



# CURRICULUM INFORMATION

Updated Nov 2021

## ACHIEVEMENT, BELONGING & CELEBRATION

**Valuing every child through fostering independence, inclusion, trust, respect and support.**

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## Introduction

Our curriculum teaches what matters for learners at New Siblands, based on areas defined by Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs).

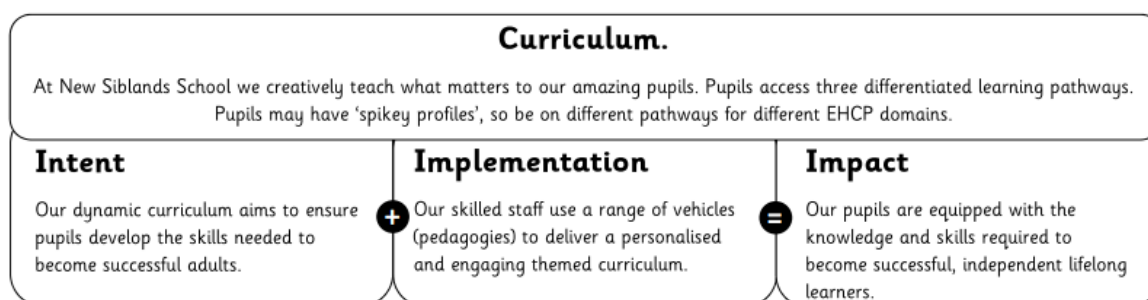
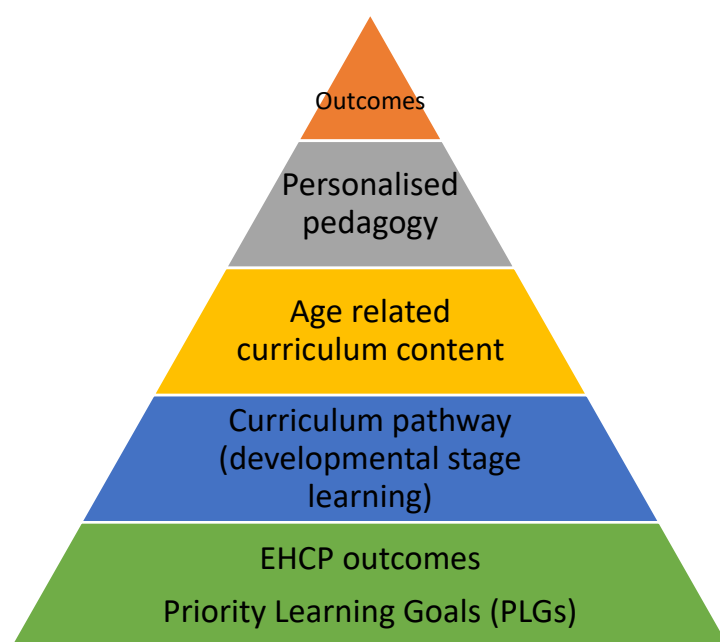
- Communication & Interaction
- Cognition & Learning
- Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH)
- Sensory & Physical Development
- Self-Care and Independence

Each of these areas are important to ensure holistic learning and development.

Our curriculum is based on a developmental model, appropriate to learners at early cognitive developmental stages. Links to EHCP outcomes are strongly embedded.

Three learning pathways address learners' cognitive developmental levels, while age appropriate content ensures their chronological developmental needs are met. Personalised activities engage learners and so that they can enjoy learning.

