



Engagement Pathway Curriculum Rationale



Who is the engagement pathway for?

Engagement pathway	
Pupils:	
	Pupils within this pathway will have profound and complex needs (PMLD). This will be a significant learning need combined with a physical and/or medical condition. Pupils will require significant adult support to meet all of their needs and experience a multi-sensory curriculum focused on engagement.
Provision:	
	The curriculum offered will be of a sensory and therapeutic nature, with a focus on developing supported independence, communicating feelings, needs and choices. The primary learning will centre around the individual pupils' EHCP outcomes and personal learning goals. The National curriculum is used as a vehicle for learning to ensure equality of opportunity in subjects studied and accessed. Pupils receive a broad, balanced and engaging offer. The provision for these pupils will take place in a stimulating multi-sensory environment with the support of skilled staff who are empathetic and attuned to understanding the individual pupil's communications and needs. There is an enhanced focus on health and wellbeing including physical, medical, social and emotional support. The pupils will require significant therapeutic support throughout the school day.
Aspirational Aim:	
	The aspiration is that our pupils are supported to develop effective communication and engagement strategies. To develop healthy relationships with people that are important to them and express their feelings, make choices, socialise with others, and to be valued active members of their community.



What is our curriculum designed to do?

We aim to provide a curriculum that meets the core needs of the learners within it. Our curriculum design acknowledges the barriers to learning that our young people face and aims to support them to overcome these to be able to access the learning that will allow them to develop the key skills they need for life beyond school.

Within our Engagement Pathway, the learners have complex, profound and multiple, needs, often with sensory impairments. The children within the engagement pathway receive integral support to meet their physical, medical, social and communicative needs. Parent/carers and staff recognise the importance of learners being able to communicate their feelings, wants and needs to well-known communication partners who are able to suggest interpretations of what is being communicated and respond appropriately, developing consistency. The needs of the learners within this pathway influence the pedagogies and strategies used within the classrooms which in turn guide the curriculum forward, creating an enabled space for learners to contribute and lead staff in a direction appropriate for them as individuals. The role of staff is therefore to create a responsive environment rich in valuable interactions and opportunities for learners to contribute in any way they can, allowing time for these contributions to be made, recognised and responded to in a way the learners will appreciate, supporting their developing sense of autonomy. We aim to ensure that they develop their awareness of the world around them, developing a sense of agency and an understanding of their own sense of agency and ability to interact with and influence this. Physical health and mental wellbeing are also priorities for this cohort to ensure their comfort, dignity and therefore enjoyment of life. It is important for these learners to feel included, valued and able to interact with the world around them, both in school and beyond in a way that promotes joy and engagement. Ultimately, we aim to ensure learners leave Doubletrees school with as much independence as they can, whether that be physically, cognitively or communicatively.

Learners in this pathway are pre-subject specific learners, and their curriculum is focused on the earliest pre-requisites of learning and delivered through highly personalised learning goals, that are based on their EHCP targets and theirs, and their families hopes and aspirations for the future. Learners within this pathway sometimes face degenerative or life limiting conditions, therefore the focus for these learners may be the maintenance of skills or application of skills to a range of contexts, rather than the expected linear progressions of other pathways.

Our intent is to prepare our young people for life after Doubletrees by providing them with a holistic curriculum rich in communication opportunities and mutual respect, driven by our school's core values.



How does this match our vision and values?

Achieve:

- Through a curriculum rich in a PSHE culture to be taught at learners' developmental levels, we aim for learners to gain the skills and knowledge needed to achieve **increased independence** in wider aspects of their lives.
- We hope that learners become equipped with the communicative skills needed to keep themselves safe as they mature and navigate their way through their lives.

Belong:

- We want learners to develop a sense of **belonging, safety and security**; not just as part of their class, school or family, but also in their local community.
- It is important that our learners are able to feel **valued and recognised** through a curriculum rich in rapport building, and **celebrating diversity** across cultures, beliefs and capabilities.

Communicate:

- All of our learners have significant communication difficulties and barriers, as such, it is crucial that we provide the opportunity to **develop their communication** skills as much as relatively possible to them as individuals.
- We provide **opportunities to communicate** across all activities, through the **use of multiple techniques** to ensure pupil voice is heard and recognised.

Develop:

- We aim to develop our learners' skills across all areas of their EHCP, which looks different from one learner to the next. We use the **engagement model** as an assessment framework to determine if **new skills** are growing and developing or identify periods of regression.
- It is understood that young people in the Engagement pathway may experience significant physical or medical difficulties which will inhibit their learning and cause regression or even maintenance. Staff are able to identify this and continue to **celebrate milestones** for each learner through adapting targets appropriately.
- We want learners to be able to **experience and form meaningful, trusting and safe relationships** as they grow and provide opportunities across the school day embedded into activities deliberately planned to **develop learners' relationships** with the people around them.

