Pre/ Informal Curriculum

Applefields provision for

Children and Young People with profound and multiple learning difficulties

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3. **Our Curriculum Journey**

Applefields began changing the school curriculum during the academic year 2017 -2018. Following extensive visits by senior and executive leadership to many settings, research of settings and studying key SEND documentation; Rochford Report, EQUALS, MAPP, Engagement Model, Routes for Learning (acknowledged in references), we were able to decide as a leadership team how we wanted our curriculum to look. We wanted to have a curriculum which was meaningful and matched the aspirations and outcomes that had been planned through their Education, Health and Care Plans.

Initial research was conducted in order to ascertain views of staff, parents/ carers and students. Governors have also been fully consulted. This overwhelmingly highlighted the need for a life skills based curriculum, communication throughout everything and wellbeing and regulation being central.

During 2020 and the Covid-19 pandemic, we were able to assess where we were at. We injected significant funding into IT, home learning and resourcing. We made the brave decision to pause on assessment systems and purchased Evidence for learning. We decided to use MAPP across school rather than with our more complex learners. From 2020 to 2022 we have been building meaningful curriculum documentation to support our curriculum pedagogy for pre-formal and informal learners and now we are reviewing and refining its implementation and impact.

Introduction

Who are our pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties?

The SEND Code of Practice 2015 describes pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties as where children are likely to have severe and complex learning difficulties as well as a physical disability or sensory impairment.

Pupils with PMLD at Applefields School

Pupils with PMLD are taught in specific mixed-age classes as they require a highly personalised teaching and learning experiences within a classroom environment adapted to their needs.

The curriculum for our PMLD curriculum is predominantly based on the PMLD curriculum published by EQUALS and centres on six areas of learning and experiences: communication and interaction; thinking skills; physical development; sensory skills; personal and social development and enrichment.

We have a strong connection with The Minster Provision at Askham Bryan College that provides post 19 education provision for students with PMLD.

**Needs of pupils with PMLD**

Our pupils with PMLD experience significant barriers to their learning. They have a profound learning difficulty often with additional sensory or physical disabilities.

This means they

* Have great difficulty communicating
* Need high levels of support with most aspects of daily life
* May have complex health needs
* May have behaviours that challenge us

These barriers may lead to

* Lack of information about their world
* A distorted perception of the world
* Learned helplessness
* Lack of ability to anticipate events/ activities
* Suffering the effects of ill-health
* Difficulties in establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships

Therefore we offer our pupils with PMLD

* A specialist curriculum delivered at the right pace
* A high level of multi agency support
* Modifications in the physical environment
* A high level of specialist resources
* A high level of individual care and support

The PMLD curriculum is driven by the identification of individual personal learning outcomes. However the areas of the curriculum, themes and therapies provide a rich context in which learning can take place.

**The Learning Environment**

Routes for learning states that creating an effective learning environment is fundamental for being able to systematically extend and change pupils’ learning experiences.

Many of our pupils with PMLD also have physical and sensory disabilities and the learning environment includes

* Equipment for positioning e.g. standing frames therapy balls, Acheeva beds wedges
* Frequent changes of position
* Regular hydrotherapy sessions
* Regular rebound sessions
* Resources to support multisensory sessions and stories
* Sensory stimulation activities
* Accessible technology systems e.g. switches, touchscreen, eye gaze. Technology
* Low and high technology systems for communication e.g. eye gaze technology, E-Tran frames, symbols
* Activities centred on individual preferences
* Time to respond and a slower pace
* Sensory cues for routine activities
* Repetition
* Space to move safely
* Opportunities to relax
* Burst-pause activities to allow for the child response
* Intensive interaction through the day and the pupils ‘voices’ heard and acknowledged
* Adults who know the children and their needs very well
* Opportunities through video to observe responses in detail
* A multi-agency approach to draw on expertise and provide a holistic view
* Partnership with parents and carers

**Teaching and learning for our pupils with PMLD**

Structure

For our learners with PMLD life can become a fragmented series of events with little order. Without structure, learners may never develop anticipation and memory. We provide a simple, structured environment with ordered activities and routines.

