

Semi-Formal Curriculum

Fundamentals of
Teaching and
Learning

Semi-Formal
Curriculum
Overview

Cognition and
Learning

Independence and
Self Help

Communication
and Interaction

Physical, Sensory

Social, Emotional
and Mental Health

Pear Tree School

Achieving the Best We Can in Everything We Do

Semi-formal curriculum overview

Our semi-formal curriculum is unique to each individual pupil. The child/young person is kept at the centre of the teaching and learning process. It is not for the child to change to meet the demands of the curriculum but for experienced and skilled practitioners to provide a flexible and responsive curriculum that meets the very individual learning needs of each pupil.

What is the semi-formal curriculum?

Our semi-formal curriculum is for our children and young people who have a range of complex learning difficulties and disabilities. Our semi-formal learners are still at the very early stages of their learning and development and they learn best when the curriculum is related to their own experiences and when they are given plenty of opportunities to experience the same activities and overlearn.

Alongside the whole school curriculum, our learners may also need specialist provision in physio, OT, hydrotherapy, sensory integration, communication, rebound therapy, and sensory learning. At Pear Tree we adopt a multi-agency approach to meeting the teaching and learning needs of our learners.

Our semi-formal learners

Our semi-formal learners are on a learning spectrum that indicates that they have complex learning needs. In addition to learning difficulties, they may also face other barriers to learning such as physical difficulties, medical conditions, sensory processing disorder, visual or hearing impairments, communication difficulties, ASD.

Our learners will all require additional interventions throughout their day to enable them to fully access and engage with all educational activities and opportunities. A multi-agency approach to learning is required if our pupils are to achieve the very best they can in everything they do.

Curriculum Focus

Our semi-formal learners are extremely unique with individual learning needs and as such it is impossible to force them to fit into a formal and structured framework. Whilst they will benefit from accessing the more formal subject curriculum, they also need a more flexible and holistic approach to learning to ensure that all learning needs are met and barriers to learning are removed. Some pupils require a personalised timetable throughout the day and teachers have a clear remit to ensure that the curriculum is flexible and adaptable to meet each pupil's individual need whilst taking account of atypical patterns of development which impact on learner's ability to process new information and stimuli.

Our semi-formal curriculum places an emphasis on developing:

- **Communication** whether this be verbal or non verbal. Developing purposeful and intentional communication that enables learners to communicate simple messages effectively with peers and adults.
- **Cognition** and the ability to think and learn. Our learners also need help to develop attention and concentration so that effective learning can take place.
- **Self-regulation** Many of our semi-formal learners will experience sensory processing difficulties and will require a sensory diet to enable them to develop self-regulation so that they can fully engage with learning.
- **Generalisation** many of our semi-formal learners find it difficult to transfer a skill they have learned within one particular context across a range of contexts and situations.
- **Working memory** our learners find it difficult to hold a number of words, numbers and ideas at any one time and can find following a set of complex instructions difficult as they can not remember the steps.
- **Problem solving** and the ability to their existing skills, knowledge and understanding of the world around them to solve simple every day problems.
- **Physical Skills** both gross and fine motor to enable pupils to become as independent as possible in daily activities.
- **Independence** throughout everything we do, our curriculum aims to support pupils to become as independent as possible in all aspects of their life. *“We will never do for a child something that he/she has the potential to do for his/herself.”*

Assessment

Ongoing continuous and rigorous assessment is at the heart of the semi-formal curriculum as it:

- Ensures that teachers are reflecting on provision and ensuring that the personalised curriculum for each individual learner remains appropriate;
- Informs planning and teaching;
- Ensures pupils are making the best possible progress.

Assessment for Learning is key to success and all teachers ensure appropriate assessment for learning is embedded within their classroom and practice.

PIVATS is our main assessment tool for our semi formal learners. It is used at key times throughout the year to summarise learning, set end of key stage targets and to provide qualitative data for reporting parents, governors and other relevant professionals.

All of our learners have key learning skills to work towards; these are personalised skills and behaviours that a pupil needs to develop in order for them to become a successful learner.

