

## Curriculum Policy

- To be read in conjunction with the NAS Quality of Life Curriculum Philosophy and Framework Policy.

### CONTEXT

Pupils at Robert Ogden School come from eighteen different authorities and reflect diversity of race, culture, background and economic situations.

All pupils have a diagnosis of autism and their own learning profile, outlined in their Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

### INTENT

Our curriculum is designed to offer a broad and balanced learning experience, which is designed around each pupils' unique learning journey. We enable every child to reach their potential by encouraging and building on their strengths and interests, and work with pupils to develop strategies to overcome and cope with any difficulties or barriers.

Our curriculum is based on a Quality of Life focused framework and incorporates academic, vocational and life skills, as well as communication, social and emotional skills. This is supported by strengthening pupils' independence and living skills which are pivotal to building their confidence and self-esteem.

### **The key principles and purpose of our curriculum in order to meet the needs of all our pupils whatever their ability in a highly bespoke way:**

- To equip pupils with portable skills for life, living and work.
- To be adaptive and responsive to individual needs, strengths and interests.
- To be skill and context based that encourages active engagement in learning
- To focus on developing the key skills of communication, cognition, independence, physical development and self-care, all transferrable skills that equip pupils for life beyond the school.

Ultimately, we want all of our pupils, to be the best they can be.

- For further details on specific Subject areas see their individual policies and protocols.

### IMPLEMENTATION

#### **Curriculum driver:**

- Is derived from an exploration of the backgrounds and needs of our pupils and our beliefs about high quality education and values.
- It is used to ensure we give our pupils appropriate, relevant and ambitious curriculum experiences and opportunities.
- Our main curriculum driver is:

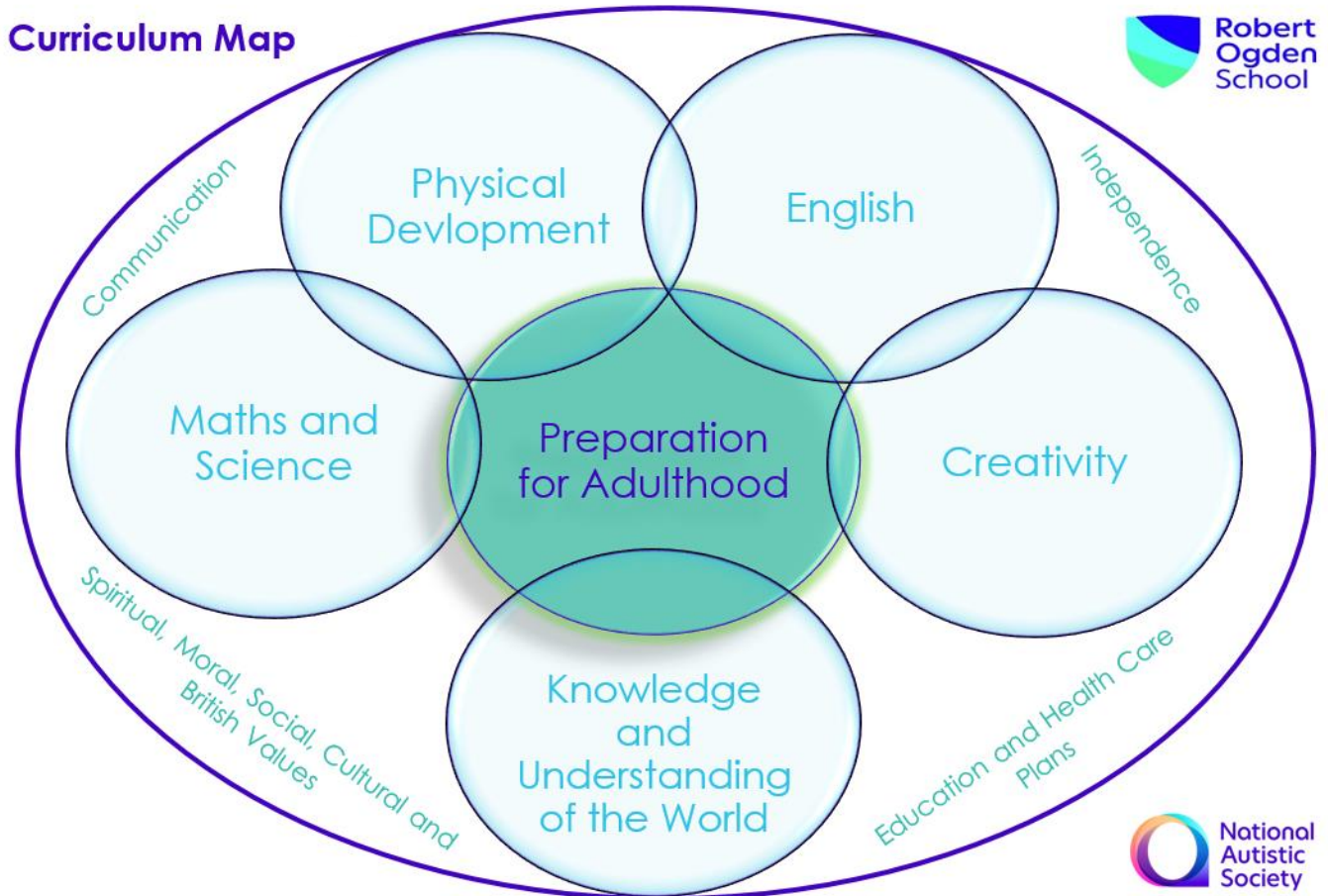
#### **Preparation for Adulthood**

portable skills for life, living and work

- The curriculum places emphasis on learning for life. Part 3 of The Children and Families Act (2014), states that Preparing for Adulthood outcomes should be a focus from 13 years old onwards.

- We place this at the heart of our curriculum from age 5 onwards.
- We have identified a further five key areas of learning that form the basis of our curriculum.
- Integral to this is the development of effective communication, independence skills, SMSC and British Values.
- Underpinning all we do are the EHCP Outcomes.

The curriculum is split into **6 Areas of learning**:



We recognise that our pupils do not necessarily follow a typical developmental trajectory. This is particularly the case for pupils with autism. Therefore, the curriculum needs to provide a framework which can support learning for those that learn in a 'typical' and 'atypical' manner. In essence the pedagogical approach proposed is one that is fit for purpose for each individual pupil.

