



Sept 2017

Pre-Formal Curriculum Pathway **Handbook**

Vision

Aspire, Challenge and Empower (ACE)

Our vision is that “all learners access outstanding teaching and facilities personalised to their individual learning needs, within a happy, confident and proud school”.

Values

Achieve

Self Esteem

Positive

Inclusive and friendly

Respect (dignity)

Enjoyment

What is the Pre-Formal Curriculum Pathway?

The pre-formal curriculum pathway is typically for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) who need a very special approach to their learning. It is for learners largely working between P1 and P3. It is a curriculum that has evolved from the school's own practice, inspired by the work of other schools and organisations and latterly, in response to the Rochford Review Report 2016.

The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of pupils through a personalised learning approach focusing on early communication, cognitive, physical, personal, social and emotional skills, that are the foundations of learning. It is based on an early year's approach to teaching and learning, recognising the importance of play and the need for multi-sensory resources, enabling pupils to explore and make sense of the world around them. There will be a significant focus on specialist provision such as swimming, rebound therapy, physiotherapy, massage stories, intensive interaction and physical development programmes. The staffing ratios required to access this specialist provision are usually higher within pre-formal classes.

The curriculum takes a holistic view of the learners, by focussing on how best they learn and by acknowledging and celebrating the different abilities and achievements of those with the most complex needs. It is because these learners are so unique that they require a very separate curriculum and we do not attempt to fit them into existing frameworks that were not developed with such complex learning needs in mind, i.e. we do not follow age related expectations devised for mainstream schools. At Springwater, we like to describe our pre-formal pathway as a 'mushy' curriculum meaning that subject specific lessons are not necessarily identified within the weekly timetable. In fact, all lessons aim to encompass the teaching of key skills for life. We know that learning for those with PMLD is more successful this way by immersing them in the curriculum, as opposed to teaching skills in isolation.

Planning in the Pre-Formal Curriculum

With regards to planning, each department (primary and secondary) have a long-term plan (three-year rolling programme) based on a variety of creative themes or topics. These topics change, termly. Within the long-term plan are suggested Equals units (differentiated schemes of work based on the National Curriculum). Teachers of pre-formal learners may or may not choose to follow these schemes of work; some may be completely inappropriate in content, others may be more suitable.

From this, medium term plans are developed and within the pre-formal pathway, are written into a format which looks something like this:

See pupil MAPP targets for personalised learning outcomes / targets							
Desired Learning Outcomes:							
W-C	Communication and Literacy	Cognition and Numeracy	Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Physical Development	Enrichment / Creativity (other curriculum areas)	Educational Visits	Continuous Provision
			Half Term				

Teachers may then produce their own short term or daily plans, but there is no requirement to do this and therefore no agreed format in which to do this. Teachers who wish to do this will devise their own ways of representing it. The medium term plan is sharply focussed on personalised priorities and allows each teacher to plan for progression.

Learning outcomes are mostly taken from Castle Wood School's PMLD programmes of learning and are centred on the development of key skills for life in communication, cognition, personal, social and physical development. These outcomes may remain static throughout a pupil's career at Springwater as the nature of their learning needs defines their ability to progress through numerous objectives. However, their individual and personalised MAPP targets are what we refer to more significantly to measure their progress.

For some of our more able PMLD learners (high P3 / P4 level), some learning outcomes may be taken from the suggested Equals schemes of work within the long-term plan, if deemed appropriate.

Our Learners

Our learners have a range of profound and complex needs. Many have physical difficulties linked to a combination of other profound difficulties such as cognitive processing needs, sensory needs or complex health needs.

Many of these learners rely on facial expressions, vocalisations, body language and exhibit a range of behaviours, to communicate. Some of the learners may use a small range of more formal communication methods (objects of reference, photographs, symbols, Makaton signs, or switches). Others may not have reached the stage of using any form of intentional communication.