The Engagement Model is also used to assess the progress for our pre-formal learners and those learners who are accessing non subject specific learning activities. The Engagement Model assesses linear and lateral progress for learners as well as their consolidation and maintenance of knowledge, skills and concepts in the following five areas of:

- Exploration
- Realisation
- Anticipation
- Persistence
- Initiation

Attention Autism

Attention Autism is a learning approach that aims to develop natural and spontaneous communication skills in children through the use of visually based and highly motivating activities. The Attention Autism approach aims to provide children with a learning experience that they want to communicate about. As well as the goal of developing natural and spontaneous communication, there are several other aims that Attention Autism strives to achieve such as improving joint attention, increasing attention in adult-led activities and developing shared enjoyment in a group activity. The intervention includes four different stages including:

- Stage 1: The 'Box' to Focus Attention
- Stage 2: The Attention Builder
- Stage 3: Shifting Attention and Turn Taking
- Stage 4: Individual or Group Activity

Pupils on the semi-formal pathway will be assessed against the skills progression document and some pupils will be assessed against PIVATS in line with subject specific targets. For these pupils we are looking for them maintaining their focus and communicating through words or alternative methods of communication. At this point teachers may bring in subject specific content.

Planning

The planning cycle begins with the outcomes identified within the EHCP. These are reviewed and updated annually as part of the Annual Review process and small steps to achieving these outcomes identified. Each pupil at the start of each half term will have an IEP set for them to work on over the half term period. The IEP will identify 3-4 targets and will include advice received from other professionals e.g. Salt, physio, VI, HI. These IEPs, where appropriate, will be incorporated throughout the whole curriculum and all lessons.

It is expected that pupils will achieve targets over the half term period. Targets set are SMART to ensure they are challenging yet achievable over the half term. When planning for learning, teachers will ensure that learning takes place across all areas of learning and development identified within the EHCP. Planning is highly individualised for each learner so emphasis on particular areas may vary between learners.

Area of learning and development	Planning Focus
Cognition and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Literacy • Early numeracy • Memory • Behaviour for learning • Listening • Understanding • Engagement
Communication and Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SaLT targets • Communication aids • Signing • Colourful semantics • PSD • Personalised timetable activities
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSD • Behaviour for learning • Positive handling plans • Community visits • Inclusion • Growth mindset • Mindfulness • nurture
Physical, Sensory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PE • Swimming • Fine motor • Gross motor • Additional sensory processing sessions • Impact of physical activity on mental health • Physio programmes • Postural management
Independence and Self Help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSD • Key learning target • Travel training

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills for life • Independence • Functional skills • Personal care • Personal hygiene • Dressing skills • Positional needs • College courses • World of work • Lunchtime routines • Online safety
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Recording and Reporting

Ongoing, daily, formative assessment is key to ensuring pupils are making as much progress as possible. Evidence of pupil progress and achievement of targets is captured in a variety of ways e.g photographs, videos and samples of work using Evidence for Learning. Evidence for Learning captures the very individual learning journey of each pupil and is shared with parents/carers.

PIVATS is our main summative assessment tool for reporting termly and annual progress. These assessments are reported to parents and are analysed to report to governors. Some learners, dependent on learning need and provision, may also be assessed using other methods e.g. our school sensory processing/behaviour for learning assessment tool if they are accessing this curriculum too.

Annual Reviews provide summative evidence of progress towards annual targets and EHCP outcomes. Parents are provided with an annual report, detailing progress made in key areas of learning for each individual pupil.

The EHCP outcomes and annual review targets are assessed annually using the Achievement Continuum detailed below:

Step	Stage	Characteristics
1	Acquisition	Characterised by the pupil learning new responses and skills. This is often achieved through demonstration, modelling or physical prompting from an adult. At this level, there is a high level of support required from an adult.
2	Developing, Exploring and Initiating	Characterised by remembered responses and intentional communication; by concentration, recall and observation; and by established responses and conventional communication.
3	Consolidation	Characterised by pupils becoming competent and fluent in

		skills, knowledge, concepts and understandings when in a familiar setting.
4	Generalisation	Characterised by pupils having mastered responses or skills in different settings or contexts; or with different materials, stimuli and staff.

Fundamentals of Teaching and Learning

The following four areas of the EHCP outcomes form the fundamental aspects of our semi-formal curriculum. They are the foundations of developing our children and young people as learners.

Cognition and Learning

Communication and Interaction

Independence and Self Help

Social, Emotional and Mental Health

Communication

Communication is at the heart of everything we do at Pear Tree and is a key fundamental of learning for our semi-formal learners. Our semi-formal learners are intentional communicators and generally, will progress through the following stages when learning to develop their communication skills.