**Our curriculum design is based on evidence from cognitive science and autism research** (see appendix for referencing); **the curriculum provides:**

- a provision map identifying curriculum content and coverage.
- a framework of suggested learning opportunities for how learning can be scaffolded
- a clear accreditation pathway for pupils that underpins their learning and acknowledges the progress that has been made throughout their education.
- frequent and regular opportunities for pupils to repeat, retrieve and generalise knowledge and skills across contexts, to support both storage and retrieval strength and retention of new learning
- real-life application of knowledge and skills to prepare pupils for increased independence, moving towards adulthood
- individual priorities (as identified in EHCP Outcomes) are embedded in daily learning

In addition, we also understand that learning can be invisible in the short term and that sustained mastery takes time. We make intra-curricular wherever possible to strengthen learning. Our pupils are not always able to make the links between different learning experiences due to the contextualised learning, associated with autism. For this reason, we teach themes through other curriculum areas. For example, numeracy skills are often specifically practiced in the community, using money and time in real situations where appropriate. Our curriculum gives equal weight to the knowledge and skills our pupils need to equip them for independence along with those more relevant to subject specific understanding.

**Connections:** several aspects of the curriculum can be learned at the same time both between subjects (cross curricular) and within subjects (intra-curricular).

The same concepts are explored in a wide breadth of topics (For further details see Assessment policy). Through this 'forwards and backwards engineering' of the curriculum, pupils return to the core concepts over and over and gradually build understanding of them.

For each of the core concepts there are milestone markers, which includes the skills both procedural and semantic, that pupils need to understand the core concepts.

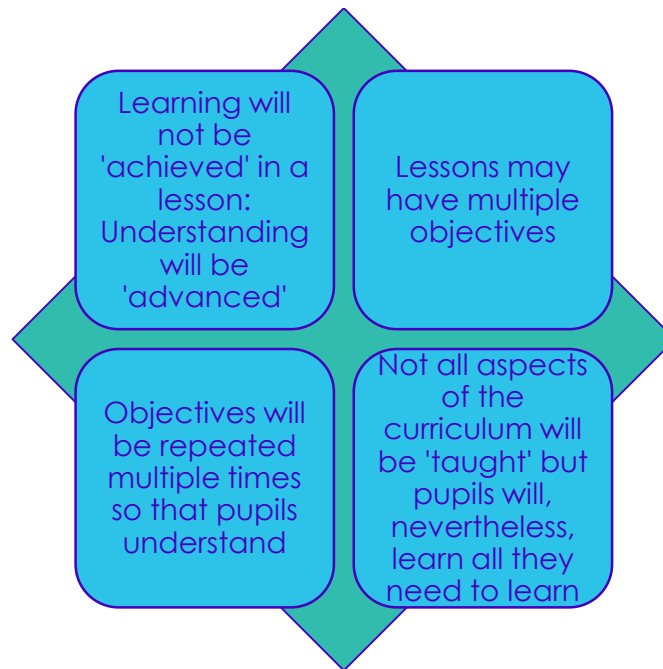
Cognitive science tells us learning is a change to long term memory. Working memory is limited and that cognitive load is too high if pupils rush through content. This limits the acquisition of long-term memory. Cognitive science also tells us that in order for pupils to become creative thinkers, or have a greater depth of understanding they must first master the basics, which takes time.

We recognise that pupils with both severe and profound learning difficulties face particular challenges with learning which demand particular solutions and ways of learning. (Collis and Lacey 1996; Northway, 2001; Ware, 2003; Porter, 2005; Hewett, 2006; Goss, 2006; Lacey, Layton, Miller, Goldbart and Lawson, 2007; Lacey, 2009; Imray, Gasquez-Navarro and Bond, 2010; Imray and Hinchcliffe, 2012).

This means that those pupils are likely to remain within intellectual parameters well below their chronological age for the whole of their school lives Lacey (2009). We believe our approach to learning best meets our pupils needs because it is personalised and engaging. Personalised learning 'is simply spending quality time on things that really matter for children' (Imray & Hinchcliffe 2014).

**At Robert Ogden School learning is defined as:** The cognitive process of acquiring the essential knowledge, skills understanding and behaviours required for deep understanding.

**The four principals are:**



**Longitudinal learning:** the curriculum is designed to advance understanding, gradually increasing the amount of content pupils have covered and therefore increasing understanding within and across the subject. Time is taken to learn things that matter across a much longer period of time than a lesson. Lessons are not an event in themselves. They are part of the process of learning and therefore we do not expect pupils to always complete learning within a lesson. Many lessons will carry on over several days, weeks or even months until a pupil is able to demonstrate the required degree of understanding.

Many lessons will involve multiple learning objectives, some of which may be encountered for the first time whilst others are being revisited in a new context. Pupils learn best when teaching approaches allow for generalisation and concentrate in real-life situations rather than abstract concepts.

**Progress is defined as:** the widening and deepening of essential knowledge, skills, understanding and behaviour. This means that pupils may experience the same content over and over again, each time in a richer and more challenging context, thus deepening their understanding. We do not rush to introduce new content as it is important that pupils have sophisticated problems that challenge them in a wide variety of different and diverse situations first.

**Implementation of teaching:** We use a combination of teaching methods, which are appropriate and adapt them to support the pupils learning styles and needs within individual classes. Teaching methods are informed by the specific needs of each individual within a class. Classroom management strategies take into consideration the varying levels of social and communicative differences and needs of our pupils. Within a class group there may be pupils who cannot tolerate peer contact and a major emphasis will be to encourage them towards being integrated into group situations for small periods of time.

Learning for pupils with autism may be dependent upon many factors including a secure environment, interaction with particular staff, external changes, mood or degree of withdrawal from situations. A pupil's ability to learn can be strongly affected by factors beyond their control; including environmental changes such as changes in transport, changes in routine and changes

in the weather. Breaking through the fear, anxiety and confusion of daily life is dependent on the creation of a secure and trusting foundation and only then will a pupil be receptive to learning.

There may be times when the pupils are unable to participate in their lessons due to factors related to their autism and other needs. Pupils will always be encouraged to return to learning as swiftly as possible.

In addressing this, teaching strategies need to be well planned but flexible. It is often not possible to predict changes in mood. Triggers for behaviour patterns can be internal as well as resulting from factors in the environment. Pupils may also access additional programmes such as toileting, eating, managing anxiety, understanding autism, occupational therapy, that are built into their individual timetable.

In the light of the difficulties which our pupils encounter with abstract concepts, the generalisation of skills, perception and in the area of imagination, it is essential to prioritise teaching according to functional, contemporary and relevant criteria.

Due to the well documented differences in the way people with autism learn (sometimes known as a 'spikey profile') and the wide range of abilities in the school it is necessary for us to differentiate for every pupil. Therefore, the long term plans give an overview of the breadth and focus of the learning but the specific learning objectives and learning tasks are written for every pupil (or small groups of pupils) in half termly planning documents produced by class teachers. Our curriculum does not use specific schemes of work as we have found them too restricting. The core concepts and milestones tie together the subject topics.

- Teachers have access to 'Cornerstones' and 'Equals' schemes of work to support the planning process.

These half termly planning documents are tailored to the needs of the specific class, adapting the learning areas and opportunities to their interests, needs and level of learning. Planning supports the point of learning of individual pupils and is very adaptable to changes to support pupil's learning opportunities and changing experiences.