For our pupils, movement is a significant part of their learning. It may occur naturally through play or through structured opportunities such as swimming, rebound therapy or physical movement activities in the classroom such as bouncing on an exercise ball. It helps develop an awareness of body in space, what is happening to their body when they move and then to learn to interact with others.

Play in the Pre-Formal Curriculum

Play is a critical aspect of a child's development as it provides them with opportunities for social interaction, to think creatively and allows them to make sense of the world around them. For our pre-formal learners with complex and profound needs, many early developmental stages have been delayed or restricted by the nature of their needs in those early years.

Adults play an important role in facilitating play for children with PMLD. The complexity of our pupils needs, means that we need to provide play partners who enable play. Adults need to be aware of the challenges faced by each child and know how to adapt the environment, so it encourages the child to explore and learn through play and consider the time it takes for a child to process information. They must ensure that the child has opportunities to self-initiate play and be active in their play. The play environment is a key factor; spaces that enable play and generate play opportunities are vital. Although some adult modelling may be required before the child is able to play independently or with peers, it is important that the adult doesn't guide their hands, help, demonstrate or otherwise do it for them. We must be careful it does not become an approach that incorporates overly structured adult intervention strategies that robs the child of the vital essence of learning through exploration.

We must remember that the most effective play experiences are child-directed and incorporate and enhance self-esteem, social development, communication and motor development. It should not be designed to focus on limited, specific skills and concepts. It must not be one directional. It should be spontaneous, active and fun.

Assessment in the Pre-Formal Curriculum

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

- enables us to be certain about the appropriateness of the personalised curriculum we aim to provide for each learner
- informs teaching
- drives progress

At Springwater, we assess the pre-formal curriculum through individual and personalised MAPP targets mostly based on Routes for Learning milestones (for cognition and communication). We recognise that our pre-formal learners are likely to remain within developmentally early intellectual parameters, for the whole of their school career. We gather evidence of our assessments (in both photographic and

video format) through an online learning journal called, Tapestry (<https://tapestry.info/index.html>). We aim to collect one piece of evidence (usually observations) per pupil per week and subsequently aim to level (in greater depth) one piece of evidence per pupil per half term. It is up to the individual teacher to ensure a breadth of evidence (range of curriculum areas) is collected and levelled over an academic year. Internal moderation meetings are held half termly to ensure accuracy of these assessments.

Sitting alongside MAPP are other, more specific skills targets such as physiotherapy and occupational therapy goals, SaLT targets, visual/hearing impairment goals and music therapy aims. All pupils are also assessed termly using PIVATS to inform national data statistics and school practice. All KS4 and 5 pre-formal learners also follow ASDAN accredited modules to underpin their curriculum studies.

Within our end of year school reports, pupils are assessed against the 7 levels of engagement as recommended by the Rochford Review Report 2016. These are listed below:

Levels of Engagement:-

- **Responsiveness** – do changes in behaviour demonstrate they are being attentive to new stimulus?
- **Curiosity** – are they reaching out or scanning for the source of new stimulus?
- **Discovery** – are they searching out new stimulus, reacting or responding in ways that show they are engaged (such as exhibiting expressions of enjoyment and excitement)?
- **Anticipation** – how they predict, expect or associate a particular stimulus that shows their understanding of cause and effect?
- **Persistence** – the extent to which they sustain attention towards a particular toy or action and thus beginning to develop some conceptual understanding?
- **Initiation** – the different ways and extent to which a pupil is instigating an event in order to bring about a desired outcome?
- **Investigation** – the extent to which they are actively trying to find out more about a toy or activity via prolonged, independent experiment?

Training

All new members of staff and existing members of staff will receive in-house training (delivered in partnership with The Red Kite Alliance) on the pre-formal curriculum, routes for learning, sensory approaches to teaching and learning and intensive interaction.

Handbook to be read in conjunction with the Curriculum Policy and Assessment Policy.