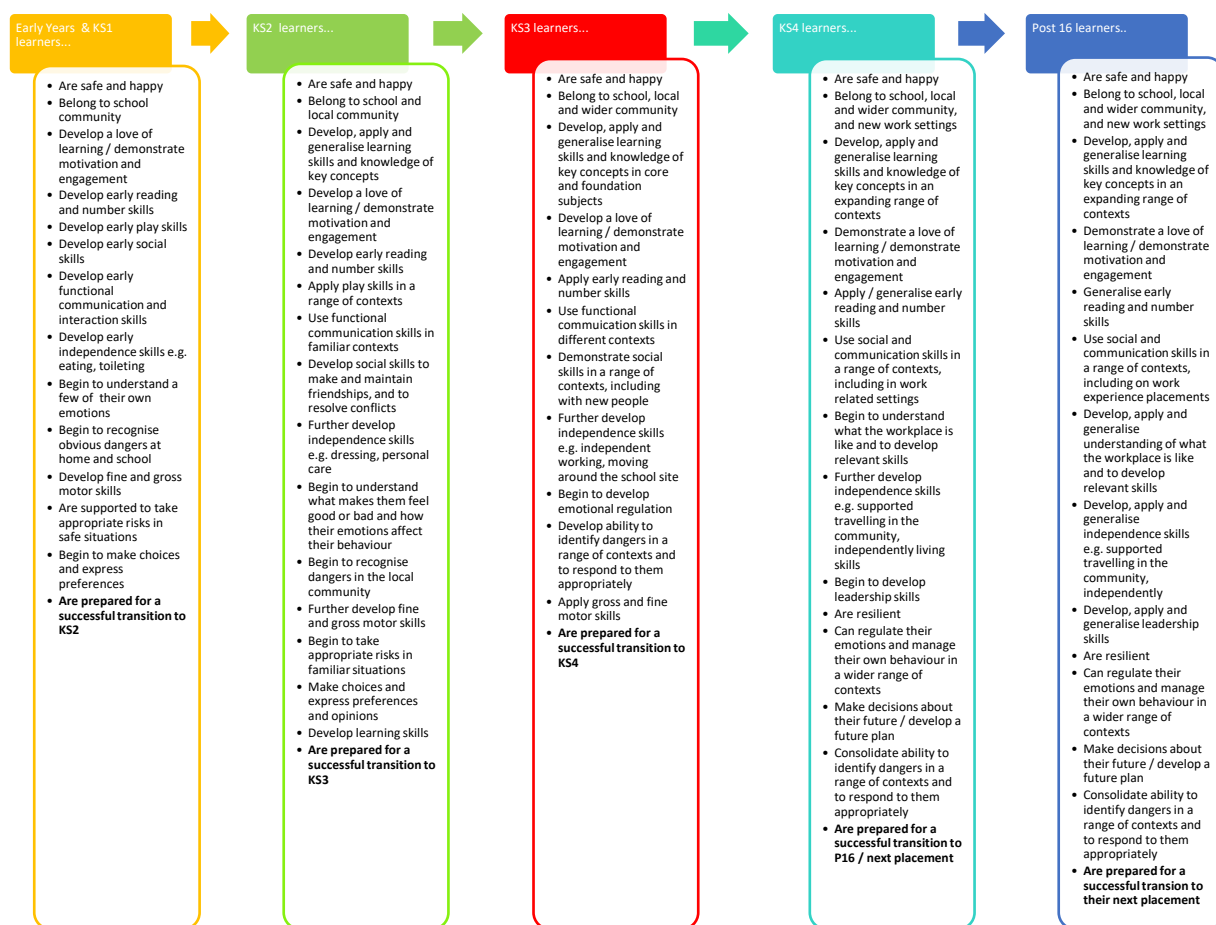
Flexibility is built into our curriculum in order to adapt to the complex and ever-changing range of learning needs of pupils at New Siblands.



