

Engagement Pathway – Curriculum Rationale

INTENT

Pupils on the Engagement Pathway often have Autism and/or complex learning difficulties and disabilities (CLDD). These needs frequently co-occur with other developmental disorders, creating highly individual learning profiles. Because 92% of pupils on this pathway have a diagnosis of Autism, our curriculum is designed to be personalised, flexible and responsive to each learner's developmental stage, needs, strengths and priorities.

Our aim is to:

- Recognise each pupil's unique needs learning pattern, communication style and sensory needs.
- Provide curriculum experiences that build confidence, communication, emotional and sensory regulation, independence and physical development.
- Equip pupils with the skills to communicate their needs, form relationships, explore the world safely and develop life skills.
- Ensure learning is meaningful, purposeful and linked to EHCP outcomes, including Preparation for Adulthood from Year 9.

Teaching is immersive, practical and experience-based, using play and therapeutic strategies to support progression from individual starting points. Staff are supported through ongoing CPD, enabling consistent, informed and reflective practice across the pathway.

PLANNING FOR LEARNING

Class leads design daily routines that are predictable and motivating. Planning is based on:

- Individual developmental stage interests and motivators.
- A total communication approach (visuals, objects of reference, PECS, symbols, Makaton, reduced language, enabling environments, etc.).
- Strategies that support pupils to express their needs in the way that suits them.

The goal is to help pupils communicate effectively, feel secure, form positive relationships, explore their environment, and work towards maximum independence.

Personal Learning Intention Maps (PLIMs)

PLIMs include aspirational, personalised targets linked to each area of the EHCP. They are reviewed formally through the annual review process and are continually evaluated throughout the year. They provide the basis for individual curriculum development including activities designed to address needs and developmental stage according to areas of interest and motivation.

One Page Profiles

These provide a clear snapshot of how each pupil communicates, their strengths, and how best to support them. They are co-produced with all stakeholders, wherever possible.

IMPLEMENTATION

Teaching and Learning

We strive to create a calm, consistent, visually clear learning environment. Staff use the SPELL Framework and AET National Autism Standards to support best practice. Pupils do not follow subject-specific learning. Instead, they access an aspirational developmental curriculum, delivered through themed learning over a three-year cycle.

Areas of learning include:

- Problem Solving – early numeracy, cognitive development, developing attention
- Literacy & Communication – early reading, language development, pupil voice
- Physical Movement – gross and fine motor development, sensory processing
- Our World – sensory exploration, arts, music, creative expression, personal preference
- Social, Emotional and Mental Wellbeing – emotional regulation, building relationships, social awareness
- Activities of Daily Living – cooking, cleaning, transitions, community participation, environment exposure, travel, local facilities
- Personal Activities of Daily Living – personal hygiene, dressing, eating and drinking

Curriculum offers overlap with the Core Pathway for pupils who show readiness for subject-specific learning. In Key Stage 4–5, the emphasis shifts towards independence and preparation for adulthood.

Progress is monitored through Engagement Profiles, PLIMs, One Page Profiles and individual progress sheets deriving from evidence captured within our Earwig assessment system.

CURRICULUM APPROACHES

Our approach is highly responsive, therapeutic and communication rich. Key methods include:

1. Total Communication

Using any form of communication meaningful to the pupil—such as gestures, objects, single photographs and symbols, PECS, communication books, speech, or speech-generating devices—we ensure every child can express themselves in a way that suits them best. Total communication is supported through approaches including Intensive Interaction, Attention Autism sessions, TACPAC, and personalised SALT sessions, allowing pupils to develop communication skills in ways that feel natural and engaging. All communication attempts are recognised and valued.

2. Core Word Programme

Supports to develop communication and early reading skills through a small set of high frequency, functional words. Children are encouraged to initiate, make choices, and take turns, with refusals recognised as valid communication. Core words are taught through engaging, motivating sessions such as Attention Autism, Play Skills, ICT activities, and sensory exploration, as well as being embedded throughout daily routines using symbols, speech, sign and AAC.

3. Sensory-Based Approaches

Providing sensory experiences that support attention and regulation without causing overload. Includes:

- Sensory circuits, Sensology sessions
- Access to quiet/low demand areas
- Opportunities for self-regulation and mutual regulation
- Opportunities for movement within outdoor spaces

4. Attention Autism

A highly motivating, structured approach designed to develop pupils' attention, focus, communication, and shared enjoyment. Through short, predictable, engaging activities delivered in 4 stages, pupils are supported to build their ability to focus, shift attention, and participate. By modelling communication, turn-taking, anticipation, and joint attention, Attention Autism creates meaningful opportunities develop early interaction skills and engage purposefully in learning at their own pace.

