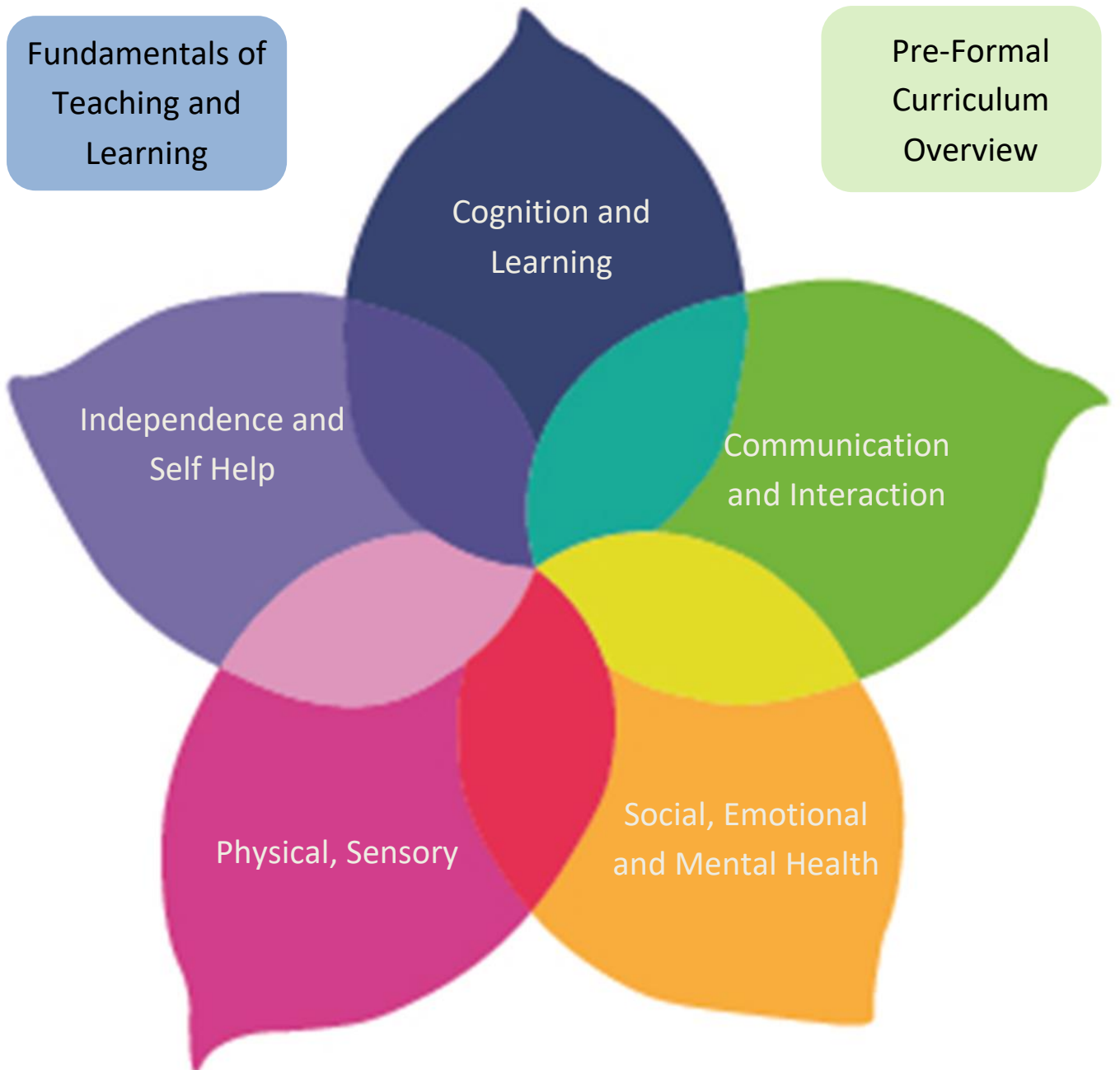


## Pre-Formal Curriculum

Fundamentals of  
Teaching and  
Learning

Pre-Formal  
Curriculum  
Overview



# Pear Tree School

*Achieving the Best We Can in Everything We Do*

## Pre-formal curriculum overview

Our pre-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. Adults are the facilitators of learning and it is key that all agencies (e.g. school nurse, physio, OT, SaLT) work together in an integrated way to maximize the learning opportunities.

**What is the Pre-Formal Curriculum?** Our pre-formal curriculum is for our children and young people with complex and profound and multiple learning difficulties. This group of pupils are engaging at the very earliest stages of learning and will likely remain within developmentally early intellectual parameters for the whole of their school career. The learning needs of our children and young people with PMLD are best met through a personalised learning approach that places relationships at the heart of activities and is based on the principles of communication, cognition, social and emotional development and physical development. This group of learners need a bespoke timetable that enables health and care plans to be seamlessly incorporated into their daily timetable to run alongside their education plans. The focus of the curriculum is on the learner and his/her abilities rather than disabilities.

### **Pupils with PMLD**

Our PMLD pupils are on a learning spectrum that indicates that they have profoundly complex learning needs. In addition to profound learning difficulties, pupils are likely to have other significant difficulties such as physical disabilities, sensory impairment and/or severe medical condition(s). Pupils require a high level of adult support, both for their learning needs and also for their personal care. They are likely to need sensory stimulation and will need a curriculum which recognises that all learners will to a greater or lesser degree, have difficulties with object permanence, contingency awareness, declarative communications, making choices, learning by imitation and following instruction. Learning needs to be broken down into very small steps. Some pupils communicate by gesture, eye pointing or symbols and a very few by very simple single word language.

## Curriculum Focus

Our pre-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. Our pre-formal curriculum takes a holistic view of learners and focuses on how best they learn. 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 the atypical patterns of development which impact on learner's ability to process new information and stimuli. Our pre-formal curriculum places relationships at the heart of all learning and recognises the fundamental principles of intensive interaction.

- Learning to give brief attention to another person
- Sharing attention with another person
- Learning to extend those attentions, learning to concentrate on another person
- Developing shared attention into 'activities'
- Taking turns in exchanges of behavior
- Having fun and playing
- Using and understanding eye contacts
- Using and understanding facial expressions
- Using and understanding of non verbal communication such as gesture and body language
- Learning use and understanding of physical contacts
- Learning use and understanding of vocalisations, having your vocalisations become more varied and extensive, then gradually more precise and meaningful.

## Assessment

Ongoing continuous and rigorous assessment is at the heart of the pre-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.

*Routes for Learning* is our main assessment tool for our pre-formal learners as it captures the very subtle and small steps of progress that this group of learners make. Routes for learning focuses on "those early communication and cognitive skills that are crucial to all future learning and improved quality of life. The impact of, and relationship between, the physical, sensory and learning disabilities of many learners with PMLD, mean that learning will not necessarily be hierarchical. Nor can we assume that it will follow the pattern of development of most young children without these impairments." (*Routes for Learning Guidance*)

As an assessment tool, Routes for learning allows pupils to take their own route through their learning pathway but assumes that all learners will have to pass through some key milestones along the way.

Whilst Routes for Learning focuses on communication and cognition, teaching and learning will take into account the 5 areas of need outlined in the Code of Practice:

- Cognition and Learning
- Communication and Interaction
- Social, Emotional and mental health
- Physical, sensory
- Independence and self help

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

We recognise that whilst Communication and Cognition remain the most important elements of the curriculum for our pre-formal learners, this should not undermine provision in the other areas of need, all of which play a crucial role in promoting independence and quality of life.

## Engagement

The Engagement Model is an assessment tool that enables us to assess and monitor both the linear and lateral progress of our learners who are not engaged with subject specific learning. It enables us to monitor the impact and effectiveness of our highly personalised and bespoke curriculum to ensure we are meeting individual learning needs.

Through the Engagement Model, we are able to assess:

- How well our pupils are being engaged in developing new skills, knowledge and concepts in our curriculum;
- How effective our bespoke and personalised provision is in empowering pupils to progress against the agreed outcomes in their EHC plans and how effectively pupils are making progress against these plans.

- Pupils' achievements and progress towards their EHCP outcomes.

The Engagement Model has 5 areas:

- Exploration
- Realisation
- Anticipation
- Persistence
- Initiation

Each of the 5 areas are interrelated and are not hierarchical so there is no expectation that pupils need to demonstrate progress in all 5 areas. Instead, each of the areas represent what is necessary for pupils to fully engage in their development and reach their full potential. The areas also provide the scaffolding to enable pupils to become independent in developing a new skill or concept.

#### Exploration:

This shows whether a pupil can build on their initial reaction to a new stimulus or activity; e.g. whether they display more than an involuntary or startled reaction to the activity. Additionally, the pupil may be interested in and curious about the stimulus or activity; e.g. they may notice or reach out to it.

Exploration becomes more established when the pupil is still responsive to the same stimulus or activity when it is presented in different contexts or environments; e.g. a different time of day, a different place or with different people.

Exploration is important in identifying which stimuli or activities interest the pupil and motivate them to pay attention and investigate them further, so that they can develop new knowledge and skills.

#### Realisation:

This shows how the pupil interacts with a new stimulus or activity or discovers a new aspect of a familiar stimulus or activity. They will display behaviours that show they want more control of the stimulus or activity, e.g. by stopping it or trying to make changes to it. The pupil will often show what familiar adults consider to be 'surprise', 'excitement', 'delight', 'amazement', 'fear'.

Realisation becomes more established when the pupil uses the newly developed skills or knowledge in new ways and in different contexts or environments. This is important as it can keep the pupil excited in their education and prevents an activity from becoming routine.

### Anticipation:

This shows how much the pupil predicts, expects or associates a stimulus or activity with an event. They may anticipate that a familiar activity is about to start or finish by interpreting cues or prompts such as auditory (what they hear), tactile (what they feel), and visual (what they see).

Anticipation becomes more established when the pupil shows awareness that a familiar activity is about to start or finish, even when cues and prompts are reduced.

Anticipation is important in measuring the pupil's understanding of cause and effect; e.g. if they do this then something will happen. This prepares the brain and helps with the pupil's memory and sequencing.

### Persistence

This shows whether the pupil can sustain their attention in a stimulus or activity for long enough that they can actively try to find out more and interact with it.

Persistence becomes more established when the pupil shows a determined effort to interact with the stimulus or activity. They will do this by showing intentional changes such as changes in their gaze, posture and hand movement.

Persistence is important so that the pupil maintains an activity long enough to develop, reinforce and apply their skills or knowledge so they can achieve their desired outcome.

### Initiation

This shows how much, and the different ways, a pupil investigates a stimulus or activity in order to bring about a desired outcome. The pupil will act spontaneously and independently during a familiar activity without waiting for direction.

Initiation becomes more established when the pupil shows they understand how to create an impact on their environment in order to achieve a desired outcome.

Initiation is important to establish how well the pupil is developing independence, which is required for more advanced progression.

## **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

For pupils on the pre-formal curriculum we are looking for children acquiring fundamental communication skills such as; showing they are alert, demonstrating anticipation and indicating they would like more of something. These sessions may not be linked to a subject specific area but have a focus on early communication skills and be led by the children's interests. Pupils are assessed against the skills progression document and IEP's linked to communication where appropriate.



### 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 that have been set using Routes for Learning and any 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. Whilst our pre-formal learners do access the whole curriculum, their learning will be focused on developing the behaviors identified within Routes for Learning.

Progress along the Route map is individual for each pupil, therefore full achievement of a target is not expected every half term. Instead, progress along the engagement scale is tracked, and new targets set when the pupil is ready.

When planning for learning, teachers will ensure learning takes place across all areas of learning and development identified within the EHCP although there will be a greater emphasis on Communication and Interaction, Physical, Sensory, Independence and Self Help.

