



Press release – 10.10.2012

## **HALF A MILLION SCHOOL CHILDREN PUT DOWN PENS AND PICK UP LANGUAGE**

More than 1,100 schools across the UK will put down their pens for the whole of today to promote good speaking and listening in an initiative from The Communication Trust, a coalition of nearly 50 voluntary organisations with expertise in speech, language and communication.

*No Pens Day Wednesday* is taking place for the second time today (Wednesday October 10<sup>th</sup>) with the aim of raising awareness of good speech, language and communication skills in schools. More than a million children in the UK have some form of speech, language and communication need (SLCN) – roughly 2-3 in every classroom – and the Trust is keen to highlight what good communication is, so that those with difficulties can be better identified.

Teachers at primary and secondary schools were supplied with lesson plans and activity templates developed by specialist teachers and speech and language therapists (SLTs) to help them conduct lessons where writing was outlawed for the day. Instead, a whole range of speaking and listening activities are being used to support children's thinking and learning.

Wendy Lee, Professional Director of The Communication Trust, said; "We are delighted with the success of *No Pens Day Wednesday*. Last year 800 schools took part, but this year more than 1,100 have registered for our free resources – this equates to roughly 500,000 children doing *No Pens Day Wednesday*. This demonstrates the real appetite there is in schools for supporting children to develop good communication skills.

"We know that developing good speech, language and communication skills is vital for children and young people and that early identification of children with speech, language and communication needs is incredibly important. We're also really pleased to hear that a lot of schools have seen so much benefit from *No Pens Day* that they're extending it to more than once a year."

*No Pens Day Wednesday* was first run last year as part of the *Hello* campaign, the national year of communication, and has been repeated this year to demonstrate how important it is that children and young people develop good communication skills. It was the brainchild of Jean Gross, who was the Government's Communication Champion for children during the national year.

She said: "I'm delighted to see *No Pens Day Wednesday* going from strength to strength. We know how important it is for children to learn good communication skills as soon as they can, and dedicating a whole day to fun activities around speaking and listening is a great way to make a start. We know that there is more teacher talk in class than pupil talk, yet children learn best when they can use their talking to think and interact. *No Pens Day Wednesday* helps teachers redress the balance. The Communication Trust has provided some fantastic resources which makes it so easy for teachers to create compelling and useful lessons, which I think they enjoy as much as the children do."

Communication has increased in importance in 2012 as it has become part of the Ofsted inspection framework, meaning schools cannot be named 'good' or 'outstanding' if communication skills are not supported in teaching and learning. Primary and secondary schools across the country are encouraging their pupils to focus on using their language and communication to learn in a fun and creative way today.

This year, *No Pens Day Wednesday* has a truly international flavour with schools from as far afield as Australia, New Zealand, India, Spain, Zimbabwe, Uganda, the Cook Islands and Romania signing up to take part.

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## Notes to editors

### About The Communication Trust

- The Communication Trust is a coalition of nearly 50 leading voluntary sector and community-based organisations with expertise in speech, language and communication
- The Trust has an extensive advisory and partner network, which includes the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT), Achievement for All, Council for Disabled Children, Early Support Programme and specialists across early years, schools and youth justice.
- We support the children's workforce and commissioners to meet the speech, language and communication needs of all children and young people
- We do this by raising awareness, influencing policy, promoting best practice among the children's workforce and commissioning work from our members.
- Last year, the Trust ran the *Hello* campaign (national year of communication) in partnership with Jean Gross in her role as the Government's Communication Champion for children.
- For more information, visit [www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk](http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk)