Communication Friendly Classroom Audit Tool (CFCAT)

The CFCAT is designed to support reflection on communication-friendly practice within the classroom. It can be completed as a self-audit or while observing a colleague's classroom. The tool focuses on three key areas that support pupils' speech, language and communication development: the physical environment, high quality classroom talk, and adult use of language. Observe a typical classroom session and give each standard a rating as shown in the adjacent box. Use the notes column to record examples, strengths and areas for development. The audit is designed to support reflection, professional discussion and action planning to further develop communication-friendly practice.

Rating scale
2 = consistently in place
1 = working towards
0 = not yet in place



1. Physical Environment

Pupils' confidence and skills are shaped by their physical and emotional environment. A well thought out environment should remove barriers to communication and support learning, social and emotional development. The environment should make communication easy, effective, and enjoyable. It should provide opportunities for everyone to talk, listen, understand, and take part.

		Rating	Notes
1.1	**Visual supports are used consistently**		
1.1.1	Visual labelling containing the picture/symbol and the word is used in key areas and on resources.		
1.1.2	A visual timetable is displayed. The timetable is used throughout the day, so pupils know the activity they are currently completing. When pupils move around school, e.g., phonics, PE, etc., the timetable is available and used.		
1.1.3	'Now and Next' boards and shorter visual timelines are used with pupils who need this level of support.		
1.1.4	Task plans, checklists and/or visual plans are used to support understanding of language and promote independent working.		
1.1.5	Choice Boards, Communication Boards and/or Communication Books are used with pupils who need them.		
1.1.6	Visual resources are available and used in areas beyond the classroom, e.g., literacy areas, quiet spaces, playgrounds and dinner halls.		

1.2	**The environment is organised, structured and supports attention**		
1.2.1	Areas are clearly defined, so pupils know what the space is for.		
1.2.2	Quiet, distraction-free areas to work are available and actively used by pupils.		
1.2.3	The environment reduces distractions by considering background noise, visual clutter and sensory demands.		
1.3	**Learning spaces are engaging, inclusive, and encourage interaction, discussion and independence**		
1.3.1	Role play areas are creative and are available for pupils beyond Early Years.		
1.3.2	Book areas are available for all year groups (not necessarily in each classroom). They are appealing, comfortable areas and contain a range of texts, e.g., picture books, fact books, fiction books and first language texts.		
1.3.3	Classroom displays are visually appealing, and they reflect and support pupils' learning. They are child-friendly, interactive, multi-sensory and promote discussion.		
1.3.4	Pupils are included in deciding what goes on displays. They are taught how to use the displays.		



2. High Quality Classroom Talk

Language development can be supported through learning opportunities within the classroom. When staff encourage pupils to think for themselves, ask questions that invite pupils to expand on the idea, and provide justified answers, pupils' skills develop. There should be an ethos in which pupils are secure in sharing their ideas and learning from their mistakes.

		Rating	**Notes**
2.1	**Pupils are supported to communicate in different ways**		
2.1.1	All methods of communication are used and encouraged by staff and pupils where appropriate, e.g., speaking, gestures, signing, pointing, Communication Boards/Books, high tech Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).		
2.1.2	All pupils are included and engaged in small group activities, regardless of their method of communication.		

2.2	**Pupils feel safe and confident to ask for help, say they do not understand, and express their needs.**		
2.2.1	There is a system for pupils to request help, say they do not understand or request repetition. Pupils feel safe to express their needs.		
2.3	**All pupils have regular opportunities to talk, share ideas and discuss learning with peers and adults**		
2.3.1	Pupils are regularly given opportunities to discuss their ideas and learning with peers on 1-to-1 level or in groups, e.g. 'Think-Pair-Share' etc.		
2.3.2	Pupils are regularly given opportunities to discuss their ideas and learning with staff.		
2.3.3	Pupils are regularly given opportunities to engage in interactive book reading and discussion.		
2.3.4	Some of the following communication-rich opportunities, or similar, are provided: ○ Show and tell ○ Personal narrative / news sharing ○ Word of the day/week ○ Sign of the day/week ○ Word walls ○ Role play / acting out learning ○ 'Ask me about' stickers ○ Oral rehearsal before writing ○ Recording podcasts ○ Recording learning by drawing or talking, rather than writing ○ Sharing special interests or expertise ○ Debate / discussion clubs ○ Interviewing visitors/staff ○ Buddy systems ○ Communication clubs		
2.4	**Staff use questioning and prompts that extend thinking and encourage detailed responses**		
2.4.1	Staff use open-ended questions to gain detailed answers.		
2.4.2	Staff extend pupils' thinking through suggestions and offering alternative opinions.		



