a more mixed class environment in key stage 3.

Although that is their class group, they do integrate into other classes during the school week and at playtime, at dinner time and at assembly time. We feel it's very important that they do go into other classes because it's important that they learn to communicate with other people than us, possibly people who don't know them so well.

This morning we did circle time, which is an activity that we do every morning, partly as a way of recognising the start of the day. It's also an ideal opportunity to practise communicating with one another. The pupils were using different forms of alternative and augmentative communication, depending on their needs and their abilities.

Both Cain and Yasmin have a severe physical disability that means that both of them are unable to speak.

Cain uses eye gaze. He was using a device which recognises the movement of his retinas and he looks at a cell and then that activates it. Cain does use switches as another means of communication but eye gaze is much quicker for him. It's much more intuitive as well because when you are looking at something of interest, your eyes are obviously directed towards it.

Yasmin was using a device called a DynaVox DV4 which is set on a two switch scan. Yasmin is supported in her scanning by Emma to provide some stability to the hand, to help reduce her spasm and to keep her hand within range of the switch, and she also uses a head switch which she turns her head to activate.

She always has yes/no wristbands because when she was younger she was unable to control her movements and that was the most reliable form of communication. She will eye point towards them but also with her 'yes', she tends to do movement of the arm. Although she has now learnt to shake her head, we tend to use her yes/no armbands because it makes it clearer to people who don't know her, so that if she is moving her arm and it has a 'yes' symbol on it, they're more likely to understand that that is a form of communication rather than just an incidental movement.

Hayley also has a physical disability which affects her movement, although she is able to make some sounds and she's able to vocalise, 'yes'. She uses a Springboard Lite communication aid using her hands. She uses a key guard because she's got significant tremor and it means that she's only able then to hit one cell at a time, and the screen is also calibrated so it has a slight delay, so that even if she presses it twice, it will only speak once.

Aliya is only able to exert slight pressure using her fingers and she constantly tremors which makes it very difficult for her to control her movements accurately. She uses a BIGmack switch to do single messages like 'Hello' and she is learning to use and recognise symbols. Aliya does also use a couple of Makaton signs as well to indicate when she's finished, to say 'please' and 'more'.

Shanese also has a physical disability, although she does have quite a lot of movement. She is significantly visually impaired. She is able to use symbols as long as they're big enough. She uses a SuperTalker aid and she uses a Go Talk 9 at snack time to tell us what she would like to eat.

We work closely with the parents. The majority of the AAC aids do go home as well but we also use low tech communication strategies, so they are able to communicate within the school but also when they go out into the wider community, so that they can be as independent with their communication as possible.