



For immediate release:

Wednesday 21st September

I CAN's Dawn House School encourages talking in class for *No Pens Day Wednesday*

Students and staff from Dawn House School in Rainworth will be thinking about how they talk and listen to others by putting down their pens on Wednesday 28th September and getting involved in *No Pens Day Wednesday*, a brand new initiative from the *Hello* campaign (the national year of communication). The special school is run by I CAN, the children's communication charity, for children aged 5 to 19 years with severe and complex speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

The school will be getting involved in this UK-wide event, which aims to raise awareness of speaking and listening skills instead of writing for the day. Students from the school will be taking part in activities on the day such as role plays, learning Makaton signing, creating a puppet theatre and composing music to accompany film clips. For the school's students, who struggle with talking, listening and understanding, the day will be an opportunity to develop these skills along with exploring alternative ways they can interact with others.

Angela Child, Principal of Dawn House School, said: "The whole school are really excited about getting involved in *No Pens Day Wednesday*. This activity is really positive for our learners as it puts a focus on alternative ways of communicating, for instance using symbols and signing. Our students will benefit from being able to focus on the person they are talking to, as opposed to having to think about how to get their language right on paper. The students will also be able to interact with a variety of pupils from across the school, which will be different from their normal routine and increase their confidence to talk to people outside their class or friendship group."

Jean Gross, the Government's Communication Champion, who is backing *No Pens Day Wednesday*, says: "2011 is a special year as it is the National Year of Communication known as the *Hello* campaign. The ability to communicate is fundamental and we would like to thank Dawn House School for taking part in *No Pens Day Wednesday*. It is important that we recognise speaking, listening and understanding as bedrock skills for success at school. In the UK today, over 1 million children and young people struggle with some sort of speech, language and communication need."

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For more information, pictures or interviews, please contact Emma Selim (Press and PR Officer) on 0207 843 2543 or eselim@ican.org.uk

Notes to Editors

About Dawn House School:

- I CAN's Dawn House School provides intensive and specialist support for children and young people aged 5 -19 years who have either severe speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) or Asperger Syndrome which prevent them from realising their full potential intellectually, academically and socially.
- Pupils receive the integrated therapy and education that they need, ensuring they receive full access to the national curriculum (pre 16) and an enriched curriculum that supports the transition to adulthood (post 16).

About I CAN:

- I CAN is the children's communication charity. www.ican.org.uk or www.talkingpoint.org.uk
- We are here to ensure that no child is left out or left behind because of a difficulty speaking or understanding.
- Nobody wants a child's potential to be wasted. It happens because communication difficulties are not visible, often mistaken for something else, or not noticed at all.
- I CAN's mission is to make sure that everyone in contact with children knows how important communication is, what a communication difficulty looks like and what they can do to help.
- We do this through:
 - Increasing public awareness of the problems children face.
 - Giving expert advice to parents and families about what to look out for and what to do via our enquiry service.
 - Providing assessments for children so that their families know what support will meet their needs.
 - Giving teachers and people working with children the skills to help children who struggle.
 - Campaigning to ensure children and families get a better deal.
 - Producing resources, DVDs, posters and other information to help parents and practitioners support children with their communication development.

At the very heart of I CAN are our special schools which give expert care and education to children with problems so severe their needs cannot be met elsewhere.

About *No Pens Day Wednesday* and the *Hello* campaign:

No Pens Day Wednesday is backed by Jean Gross, the government's Communication Champion for children, and other curriculum experts including Sir Jim Rose, Andrew Pollard and Mick Waters. It is an initiative for the *Hello* campaign to tie into the September theme of *Back to School*.

Hello is the national year of communication – a campaign to increase understanding of how important it is for children and young people to develop good communication skills.

The campaign is run by The Communication Trust, a coalition of 40 leading voluntary sector organisations (including The National Literacy Trust); in partnership with Jean Gross, the Government's Communication Champion. Together we aim to make 2011 the year when children's communication skills become a priority in schools and homes across the country.

The campaign is supported by BT and Pearson Assessment and is backed by the Department for Education and Department for Health. Please visit www.hello.org.uk for further information or to sign up for regular updates.

The national year was originally proposed by John Bercow MP – now Speaker of the House of Commons – in his July 2008 Review of Services for Children and Young People (0-19) with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN).