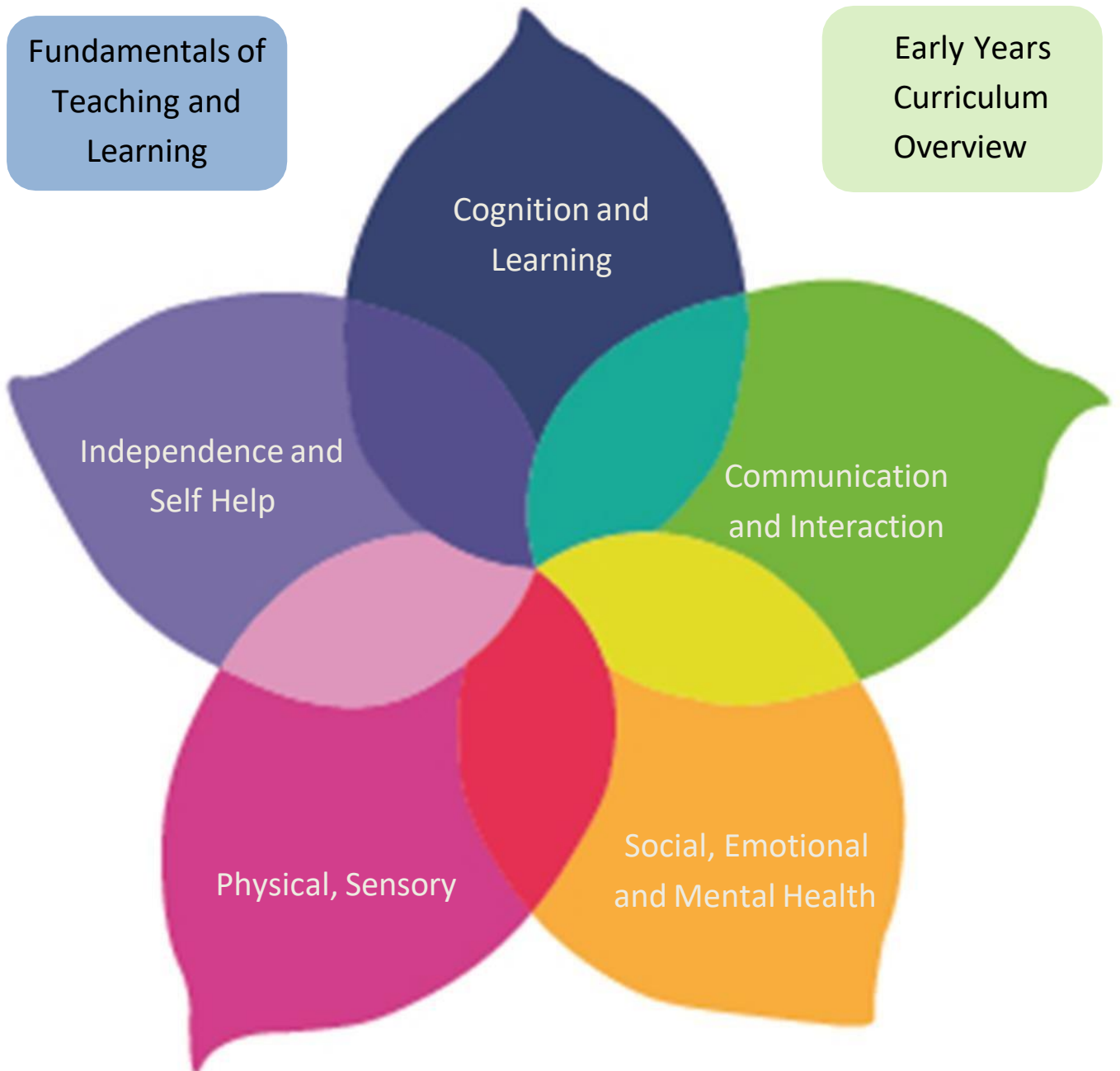


## Early Years Curriculum

Fundamentals of  
Teaching and  
Learning

Early Years  
Curriculum  
Overview



# Pear Tree School

*Achieving the Best We Can in Everything We Do*

## Early Years curriculum overview

Our Early Years curriculum is unique to each individual child and allows the child to develop at their own level and pace. The child 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.