Enjoy:

- It is important that our curriculum offers a sense of curiosity and feeling of awe for our young people. In **developing a sense of personal worth** throughout activities, learners will be granted the opportunity to **engage with and enjoy** their learning whilst developing their identity.



How is our curriculum implemented?

The curriculum for all of our pathways is structured into 4 core areas:

- Feeling safe in my world
- Exploring my world
- Accessing my world
- Interacting with my world

These broadly link to the areas of the EHCP in the following way:

Feeling safe in my world	Social, emotional and mental health outcomes
Exploring my world	Cognition and learning outcomes.
Accessing my world	Sensory and physical outcomes
Interacting with my world	Communication and interaction outcomes

As such, opportunities to work towards personal EHCP outcomes are embedded throughout the day.

For this pathway of learners, the different curriculum areas are interwoven. All practice is tailored to suit the individual needs of learners within the classes, and where class delivery may look different, the theory and intent behind the practice is the same. Therefore, the implementation of the curriculum for this pathway is a holistic approach. The learners typically follow the same themes as the other pathways to promote inclusion, however, we recognise that these are not always appropriate or accessible, therefore, when this is the case, the themes do vary to accommodate and meet the needs of this cohort.

FEELING SAFE IN MY WORLD

To access learning, our learners need to primarily have their basic care needs met. This not only includes their physical needs, such as intimate care, food, water, sleep, but also their emotional needs. To be able to access learning our learners need to feel safe enough to do so. At Doubletrees School, we recognise that curriculum access does not begin with content, but with connection. Pupils learn most effectively when they feel safe, understood and regulated. Attunement — the process by which adults notice, interpret and respond to pupils' communication, emotional state and sensory needs — is therefore the essential foundation for all learning.

Across all pathways, adults prioritise relational connection, co-regulation and responsive interaction before introducing structured teaching. This ensures that pupils are emotionally and cognitively ready to engage, reducing barriers to learning and increasing participation, independence and progress

In the Engagement pathway, pupils often experience significant barriers related to communication, regulation and sensory processing. Curriculum access is dependent on adults developing a deep understanding of each pupil's individual profile and responding in a highly attuned manner. Through consistent co-regulation, intensive interaction and responsive practice, pupils move from passive presence to active participation. Attunement



ensures that engagement is meaningful and personalised, forming the bridge between experience and learning.

Engagement Attunement for Curriculum Access

Stage	Description
Stage 1: My regulation needs are understood	Adults identify and respond to sensory, emotional and physical regulation needs.
Stage 2: I trust the adult presence around me	The pupil experiences consistent, calm and responsive adults.
Stage 3: We share moments of attention	Adults build shared attention through sensory play, interaction and joint experiences.
Stage 4: I show participation and intention	The pupil begins to respond, anticipate and express preference during interactions.
Stage 5: I can access meaningful learning experiences	The pupil engages in personalised, motivating curriculum experiences.

Attunement in the Engagement pathway enables co-regulation, participation and the earliest stages of learning.

Alongside this, a strand of our curriculum is Emotional Literacy. We support our learners to understand and communicate their feelings through Emotional Coaching and modelling by adults, with opportunities though out the day built in to check in with the learners as to how there are feeling, using a Total Communication approach.

We are a Trauma Informed school and therefore apply the neuroscience of mental health and ill health, using Panksepp's emotional system, the neuroscience of emotion, known as affective neuroscience. We use the Motional assessment tool to measure and track the areas of Panksepp's emotional systems, seeking to promote the CARE, SEEKING and PLAY systems (those that promote pro-social chemicals), whilst reducing those of RAGE, FEAR, PANIC/GRIEF (systems that trigger stress hormones). Activities to promote the CARE, SEEKING and PLAY systems are planned for through termly universal snapshots and delivered regularly. This is supplemented by comprehensive snapshots and individual interventions for learners in need of further support. This forms the Emotional Literacy strand of our curriculum.



EXPLORING MY WORLD

EQUALS CURRICULUM

Doubletrees utilises the EQUALS curriculum framework to influence and determine learning, and the pre-formal cohort is able to utilise the theory behind this practice to influence our curriculum offer. The EQUALS pre-formal curriculum does not stipulate what to teach now and what to teach next, and it does not provide a body of knowledge that is essential for learners to know as it believes that it is the learners who will decide what direction the learning will take; teachers (and TAs) can only help to build routines, facilitate change, offer alternatives, observe and guide. Therefore, EQUALS is a curriculum of ideas designed collaboratively by the pre-formal staff based upon successes and failures recognised over time, proving that the success will depend upon the students we teach, and is therefore ever evolving and changing.

EQUALS places great emphasis on developing recognition, anticipation and realisation skills relevant to our engagement model. This is why EQUALS suggests covering the same series of lessons for a pro-longed period in order to harness and develop these skills. Therefore, pupils will revisit the same learning for the minimum of an entire term before moving on to a new activity or topic, evident throughout individual teacher planning and within our rolling topic plan.