Level of communication	What is the pupil communicating?	How is it communicated?	Interaction skills
Intentional Communication	Pupil is communicating a purposeful message without words to convey simple statements e.g "It's gone", "More", "Stop"	Pupil will have developed a range of non-verbal communication such as vocalisations, approximations, facial expressions, gestures.	Pupil is dependent on a familiar adult responding to the interaction and giving it meaning.
Words and Ideas	Pupil will use simple words to name things, make requests, ask for more.	Initially pupil will use non-verbal communication but will gradually learn key words/signs or symbols.	Pupil needs an adult to respond to communication and model language.
Joining words and ideas	Pupil uses words/phrases to comment and describe. They can ask who, what and where questions and talk about the here and now.	Pupil will use words, signs or symbols to communicate short phrases and sentences.	Pupil needs an adult to model rules of interaction.
Abstract words and reasoning	Pupil can think about abstract ideas. They understand and use language to talk about things beyond the here and now. They can plan, question, negotiate, predict, reason.	Pupil uses increasingly complex sentences to communicate.	Pupils are developing the skills to interact appropriately with a range of people. As their skills develop, they may start to change the style of interaction to the situation/person.

Intentional Communication

All of our semi-formal learners will be intentional communicators. At the very early stages of this, our learners will have developed the skills to make their basic wants and needs known

to familiar adults. They have developed enough understanding and memory of the world around them and will have learned to control their body sufficiently to communicate a simple want or need through a range of non-verbal means. At this stage, our learners are able to exert some control over their environment and are developing independence.

Words and Ideas

Intentional communicators have acquired and understand many of the foundation skills of communication such as:

- Giving brief attention to another person;
- Sharing attention with another person;
- Turn taking;
- Using and understanding non-verbal communication such as eye contact, facial expressions, finger pointing, tone of voice;
- Using and understanding tone of voice.

At this stage, our learners are beginning to link information they hear with things they see. They practise making sounds and adults will begin to recognise and respond differently to these sounds. Gradually our learners begin to understand words for things that are important in their life. Vocalisations start to sound more like real words and messages become more clear and more effective meaning that the child is more effective in getting what they want.

Joining words and ideas

At this stage our learners have mastered the very basics of communication and with the right support, they will continue to develop their skills. They will begin to combine words to form more structured sentences and will be able to communicate about a wider range of topics and events. Colourful Semantics is often used to scaffold children's learning at this level.

Abstract words and reasoning

Children working at the top level of our semi-formal curriculum may begin to develop this level of communication. They may start to communicate about things beyond the here and now and they will combine a number of information carrying words to form increasingly complex sentences.

Total Communication Environment

A fundamental aspect of our provision is providing a Total Communication Environment to support the development of communication for our semi-formal learners. Whilst this group of learners have learned the basic foundation skills of communication, there will be times when they still rely on the underlying support of a total communication environment to help

with their understanding. It is the incorporation and acceptance of all forms of communication that describes this environment e.g.

- Natural gesture
- Speech
- Vocal sounds
- Using different tones, pitch or volume of the voice
- Computer generated speech
- High tech communication aids
- PECS
- Signs e.g. Makaton/BSL
- Symbols
- Photos
- Pictures
- Real objects
- Sensory cues

Our semi-formal learners also need a responsive environment, through which they:

- obtain responses to what they do;;
- Is given opportunities to respond to other people;
- Is able to initiate interactions and an adult/peer responds appropriately;
- Have good role models who can model correct language/sentence structure.

Cognition and Learning

Developing working memory

Our semi-formal learners learn best when learning is related to their own experiences and a key fundamental of their curriculum and provision is the development of the working memory. Our semi-formal learners have a smaller working memory than typically developing children and can struggle with the demands of our classrooms and learning environments for many reasons.

Dr Joni Holmes (*Working memory and learning difficulties 2012*) states that “working memory enables us to store information in our minds for short periods of time and use it in our current thinking. It is a kind of mental workspace that we use for many aspects of our everyday life, including reading comprehension, mental arithmetic and planning a series of thoughts or actions. For children, it appears to play a crucial role both in supporting learning and in maintaining focused behaviour in the classroom.”

As our semi-formal learners have a smaller working memory capacity, they hold fewer words, numbers and ideas at any one time resulting in them having difficulty remembering and following a set of complex instructions. Without careful attention to developing working

memory, our semi-formal learners can fail to make progress because the working memory load of each activity exceeds their capacities.

Our learners can make progress providing the curriculum and environment is right for each individual learner. Curriculum and planning needs to be personalised and designed in such a way to enable an increase in memory capacity. Memory loads within the classroom need to be reduced by breaking tasks and instructions down into smaller steps, frequently repeating important information in a way that makes sense to the learner, re-presenting information and by encouraging the use of memory aids.

Adults need to be able to recognise when a pupil's working memory is failing and be able to intervene and support the individual appropriately. Our semi-formal learners are extremely unique and personalised approaches to overcome working memory overload will need to be identified.