For many of our children, starting in our Early Years Seedlings class is the first time that they have been away from their family. It is crucial that induction is thorough and that parent partnerships are built upon.

### What is the Early Years Curriculum?

Our Early Years curriculum is for our children aged 2-5 who attend our Seedlings class and is based around learning through play. The Early Years is where learning begins and where children develop characteristics of effective learning to support their life long learning.

Learning is concentrated upon three Prime areas of learning:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Communication and Language

Pupils will also access learning focused on four specific areas of learning:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

Running throughout these seven areas of learning are the Characteristics of Effective Learning which underpin learning and development across all areas and support the child to remain an effective and motivated learner. These characteristics are:

- Playing and Exploring
- Active Learning
- Creating and Thinking Critically

The Early Years Curriculum has Four Themes that underpin the whole provision and it is important that we invest time in developing and understanding these themes.

- **A Unique Child**  
Every child is unique and our class needs to observe and understand each child's learning and development.
- **Positive Relationships**  
All children learn to be strong and as independent as they possibly can be through positive relationships with key workers.
- **Enabling Environments**  
Children learn and develop best in enabling environments that respond to individual needs and where there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents/carers.
- **Learning and Development**  
Children learn and develop in different ways. For children to become the very best they can be, they need to be in an environment where they are valued as a unique child, where positive relationships are developed and where environments enable all children to be their best.

Our Early Years children fall into two categories of learning needs: pre-formal learners and semi-formal learners. More information can be found in the semi-formal and pre-formal curriculums to support this document.

## **Assessment**

Ongoing continuous and rigorous assessment is at the heart of the EYFS 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.

Baseline assessment is an integral part of the planning and assessment procedures within the EYFS curriculum. On starting at Seedlings, children are assessed against the EYFS Birth 2 5 Matters. Children are observed over a period of 6-8 weeks in order to establish what each child knows, understands and can do. The process of assessing the child's individual abilities, skills and strengths provides the framework for future planning to meet individual learning needs.

*Routes for Learning* may also be used as an assessment tool for our pre-formal learners within Early Years 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)

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

## 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 2-3 targets that have been set using advice received from other professionals e.g SaLT, physio, VI, HI. These IEPs, where appropriate, will be incorporated throughout the whole provision.

Progress through the Birth to Five Matters is individual for each pupil.

When planning for learning, teachers will ensure learning takes place across all areas of learning and development identified within the EHCP.

Area of Learning and Development	Planning Focus
Cognition and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attention Autism</li> <li>• Mathematics</li> <li>• Literacy</li> <li>• Expressive Arts and Design</li> <li>• Understanding the World</li> <li>• Characteristics of Effective Learning</li> <li>• Routes for Learning cognition pathway</li> <li>• Switch work</li> <li>• Controlling environments</li> </ul>
Communication and Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attention Autism</li> <li>• Communication and Language</li> <li>• PSED</li> <li>• Routes for Learning communication</li> </ul>

	<p>pathway</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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> </ul>
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Characteristics of Effective Learning</li> <li>• Growth Mindset</li> <li>• Routes for Learning communication pathway</li> <li>• Security of relationships</li> <li>• Attachment</li> <li>• PSED</li> <li>• Intensive interaction</li> <li>• Intimate care</li> <li>• Swimming</li> </ul>
Physical, Sensory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical Development</li> <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>• PSED</li> <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>• Personal Care</li> <li>• Lunchtime routines</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, formative assessment is key to ensuring pupils are making as much progress as possible. Evidence of pupil progress and achievement of targets is captured in a variety of ways e.g photographs, videos and samples of work using Evidence for Learning. Evidence for Learning captures the very individual learning journey of each pupil and is shared with parents/carers.

The Early Years Profile provides summative assessment for pupils. However, as progress can be small steps for many of our pupils, PIVATS is also used as a summative assessment tool for reporting annual progress. The Engagement Model is also used to track progress. These assessments are reported to parents and are analysed to report to governors. Some learners, dependent on learning need and provision, may also be assessed using other methods e.g. our school sensory processing/behaviour for learning assessment tool if they are accessing this curriculum too.