ROUTES FOR LEARNING

We work solely on challenging our pupils based upon their PLG targets, two of which we take directly from the routes for learning route map, as well as targets implemented by multiagency professionals. The route map allows for us to develop our pupils' communication and cognition targets in a clear developmental route, in order to establish their current level and what we may be working towards, whilst also being able to note whether or not we may witness regression. The route map focuses on development towards contingency awareness, object permanence and problem-solving skills, with all the pre-requisites to this placed before, giving the opportunity to gradually develop towards these skills. With the ability to navigate this route via a variety of pathways, our pupils are given the opportunity to work towards these skills in different ways which may be more appropriate to each of them as individuals.

THE ENGAGEMENT MODEL

Exploration>>Realisation>>Anticipation>>Persistence>>Initiation

The engagement model is used in conjunction with our existing planning, assessment and recording systems to provide a flexible, holistic assessment of pupils not engaged in subject-specific study. It is used to assess students within activities based upon their baseline to ensure high-quality teaching, pedagogy and appropriate provision is in place for our pupils to allow them to reach their full potential. Student's engagement levels are recorded against the 5 areas both through formal and informal observations of their learning and is then assessed and moderated to ensure they are being provided with opportunities to reach their full potential. The 5 areas present differently within all learners but are assessed based upon the following key questions;

Exploration- how is the learner using explorative methods to engage with the activity/stimuli/staff member?



Realisation- is the learner able to respond/interact with the activity/stimuli/staff member in a way which could be interpreted as recognition? Or show an awareness of what the activity entails? *eg. cause and effect awareness or responding to OOR.*

Anticipation- does the learner show any level of expectancy or eagerness towards familiar or represented stimuli/activities/staff?

Persistence- is there a level of determination or prolonged engagement evident?

Initiation- is the learner able to show signs of instigating an interaction or movement in order to engage with the activity/stimuli/staff member for a longer period?

PSHE/RSHE

PHSE and RSHE became mandatory in primary and secondary schools in September 2020. Though our pre-formal classes reach post 16 level, the cognitive abilities and learning needs of our pre-formal learners mean they are unable to access RSE content explicitly, and so continue to work at an early years/primary level of HRE.

Our PHSE programme is embedded naturally into our daily/weekly timetables, covering topics in a cognitively appropriate manner through activities such as story massage (emphasising consent), health and hygiene (health and wellbeing), RE and celebration activities (diversity and British values) and sensory exploration, which can be utilised to explore living in the wider world, relationships and SMSC. Teachers will design their activities around their learners, as emphasised by the EQUALS curriculum, and as such, if their cognitive understanding cannot access the content, it will be addressed in an embedded manner throughout the curriculum.

Staff teachers identified the key messages within PHSE, RSHE, RE and SMSC, and have broken these down into the following subheadings in order to emphasise these elements across most, if not all, teaching and learning opportunities.

Consent

Consent is our most promoted RSHE driver within our activities and interactions. We ultimately aim to provide our young people with the opportunity to consent to interactions with others. This is recognized within our TaSSeLs communications which adopt a hand under hand method to allow the learner to withdraw consent, choice making and exploration sessions, whereby young people are granted the opportunity to refuse and terminate interactions with others (linked to the routes for learning route map), down to our positive touch activities whereby consent is always sought before touch activities are performed.

ACCESSING MY WORLD

We work heavily with multi-agency professionals to ensure that pupils recognised by these teams have their physical, sensory and medical targets factored into their daily school routines. Students will have physical and sensory targets derived from their physiotherapy or vision goals, as well as communication or cognitive/visual targets designed in line with routes for learning to support their goals set out by these multi agency teams. Many of our pupils have high multi-agency intervention, and so these targets and routines can be ever-evolving. Therapeutic interventions are delivered alongside the curriculum and in partnership with both home and external professionals to ensure our learners remain as physically healthy as possible.



Belonging

Belonging is embedded across all interactions and activities in order to create a feeling of value and community within our learners. We identify that belonging is at the core of RE and British values as well as living in the wider world, a core element of PHSE, and as such recognise that RE is equally at the heart of what we do across the classes. Belonging promotes the feeling of recognition, ensuring that we harness mutual respect within our young people, and provide them with a sense of worth. We aim to do this by developing 1:1 and group relationships with our learners. Where possible we ensure our learners have opportunities to support access to their wider communities through trips and local events and are able to access learning and opportunities to communicate and interact outside the classroom environment.

INTERACTING WITH MY WORLD

To support developing communication skills, we undertake a Total Communication approach and ensure our classrooms are communication rich environments. Most of our pre-formal learners have limited communication, and experience many barriers, such as physical challenges to overcome in order to make their wants and needs known and understood. This is why we ensure that we utilise a multi-modal communication approach. Across school, ALDs, symbols and Makaton signing is used heavily to support pupils communicative and understanding methods, and in the PMLD areas, we also place heavy emphasis on other methods to support communicative understanding, such as; TASSELS (on body signing) which has been especially designed for pupils who are unable to communicate through other means so to give them an awareness of what may be upcoming, sound/musical cues to cue into or out of events/activities, light cues and countdowns used in a similar manner, objects of reference or smell cues (OOR) in order to give students the opportunity over time to become responsive to a particular item or smell to represent an activity or event, intensive interaction to allow them to develop their communication skills amongst others. All these approaches are considered AAC approaches. Some PMLD learners are able to work with symbols and visual timetables, which will be worked into their classroom-based activities in order to develop these communicative skills to enhance their understanding of the world around them.

To ensure we promote a literacy rich environment within our PMLD classes, all classes will work with literacy, utilising sensory stories and story massage as approaches to storytelling. It is widely known that storytelling creates a participatory and immersive experience that allows learners to enjoy hearing language in a dynamic, stylistic and entertaining way, therefore we approach it in accessible ways for our learners to promote their engagement skill areas by offering them something tangible to support them in their attention.

Intensive interaction

At Doubletrees, we use intensive interaction across many classes. Within PMLD, this is a practice used daily in order to immerse ourselves into our learners personal space through a consented offer or response to our presence, allowing us to 'enter their world'. Intensive interaction is a practical approach to interacting with people with PMLD who do not find it easy communicating or being social. Intensive interaction is used each day across the school



day with our learners and as such is not usually timetabled in. It is a method used to 'fine-tune' into the communication potential of our learners, and allows us as practitioners to gain access to their world and thought processes. The intensive interaction approach is widely supported by our speech and language therapist team, who offer invaluable insight into how to get the best from our learners in these moments.

Sense of self

Our learning activities are hugely learner led, allowing agency, their choices, preferences and refusals to shine, thus allowing staff to build upon these likes and dislikes across all activities. This allows the learner to recognize that their choices have been recognized, showing that we are constantly aiming to get a sense of who they are. Healthy body and healthy mind is hugely relevant to our learners who are more likely to be susceptible to physical health implications, as well as emotional wellbeing challenges. We promote SMSC across all activities to ensure our learners physical and emotional needs feel prioritised at all times, allowing them to feel heard and respected. This is embedded across both timetabled activities such as the creative arts, down to 'winding down' periods where learners may be accessing physio plans, regulation periods or intensive interaction.

THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

In order for learners to access the curriculum, we ensure the classroom design and layout is organized appropriately for the cohort. Many learners across the pre-formal pathway carry one or many forms of sensory impairments, therefore activities are heavily resourced to captivate learners and address all available senses to allow them to optimise engagement against their engagement profile. The classroom itself remains structured and well organised to allow for optimal functional learning time, with no clutter and engaging continuous provision on display. Students will be able to access various physiotherapy equipment and floor time to ensure the physical health needs are being met which links into our PHSE rich foundation as well as our learner's physical and sensory PLGs.

Regular monitoring carried out by the pathway lead as well as the senior leadership team will ensure that teaching practice is enabling our learners to reach their fullest potential. Moderation and reflection on evidence capture will support this with triangulated written observations in line with the learner's PLGs and engagement profiles.

Every interaction with our students is seen as a learning opportunity. Though there are periods of 'winding down', regulation, reflection or transitioning between activities which are important moments of calm for our learners, there are no missed learning opportunities within this pathway, and so these moments are equally as observed and monitored by staff.

How do we know our curriculum is successful?

Through implementing a communication rich holistic curriculum with PHSE at the heart of every interaction, we allow pupils to develop a further understanding of themselves, the world in which they live, and their place within that world. Through providing them with multi-sensory activities to harness their engagement and promote enjoyment, we will provide them with opportunities to continue to develop their personal autonomy &



independence in decisions made relating to their personal health & safety as relatively as possible, whilst ensuring their mental wellbeing is prioritised through interactions and relationship building.

Pupils will develop their capabilities in all areas of their EHCP, though where regression occurs, staff will ensure that learners are still supported in developing or maintaining appropriate skills.

Families of our young people will be provided with information rich end of year reports which will support them with life outside of and beyond Doubletrees.

Learners are assessed through personalised learning goals (PLGs). They have PLGs for their EHCP outcomes and regularly have Engagement profiles completed.

Progress is also captured and celebrated for the wider curriculum both therapeutic and academic. We use learning journeys to track engagement towards both EHCP outcomes and the wider therapeutic offer, so that access to the full range of opportunities can be seen, alongside the progress within the opportunities offered and towards the defined endpoints, both within the EHCP and for life beyond school. There are regular pupil conferences held to explore all aspects of the learners' experiences, including progress towards outcomes, attendance and factors that may affect this, external therapies and interventions and talents, interests and aspirations of learners. This supports a wholistic view of the learner and identifies any barriers they may be experiences to support overcoming these and celebrates their successes and achievements.

What does a typical day look like in the Engagement pathway?