Generalisation

Generalisation of a skill or fact places high processing demands on the learner on making connections between the original context and the new one. This is extremely difficult for our semi-formal learners and therefore it is essential that their curriculum places an emphasis on overlearning a skill or fact in a variety of different contexts.

Problem Solving

Problem solving is a skill that our semi-formal learners need to be taught. In its complex form, problem solving requires the ability to generalise a skill and develop an understanding of when to use that skill in new and novel situations and combine it with other skills to solve the problem.

Structured teaching of the following elements needs to be planned for through engaging learners in solving real problems and providing opportunities to generalise these elements to other problems:

- Perception of problem
- Thinking about a problem and its solution
- Action trying out a strategy
- Evaluation of the strategy adopted

Teaching Thinking

Learning to think and problem solve is something that we can not take for granted with our semi-formal learners. Our learners need opportunity to:

- Focus on general thinking skills
- Access subject specific learning such as maths

- Having opportunity to transfer and use learned skills across the curriculum and in a variety of situations.

To enable the teaching of thinking, our semi-formal curriculum is delivered through subject specific lessons within a creative curriculum theme. Through the creative curriculum theme, learners are encouraged to develop thinking skills by transferring knowledge and skills learned in subject specific lessons. Teachers model the thinking process and use a talking and thinking vocabulary to support the transfer of skills.

Our semi-formal curriculum provides lots of opportunity for hands on learning and learning through play. This enables teachers to scaffold children's learning and allows children to see thinking is process as well as hear it.

As for all of our learners, teachers and TAs need to have high expectations of what our children and young people can do. They need to challenge learners and allow them to struggle within a supportive Growth Mindset environment. Often our semi-formal learners have developed what Maier and Seligman describe as 'learned helplessness' which describes how a child, when faced with a challenge, will simply give up. Through developing a Growth Mindset and providing challenge, we develop children's thinking skills and support them to problem solve.

Social, Emotional and Mental Health

Growth Mindset

Growth mindset is an important element of our semi-formal curriculum. Children either have:

- a fixed mindset where they believe you are either born clever or not and you can either do something well or you can't. A fixed mindset hinders learning, thinking and development as children see mistakes as a sign that they are not good at something so this puts them off attempting something they do not find easy.
- A growth mindset gives children confidence to try new things and face challenges. They see challenges and failure as an opportunity to learn and grow.

Our semi-formal curriculum helps develop a growth mindset by:

1. **Helping children understand that the brain works like a muscle**, that can only grow through hard work, determination, and lots and lots of practice.
2. **Not telling students they are smart, gifted, or talented**, since this implies that they were born with the knowledge, and does not encourage effort and growth.
3. Telling children when they demonstrate **a growth mindset**.
4. **Praising the process**. It's effort, hard work, and practice that allow children to achieve their true potential.

5. **Not praising the results.** Test scores and rigid ways of measuring learning and knowledge limit the growth that would otherwise be tapped.
6. **Embracing failures and missteps.** Children sometimes learn the most when they fail. Let them know that mistakes are a big part of the learning process. There is nothing like the feeling of struggling through a very difficult problem, only to finally break through and solve it! The harder the problem, the more satisfying it is to find the solution.
7. **Encouraging participation and collaborative group learning.** Children learn best when they are immersed in a topic and allowed to discuss and advance with their peers.
8. **Encouraging competency-based learning.** Get kids excited about subject matter by explaining why it is important and how it will help them in the future. The goal should never be to get the 'correct' answer, but to understand the topic at a fundamental, deep level, and want to learn more.

"We will never do something for a child that they have the chance to do for themselves."

Independence and Self Help

Developing Independence

A big focus throughout our semi-formal curriculum is on developing independence in learning and supporting pupils to be less reliant on adult support. Throughout school, our curriculum focuses on developing the skills necessary for pupils to move into adulthood confidently, being able to be as independent as possible across all aspects of their life. The Early Years Characteristics of Learning provide the perfect ground work for developing independent learning for all of our pupils.

Communication and Interaction

Communication and Interaction is a key area for all of our semi-formal learners to develop. Developing an appropriate communication programme for each individual learner is key to building a successful learning environment for each child/young person. Communication is central to every interaction throughout the school day so it is imperative that we get it right for our pupils. We work closely with speech and language therapists and specialist teachers such as VI/HI to support our pupils to develop effective communication through the most appropriate means for them.

The programme of learning for pupils working within the semi-formal stage is based around PIVATS and advice we receive from other professionals such as Speech and language

therapists. Our PSD curriculum and assessment of this plays a big part in developing this area of learning. Through our curriculum we aim to progress pupils, as appropriate, through the following levels of communication.