5. Physical and Wellbeing Activities

Regular movement sessions—including Smart Moves, Jabadeo sessions, trips to Seb and Olivia's Den, community walks, and visits to local parks—are embedded throughout the week to support pupils' regulation, physical development, and overall wellbeing. Pupils also have regular access to a wide range of regulation equipment within the school environment, such as swings, hammocks, slack lines in Forest School, the trim trail area, trampettes, slides, soft play, sensory circuits, and the sensory garden, ensuring movement and regulation opportunities are available whenever they are needed.

6. Daily Living Skills

Structured support for personal care, independence, making choices and accessing community environments.

7. Therapeutic Interventions

Pupils have access to a range of therapeutic interventions including SALT, OT, physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, rebound therapy, music therapy, and fine/gross motor programmes. Interventions play a vital role in supporting pupils' communication, physical development, sensory regulation, and emotional wellbeing.

8. Structured Teaching & Visuals

Routines, schedules and in-task visuals to reduce anxiety, support transitions and clarify expectations. Personalised timetables allow flexibility to accommodate learners who have an 'uneven' learning profile.

9. Co-Curricular Opportunities

Including independence programmes, PSHEE, healthy eating, community participation, focus weeks and links with external providers.

10. Transition Support

Using visuals, adapted environments, predictable routines, transition objects, staffing support and clear communication with families and agencies.

11. Responsive Approaches

Completion and review of regular dynamic risk assessments and multi-agency collaboration ensuring we are highly responsive to individual emerging and developing needs. A holistic approach to assessing and responding to changing and emerging needs working in collaboration with parents and multiagency partners.

Supporting Documents

- PLIMs
- One Page Profiles
- Engagement Profiles
- Consistent Approach Plans
- Curriculum Progression Model & PSHEE Framework
- AET Standards
- IDAF

PROVIDING FOR PUPILS WITH ADDITIONAL COMPLEX NEEDS

Some pupils require highly individualised therapeutic timetables, enhanced staffing ratios, and carefully controlled environments. Due to the complexity of their needs, provision is fully bespoke and responsive to each child. This may include staff adopting a 'low-demand approach' to support communication, emotional regulation, and

safety. Planning and delivery of this provision takes place in close collaboration with families, the local authority, and external agencies to ensure a consistent and well-coordinated approach.

IMPACT

Assessment is personalised, holistic and continuous. For learners not yet ready for subject-specific learning, progress is assessed using a non-linear, engagement-focused approach. Assessment draws on:

- Observation across environments
- Multi-agency collaboration
- Family input
- Tools such as SCERTS, the Engagement Model, Pre Key Stage Standards, AET standards, IDAF

Targets are set annually (linked to EHCP outcomes) and continually monitored and reviewed using evidence captured within our assessment system, Earwig. Progress is shared with parents termly to ensure effective co-production in target setting.

Engagement Model

Used for pupils working below National Standards, focusing on the five aspects of engagement. It helps identify strengths, barriers and next steps. We can use the engagement model to inform small steps of progress linked to individual targets.

Individual Developmental Assessment Framework (IDAF)

An Individual Developmental Assessment Framework is a structured approach used to identify a child's strengths, needs and emerging skills across the four broad areas of need, ensuring targets are matched to their individual profile. It provides a holistic, ongoing picture of progress in smaller developmental steps that informs personalised planning, target setting and intervention and multi-agency collaboration, where appropriate.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Regular comparative judgement meetings
- Deep dives for pupils not on track
- Multi-agency referrals where needed
- Continuous reflection on pupil experience and curriculum quality
- Consideration of Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) data, where applicable to inform consistent approach planning
- Review of pupil passports in ensuring exposure to a variety of environments and community access, where applicable

MAINTAINING EFFECTIVE CO-PRODUCTION

Family Partnerships

We maintain strong communication with families through preferred agreed methods including:

- Parents' evenings
- EHCP annual reviews
- Home-school diaries
- Phone/email contact as agreed with families
- Earwig
- Coffee mornings
- Stay and Play sessions
- School website and social media
- Parent partnership drop-in sessions and training

Pupil Voice

We acknowledge that some pupils in the engagement pathway are non-speaking or minimally speaking and therefore require a bespoke approach when attempting to capture pupil voice and ensure authentic communication. We do this through:

- Structured observations using tools such as intensive interaction an engagement model
- Behaviour as communication – tracking patterns e.g. sensory-seeking/avoidance and regulation and informing consistent approach plans
- AAC (augmentative alternative communication) such as objects of reference, photos, symbol cards, choice boards, switches or similar voice output devices
- Co-regulation and advocacy to identify choices and honour preferences acknowledging agency, autonomy and consent

External agencies

We share progress with external agencies to ensure that wider needs and interventions are effectively supported, including contributing to CYPs assessments and providing detailed feedback. Multi-agency collaboration also involves home observations and professional assessments from Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, and Paediatricians. We work openly and transparently with the local authority to secure the resources and support required to ensure that each pupil receives appropriate and well-matched provision.