**Example:** Functional Skills (literacy, numeracy) are taught with a discrete focus often in the morning tutor group or Functional Skills lesson (alongside relevant learning intentions). They are also often taught using the vehicle of another area of the curriculum in a functional and meaningful way. For example, the students may use a cookery lesson to focus on communication/literacy in which case extending the pupils' cookery skills would not be the main focus but the communication involved in working with others, making requests, listening, discussing, compromising or the literacy involved in working out and following recipes might be the main focus. The teacher of a group will therefore plan the appropriate balance and activities for their pupils bearing in mind their learning intentions and styles.

**Implementation of learning** – for further details see Appendix 1 & 2

**Structured Learning:** provides stability, predictability and security. For many of our pupils these are crucial elements to ensuring they are ready and able to learn. The way in which pupils' days are structured and organised depends on their individual needs. This can be done through areas such as timetabling, rewards, exercise, schedules, reflection, curriculum support and intervention.

Pupils all have individual structured timetables that can be presented in different formats. This enables each pupil to identify what to expect during the day and to help them become more organised.

Movement and sensory breaks happen throughout the school day where appropriate. We believe that exercise is a key factor in increased attention and concentration and also contributes to an individual's health and well-being. Planned transition times are an important part of our teaching. We explicitly teach all our pupils how to manage these times and how to prepare for change, including planned and unplanned changes.

**Personalised Approach to Learning:** Pupils have a personal passport that highlights individual strengths and areas of need. This provides information on teaching and learning styles, strategies and responses. This is shared between all staff so there is continuity and consistency.

**Teaching and Learning Methods** – for further details see Appendix 1 & 2

At Robert Ogden we apply a variety of teaching methods to suit pupils' different learning styles. Some of our pupils benefit from multi-sensory approaches to accommodate their kinesthetic and visual learning styles. Tasks and activities are broken down into manageable chunks to help pupils with organisation and sequencing skills.

**Extra Provision and Interventions:** While the desired outcome for all pupils is 'greater pupil independence', targeted support remains in place to help the pupils achieve this. This support includes:

- Enrichment activities to support the curriculum development
- Academic interventions (where required)
- Community Access to enhance the delivery of the curriculum
- OT support: through practical lessons, supports pupils in acquiring functional life skills.
- Communication with SaLT: supports pupil progress in social communication skills and learning language.
- Support for well-being through a range of therapies such as Lego therapy and complimentary therapy.

**Age appropriate teaching:** Teaching across all key-stages is carried out with the use of materials aimed at the appropriate stage of development of the pupils. Materials and resources used may be adapted or selected to reflect a multisensory approach and to ensure access to the curriculum for all pupils. These resources, teaching approaches and materials will always take chronological age into account.

Materials may be selected from earlier or later year groups where this is appropriate to enable individual pupils to progress and demonstrate achievement. This is always presented in context and using resources suitable to the pupil's age.

Planning and delivering high quality teaching and learning for pupils with complex needs is a demanding task; staff are adept in the production of autism-specific, differentiated resources. Each Curriculum Leader is responsible for managing their subject-specific resources and ensuring they are well-maintained, age-appropriate and innovative.

**Compatibility of individual pupils:** is an important aspect of the organisation within class groups, especially when we consider the specific behavioural and high sensory needs of our pupils. For example, it would be inappropriate to group Pupil X with particular noise sensitivities to high-pitched screaming with Pupil Y who frequently communicates using such sounds. This is further compounded by the small number of pupils and class groups which limits alternative provisions. This issue presents challenges and can result in pupils being taught with peers outside of their key-stage. Regardless of the class group pupils are in, each pupil receives an individualised curriculum which seeks to address each pupil's main barriers to learning. For a very small number of pupils, individualised sensory-specific curricula focusing on maximising inclusion and opportunities to tolerate being in proximity to others is prioritised over all other learning.

## Principles of Curriculum structure

In order to provide pupils across the 5-19 age range with experiences that are relevant, interesting and challenging, and to identify opportunities for progression, we have adopted the following curriculum structure/tiers.

**Sensory:** Pupils with profound and complex needs learn through consistent routines, sensory experiences and interaction with adults. The curriculum supports pupils to:

- Develop a sense of security through building positive relationships.
- Develop an awareness of the world around them through sensory exploration.
- Develop the physical skills through which they can control and explore their environment.
- Establish behaviours through which they can express their feelings, make choices and communicate with other people.
- Experience life within the school community, responding to other people and sharing activities with them.

**Primary:** Pupils learn through play, exploration, practical activities and community involvement.

The curriculum supports pupils to:

- Develop communication skills so that they can interact with other people, make choices, follow instructions and explanations and access the key concepts needed for learning.
- Establish key skills in literacy, numeracy, science and ICT.
- Learn to co-operate with other people, to build positive relationships and to take responsibility for themselves.
- Learn the skills which will help them be more independent in adult life.
- Learn about the world around them and the wider community.

**Secondary:** Pupils access subject specific learning, adapted and augmented in the light of individual needs. The curriculum supports pupils to:

- Develop effective communication to interact confidently with other people.
- Study as wide a range of academic subjects as is appropriate for individuals, leading to accredited courses and qualifications.
- Develop self-awareness, respect for others and a sense of responsibility, so that they can play their part in the school community and become active citizens as adults.
- Develop confidence and personal independence.
- Learn about the world of work and develop the skills and understanding which will enable them to move into paid employment or voluntary work in adulthood.

All secondary aged pupils access accredited courses including GCSE and Entry Level where appropriate.

**Post 16:** focus on preparation for adulthood with closely tailored study programmes, work experience, developing independence skills and preparation for next steps, equipping them for future choices in work, college and independent or supported living. Pupils continue to develop their skills within the areas of learning and continue to follow accredited courses as appropriate to their needs and their plans for life after school.

**Inclusive Learning Hubs for pupils' with Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA):**

**For further details see Appendix 3.** The curriculum, approach and support is matched to the pupil's individual needs through collaborative learning, flexibility and adaptations at an organisation level and in personal style. We aim to offer students a curriculum and pace of activity that correlates with pupil's emotional states and ability to engage at any given time and a need for flexibility in delivering curriculum and in collaboration with the pupil.

**Delivery of lesson topics:** An individualised, personalised curriculum and teaching style is used with pupils. Personalised and relevant content is built around topics of interest and in agreement with the pupil. Those are linked to core subjects allowing access to activities to develop skills to manage emotional regulation, which might include offering off site learning, a reduced academic content and a significant degree of choice to give pupil's a feeling of control. The delivery of lessons is personalised to each child and needs to be flexible in the school day and to be an overall decrease in demands. Pupils are given the responsibility to have some control over their physical learning environment (in order to tolerate learning, reduce social anxiety and allow them to feel in control). Staff need to allow for an absence of presence to follow a typical subject or lesson structure or whole school timetable (e.g. set playtimes, assemblies, length of lesson etc.).