A typical day in the Engagement pathway

- Upon arrival- structured individual role call/greetings communication session alongside or followed by positional changes.
- Morning structured session and interventions eg. Music, story massage, sensology.
- Social interaction time (*featuring opportunities for regulation, snack and communicating preferences/refusals, structured play, positional changes and communication development*)
- Mid- morning structured session and interventions eg. Make it happen (cause and effect development), drama, sensory story, cooking.
- Social interaction time (*featuring feeds and lunch choices, free play, positional changes, child led interactions and relationship building*)
- Post lunch regulation sessions: Opportunities for personal care, SEMH activities, 1:1 interactions/interventions supporting PLGs, positional changes and physio
- Afternoon structured session and interventions eg. Art, soundabout, dance massage, communication through touch.
- Collective worship, positional changes, and reflective session and preparation for the transition home.



What do learning sessions look like in the Engagement pathway?

Termly themes are used to engage and enthuse the learners and as a vehicle to deliver the curriculum through. The overview of these themes is as follows:

Termly Theme Overview		Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
EYFS	Year 1	Senses	Food	Weather	Spring	Seaside	Transport
	Year 2	All About Me	Changing Seasons	Colours and Patterns	Explorers	Growth	Farm
Lower school	Year 1	Above and beyond		Jungles		People who help us <i>Engagement pathway - Circus is in town</i>	
	Year 2	Seasons and Weather		Moving & getting about		Seaside	
	Year 3	Wonderful me <i>Engagement pathway - It's showtime!</i>		Carnival of the animals		Exploring <i>Engagement pathway - Magic carpet ride</i>	
	Year 4	Home sweet home <i>Engagement pathway - Wind in the Willows</i>		Colour		Cornish picnics <i>Engagement pathway - What's on the menu?</i>	
Middle School	Year 1	Important people <i>Engagement pathway - Autumn and Harvest</i>		Arctic adventures (Frozen environments)		On our doorstep	
	Year 2	Fantastic festivals		Incredible India (Rainforest environments)		Looking after our local area <i>Engagement pathway - Wonderful Local Wildlife</i>	
	Year 3	Me and my future <i>Engagement pathway - Understanding myself and others Emotions and feelings</i>		UK City – London (a contrasting UK locality)		Underwater wonders	
	Year 4	Farm to Fork		Safari Adventures (A desert environment)		Magical Mythical Cornwall	
Upper school	Year 1	Party Planning (Enterprise Focus)		Holidays (The World Around Us Focus)		Caring for the Environment (Our Local Area Focus)	
	Year 2	Eating Out (Enterprise Focus)		Blooming Marvellous (The World Around Us Focus)		The Beach (Our Local Area Focus)	
	Year 3	Helping Others (Enterprise Focus)		Food Around the World (The World Around Us Focus)		Local Events and Festivals (Our Local Area Focus)	
	Year 4	Make, Do, Mend and Sell (Enterprise Focus)		Transport and Travel (The World Around Us Focus)		Cornish Life (Our Local area focus)	

There is a more detailed overview of the key learning focuses that will be delivered through these topics.

There are also structured sessions through which learning is delivered, though all opportunities are taken to promote learning, both in structured and unstructured times. Details of these sessions are as follows:



Sensory story (facilitating choice and communication)

Our sensory stories are short, highly structured narratives designed to be experienced through the senses rather than through language alone, using objects, sounds, smells, movement and touch. It is used with learners in our Engagement pathway because it removes reliance on verbal comprehension and instead supports meaning-making through direct sensory experiences. The core focus of a sensory story is to promote active engagement, independence and choice-making, enabling learners to interact with materials in their own way and at their own pace while developing awareness of cause and effect.

Sensory stories also provide meaningful opportunities to enhance communication, as learners can express preferences, anticipation, and responses through vocalisations, facial expressions, body movements or use of communication aids. Sensory stories align closely with the Engagement Profile, as they provide rich opportunities to observe and develop the five areas of engagement—exploration, realisation, anticipation, persistence and initiation.

The role of the staff member is to carefully deliver and pace the sensory stimuli, observe and respond to individual learner cues, and adapt interactions sensitively to maximise engagement, independence and communicative intent.

Story massage (facilitating communication and social understanding)

Story massage lends itself particularly well to our embedded PHSE curriculum, as it supports the development of trusting relationships, emotional well-being and social interaction, while promoting individual liberty and informed choice. Central to story massage is the learner's right to consent; pupils are supported to communicate whether they wish to participate and to indicate preferences throughout the session, reinforcing autonomy and self-advocacy.

Story massage is used with learners in our Engagement pathway to provide a calm, predictable sensory experience that supports engagement through positive, respectful touch. Repetition of the same story over a period of time allows pupils to develop familiarity and anticipation, enabling consistent responses and greater understanding of the activity. This approach supports sensory regulation, body awareness and emotional security, which are essential foundations for meaningful learning and engagement.