Level of communication	What is the pupil communicating?	How is it communicated?	Interaction skills
Intentional Communication	Pupil is communicating a purposeful message without words to convey simple statements e.g "It's gone", "More", "Stop"	Pupil will have developed a range of non-verbal communication such as vocalisations, approximations, facial expressions, gestures.	Pupil is dependent on a familiar adult responding to the interaction and giving it meaning.
Words and Ideas	Pupil will use simple words to name things, make requests, ask for more.	Initially pupil will use non-verbal communication but will gradually learn key words/signs or symbols.	Pupil needs an adult to respond to communication and model language.
Joining words and ideas	Pupil uses words/phrases to comment and describe. They can ask who, what and where questions and talk about the here and now.	Pupil will use words, signs or symbols to communicate short phrases and sentences.	Pupil needs an adult to model rules of interaction.
Abstract words and reasoning	Pupil can think about abstract ideas. They understand and use language to talk about things beyond the here and now. They can plan, question, negotiate, predict, reason.	Pupil uses increasingly complex sentences to communicate.	Pupils are developing the skills to interact appropriately with a range of people. As their skills develop, they may start to change the style of interaction to the situation/person.

How our pupils interact with others and the world around them is crucial to their success moving into adulthood so it is essential that our semi-formal curriculum places an emphasis on developing appropriate interactions. Our semi-formal curriculum places an emphasis on teaching our pupils to:

Interacting

- Interact with familiar and unfamiliar people
- Develop skills of working/playing co-operatively with familiar people.
- Show anticipation, awareness and understanding of familiar social activities and events.

- Show, through appropriate means, when they have had enough of a social interaction.
- Respond with interest to others and their actions/activities/comments.
- Actively engage in social events and activities.
- Join in with conversations
- Initiate conversations and interactions
- Use words and simple phrases to communicate.

Communicating

- Make choices of things that affect them e.g. activities, adults, friends, food, programmes
- Intentionally communicate wants and needs to familiar and unfamiliar people.
- Practice using words and simple phrases to communicate with people about things in the here and now and very recent past/future.
- Develop memory, problem solving and generalisation skills
- Listen and respond appropriately
- Understand and follow simple instructions

Cognition and Learning

As detailed in the fundamentals of our semi-formal curriculum, the foundations for teaching cognition and learning are based on:

- Developing working memory
- Generalising skills/knowledge
- Problem solving
- Learning to think

A creative curriculum themed approach enables us to teach subject specific learning, such as maths and English and provides opportunities for pupils to transfer these skills across the creative curriculum themed lessons. Our semi-formal learners will access foundation subject lessons such as history and geography but their targets for learning will very much be set in developing memory, generalisation, problem solving and learning to think.

**Social, Emotional and
Mental Health**

Mental health and wellbeing is a whole school priority. A key aspect of this is our work on developing a growth mindset in our pupils to support resilience. This has been detailed in the fundamentals of our semi-formal curriculum. Our PSD curriculum also forms the basis of this area of learning and development. Social, emotional and mental health is not a stand alone area and must be incorporated throughout all teaching and learning and within a fully inclusive environment for all pupils.

The majority of our semi-formal learners will benefit solely from our whole school intervention work. Some of our semi-formal learners may require more support and some personalised interventions for a short period of time or a longer period of time.

Whole School Level	
PSD curriculum	Our PSD curriculum covers all aspects of social, emotional and mental health and our semi-formal learners will access PSD lessons. Targets are embedded throughout the school day, enabling pupils to work on their targets across various situations and across the school day. PSD is not stand alone, but rather a part of what we do every day.
Prince William Award	This is something we offer to some of our older semi-formal learners. The focus is around developing character and resilience.
Communication	Being able to communicate effectively and make your wants, needs and feelings known to others is crucial to positive mental health and wellbeing
Growth mindset	As detailed in the fundamentals of the curriculum, growth mindset is key to positive mental health and resilience.
Relationships	Building positive relationships with both adults and peers is vital to promoting social, emotional and mental health. Relationships underpin the whole of our curriculum and daily interactions with pupils. The PSD curriculum focuses on this aspect of learning and development but this can not be stand alone and all staff invest in developing positive relationships

	with pupils and in supporting them to develop them with peers.
Routines and Boundaries	A fundamental aspect of our curriculum is that the school day is extremely predictable for our pupils. This enables them to feel safe and secure and to develop confidence to explore and learn independently and to try new things. Children need boundaries and staff are consistent in implementation of these. Whilst there is a clear routine within the school day, pupils are supported to manage change and unexpected events through trusting relationships with staff and a focus on communication and regulation.
Positive Handling Plans	To support social, emotional and mental health, we need to have a good understanding of each pupil and see them for the unique individuals that they are. Through positive handling plans, we can create consistency between staff when dealing with behaviours and pupils who are able to contribute to these and identify ways in which the adults around them can support them when they are struggling.
Mental health first aid	Staff have received appropriate mental health first aid. This enables staff to be pro-active in identifying when there is a problem for a young person and putting in strategies and targets to support a pupil.