### **'A Trans-Disciplinary Approach'**

The school operates a trans-disciplinary Pupil Support Team (PST) approach to providing individualised learning and support for pupils. These include Speech and Language Therapy, Psychology, Behaviour Support, and Occupational Therapy. Much of this work is embedded/integrated into the curriculum and staff practice. The teaching of certain skills may be presented as 'additional curriculum' activities for pupils who require intensive specialist intervention to supplement an otherwise 'conventional' timetable. We also offer specialist curriculum provision for our multi-sensory learner population across school, offering support in sensory integration, tactile exploration and developing a sense of self and choices. Support is mapped using Provision Mapping – standard, enhanced, enhanced plus and intensive.

### **Residential provision and the curriculum**

Thurnscoe House and Studios ensure an extended curriculum is wholly embraced. This is achieved by the Head of Care working closely with the Senior Education Team. The children work towards a joint educational/residential communication learning outcome, which is linked to their EHCP; pupils also work towards an AQA Unit Award that supports and extend learning.

The activity planner for each term also highlights where each activity blends with the curriculum. End of term "My Progress" meetings with class teachers discuss outcomes achieved within the residential services, this is then reflected on their overall academic data where appropriate. Residential Managers also meet with teachers once per term to discuss EHCP Outcomes, Risk Assessments and Individual Behaviour Support Plans to ensure consistency flows across all sites.

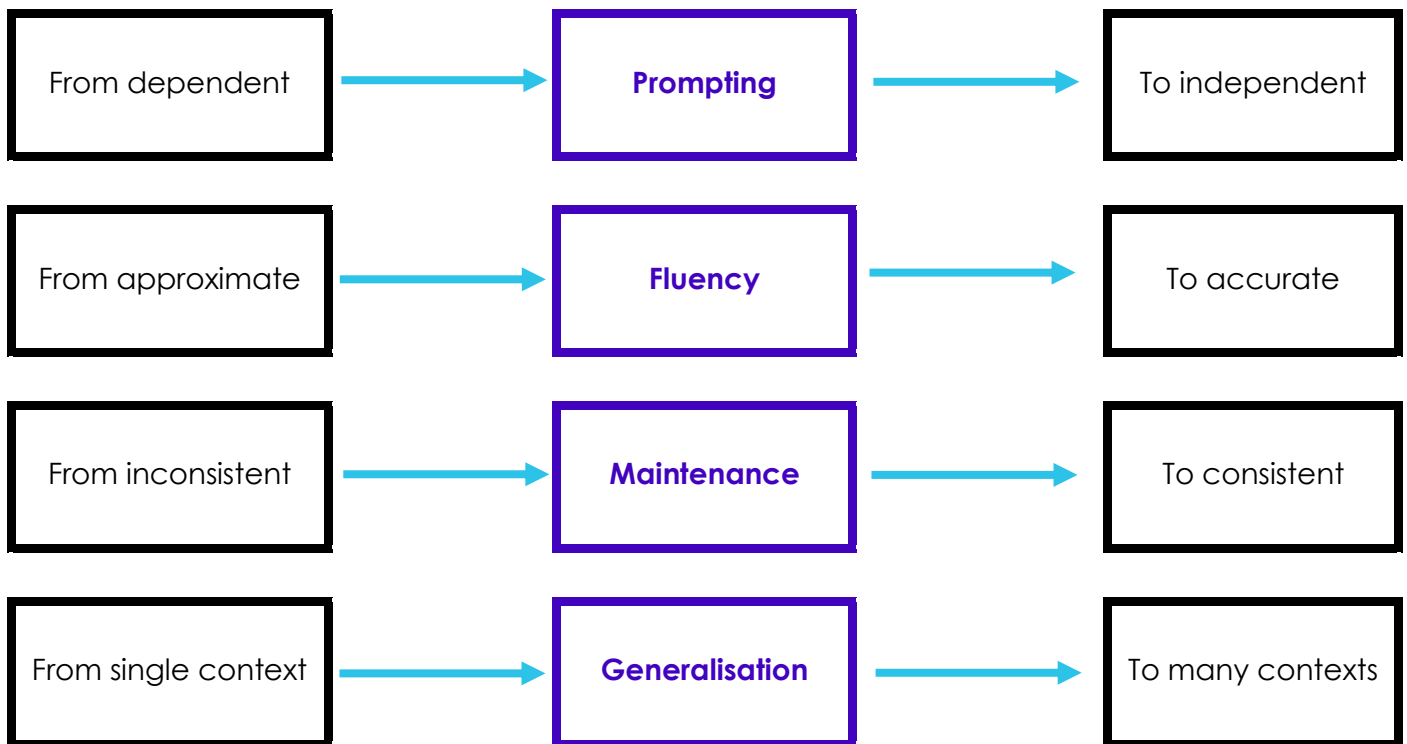
### **The Learning Environment**

Where needed, pupils have access to a highly specialised learning environment specifically designed to meet the needs of pupils whose autism impacts considerably on their communication and learning needs. Pupils may have individual workstations or rooms which allow for maximum concentration and support pupils who find the world a distracting place or who struggle to make sense of the world. Everything we do is through personalised learning and supports pupils as individuals, incorporating their individual needs, interests and ways of learning. We promote a low arousal environment that enables our pupils to predict and manage their day. As a result, our pupils are able to predict what is happening, communicate their needs and interact with others, so developing and building on independent learning and problem-solving strategies.



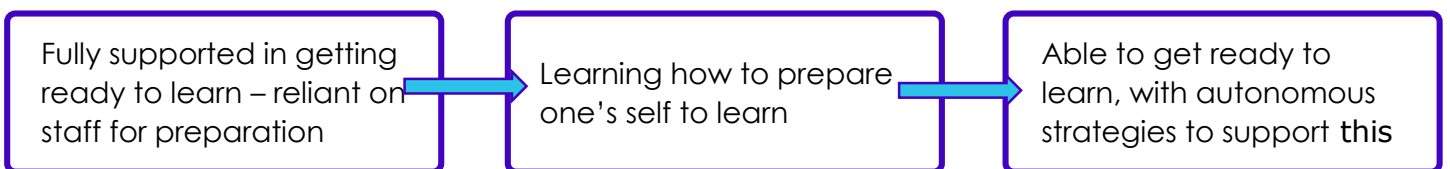
## Applying and using learning

What kind of learning do we want from our pupils? We want learning that is independent, accurate, consistent and has the ability to be generalised to new or different circumstances, this has become to be known as *Deep Learning*. Before moving pupils onto the next step of their learning we must consider these processes.