Annual Reviews provide summative evidence of progress towards annual targets and EHCP outcomes. Parents are provided with an annual report, detailing progress made in key areas of learning for each individual pupil. For children under 5, a review of the EHCP is held every 6 months.

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

In Early Years the key fundamental is that children learn through a play based curriculum. The provision is set up to provide continuous provision both indoors and outdoors that the children can access for child led play and adult directed activity. Children are encouraged to be independent and to develop the Characteristics of Effective Learning to enable them to become resilient and confident learners.

Characteristics of Effective Learning
<b>Playing and Exploring-Engagement</b> Finding out and exploring Playing with what they know Being willing to 'have a go'
<b>Active Learning</b> Being involved and concentrating Keeping trying Enjoying achieving what they set out to do
<b>Creating and Thinking Critically-Thinking</b> Having their own ideas Making links Choosing ways to do things

Our Early Years Practitioners must be highly skilled in 'play' so that they can:

- provide the right environment for children to learn;
- provide inclusion for all pupils,
- role model play and learning in the provision;
- demonstrate Characteristics of Effective Learning;
- scaffold learning within the provision;
- recognise when to stand back and observe and when to intervene to further develop learning;
- provide the right balance of child led and adult directed play;
- provide an engaging learning environment for children.

### Total Communication Environment

For teaching and learning to be successful in our Early Years, 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. Please see the curriculum documents for pre-formal and

semi-formal learners for more detail on what each child needs from their Early Years provision.

### **Key Workers**

A fundamental aspect of the Early Years provision is the allocation of a key worker to each child. Children thrive from a base of loving and secure relationships. This is normally provided by a child's parents but it can also be provided by a key person. A key person is a named member of staff with responsibilities for a small group of children who helps those children in the group feel safe and cared for. The role is extremely important and crucial for children to feel safe and secure and to be able to learn. The key person makes sure that they get to know each of their children so that they can respond sensitively to children's feelings and behaviours and meet emotional needs by giving reassurance and comfort. The key person supports physical needs too, helping with issues like nappy changing, toileting and dressing. That person is a familiar figure who is accessible and available as a point of contact for parents and one who builds relationships with the child and parents or carers.

The role of the key worker is crucial to positive and healthy attachments in young children. Attachments are the emotional bonds that young children develop with parents and other carers such as their key person. Children with strong early attachments cry less when separated. They engage in more pretend play and sustain attention for longer. They are less aggressive and are popular with other children and with adults. Their sense of who they are is strong. Children need to be safe in the relationship they have with parents or carers. They are vulnerable but will develop resilience when their physical and psychological well-being is protected by an adult. Being emotionally attached to such an adult helps the child feel secure that the person they depend on is there for them. When children feel safe they are more inclined to try things out and be more independent. They are confident to express their ideas and feelings and feel good about themselves. Attachment influences a child's immediate all-round development and future relationships.



## 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. Please refer to the pre-formal and semi-formal curriculum documents for more information on how we develop this area of learning for each child.

## Cognition and Learning

Our Early Years children 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 children need to experience the same activities repeatedly if they are going to be able to learn from them. Please refer to the pre-formal and semi-formal curriculum documents for more information on how we develop this area of learning for each child.

## Physical and Sensory Development

Many of our Early Years children will require physiotherapy and postural management programmes and so Early Years 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 Early Years children 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**

Children access a weekly PE session focused 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 Early Years children 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;

Work around Personal, Social and Emotional development as well as the Characteristics of Effective Learning provide the grounding for developing positive social, emotional and mental health.

## Independence and Self Help

The whole of the Early Years provision is set up to provide opportunities for developing independence and self help and the area of learning for Personal, Social and Emotional development is focussed on developing these skills as are the Characteristics of Effective learning.

A focus for the Early Years provision is on:

- 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

This might be the first time I have ever been away from my family so please make me feel safe and loved. Help me to get to know you, my key worker, so that I can learn to trust you and feel happy and safe when I am with you. I love playing but I need you to help me to try new things. I will have barriers to my learning and some people might think that these mean I can not learn, but I can. I need you to work out how these barriers can be removed so that I can achieve and everyone can be proud of me.

From school I need:

- To feel safe, cared for and loved. I need to know that I am ok when I am not with my family.
- 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.
- 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.