Individual Level	
Personalised timetables	Learning is personalised for all of our pupils but some will require a more bespoke timetable and curriculum that is centred on meeting the social, emotional and mental health needs. Personalised timetables are overseen by our lead practitioner to ensure they are meeting need. They are reviewed at least half termly and any changes that are required are made.
Learning Disabilities and Complex Needs Team	If school interventions have been unsuccessful in supporting positive social, emotional and mental health, a referral may be made to the LD team for assessment and additional support from mental health nurse. We work closely with the LD team to ensure positive outcomes and pathways for our young people.
Family worker	Our family worker can provide targeted support if necessary for a pupil and/or their family. This is through evidence based interventions to support social and emotional needs led by the pupil to meet individual need.
Inclusion	Some of our semi-formal learners may access inclusion opportunities in other settings to enable them to develop particular skills within this area of learning and development.
Sensory Diets	Learning is personalised for all of our pupils but some will require a more bespoke timetable and curriculum that includes provision for a sensory diet. Some of our semi-formal learners will require access to our sensory processing curriculum to

	support them to regulate emotions/anxiety etc. Sensory diets are overseen by our lead practitioner to ensure they are meeting need. They are reviewed at least half termly and any changes that are required are made.
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Independence and Self Help

Throughout school this is a fundamental aspect of our curriculum. It is not a stand alone subject but rather something that is incorporated throughout the school day. Very often, this area of learning and development fits within a pupil's key learning skill. Independence is unique to each individual pupil and it is the teacher's job to identify barriers to independence and to try to remove these to enable each pupil to display as much independence as is possible. Our school motto of "We will never do something for a child that they have the potential to do for themselves" underpins this area of development and all staff fully embrace the ethos of creating an environment in which all pupils can achieve their potential.

The Early Years Characteristics of Learning provide the perfect ground work for developing independent learning for all of our pupils.

Characteristics of Independent Learning			
	A unique learner Observing how a pupil learns	Positive Relationships What adults could do	Enabling Environments What adults could provide
Developing Engagement with learning	Finding Out and Exploring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing curiosity about objects, events and people • Using senses to explore the world around them • Engaging in open-ended activity • Showing particular interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play with learners. Encourage them to explore and show your interest in discovering new things. • Help learners as needed to do what they are trying to do, without taking over or directing. • Join in play sensitively, fitting in with learner's ideas • Model pretending an object is something else and help develop roles and stories. • Encourage learners to try new activities and to judge risks for themselves. • Pay attention to how learners engage in activities; the challenges they face, the effort, thought, learning and enjoyment. Talk more about the process than the product. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide stimulating resources which are accessible and open ended so they can be used, moved and combined in a variety of ways. • Make sure resources are relevant to children's interests. • Arrange flexible indoor and outdoor space and resources. • Help learners concentrate by limiting noise and making spaces visually calm and orderly. • Plan first-hand experiences and challenges appropriate to the development of the children • Ensure learners have uninterrupted time to explore.
	Playing with what they know <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pretending objects are things from their experience • Representing their experiences in play • Taking on a role in their play • Acting out experiences with other people 		
	Being willing to have a go <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiating activities • Seeking challenge • Showing a 'can do' attitude • Taking a risk, engaging in new experiences and learning by trial and error. 		
	A unique learner Observing how a pupil learns	Positive Relationships What adults could do	Enabling Environments What adults could provide
Developing motivation to learn	Being involved and concentrating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow learners ownership over what they are doing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice what arouses learner's curiosity.