Area of Learning and Development	Planning Focus
Cognition and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Routes for Learning cognition pathway</li> <li>● Switch work</li> <li>● Controlling environments</li> <li>● Attention Autism</li> </ul>

Communication and Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Routes for Learning communication pathway</li> <li>• SaLT targets</li> <li>• ICT</li> <li>• Intensive Interaction</li> <li>• Switches</li> <li>• Communication aids</li> <li>• Choice making</li> <li>• Vocalisations</li> <li>• Objects of reference</li> <li>• Eye pointing</li> <li>• Attention Autism</li> </ul>
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Routes for Learning communication pathway</li> <li>• Security of relationships</li> <li>• Attachment</li> <li>• PSD</li> <li>• Intensive interaction</li> <li>• Intimate care</li> <li>• Swimming</li> </ul>
Physical, Sensory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swimming</li> <li>• PE</li> <li>• Physio</li> <li>• HI</li> <li>• VI</li> <li>• MSI</li> <li>• Postural Management</li> </ul>
Independence and Self Help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Routes for Learning communication pathway</li> <li>• Anticipation</li> <li>• Choice making</li> <li>• Co-operation</li> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Postural management</li> <li>• Involvement in care plans</li> <li>• Switch work</li> <li>• Free exploration</li> <li>• Communication aids</li> <li>• Lunchtime routines</li> </ul>



## Recording and Reporting



Ongoing daily assessments of pupils are made by the whole class team and key observations are recorded on the Routes for Learning progress map for each pupil. Over the half term, observations are collated and annotated photographs are included in each pupil's Evidence for Learning online file.

When reporting on pupils' progress, the Routes for Learning Map is used alongside the P-Levels. Parents receive an annual school report in the summer term detailing progress along the Route Map.

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

### Communication

Communication is at the heart of everything we do at Pear Tree and forms the basis of all teaching and learning for our pre-formal learners. Generally, our learners will progress through the following stages when learning to communicate.

	<b>Pre-intentional</b>	<b>Anticipatory</b>	<b>Intentional</b>
<b>Pupil thoughts</b>	I like that	I know what's coming next	I want that one...
<b>Pupil reactions</b>	Smiles Vocalises Eye contact Tracks	Stills Excited body movements Facial expressions vocalisations	Confirms choice Eye points Vocalises Reaching out Wide range of non-verbal communication

<b>Progress we see</b>	Pupil is responding to stimulus	Pupil is anticipating what will happen next	Pupil is able to make choices of preferred item
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### **Pre-Intentional Communication**

The majority of our pre-formal learners are at the pre-intentional stage of their communication which means that they use informal types of communication that are interpreted and given meaning to by adults; they have not yet learned a structured way of communicating. With these pupils it is our role to take time to interpret and act on what they are telling us; to respond consistently to help shape their responses towards communicating intentionally.

### **Anticipatory Communication**

Our learners at this level can show us that they have memory of a familiar event and that they are developing 'object permanence'. It shows development of their cognitive skills and suggests that they can store and retrieve information in their brain. This is why routine and consistency of the environment and resources is so important for our pre-formal learners to make progress with their communication. Within a familiar routine or activity, our learners will begin to remember events and will gradually join up all of the sensory feedback information their brain is receiving to anticipate what is happening next. They will respond through various means just before the event happens, demonstrating that he/she knows what is about to happen.

### **Intentional Communication**

Some of our pre-formal learners will develop the skills to make their basic wants and needs known to familiar adults. They will develop enough understanding and memory of the world immediately around them and will have learnt to control their body sufficiently to communicate a simple want or need. At this stage, our learners are able to exert some control over their environment and are developing their independence.

### **Assessment of Communication Needs**

Assessment of our pre-formal learners' needs takes a multi-professional approach. Teachers work predominantly with parents and Speech and Language Therapists initially. Advice is requested from physio, OT, HI teacher and VI teacher as appropriate for individual children and young people. Through assessment, we aim to identify how a child/young person is communicating and what resources we need to support and further develop this communication. Pupils may use one of the following or a combination.

<b>What the pupil uses</b>	<b>How do they communicate?</b>
Hands	Gesture

	Pointing Pantomime Pushing things away Reaching
Body	Body Movement Physical contact Positioning/posture Proximity
Voice	Vocal noises Speech attempts Intonation Crying/laughing
Head	Facial expressions Head movements Eye gaze

### Total Communication Environment

For teaching and learning for our pre-formal learners to be successful, the environment must also be directed at encouraging communication. Pupils should never have to rely on only the spoken word to make themselves understood or to understand what is happening. It is the incorporation and acceptance of all forms of communication that describes a Total Communication Environment such as:

- Natural gesture
- Speech
- Vocal noises
- Using different tones, pitch or volume of the voice
- Computer generated speech
- Signs
- Symbols
- Real objects
- Pictures
- Photos
- Sensory cues

Total Communication can be used to:

- Help a child to *understand* what is being said;
- Enable a child to *express* what he wants to say.