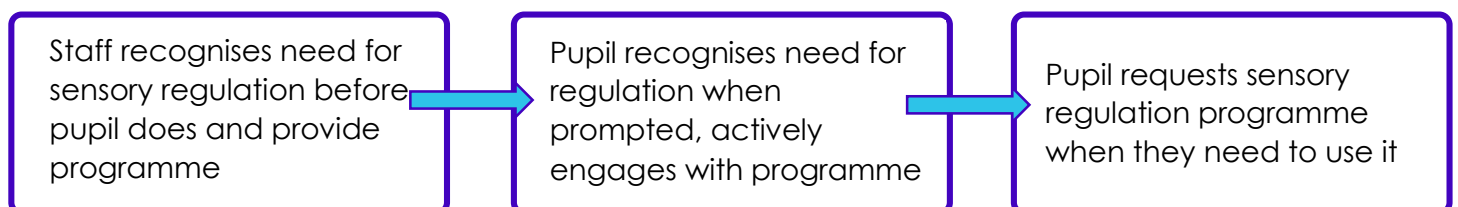


## Being ready to learn

Our pupils need to do to be ready to learn, this will include their health and sensory needs; this will form part of an individual's learning experience and a simple development process takes place.



An example for a pupil with complex autism and sensory regulation.



## IMPACT

The curriculum is monitored and evaluated to ensure that it is working, through a rigorous quality assurance process (See also Quality Assurance policy).

Because learning is a change to long-term memory it is not always possible to see impact in the short term. We do however look at the practice taking place to determine whether they are appropriate, related to our goals and likely to produce results in the long-run.

We use comparative judgement in two ways: in the tasks we set and in comparing pupils work over time. We use lesson observations to see if the pedagogical style matches our expectations. Progress towards the core concepts and milestones is tracked via our assessment system. Each pupil's progress is discussed at pupil progress meetings that take place with the Assistant Head three times a year and include triangulation of available data and assessments, work scrutiny and observation/pupil voice.

The School uses a 'basket of indicators' to capture the full picture of pupil progress. The range of measures and assessments used include:



\* Pre key stage standards and Key stage standards/ expectations (however this is only a secondary measure, other measures more accurately demonstrate progress and attainment)

**This policy should be read in conjunction with:**

- Subject area specific policies and protocols
- Assessment Policy
- Feedback, Marking, Assessment for Learning and Promoting Progress within lessons Procedure
- Homework Policy
- Quality Assurance policy
- NAS Quality of Life Curriculum Philosophy and Framework Policy

<b>Written by:</b>	Jon Mount (Deputy Principal)	April 2016
<b>Reviewed by:</b>	Jon Mount (Deputy Principal) and Jo Barker Carr (Assistant Head)	
April 2018	January 2020	January 2022
		January 2024

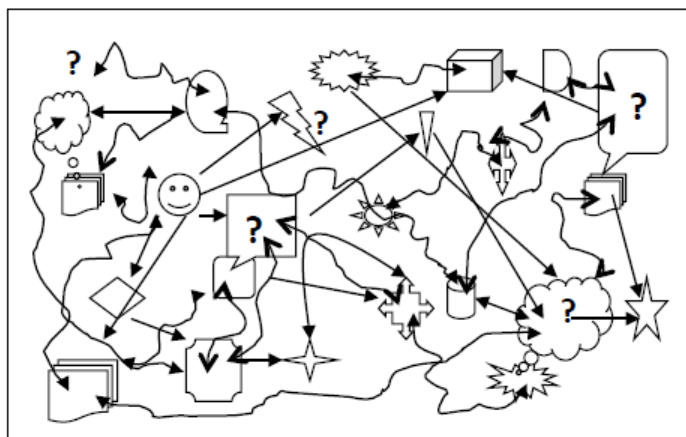
## Appendix 1: Skill and Process based approaches to Teaching and Learning

There is considerable debate about the approach to pedagogy for pupils with special educational needs. Norwich (2008) argues for a similar approach to teaching for all pupils, with those with special educational needs being taught using similar techniques to those not defined as having special educational needs, except where a pupil's needs are clearly unique and then these needs should be specifically addressed. Hinchcliffe and Imray (2012) argue against this position, suggesting that for pupils with more complex needs, particularly those attending special schools, they should be supported by specific and different approaches to pedagogy.

We agree with both propositions in different contexts. Generally, for our pupils with severe learning difficulties we have adopted the unique differences approach, where the approach to pedagogy is not at all similar to teaching that you would see in mainstream education. However, for some of our more cognitively able pupils, and even when teaching those with moderate learning difficulties specific things or engaging in specific teaching activities more conventional pedagogical approaches are used.

**Process Based Teaching and Learning:** At the Robert Ogden School, we acknowledge the difference between process based and skills based teaching and learning. Hewett (2006) describes traditional approaches to teaching as tending to be highly structured, with the teacher leading the activities in ordered sequential steps.

The nature of learning for children with significant special educational needs would he suggests, look more like this:



The complexity of communication learning

This model mirrors the arguments of Routes for Learning (2006) on the holistic nature of learning for those with PMLD and the Robert Ogden School believes that this to be equally true for all those with significant learning difficulties. This group of learners do not do well with the compartmentalised learning that advocates the teaching of discrete subjects such as Literacy and Numeracy.

Process based teaching and learning (Burden, 1990; Hinchcliffe, 1994; Collis and Lacey, 1996; Hewett and Nind, 1998; Nind and Hewett, 2001; Hewett, 2006; Imray, Gasquez-Navarro and Bond, 2010) posits that teaching understanding and knowledge-content (fact) together requires a holistic approach, where the process of the lesson becomes the objective. As such:

- There may be no specific individual (SMART) objectives or targets;
- We are open to progress of any description;
- Pupils take it where they can;
- Adults 'ladder' and 'scaffold';
- We record regularly and assiduously;
- We establish regular plenaries which involve learners in their own ongoing assessment.

Intensive Interaction is a classic example of process based teaching where the key elements are:

- Teachers follow, celebrate and extend;
- Teachers act as facilitators to learning by “tuning in” to the learner and looking for “communication moments”;
- Creating the communicative flow is the objective of the session.

This model also holds that:

- A 'target set' curriculum has a tendency to drive us to teach to targets;
- These targets are largely based on a pattern of conventional and normative development (as discussed above);
- They are academic in principle;
- They may not allow other learning to take place, in that the teachers' drive is towards achieving the target;
- They compartmentalise and close the notion of learning, rather than adopting an open ended approach.

The adoption of a process based ideology for part of the curriculum heralds a significant change in emphasis. We are now concerned with the specific process of making a pizza or painting or travel training or shopping or dressing etc.; the by product is now the Maths (or the English or the Science); curriculum design can concentrate on what is important to the child; we can fit the curriculum into the child rather than the child into the curriculum.