	<p>on their activity for a period of time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing high levels of energy, fascination • Not easily distracted • Paying attention to details 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stimulate learner's interest through shared attention and calm overstimulated learners. • Help learners to become aware of their own goals, make plans, review own progress and success. Describe what you see them trying to do, and encourage learners to talk about their own processes and successes. • Be specific when you praise, especially noting effort such as how the learner concentrates, tries different approaches, persists, solves problems and has new ideas. • Encourage learners to learn together and from each other. • Learners develop their own motivations when you give them reasons and talk about learning rather than just directing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure learners have time and freedom to become deeply involved in activities. • Learners can maintain focus on things that interest them over a period of time. Help them to keep ideas in mind by talking over photographs of their previous activities. • Make space and time for all learners to contribute.
	<p>Keeping on trying</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persisting with activity when challenges occur • Showing a belief that more effort or a different approach will pay off • Bouncing back after difficulties 		
	<p>Enjoying achieving what they set out to do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing satisfaction in meeting their own goals • Being proud of how they accomplished something-not just the end result • Enjoying meeting challenges for their own sake rather than external rewards or praise 		
	<p>A unique learner Observing how a pupil learns</p>	<p>Positive Relationships What adults could do</p>	<p>Enabling Environments What adults could provide</p>
<p>Developing creative and critical thinking</p>	<p>Having their own ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking of ideas • Finding ways to solve problems • Finding new ways to do things 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the language of thinking and learning: <i>think, know, remember, forget, idea, makes sense, plan, learn, find out, confused, figure out, trying to do.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In planning, ask yourself: <i>Is this an opportunity for children to find their own ways to represent and develop their own ideas?</i>

	<p>Making Links</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making links and noticing patterns in their experience • Making predictions • Testing their ideas • Developing ideas of grouping, sequences, cause and effect • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model being a thinker, showing that you don't always know, are curious and sometimes puzzled, and can think and find out. • Encourage open ended thinking by not settling on the first ideas: <i>What else is possible?</i> • Always respect children's efforts and ideas, so they feel safe to take a risk with a new idea. • Talking aloud helps learners to think and control what they do. Model self-talk, describing your actions in play. • Give children time to talk and think. • Value questions, talk and many possible responses without rushing toward answers too quickly. • Model the creative process, showing your thinking about some of the many possible ways forward. • Encourage learners to describe problems they encounter, and to suggest ways to solve the problem. • Show and talk about strategies-how to do things-including problem solving, thinking and learning. • Give feedback and help learners to review their own progress and learning. Talk with learners about what they are doing, how they plan to do it and what they would change next time. • Model the plan-do-review process yourself. 	<p>Avoid learners just reproducing someone else's ideas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build in opportunities for children to play with materials before using them in planned tasks. • Recognisable and predictable routines help children to predict and make connections in their experiences. • Routines can be flexible, while still basically orderly. • Use mind maps to represent thinking together • Develop a learning community which focuses on how and not just what we are learning. • Play is a key opportunity for learners to think creatively and flexibly, solve problems and link ideas. Establish the enabling conditions for rich play: space, time, flexible resources, choice, control, warm and supportive relationships.
	<p>Choosing ways to do things</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning, making decisions about how to approach a task, solve a problem and reach a goal • Checking how well their activities are going • Changing strategy as needed • Reviewing how well the approach worked 		

Developing independent learning is not our only focus in this area of development. Dependent on individual need, our semi-formal learners may be working towards becoming more independent in:

- Managing their own self care
- Eating and drinking i.e. feeding themselves their own dinner/ holding their own cup.
- Dressing
- Organising themselves for familiar activities
- Following routines with less adult support

Some of our semi-formal learners may access specific programmes/activities to support development of independence e.g.

- Toileting programmes
- Travel Training
- College courses
- Work placements
- Inclusion in local mainstream settings

Physical and Sensory

Some of our semi-formal learners may have significant physical disabilities that are a barrier to accessing learning and keeping healthy and these pupils will require a bespoke and individual curriculum that recognises the importance of physical development. Classes have a high staffing ratio of highly skilled TAs who are trained to deliver all aspects of physical development. Some of our semi-formal learners may require a personalised timetable developed in consultation with physio, OT, SLT, school nurse that is incorporated throughout the school day.

Moving and Handling Plan/Postural Management programmes/Physio Programmes

For our semi-formal learners who have physical disabilities, this aspect is central to their development. Prior to any programmes being devised, a pupil will undergo a rigorous multi-professional assessment to inform the moving and handling plan and postural management programme. From this, it is decided what equipment is required for each child to assist in their 24 hour postural management care.

It is crucial that postural management forms a key part of our pre-formal curriculum as it not only improves and maintains the health of our pupils but ensures they are in an optimum position to learn.

Physiotherapy is concerned with maintaining posture with the use of specialist equipment and exercise programmes to assist in the development of gross motor skills.

OT is provided to assist our pupils to function in all activities, develop as much independence as is possible and access the curriculum. It is also provided to ensure that staff are able to move and handle pupils safely. OT is essential to help us assist our pupils to develop longer term living skills such as learning to use cutlery to feed themselves.