## Communication Cues

Within a Total Communication Environment, our pre-formal learners will receive various cues to help them understand the routine and the world around them. These cues are extremely important to support the development of communication, cognition and independence.

### **Sensory Cues**

Our pupils need to be given a consistent routine to help them begin to learn to distinguish activities and people so that they can begin to anticipate what is going to happen next within a familiar routine. Sensory cues are used to aid this development and may include:

- Sounds
- Music
- Scents
- Touch
- Key word
- Clothes
- Sensory signifier for individual staff

Some cues are used at a whole class/whole school level e.g. a specific piece of music played before the start of a lesson.

Some cues are unique to an individual pupil e.g. a touch that indicates they are going to move into a different piece of equipment.

Some cues are built into the activity e.g. the smell of lunch, the sound of the swimming pool door alarm.

Cues must be used consistently and always represent the same person/activity/event. They need to be used immediately before the activity starts.

### **Object Cues**

Object cues follow on from sensory cues and involve using the objects that are part of the activity e.g. the cup that a child always uses to drink from. The object cue is shown immediately prior to the activity begins with the aim of the pupil beginning to show anticipation.

For our pre-formal learners it is essential to limit the number of different cues they experience e.g. a different cue for each different activity is too much. Focus on key, significant events. Cues have to be planned for and time given for the pupil to respond. All staff must be attuned to recognising individual pupil responses.

### **Objects of Reference**

As pupils progress along the Routes for Learning Map and reach around behaviour number 41, Objects of Reference may become appropriate for them. These differ from object cues in that the object used is representative of the activity. E.g. being shown or feeling a small red cup but actually using a big blue cup for drinking. At the Intentional Stage of communication, Objects of Reference can be used to:

- Inform a child about what is going to happen next.
- Enable a child to make a choice.
- Promote the understanding of a sequence of events.

### **Canaan Barrie Signs**

Some of our pre-formal learners will be supported to understand their routine and environment through the use of Canaan Barrie signs. This is a way of communicating through movement and touch. Most signs have a specific reference point on the body using touch, gesture or movement. A key vocabulary is identified for individual children that reflects key events and interests within their daily routine.

### **Makaton**

Makaton is the main sign language we use across school as signs are used at the same time as speech and support the spoken word. A set of key vocabulary will be selected for individual children to help them understand and make sense of what is going to happen in their routine.

## **Responsive environment**

For our learners to be successful, a fundamental aspect of our teaching and learning is providing a responsive environment within which, the adult plays a crucial role. Through a responsive environment, the child/young person:

- Obtains responses to what he or she does;
- is given opportunities to respond to other people;
- is allowed to take the lead in interactions.

This communication may well be pre-intentional but by responding to the interaction and extending it, pupils can learn fundamental skills.

**Intensive Interaction** is a central part of our approach to providing a responsive learning environment. Adults know individual children and young people very well and are extremely sensitive to their responses. The adult and the learner develop enjoyable and relaxed interaction sequences that are repeated frequently. Through these fun filled exchanges, basic communication skills are promoted. The child is encouraged to lead the interaction

and the adult observes and responds consistently to the child's actions as if these are meaningful messages. Through intensive interaction, the following skills are developed:

- Giving brief attention to another person.
- Sharing attention with another person.
- Taking turns with the child initiating and maintaining the 'game'.
- Using and understanding non-verbal communication, including:
  - Eye contact
  - Facial expressions
  - Finger pointing
  - Tone of voice
- Using and understanding a range of vocalisations.

## Sensory learning

Multi-sensory learning is a fundamental aspect of the pre-formal curriculum. This is provided within both the classroom and the multi-sensory environment of The Studio. Teaching and learning may focus on all the senses, particularly utilising a child's strongest sense but may also focus on one sense at a time, depending on the teaching and learning objective.