Process based teaching and learning encourages the development of concepts throughout the curriculum. For example, mathematic concepts will be learned as a natural consequence of teaching the making a pizza. Here the mathematical thinking will involve the concepts of size, quantity, position, measurement, weight, structure of properties, temperature, sequencing, cause and effect, estimation, counting, addition, subtraction, fractions, division and possibly more. Similarly, the opportunities for developing language, literacy and communication are self-evident and there are no doubt considerable openings for a number of scientific concepts to be explored.

The open-ended nature of process based teaching and learning not only allows for, but positively encourages, all learners to stretch and be stretched. It ensures that teachers are facilitators of learning rather than mere trainers. Because the learner is to a large degree in control of his own learning, it naturally lends itself to seeking out highly motivating activities for each individual learner which in turn increases levels of engagement. High levels of engagement themselves ensure stretch and so the upward spiral continues.

**Skills Based Teaching and Learning:** There is however, also a place for skills based teaching and learning within our curricular. Skills based teaching and learning is anything that might be taught and learned by rote, where complete understanding is not an absolute essential to learning. It is of course desirable and should always be sought by the teacher, but it is not essential. One may for example, teach a pupil how to make a slice of toast without requiring him or her to understand what happens to the bread to turn it into toast. Similarly, we can teach the steps required to wash one's hands without requiring the learner to understand exactly why washing one's hands is necessary. Though we may use behavioural task analysis techniques such as chaining, backward chaining, shaping and fading to teach these specific skills, they should always be taught in context so that knowledge-content (the skills) can at least be related to an understanding of the event, for example, washing hands after using the toilet and before engaging in cooking etc.

**Examples of skills based teaching and learning might be:** Self-help and independence – dressing and undressing, teeth cleaning, washing, using the shower, hair washing and brushing, using the

toilet, personal hygiene, eating etc. some pre-numeracy and pre-literacy skills – counting to 10, gaining attention etc.

**There might also be specific skills within various activities:**

- Travel training, such as knowing the sequence for crossing at a zebra crossing;
- Shopping and money handling, such as knowing where to put one's money before going to the shops;
- Cooking and the kitchen, such as knowing how to use a kettle safely;
- Independent living, such as how to make a bed;
- ICT, especially in using a qwerty key board, the sequence necessary for successful texting, how to capture and play back still and moving images on a phone, how to log onto the internet, how to bring up favourite apps on an iPad etc.

This list is not exhaustive and there are many other skills that should be taught by rote, but teachers must beware that this method of teaching can be highly inappropriate in certain areas. For example, pupils may not be secure in their use of number. That is, they may have learned to rote count, but as they could not detect simple counting errors their ability to use number effectively was largely negated. In practice, each of the Robert Ogden School curricular will be taught using elements of both process and skills based teaching approaches.

## Appendix 2: Specific teaching and learning approaches, methods and strategies used

When educating pupils with learning difficulties, and specifically pupils with autism, some advocate for one or two specific approaches to be used across a school. The argument for this is that it provides a consistency to everything that the pupil experiences. It also presents less of a challenge when developing staff as they only learn to operate within one framework which is consistently reinforced.

We see the purpose of the curricula as being about providing a broad and wide ranging educational experience which promotes the development of the young person in the widest possible sense and helps them develop skills and knowledge to operate within our wider society. We do not subscribe to the use of one specific approach to teaching as we accept that all our pupils are very different and what works for one young person will not necessarily work for another.

This could be perceived as a more difficult path to follow as this requires ensuring all of our staff are conversant with a wide range of teaching approaches and are able to match appropriately approaches to individual children. We are however committed to this approach from an ethical standpoint and have developed the in house training and support mechanisms to develop our staff to work in this way.

Some of the approaches staff at the Robert Ogden School become familiar with are listed below.

- PECS
- Makaton
- Intensive Interaction
- Sensory diets
- Sensory integration circuits
- TEACCH, particularly visual timetables
- Using iPad
- Attention Autism
- Tacpac
- Multi-sensory approaches
- Sensory and social stories
- Colourful Semantics
- Blanks Levels
- Blooms Taxonomy
- Aided Language Stimulation/Intervention

It is up to the teachers and PST to decide which of the above are most suitable and beneficial for their students. Research and evidence is very important in deciding which approach to use. We encourage the implementation and evaluation of new ideas.

**Attention Autism:** is an intervention model designed by Gina Davies, Specialist Speech and Language Therapist, which we adopt as part of our specialised teaching and learning. It aims to develop natural and spontaneous communication through the use of visually-based and highly motivating activities. The aims of Attention Autism are to foster pupil engagement and develop their capacity to share and extend their attention.

**TEACCH Approach:** Structured teaching via the TEACCH method was developed by Professor Eric Schopler and many of his colleagues at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The TEACCH method provides the child with structure and organisation which supports the difficulties many of our learners have with receptive and expressive language, sequential memory, and coping with changes in their environment. This approach is based on five basic principles which we adopt primarily to assist understanding the environment. The techniques are not faded out over time; they are consistently used across a variety of environments and settings. The five principles are Physical structure, Scheduling, Work system, Routine and Visual structure.

**The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS):** is a functional communication system that develops important communication and social skills. It is appropriate for people of all ages with a wide range of learning difficulties. PECS can be used anywhere and at any time when someone communicates. There are six phases of PECS.

**Visual Systems:** Many of our pupils are visual learners, this means that their strongest learning style is through things that they see in preference to listening or auditory learning. To this end we endeavour to use a wide range of visual materials and methods including symbols, photographs, extensive use of IT and the interactive white board, signing, gesture, use of colour to highlight notices and labels and various types of visual schedules to show timetables.

**Role Play:** Much learning is situational and contextual and comes alive for our pupils when acted out and practiced before the real event e.g. using money in a class shop, learning to put on different clothes depending on the weather, and learning to deal with adults we don't know. Acting out or role playing a situation can then be videoed and give pupils a chance to see themselves and doubly learn from the experience.

**Kineasthetic and Practical Learning:** Many of our pupils, learn through movement and physically doing as a preferred way of learning. For example, when counting pupils may build a brick tower or jump a certain number of times. Kineasthetics or movement based learning makes many concepts more real for our pupils but also has the added benefit in developing their motor control.

**Sensory Based Work:** For those pupils who are more profoundly developmentally young, there is a need to work at a sensory level. This means that all seven senses need to be developed and used as the primary vehicle for learning. The seven senses that are specifically acknowledged within our amended curriculum are: visual, auditory (hearing), taste, smell, touch, vestibular (balance) and proprioception (stimulus received through our muscles and joints largely through movement).

**Community Based Learning:** As role play is practice for a real situation so community based learning is an opportunity to use skills in a real context e.g. buying items in a shop, going on a bus or train, or using the swimming pool etc. Equally the community provides a social context for learning which will become even more important as pupils get older. Preparing our pupils for the wider world, in different degrees, is a key skill and ultimately will make a big difference to their quality of life.