All programmes are child specific and pupils may be prescribed one or more of the following:

- Standing frame
- Walker
- Corner seat
- Wedge
- Acheeva
- Activity mat
- Specialist seating
- Trays for seat systems
- Wheelchair
- Height adjustable table
- Specialist/adapted equipment such as cutlery
- Gaiters
- Splints
- Bench sitting
- Roll sitting
- Equipoise

Providing postural management programmes brings many **health benefits** for our learners and leads to better attendance. Programmes provide opportunities for:

- Weight bearing which promotes healthy bones and improved hip joint activity.
- Stretching leg muscles to prevent them becoming tight over time and reducing the risk of muscle shortening and fixed joints.
- Reducing spasticity to improve functional transfers and mobility.
- Improving the function of internal organs and systems by enabling them to function more naturally e.g. bladder and bowel function, respiratory system, improved digestion and circulation.
- Improved posture.

- Prevention or improvement of lower limb contractures by improving range of motion and joint flexibility.
- Prevention of skin break down caused by prolonged sitting.
- Preventing muscle wasting (atrophy).

Alongside health benefits, postural management programmes also provide the following **educational benefits:**

- The development or significant improvement of motor skills (fine and gross)
- Increases self-confidence, self-esteem, self-image and overall quality of life.
- Better concentration/engagement in lessons.
- Better access to educational resources such as whiteboards.
- Improved attendance at school.
- Inclusion within more class activities at a better level allowing interaction at eye level with staff and peers.
- Development of social skills and communication.
- The chance to become more independent and make choices.
- Improved functional transfers and mobility.
- Allows us to focus on keeping the child in the classroom with his/her peers and incorporating therapy into that routine.
- Improved visual awareness.

All of our semi-formal learners will be supported to develop the following skills:

Fine Motor Skills

Class staff work closely with physio and OT to devise SMART targets for developing fine motor skills. Targets are incorporated into teaching plans to provide daily opportunities for pupils to work on developing these skills.

Gross Motor Skills

These are incorporated through SMART targets and are worked on during physical activities e.g PE, swimming, outdoor play and specific lessons that allow for the development of these movements.

Swimming

Following a risk assessment being completed, the majority of our semi-formal learners will access a weekly swimming session. Swimming sessions are individually planned for each learner so that pupils can build upon previous achievements and attainments and work towards their next target. Within the session, pupils may be supported to:

- Work through physio exercises and programmes
- Develop their body awareness

- Move freely
- Develop gross motor movements
- Develop early swimming skills

Some of our semi-formal learners will access swimming at the local swimming pool.

Rebound Therapy

Some of our semi-formal learners may access this as part of a personalised timetable. Rebound Therapy uses trampolines to provide therapeutic exercises for our learners. The therapy involves using the moving bed of the trampoline to promote movement in the pupil. By carrying out basic through to highly technical physiotherapy techniques on the trampoline, the therapy can provide many therapeutic and physiological benefits:

- Facilitate and promote movement and balance,
- Improve fitness,
- Increase or decrease muscle tone,
- Help relax the participant,
- Improve sensory integration,
- Improve concentration
- Develop communication skills.

PE

All of our semi-formal learners access a weekly PE session focussed on developing:

- Gross motor
- Fine motor
- Sport specific skills

The PE curriculum is differentiated to identify teaching and learning for our semi-formal learners.

The Voice of our Learners

I come to school to learn. There is so much I can do and achieve if I am given the right environment and teachers who know how to teach me. I need teachers who want to get to know me and how I learn; I am not like everyone else and I might need different things to my friends in class. I will have barriers to my learning and I will need you to understand these and how you can remove them for me. I need to learn to trust you and know that you care for me and want me to achieve. I need you to be firm but fair and ensure I understand boundaries and expectations. You, my teachers, are keen to me being a successful learner. Without the right environment and curriculum, I can not learn.

- I want to be listened to and understood.
- I want you to find ways to help me communicate effectively with people around me.
- I want you to help me to understand the world around me.
- I want to feel safe.
- I want to feel cared for and loved.
- I want boundaries and for these to always be the same no matter who is supporting me.
- I want you to believe in me and what I can do and to challenge me to be the best I can be.
- I want to have choices.
- I want to work with my friends as well as adults.
- I want to learn how to do things for myself.
- I want to be brave and try new things.
- I want to make mistakes and be taught how to learn from these.
- I want you to know what I find difficult and help me to overcome these difficulties so I can learn as best I can.
- I want you to find ways to engage me with learning.