3. Adult use of language

Pupils learn language by hearing it in everyday situations. When all staff use good language models and teaching methods, it extends and maximises the opportunities for pupils to learn, opening pupils to their full communicative potential.

		Rating	Notes
3.1	**Staff adapt their communication to support understanding**		
3.1.1	Staff are face-to-face with pupils when communicating and get down to their level, where possible.		
3.1.2	Staff use a slower pace when speaking and routinely provide sufficient processing time (approximately 10 seconds where appropriate) after asking questions or giving instructions.		
3.1.3	Staff simplify and repeat what is said to support understanding of language.		
3.1.4	Staff keep instructions concise (chunking) and give them in a logical sequence.		
3.2	**Staff actively develop expressive language by repeating, commenting, modelling and expanding**		
3.2.1	Staff repeat, comment, expand and/or explain when responding to pupils' expressive language.		
3.3	**A multi-sensory approach to learning is used to support communication**		
3.3.1	Staff use a multi-sensory approach to support learning including objects, pictures, diagrams, timelines, videos, story sacks, story grids, word maps, mind maps, signing/gestures, singing, props etc.		
3.3.2	Learning includes demonstrations and/or practical tasks where possible.		
3.3.3	Learning takes place in short chunks of listening, having a go, movement etc.		
3.4	**Staff use interaction strategies that support communication and language development**		
3.4.1	All staff use strategies to ensure a balance of comments and questions during interactions, such as the 'hand' rule (1 question to 4 comments).		
3.4.2	All staff are mindful of the level and complexity of questions they ask, drawing on the 4 Blank Levels framework where appropriate.		

3.5	**Staff explicitly teach and reinforce vocabulary**		
3.5.1	Staff explain, model and repeat new vocabulary to support understanding and use of language.		
3.5.2	Pre-teaching of vocabulary is provided to pupils who need it.		

Pupil Voice Audit Tool (PVAT)

The PVAT is designed to gather pupils' views about how communication-friendly their classroom is. It focuses on three key areas: the physical environment, classroom communication opportunities, and adult use of language. Ask one pupil, a small group of pupils, or your whole class to respond to a series of statements about their experiences and to share their ideas for improvement. Use the notes column to record their key comments. The tool is designed to support pupil voice, reflection and discussion, helping staff identify strengths and opportunities to further develop communication-friendly practice.

1. Physical Environment

		Response	Notes
1.1	There are pictures, signs and labels in my classroom which help me to find things I need.		
1.2	There is a timetable displayed which helps me know what is happening next.		
1.3	There are checklists, pictures and other resources available to help me work on my own when needed.		
1.4	There is a quiet place to work when I need to.		
1.5	I can concentrate in my classroom.		
1.6	The book area contains books that interest me and help me to learn.		
1.7	The displays in my classroom help me to learn, talk and share my ideas.		
1.8	I am involved in deciding what goes on the displays in my classroom.		

1.9	What is one thing you would change to make your classroom easier to learn in?	

2. High Quality Classroom Talk

		Response	Notes
2.1	I can join in and share my ideas in lessons.		
2.2	I feel comfortable asking for help, saying I do not understand, or asking someone to explain again.		
2.3	There are regular chances to talk about my learning with other children.		
2.4	There are regular chances to talk about my learning with adults.		
2.5	Teachers ask questions that help me explain my ideas and think more deeply.		
2.6	There are times when I can share my own interests, ideas and learning in different ways, for example, through role play, presentations, drawing, talking or group activities.		
2.7	What is one thing you would change to make it easier for you and other children to share your ideas?		



3. Adult use of language

		Response	Notes
3.1	Adults explain things in a way that is easy for me to understand.		
3.2	Adults give me time to think before I answer a question or follow instructions.		
3.3	Adults listen and help me develop my thinking when I share an idea or answer.		
3.4	Adults use pictures, videos, objects, demonstrations and practical activities to help me learn.		
3.5	My lessons include a mix of listening, talking, moving and having a go.		
3.6	What is one thing you would change to make it easier for you to understand, learn and join in?		