**Social Stories:** were created by Carol Gray in 1991 to help teach social skills to people on the autistic spectrum. They are short descriptions of a particular situation, event or activity, which include specific information to the reader on what to expect in a given situation, enabling the person to have a greater understanding of what to expect or how to adapt their response. Social stories have a huge range of applications, which include:

- developing personal skills
- helping to understand how others might behave or respond in a particular situation, and therefore how they might be expected to behave
- supporting changes to routine and unexpected or distressing events
- providing positive feedback to a person about an area of strength or achievement in order to develop self-esteem
- supporting the understanding of how to manage an emotion or behaviour.

**Play:** takes a central part in our KS1/2 and sensory curriculum, we see Play as being fundamental to the development of both the pupil and the adult that the pupil will become. Play is an essential part of learning, so we provide our pupils with a safe and secure environment, to explore and engage in Play and Leisure skills.

Those with ASC are unlikely to learn spontaneously and will find the art of generalising one learned experience of play into another very difficult (Athey, 2007). There are many aspects of free play in particular that those with autism will find challenging, e.g. they will have difficulties with the abstract nature of creative play, they will have poor expressive and receptive communication skills and they may well have problems with flexibility of thought, perhaps engaging in rigid routines which prevent the development of play skills. They will be delayed in their understanding of representation, which is critical to symbolic play.

If we can teach children with autism to play, we can help them to break into creativity, thinking, problem solving, formulating and maintaining relationships, purposeful self-engagement, narrative and storytelling, theory of mind and developing self-confidence, self-belief and self-esteem. For those who are at the earliest stages of intellectual development, play and playing games . . . "Are not time out from real work; they are the most intensive developmental work you can do" (Nind and Hewett, 2001; p66)

### **There are two broad types of play that we aim to develop**

- Free play – process based, fluid rules, child led, adult modelled and may cover all levels and social dimensions of play
- Structured play (games) – product based, rule bound, adult led, adult modelled

**Intensive interaction:** is an approach for teaching communication skills to children and adults who have autism, severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties who are still at early stages of development. The approach focuses on teaching the Fundamentals of Communication – the communication concepts and performances that precede speech development, though it may include many people who have some speech and language development.

**Sensory Integration:** This is a multi-disciplinary approach to enabling children to respond to the sensory changes in their own body.

**Thinking and Problem Solving:** is fundamental for our pupils, we see the development of Thinking and Problem Solving not as an isolated scheme of work that should be taught discretely, but in everything we do and therefore everything we do should be regarded as an opportunity for thinking and problem solving.

**Task Analysis:** by breaking down a task into individual steps it is easier to see how much a pupil has to learn, but also ensures that staff are consistent in their expectations of how a task should be mastered. The use of Task Analysis is linked to the teaching approaches of backward and Forward Chaining (see below)

**Backward Chaining:** Backward Chaining is a process which is used within the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) but can also be used outside of PECS. It involves the pupil completing the last step of the process and then working backward through the sequence of events until they can complete the task independently. For this a 'Task Analysis' is essential so that all staff working with the pupil follow the same teaching steps. Initially the last step may have to be modelled or hand over hand support given in order for the pupil to do this successfully. The last step is often the most motivating as the task is complete, so is a powerful reinforcer. The next time the task is attempted the pupil might be encouraged to do the last 2 steps. Essentially the pupil is learning the steps in reverse until they are fully independent. Other supports can be used alongside, for example if it is a 5 step recipe, the task analysis is broken down but each step could also be displayed on the whiteboard/on paper.

**Forward Chaining:** Forward Chaining is when the initial step is taught and then the rest of the steps have full staff support. The following attempt is when the pupil might be encouraged to do the first



two steps independently, and so on until they are independent. As with Backward Chaining, **Task Analysis** is essential for this teaching approach.

## Developing Attention and Engagement

'Developing Attention and Engagement' sessions are based on a programme devised by Speech and Language Therapist, Gina Davies called "Attention Autism".

The aim is to encourage pupils to engage with an adult, share attention and be able to take turns with others.

The sessions involve either the whole group or a small group and take place as frequently as appropriate.

Each session has four sections, which are gradually built up over a period of time, as the children learn to engage.

- 1) **Capturing attention:** (often referred to as 'The Bucket') – a collection of objects to excite and interest the children, usually which spin, light up or move in some way. The children sit in a circle and watch whilst the adult shows three of the items from the bucket in turn. The children are not allowed to touch the objects, and remain seated throughout. All adults in the room are modelling engagement, so should not speak or interact with the objects.
- 2) **Extending engagement:** a longer activity which holds the children's attention for up to 5 minutes, and gradually builds up interest. All adults and children engage in the same way as part 1.
- 3) **Turn Taking:** the children join in with a short exciting activity, one at a time, when invited to join in. The children are allowed to refuse if they don't want a turn. The activity usually involves doing an action after a short rhyme has been sung, for example, jumping on a trampoline, hiding in a blanket or launching a rocket. The children have to remain seated and watch others while they wait for their turn.
- 4) **Having a go:** the adult makes a task box for each child with all the resources they need to complete a short activity. The adult models the activity in front of all of the children (such as making a sausage from playdough, and cutting it into pieces), then gives each child their task box to repeat the activity by themselves.

After following these sessions for a few terms, the children are able to sit and engage for longer periods, and this also extends to their learning and concentration in other areas of the curriculum.

**Planning:** The educational provision provided at the Robert Ogden School for children with a Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) diagnosis or a profile more indicative of PDA than the more common ASD presentation adopt the guidelines developed and adopted as part of the Autism National Standards (2012).

We attempt to match the curriculum, approach and support that is required to the pupil's individual needs through collaborative learning, flexibility and adaptations at an organisation level and in personal style. The mood and behaviour of children with PDA can change very quickly if they perceive they are not in control. It is important to look out for signs of increased anxiety, which can be reduced by decreasing demands. Planning is completed for each student for the term ahead. Planning outlines a range of topics linking the curriculum to these topic areas to engage and motivate students to learn new skills and be in a position to learn to their full potential. We aim to offer students a curriculum and pace of activity that correlates with pupil's emotional states and ability to engage at any given time and a need for flexibility in delivering curriculum and in collaboration with the pupil.

**Delivery of lesson topics:** An individualised, personalised curriculum and teaching style is used with pupils where possible with personal relevant content around topics of interest and in agreement with the pupil linked to core subjects allowing access to activities to develop skills to manage emotional regulation which might include offering off site learning, a reduced academic content and a significant degree of choice to give pupil's a feeling of control. The delivery of lessons is personalised to each child and needs to be flexible in the school day and to be an overall decrease in demands. Pupils are given the responsibility to have some control over their physical learning environment (in order to tolerate learning, reduce social anxiety and allow them to feel in control). Staff need to allow for an absence of presence to follow a typical subject or lesson structure or whole school timetable (e.g. set playtimes, assemblies, length of lesson etc.)