Sessions are adapted to meet the needs of individual classes and learners. Some teachers choose to enhance the story with supporting elements such as music or visual prompts, while others intentionally reduce sensory input to minimise distractions and focus on the massage itself. The role of the staff member is to deliver the story massage sensitively and responsively, carefully observing learner cues, adjusting pace and pressure, and respecting communication of consent or withdrawal. Through this responsive approach, staff enable pupils to engage safely, communicate preferences, and experience shared enjoyment and connection within a supportive relational context.



Sensology (facilitating choice, communication and dexterity skills)

Sensology is utilised across all classes as a structured approach to awakening and developing awareness of the seven senses, including vestibular and proprioceptive input, in a meaningful and learner-centred way. It is embedded within the curriculum to support sensory processing, engagement and communication, and can be delivered as frequently as required across the timetabled week to meet the needs of individual pupils and classes. Sensology provides pupils with repeated opportunities to experience stimuli presented to each sense and to communicate preferences, enjoyment or refusal, reinforcing autonomy, choice and self-advocacy.

Sensology is particularly relevant for our Engagement learners, as it removes reliance on verbal instruction and instead prioritises direct sensory exploration as a route to engagement and understanding. Pupils are supported on a 1:1 basis with individual targets in mind and are encouraged to actively explore stimuli using the senses that are most accessible to them. Not all senses will be equally accessible for every learner; therefore, Sensology allows staff to identify preferred methods of exploration, areas of sensory strength, and sensory needs that may require additional support. This information is used to inform future planning, personalised learning opportunities and appropriate sensory regulation strategies.

Sensology sessions are highly individualised and may look different for each pupil, lasting only as long as the learner is comfortable and engaged. The role of the staff member is to carefully select and present sensory stimuli, observe and interpret subtle responses, and adapt the environment, pace and level of support to remain fully responsive to the learner. By following the pupil's lead and respecting communication of acceptance or refusal, staff enable safe exploration, meaningful engagement and the development of consistent responses within a supportive and trusting relationship.

Intensive interaction (facilitating communication and relationship building)

Intensive Interaction is a practical, evidence-based approach used to support communication and social engagement for learners who find conventional forms of interaction challenging. It focuses on developing the fundamentals of communication—such as shared attention, turn-taking, eye contact, facial expression and vocalisation—by responding to the learner's own behaviours and interests. Rather than being a discrete or timetabled session, Intensive Interaction is embedded naturally throughout the school day and woven into everyday activities, routines and moments of connection.

Intensive Interaction is particularly relevant for learners with Severe, Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (SPMLD), as it prioritises connection and communication before formal outcomes. The approach allows practitioners to 'tune in' to the learner's existing communication potential, valuing all behaviours as meaningful and intentional. Through this responsive interaction, staff are able to gain insight into the learner's world, preferences and ways of thinking, supporting the development of early communication skills, emotional security and positive relationships. This aligns closely with engagement-based learning and supports progress within areas such as anticipation, persistence and initiation.

The role of the staff member is central to effective Intensive Interaction. Practitioners observe carefully, follow the learner's lead, mirror and respond to actions or vocalisations, and create interaction at a pace that feels safe and motivating for the learner. Staff are supported in this approach by the speech and language therapy team, whose expertise helps guide best practice and ensures interactions are meaningful, purposeful and developmentally appropriate. Through sensitive, consistent and attuned interactions, staff enable learners to build confidence, develop communicative intent and experience the joy of shared interaction.



The curiosity programme

The Curiosity Programme is a targeted approach designed to develop early curiosity, engagement and relational skills by supporting learners to explore and attend to a wider range of stimuli. Drawing on principles from early years educational philosophies, the programme consists of short, focused interactions between one staff member, one pupil and one carefully chosen object presented within a curiosity box. These brief interactions provide a safe and motivating context for learners to explore, investigate and engage at their own pace.

The Curiosity Programme is particularly relevant for learners in the Engagement pathway, as it prioritises engagement, shared attention and intrinsic motivation over task-based outcomes. Sessions are delivered flexibly throughout the week, often several times a day, and are intentionally time-limited (typically no longer than five minutes) to respect individual attention spans and processing needs. Over time, this enables staff to identify likes and dislikes, understand processing time, and observe key indicators of engagement such as initiation and persistence.

The role of the staff member is to carefully select motivating objects, follow the learner's lead, and respond sensitively to verbal and non-verbal communication. By observing, waiting and responding rather than directing, staff create opportunities for the learner to initiate interaction, sustain interest and develop confidence within a positive, trusting relationship.

Contingency Awareness activities (facilitating cognitive development)

Cause and effect sessions are used to support the development of early awareness that actions can influence outcomes, enabling learners to begin to understand that they can have an impact on the world around them. This is a key area of learning for pupils in the Engagement pathway, even where true contingency awareness may not be fully achieved. By revisiting cause and effect regularly, we ensure that all learners are given meaningful opportunities to experience control, agency and choice within a supportive and motivating context.