### **Personalised Timetables**

Each of our learners requires a very personalised approach to teaching and learning. Each child/young person will have a personalised timetable that incorporates their health and care needs alongside educational opportunities e.g. postural management, physiotherapy, feeding. Specialist advice provided by HI teacher/VI teacher, SaLT also need to be incorporated into daily routines and teaching and learning. Careful consideration needs to be given to the environment in which a child learns to ensure that optimum engagement levels can be achieved. E.g. some children will benefit from working in an environment in which the lighting levels can be controlled.

## Communication and Interaction

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 whole school day, with intensive interaction being the model for every interaction with our pre-formal learners rather than a discrete lesson itself.

The programme of learning for pupils working within the pre-formal stage is based around the Routes for Learning Communication Route and will include the following areas:

- Responding (to social events and activities)
- Interacting (with others)
- Communicating/Making choices

These areas are roughly in developmental order but should not be treated as steps to be mastered one after the other. Teachers should take lead from learners.



Pupil progress across these areas will be recorded and monitored using the engagement model:


- Exploration
- Realisation
- Anticipation
- Persistence
- Initiation

## Responding

Throughout the day, during educational, health and care giving routines and activities, pupils should, as examples, be given opportunity to:

- Respond when basic needs and wants are met.
- Respond to stimuli presented in on/off pattern.
- Respond to a nearby person.
- Respond to consistent and predictable social routines.
- Respond to their own names.
- Respond with consistent positive and negative reactions to a range of social activities.
- Respond to people talking around them.
- Respond in different ways to familiar and unfamiliar adults.
- Respond to sensory cues.
- Respond to object cues.
- Respond to objects of reference or pictures.
- Respond to familiar sounds and early words.

## Interacting

- Interact with familiar people
  - Show they can work co-actively with familiar people
  - Show anticipation of familiar social activities and events
  - Show they have had enough of a social interaction
  - Show preference for particular people, objects and activities.
  - Respond with interest in the actions of others close by
  - Engage actively in familiar social events and activities.
  - Use their voices to join in conversations
  - Attempt simple words and phrases in imitation
  - Use a few words appropriately
- 

## Communicating

- Make choices of objects/ activities through own preferred means
- Indicate more or less of an object/activity/event
- Practice making sounds
- Develop an understanding of words for things that are important in hi/her life.
- Develop memory
- Use objects/photographs/symbols to communicate a message.
- Attract someone's attention
- Make simple meaningful gestures
- Use their voices to join in a 'conversation'

## Cognition and Learning

Our pre-formal learners are at the very earliest stage of developing cognition. They need skilled adults to help them to explore and interpret the world around them. Our learners at this stage of development need to experience the same activities repeatedly if they are going to be able to learn from them. Through cognition learning, pupils will learn that they can have an effect on their world.

The programme of learning follows the cognitive pathway of Routes for Learning and is divided into the following 4 areas:

- Awareness
- Exploration
- Control and early problem solving
- Sequence and pattern

These areas are roughly in developmental order but should not be treated as steps to be mastered one after the other. Teachers should take lead from learners.

Pupil progress across these areas will be recorded and monitored using the engagement model:

- Exploration
- Realisation
- Anticipation
- Persistence
- Initiation

## **Awareness**

Through the provision and health and care routines, pupils are supported to develop their awareness of a range of stimuli using all functional senses.

As examples, pupils are provided with opportunities to:

- Recognise an obvious change happening very close to themselves.
- Recognise when a stimulus starts and stops
- Accept stimuli for an increasing amount of time.
- Respond to a widening range of stimuli.
- Anticipate stimuli that occur over and over again.
- Respond to a range of sound volumes.
- Respond to stimuli not in their very immediate environment.
- Transfer attention from one stimulus to another.
- Attend to stimuli in a busy classroom.

## **Exploration**

Through the provision and health and care routines, pupils are supported to develop their exploration skills, using all parts of their body, particularly those that the pupil can move independently.

As examples, pupils are provided with opportunities to:

- Use their senses to register interesting events around them.
- Locate moving stimuli
- Make things happen when they move randomly
- Activate toys that provide an interesting effect randomly and without connecting the cause to the effect.