**Monitored/Assessed:** Each pupil is assessed to identify which PDA strategies are best to use to enable each pupil to take an active part in their educational experience at a pace they can manage. Assessment and record keeping is the means by which pupil's attainment and achievements are monitored and an appropriate progression through the curriculum is ensured. By monitoring and recording pupil's progress, teachers are able to build up a profile of individual strengths and areas for development. This is then used to inform their planning and teaching. Assessment also allows staff to identify those children whose achievements fall outside the boundaries of differentiated activities. Assessment information is completed termly by teachers on Pupil asset to show attainment against the school's assessment documents in each area.

Within the hubs we used the "Five pillars approach" when completing the assessment for learning process for students. They are a way of capturing and assessing the engagement for a student within a particular lesson. We recognised that a number of our pupils, particularly when they first started in the Hubs, would attend, without necessarily engaging in any other way. We understand that the very act of attending can be a level of engagement which improves on previous school placements. The Five Pillars Presence, Learn, Create, Socialise and Get Out are linked to Barry Carpenter's seven engagement indicators.

Key strategies used with pupils within the hubs in order to reduce anxiety and help them in their learning and to access the curriculum:

- To offer a curriculum and pace of activity that correlates with pupils emotional states and ability to engage at any given time and a need for flexibility in delivering curriculum and in collaboration with the pupil.
- To be flexible in the school day to allow for an overall decrease in demands.
- To give pupils some control over the physical learning environment (in order to tolerate learning, reduce social anxiety and allow them to feel in control).
- To focus on pupils' being in control of both their learning and social interactions (with pupils and adults).
- To allow for an absence of presence to follow a typical subject or lesson structure or whole school timetable (e.g. set playtimes, assemblies etc.)
- An individualised, personalised curriculum and teaching style with where possible personal relevant content and one which allows access to activities to develop skills to manage emotional regulation which might include offering off site learning
- A particularly child-led approach.
- Embedding special interests within tasks and using rewards in a subtle, spontaneous way
- That pupil's learning nurtures their talents and strong interests.
- To identify which PDA strategies are best to use to enable each pupil to take an active part in their educational experience

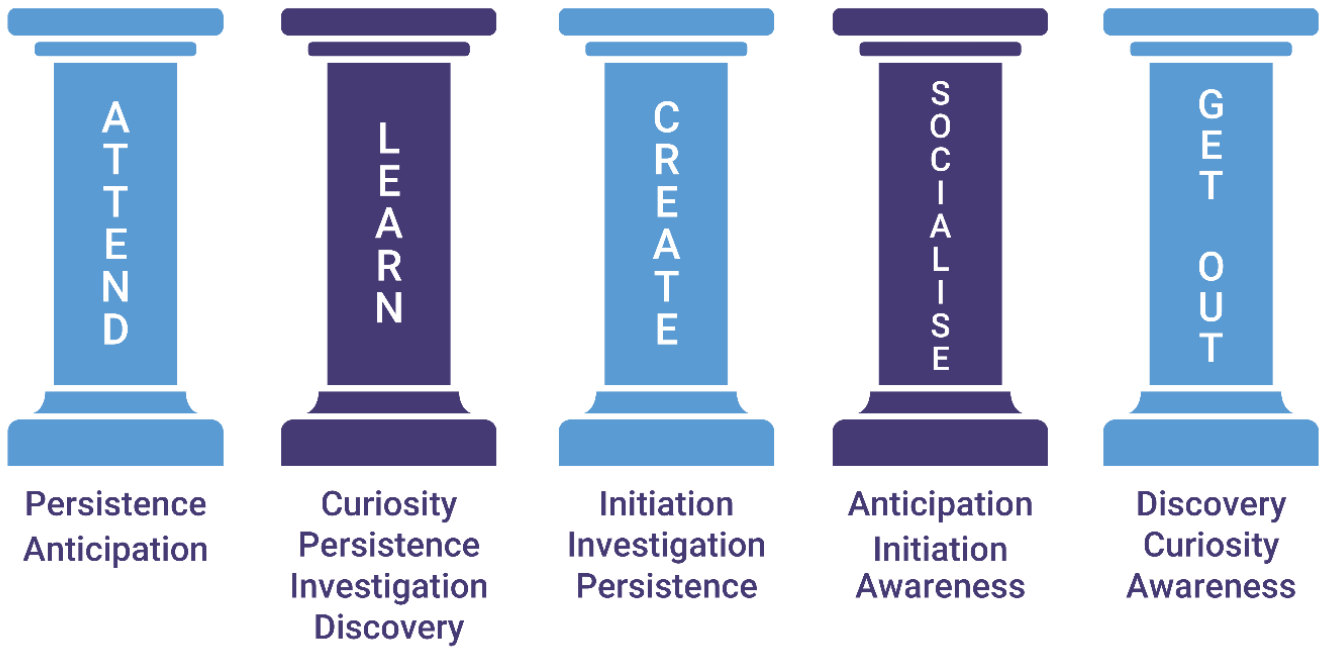
The Rochford Review believes that "...cognition and learning should centre on a range of skills that enable students to engage in learning situations and on their growing ability to seek out or direct learning opportunities autonomously." The review recommends *The Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (CLDD) research Project*. This project states that:

*"Children with CLDD are often disengaged from learning and do not respond to teaching approaches which engage most other students. It is therefore necessary to focus upon developing personalised learning pathways which will enable students to connect with the learning experience."*

This research notes that 'engaged behaviour is the best predictor of successful learning' and suggests that, in order to prevent disenfranchisement; 'we need to remodel our pedagogy and generate teaching strategies which will embrace them as learners'. The report reminds us that we shouldn't underestimate what a significant shift in thinking this will take and how it is likely to involve new and innovative teaching strategies. The Rochford Review identifies seven aspects of engagement. Due to the specific nature of the children that come to the Inclusive Learning Hubs, we have felt it necessary to adapt these seven factors.

Sally Russell OBE, through training for the PDA society, identified for her son that there was a great need to 'widen his world significantly'. She divided this into what she called the 'Four Pillars', these being: Learn, Create, Get out and Socialise. These pillars resonated strongly with us and we recognised these pillars as vital aspects of all we do to engage the pupils in the Hubs. We decided to investigate whether we could use these pillars as a way of assessing the engagement of the students we work with. We recognised that a number of our pupils, particularly when they first started in the Hubs, would attend, without necessarily engaging in any other way. We understand that the very act of attending can be a level of engagement which improves on previous school placements. We have therefore felt it important to include a fifth pillar, 'Presence'.

**The Five Pillars** linked to Barry Carpenter's seven engagement indicators



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