Cause and effect is typically presented through sensory exploration, using a range of resources such as switches, cause-and-effect toys, light-based equipment, instruments, eye gaze technology and interactive environments. Learners may engage through fine or gross motor movements, visual focus or supported switch activation. For many pre-formal learners, physical support may be required to activate equipment; however, the responses observed following activation—such as anticipation, attention, enjoyment or withdrawal—are valued as equally significant indicators of engagement and understanding.

The role of the staff member is to carefully select accessible resources, provide appropriate levels of physical and sensory support, and closely observe and interpret learner responses. Staff adapt sessions to individual needs, gradually reducing support where possible to encourage increased independence. All progress is supported with the long-term aim of enabling learners to use switches or technology more independently to control their environment, supporting the development of true contingency awareness, autonomy and engagement.



Art, DT, cooking and sensory exploration (facilitating communication, choice and cognitive development)

Sensory exploration is a core focus within Art sessions, with creative activities such as arts and crafts and cooking used as meaningful contexts for pupils to explore a wide range of sensory experiences. Learners are supported to investigate textures, temperatures, smells, sounds, movements and visual changes through hands-on engagement with materials and processes. Art and cooking are therefore used not for end products, but as sensory-rich experiences that encourage curiosity, interaction and engagement in a safe and motivating environment.

This approach is particularly relevant for these learners, as it prioritises sensory processing and experiential learning over verbal instruction, yet uses communicative aids as support throughout. Sensory exploration aligns closely with the Engagement Model, providing opportunities to develop and observe exploration, realisation, anticipation, persistence and initiation. Pupils are supported to communicate responses to sensory input, make choices, express preferences or refusals, and develop confidence in interacting with their environment.

Learning objectives and assessment criteria are individualised to ensure the appropriate level of support is provided. The role of the staff member is to carefully structure sensory opportunities, offer clear and meaningful choices, allow processing time, and respond sensitively to all forms of communication. By following the learner's lead and adapting activities to individual sensory needs, staff promote engagement, independence and purposeful communication through sensory exploration, with art and cooking used as accessible and motivating examples.

Music (facilitating choice, communication and social development)

Musical activities are used as sensory-rich experiences that support engagement, communication and emotional wellbeing. Music is presented in a variety of ways, including improvised music-making, exploratory instrument play and immersive sound experiences, allowing pupils to connect with sound through vibration, rhythm, tempo and volume. These experiences provide a powerful, non-verbal means of interaction and shared attention, enabling learners to form social connections and express themselves in meaningful ways.

Music is particularly relevant for learners with Severe, Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (SPMLD), as it offers accessible routes to engagement without reliance on spoken language. Explorative music sessions support pupils to make choices between instruments, respond to sensory input, and communicate preferences or refusals. Approaches such as Soundabout sessions allow learners to explore cause and effect through soundboards and instruments, supporting both physical development and communication targets. Some classes also access soundbath sessions, which provide calming, immersive sensory experiences that can support regulation and wellbeing.

The role of the staff member is to create a safe and responsive musical environment, carefully selecting and presenting sounds, observing and responding to learner cues, and adapting interactions to individual needs. Staff support shared attention, model interaction, and allow space for collaborative music-making, enabling pupils to engage at their own level and develop communication, connection and confidence through sensory exploration of sound.



Dance massage and communication through touch activities

Communication through touch sessions, including positive touch and dance-based activities, are used as structured sensory interactions that focus on shared movement, rhythm and physical connection. These activities support pupils to experience communication through the body, using touch, movement and music as primary modes of interaction. Dance massage and movement-based experiences address vestibular and proprioceptive needs, supporting pupils to develop greater body awareness, spatial understanding and confidence in what their bodies can do.

This approach is particularly relevant for learners with limited or pre-verbal communication, sensory impairments or tactile defensiveness. Communication through touch provides an accessible sensory communication pathway, supporting trust-building, emotional regulation and social connection. Through repeated, predictable experiences, pupils are supported to respond to touch, anticipate movement, communicate preferences or refusals, and engage in shared interaction in a way that feels safe and meaningful.

The role of the staff member is to deliver touch-based interactions sensitively and respectfully, ensuring consent is central at all times. Staff carefully observe learner responses, adjust pressure, pace and proximity, and use music and movement to create sensory alignment and shared attention. By following the learner's cues and maintaining a calm, responsive approach, staff enable pupils to develop trust, engage socially and communicate through touch and movement within a supportive relational context.

MATP (facilitating physical development)

The Motor Activity Training Programme (MATP) is a movement-based sports programme developed by Special Olympics to provide meaningful physical activity for young people with Severe, Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (SPMLD) and complex support needs. MATP focuses on developing gross and fine motor skills through structured, purposeful movement, including upper and lower body actions. Activities are designed to promote physical engagement, confidence and enjoyment, while supporting pupils to experience achievement through movement.