## **Control**

Developing control over objects and the environment can be difficult for some of our learners due to their physical disabilities. Eye pointing and technology are ways in which our learners can explore and learn to control activities and events.

Through the provision and health and care routines, pupils are supported to develop and exert their control on the environment around them, to influence a desired outcome.

As examples, pupils are provided with opportunities to:

- Make things move deliberately with gross motor movements
- Make things move deliberately with fine motor movements.
- Persist in operating simple toys.
- Operate a toy that requires a simple action.
- Activate toys deliberately, using different movements for different toys.
- Manipulate objects purposely.
- Press buttons to make toys work.
- Look for favourite objects that are hidden just out of view.
- Open containers to find objects.
- Use objects and materials according to function.

## Sequence and Pattern

Through the provision and health and care routines, pupils are supported to develop memory so that they can begin to anticipate and predict what will happen next in a sequence of events/activities. This enables our learners to become more independent and participate more fully within their familiar environment.

As examples, pupils are provided with opportunities to:

- Take turns in repetitive games during intensive interaction activities.
- Anticipate routine events.
- Recognise familiar places
- Explore objects that are used in familiar routines.
- Choose between two or more motivating toys.
- Respond to object cues.
- Select appropriate resources for familiar routines.
- Operate toys that require more than one action to complete.
- Operate toys that need to be pulled apart and put together.
- Follow objects that move.
- Put objects into a container.
- Look for a moving object to reappear.

## Physical and Sensory Development

Our pre-formal learners 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. For each PMLD learner, a personalised timetable is developed in consultation with physio, OT, SLT, school nurse and this is incorporated throughout the school day.

We consider physical development in four strands:

- Body Awareness
- Fine Motor skills
- Gross motor skills
- Mobility

### **Moving and Handling Plan/Postural Management programmes/Physio Programmes**

These are central to our educational provision for our pre-formal learners. 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.

## **Body Awareness**

Body Awareness is described as a person's awareness of their body parts and knowing where their body is in a defined space. Body Awareness is important for children to learn to motor plan and coordinate their body parts through space and around objects in their environment. It is essential to developing gross and fine motor skills. Pupils will be supported to develop their body awareness through a range of activities and opportunities to:

- Show awareness of massage of hands/feet/arms/legs.
- Show awareness of various sensory stimulation on different parts of the body.
- Show awareness of a range of total body movements.
- Show awareness of a range of different body orientations.
- Show awareness of where their body is in space.
- Show awareness of different speeds of movement.
- Show awareness of different textures touching the body.

- Show awareness of objects in familiar places and show a movement to reach them.
- Allow an adult to support them to move their hands and arms.
- Show awareness during body awareness songs.
- Actively move during body awareness activities.
- Learning to co-operate with daily postural management routines e.g. lifting hands when trays are being applied to equipment and places hands on tummy in slings prior to hoisting.

### **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. Children are given opportunities to develop skills in the following areas:

- Reaching
- Grasping
- Releasing
- Manipulating
- Co-operating with physio exercise programmes

### **Gross Motor Skills**

Following assessments by physio and OT, a moving and handling plan and postural management programme will be written and the class team will be responsible for ensuring that this is carried out daily. Programmes will cover the following areas:

- Sitting
- Standing
- Walking
- Side lying
- Lying in prone
- Lying in supine

Each programme is highly personalised and specific to each individual pupil.

### **Swimming**

Following a risk assessment being completed, the majority of our pre-formal learners will access a weekly swimming session. (For some pupils, complex medical needs mean that they are unable to access the pool environment). 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

### **Rebound Therapy**

Rebound Therapy uses trampolines to provide therapeutic exercises for our PMLD 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.

Individual teaching plans are written for pupils in consultation with physio/OT/school nurse. The outcomes to be achieved are very specific to an individual pupil.