Engagement

Many of our pupils with PMLD only engage with activities/ interactions within their immediate personal space.

Staff consider

* The proximity of activities
* The positioning of the pupil
* The ebb and flow of the lesson
* The atmosphere of the session, are we engaged and having fun!

Level of stimulation

We consider the needs of each pupil; some need exciting experiences but others need a gentle approach.

Repetition

We acknowledge that many of our pupils need huge amounts of repletion to be able to anticipate

Waiting time, pausing and anticipation

We recognise the need that many pupils need time to respond to stimuli and waiting time is needed to process information. This will enable our learners to share control and have equal interactions. By building pauses into routines and activities we allow pupils to ‘fill the gap’ and make a communicative response.

Intensive interaction

We respond to any communications from our learners, however subtle. This may well be pre-intentional but by responding to the interaction and extending it, our pupils can learn fundamental communicative skills in an enjoyable, non-directive and relaxed way. This approach is often referred to as ‘*intensive interaction’.*

When using an intensive interaction approach we consider

* Interactions based on individual’s communicative behaviours
* Burst-pause activities so pupils can insert their responses
* The style of the learner

Imitation

We support the development of imitation though

* Intensive interaction with adults coping the movements and sounds of the learner
* Modelling activities

Turn-taking

Turn-taking is the art of conversation and interaction and we will support pupils in developing this skill through

* Making turns short
* Engaging in 1-1 games
* Using short and repetitive language.

Staffing and grouping

We provide a high level of support for our pupils with PMLD. We allow time for relaxation and time to socialise with other pupils. We work as a team along with families, carers and multi-disciplinary professionals to ensure common aims and practices. We work in an atmosphere of fun and enjoyment.

Physical moving, handling and safety

We work alongside a physiotherapist, physiotherapy assistant and an occupational therapist and all class staff are trained in moving and handling and the use of specialist equipment.

We have a team of school nurses and health workers on site to support pupils’ medical needs.

**Support for Learning**

Sensory cues

We use sensory cues to help pupils begin to learn to anticipate routines. These include; starting each day with a termly thematic set of songs; a morning song about days of the week accompanied by a smell of the day; songs to introduce specific activities and a song to indicate the end of the day.

Object cues/ objects of reference.

Objects are used to indicate activities that are about to help to support anticipation; this may be as simple as holding the swimming towel on the way to hydrotherapy. Some pupils use photographs or symbols to indicate what is happening.

**Planning**

When planning we take into account prior learning and experiences with a balance between keeping things fresh and interesting and allowing for the importance of repetition.

Long term planning

Our overall curriculum map is linked to whole school termly themes alongside the EQUALS PMLD curriculum.

Medium term planning

Planning both for repeated activities and termly lessons is linked to pupils’ EHCP learning outcomes. Switch progression is used as a planning tool for computing skills.

Pupil profiles and communication passports

All children with PMLD have pupil profiles and communication passports to provide key information.

**Programmes of Learning**

**Communication and interaction**

Pupils with PMLD are at a stage before their communication becomes fully intentional. Staff will respond as if the children are intentionally communicating in order to develop intentional communication.

Communication areas of learning can be divided into three areas

* Responding to stimuli, people routines and activities
* Interacting (with others) with people, anticipating social activities, using their sounds as a ‘conversation’.
* Communicating by showing preferences for objects, activities and events, indicating more/ no

**Thinking skills**

Our pupils are supported to explore their world through a multi-sensory exploratory approach and the use of technology to develop cause and effect skills.

Thinking skills areas of learning can be divided into these areas

* Control of objects and materials
* Sequence and pattern

**Physical**

Individual programmes for mobility and positioning are developed in conjunction with our physiotherapy and occupational therapy team. Each child will have their own personal moving and handling plan written by our in house moving and handling trainers

Physical areas of learning can be divided into these areas

* Body awareness including massage sensory stimulation on different parts of the body songs and games passive and active movement.
* Fine motor movement including reaching, grasping, releasing and manipulating.
* Mobility including hydrotherapy and rebound therapy

**Sensory**

Sensory areas of learning can be divided into these areas

* Awareness of stimuli - people, objects and activities
* Exploration of objects, materials and substances
* The development of preferences

**Personal and social development**

Personal and social development can be divided into these areas

* Well-being shown by being calm and happy, demonstrating likes and dislikes and being able to make choices
* Interaction and relationships
* Our community in school

**Enrichment**

The enrichment curriculum allows our pupils to have access to a diversity of activities in which learning can occur including the creative arts and thematic experiences.