MATP is fully inclusive and does not exclude any athlete. The programme is highly individualised, with activities adapted to meet each pupil's physical abilities and needs. Key focus areas include mobility, dexterity, kicking and striking; while not all pupils will access every area, each learner is supported to engage in appropriate elements that promote independence, body awareness and motor control. Participation in MATP also supports a sense of belonging, value and community within a group physical activity setting.

The staff member must carefully plan and deliver adapted activities, provide appropriate physical support, and encourage active participation at the learner's level. Staff observe and respond to individual movement patterns, gradually reducing support where possible to promote increased independence. Through sensitive encouragement and personalised adaptation, staff enable pupils to develop motor skills, experience success and engage meaningfully in physical activity through the MATP programme.



Massage and reflexology (facilitating physical development)

Massage, including reflexology, is used as a structured sensory and therapeutic approach to support relaxation, physical comfort and emotional wellbeing. In line with communication through touch, massage helps to bring the body into a calm, regulated state, supporting pupils to feel safe, settled and ready to engage. Massage sessions can be informed by individual physiotherapy plans and delivered in accordance with guidance from multi-agency professionals, ensuring approaches are safe, purposeful and tailored to each learner's physical needs.

This approach is particularly relevant for learners with Severe, Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (SPMLD), many of whom experience muscle tone difficulties, joint stiffness or physical discomfort. Embedding massage into daily routines, as directed by physiotherapy programmes, supports the relaxation of targeted muscle groups, helps prevent further stiffening, and promotes mobility and comfort. Improved physical wellbeing directly supports pupils' ability to participate meaningfully in learning and daily activities.

Staff implement massage strategies consistently and sensitively, following physiotherapy guidance and prioritising consent, choice and learner comfort at all times. Staff closely observe pupil responses, adjust pressure, positioning and pace, and communicate with multi-agency professionals as required. Through a calm, responsive and informed approach, staff support pupils' physical health, emotional regulation and sustained engagement across the school day.

Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) (facilitating communication)

Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) is used as a sensory-based, movement-focused approach to support physical, emotional and communicative development through shared movement experiences. Sessions may be delivered in a planned, structured format or offered ad-hoc in response to pupil need, often alongside wider sensory intervention activities. Through rhythm, gesture, posture and mirrored movement, DMT provides a physical form of Intensive Interaction, enabling staff to tune into learners' movements and respond in an attuned, meaningful way.

DMT is particularly relevant for learners in the engagement pathway, as it offers an accessible, non-verbal route to communication and engagement. Movement-based interactions support vestibular and proprioceptive processing, body awareness and emotional regulation, while promoting shared attention, anticipation, initiation and connection. These embodied interactions allow pupils to express themselves physically and develop trust and social connection through movement rather than words.

The role of the staff member is to observe, follow and respond to the learner's movement cues, adapting pace, proximity and level of support to meet individual needs. Staff may mirror movements, introduce gentle structure, or respond spontaneously to pupil-led actions, ensuring that choice, consent and comfort remain central. By embedding DMT flexibly within the day and alongside sensory interventions, staff support meaningful engagement, physical communication and emotional wellbeing through responsive, movement-based interaction.



Drama (facilitating social development)

Drama sessions are used as immersive experiences that support engagement, communication and emotional expression through shared theatrical interaction. Drawing on the inclusive and immersive approaches of companies such as Bamboozle Theatre Company and the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, drama is presented as an experiential process rather than a performance-based outcome. Sessions focus on atmosphere, sensory stimuli, role, movement, sound and interaction, allowing pupils to engage with drama in ways that are meaningful and accessible to them.

Drama is particularly relevant for our Engagement learners, as it provides non-verbal routes to communication, shared attention and connection. Sensory theatre approaches support pupils to explore cause and effect, anticipation and emotional response, while encouraging choice-making and initiation within a safe, structured environment. These experiences align closely with the Engagement Model, offering rich opportunities to observe exploration, realisation, persistence and initiation through embodied and relational play.

The role of the staff member is to facilitate drama experiences sensitively and responsively, following the learner's lead and adapting interactions in the moment. The sessions are purely non-verbal as per the approaches of theatre companies, instead using music, sound and vocalisations to create atmosphere and articulate feelings. Staff create immersive environments, model engagement, and respond to pupil cues through movement, sound and expression. Through this responsive, inclusive approach, staff enable pupils to access drama as a powerful sensory and communicative experience that fosters connection, confidence and engagement.

How is the curriculum assessed?

All learners have Personalised learning Goals (PLGs). They have these for their EHCP outcomes.

For each area of need, there is an annual target set towards the EHCP outcome, with a mid year target also set to allow teachers to assess progress towards the annual target during the year and if necessary amend the target. These are assessed formatively and when a target is assessed as Established or Generalised, a new target is set.

We also use Pupil Conferencing. These are regularly held to explore all aspects of the learners' experiences, including progress towards outcomes, attendance and factors that may affect this, contextual information, external therapies and interventions and talents, interests and aspirations of learners. This supports a wholistic view of the learner and



identifies any barriers they may be experiences to support overcoming these and celebrates their successes and achievements.