### **PE**

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

- Body awareness
- Gross motor skills
- Fine motor skills
- Physio programmes

### **Sensory Circuits**

Pupils work 1:1 with a familiar adult to develop:

- body awareness

- gross and fine motor skills
- communication and interaction

## Social, Emotional, Mental Health

The basis of this area of learning and development for our pre-formal learners is centred around developing secure attachments and relationships with key people. Through all of the areas of the EHCP outcomes, pupils are supported to:

- develop secure attachments and relationships with key adults;
- develop positive interactions;
- develop trust in key adults;
- make choices and have control over things that directly affect them;
- feel involved in things happening to them;
- have all their health, care and emotional needs met;
- Develop their own voice and communication to express their basic wants and needs;

## Independence and Self Help

This area of learning and development for our pre-formal learners is not stand alone and is very much incorporated into all other areas of learning and development, particularly communication. Independence and self help can be difficult for our pre-formal learners to develop due to the level of their development. However, through our pre-formal curriculum, we aim support our learners to become as independent as possible through:

- Developing communication so that learners can make their basic wants and needs known. Communication is key to developing independence and self help for our learners;
- Developing two way interactions with key adults;
- Developing choice making so that pupils can make choices about things that directly affect them in the here and now;
- Providing a total communication environment that supports pupils to understand the world around them so that they can begin to predict and anticipate what is about to happen;
- Supporting pupils to co-operate with activities they are involved in;
- Providing a predictable and familiar curriculum that enables a pupil to overlearn skills and transfer these to new situations;
- Giving each pupil a voice and valuing their contributions. Every pupil needs to feel listened to and learn that adults will respond consistently to their communications.
- Staff recognising that all routines and interactions with pupils are important and opportunities for pupils to learn, particularly self care routines.

## The Voice of our Learners

Please see me as a learner. There is so much I can show you and so much I can learn if you give me the right environment. I am not like everyone else; I need you to take time to get to know me and how I communicate. I need to learn to trust you and know that you care for me and want me to achieve. You, the grown up, and our relationship are key to me being a successful learner.

From school I need:

- Very skilled teachers who invest time in getting to know me: what I like and do not like, how I show this, how I learn, what upsets me/makes me happy.
- Equipment for my positioning so that I can be comfortable and maintain good health.
- Frequent changes of position. I need you to make sure that my postural management plan is followed and that it does not stop me from learning.
- Regular therapy exercises. I need you to know what my therapy programme looks like and to do my exercises with me; they are really important to me staying healthy.

- Physical activity. PE, swimming, hydrotherapy, stretches, rebound therapy are key to me keeping healthy. Please make sure I can access these.
- Safe space to move around on the floor. If I am allowed floor time to learn new skills and move around then I need this to be safe so that I don't hurt myself or get in the way of other children.
- Highly skilled teachers who understand my learning needs and plan for me to make progress.
- A multi-sensory environment where I can focus on one stimulus at a time. Sometimes the main classroom is just too much and I can not concentrate on what you are trying to teach me as there is just too much going on. I need time to focus on one sense.
- Multi-sensory activities in the classroom, particularly using my strongest sense but not forgetting all of my senses.
- Carefully planned activities that motivate and engage me. I need plenty of sensory feedback and attuned interactions with familiar adults.
- Staff to know what level of stimulation is right for me.
- Repetition; I need things to be repeated over and over again so that I can learn them. I need my routine to be consistent so that I can get to learn it.
- Staff to recognise that my personal care is as important to me as learning. I can not learn if I am not comfortable.
- Staff to recognise that self-help routines are a perfect opportunity for me to learn.
- Staff to make me feel safe.
- Lots of time to respond to objects, materials, activities, events and people; please don't rush me.
- Sensory cues to help me understand what is happening.
- Concrete objects and materials to accompany stories, songs.
- Intensive interaction with an adult who knows what they are doing, who understands and responds to me and who I like.
- Opportunity to interact with my friends in both learning activities and at social times.
- An adult to interpret my communication for others.
- An adult to sit next to me in whole class learning to interpret what is happening for me.
- Clear cues for the beginning and end of activities.
- Sensory cues for different learning spaces and for moving around school.
- My voice to be heard.
- A family partnership. Don't forget my mum and dad/carers at home. They know me better than anyone and they worry about me when I am at school. Talk to them to find out more about me and let them know what I am doing at school so that they can talk to me about it when I get home.