**Pupil progress and attainment**

We recognise all of PMLD pupils are unique and consequently their curriculum will be personalised with outcomes dependent on their individual needs.

Through the EHCP process, each pupil has personalised learning outcomes set in conjunction with parents and other professionals. MAPP is used to record progress in these outcomes in the following areas; Independence, Fluency, Maintenance and Generalisation. We use the engagement model which looks specifically at how students engage with their learning. The model assesses students in four different areas:

|  |
| --- |
| *from* **dependent** **INDEPENDENCE**  *to* **independent** |
| **Learners complete tasks independently** |
| The task is carefully scaffolded and the learner is fully prompted throughout. | Some elements of the task are completed without support (*or* the overall level of support is lighter, for example physical help is replaced by gestural help). | The learner performs the task with minimal support. Encouragement may be given, and prompting may be needed to *initiate* the relevant skill(s). | The learner initiates the appropriate action and completes the task independently without prompts or other external cues. |
|  **1** 2 |  3 **4** 5 |  6 **7** 8 |  9 **10** |

|  |
| --- |
| *from* **approximate** **FLUENCY**  *to* **accurate** |
| **Learners reach a level of mastery combining speed and accuracy** |
| The skill is approximate and the learner’s behaviour needs considerable shaping in order to accomplish the task. Performance is slow and halting. | The learner’s performance is increasingly purposeful and coordinated, but it is not yet sufficiently accurate to effectively accomplish the task. | Performance is sufficiently accurate to meet the requirements of the task which is completed with little faltering or hesitation. | The skill is smooth, swift and accurate. No further refinement is needed.  |
|  **1** 2 |  3 **4** 5 |  6 **7** 8 |  9 **10** |

|  |
| --- |
| *from* **inconsistent** **MAINTENANCE**  *to* **consistent** |
| **Learners maintain competency over time through repetition. They remember how to do a task after a break** |
| The skill has been observed on a single occasion or, at most, on sporadic and isolated occasions. | The skill is demonstrated on repeated occasions. Performance is not yet sufficiently consistent to be reliably anticipated. | Performance of the skill is consistent and can be reliably anticipated. The skill needs refreshing after a break. | The skill is consolidated and maintained over time. It is remembered after a break and any loss of quality is quickly recovered with practice. |
|  **1** 2 |  3 **4** 5 |  6 **7** 8 |  9 **10** |

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| --- |
| *from* **single context** **GENERALISATION**  *to* **many contexts** |
| **Learners achieve mastery in different settings or contexts, with different stimuli or with different staff** |
| The skill is demonstrated in a single setting or context, with limited stimuli or materials and with the same staff. | The skill is repeated but with some variation in setting, context, materials or staff. | The skill is demonstrated in different settings or contexts, with different stimuli or materials and with different staff. | The learner applies the skill to meet the demands of a new situation. |
|  **1** 2 |  3 **4** 5 |  6 **7** 8 |  9 **10** |

This pupil-centred approach allows teachers to make valuable and insightful assessments of students to identify areas they need further support in, as well as identifying areas of strength for each pupil. The Engagement Model has 5 areas of engagement which identifies and celebrates all students' progress, and informs future planning:

* exploration
* realisation
* anticipation
* persistence
* initiation

Evidence of learning journeys and progress is recorded through annotated video/ photographs on Evidence for Learning (EfL). Evidence is shared with parents/ carers and the journey can be added to by families.

**Acknowledgements**

EQUALS <https://equals.co.uk/>

Routes for learning https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/routes-for-learning

MAPP Mapping and Assessing Personal Progress

Evidence for Learning- <https://www.evidenceforlearning.net/learningshared/>

Engagement Model <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-engagement-model>

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