## Curriculum Intent



## Our intended learning journey



## Curriculum Implementation

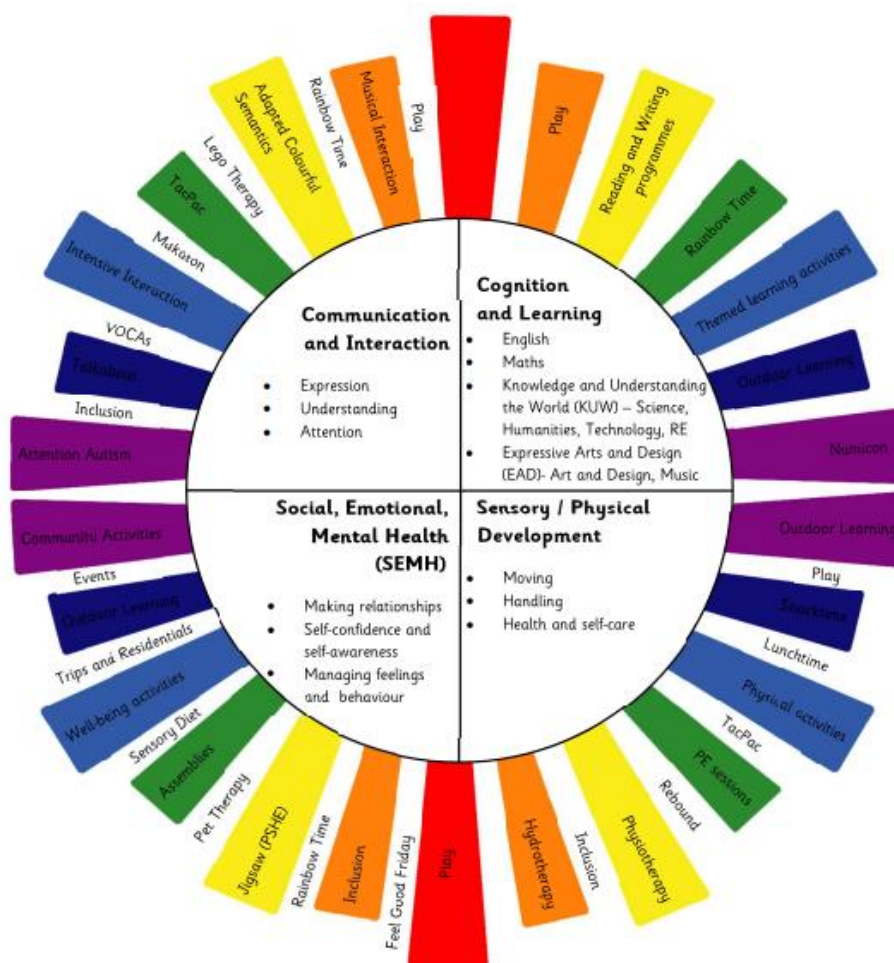
### Curriculum Pathways

Broadly speaking, learners at New Siblands access three differentiated learning pathways:

Pathway: Achievement	Pathway: Belonging	Pathway: Celebration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Semi-formal learners, acquiring early learning skills</li> <li>Learning is themed and experiential</li> <li>Repetition or 'over-learning' supports the consolidation and generalisation of skills and knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-formal learners at very early cognitive developmental stages</li> <li>Multi-sensory approaches to holistic learning themes support learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal learners entering into more subject specific learning in some areas</li> </ul>
Learners in P16 all follow the <b>Preparation for Adulthood (PfA)</b> curriculum.		

### Our Pedagogy

The following diagram shows subjects (what we teach) in the centre and some of the teaching approaches (our pedagogy) in the rays of the rainbow.



## Communication & Interaction



*‘Communication is fundamental to children’s development; children need to be able to understand and be understood. Communication is the foundation of relationships and is essential for learning, play and social interaction. ‘*

*The Communication Trust*

The Communication & Interaction aspect of the curriculum at New Siblands equips our learners with the skills they need to become adults who can express their needs, preferences and opinions; who feel confident to use their voice and be heard, and who understand the social conventions of communication in different situations.

The Communication & Interaction aspect of the curriculum focuses on **expression**, **understanding** and **attention**. It includes:

- Attention Autism (a programme to develop concentration and attention)
- Talkabout (a social language skills programme)
- Social language skills and conventions
- Lego Therapy
- Communication aid user groups
- Eye-gaze programmes
- Intensive interaction

Communication is consistently supported across the school using:

- Makaton
- Boardmaker symbols
- Objects of reference
- Communication boards

Learners who need communication pathways that are not based only on verbal communication access a range of progressive Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) techniques including communication books, E-tran frames, eye gaze, PECS, and high tech voice output communication aids (VOCAs)

Opportunities to learn, develop, consolidate and generalise language skills occur at all points in the school day. Less structured times, such as lunchtimes, playtimes, outdoor breaks, as well as outdoor learning sessions, inclusion sessions and assemblies are used to motivate and encourage learners to use their language skills in a range of contexts.

A Speech and Language Therapist (SLTh) supports the assessment and monitoring of individual speech and language programmes, as well as delivering direct specialist support 1:1, in small groups and to whole classes.

## Cognition & learning



The Cognition and Learning aspect of the curriculum at New Siblands equips our learners with the knowledge they need to develop early reading and literacy skills; mathematical and scientific thinking skills; problems solving skills; and early learning skills. Our learners are engaged through play, creativity and personalisation. Developing independent learning skills is a key component of learning.

Cognition & learning subjects are based on an early years' model, appropriate to our learners, and most are taught through termly themes.

- **English**
- **Maths**
- **Understanding the world**
- **Expressive arts and design**

### English: Reading

Developing communication and reading skills is foremost and integral to our curriculum.

The reading route for learners on the Belonging pathway supports the development of pre-reading skills through a wider understanding of the meaning of photographs, symbols and objects. Early reading skills are taught using 'See & Learn' or structured phonics lessons.

Motivating resources help to engender a love of reading. Story sacks, sensory studio sessions and objects of reference, all help to bring set texts to life for our learners.

All learners have regular reading sessions. Reading schemes contain resources for readers using both phonics and whole word recognition.

### English: Writing

Physical disabilities and delayed physical development affects the gross and fine motor skills necessary for writing. Cognitive impairments may affect the speed at which learners can control their movements. For this reason, progress in physical development is closely linked with progress in writing.

Writing sessions include strategies for developing the physical skills of writing. *Writing Without Tears* has also influenced the way we build early writing skills and provides an assessment model for how to build the mark making skills required for letter formation. For pupils on the Celebration pathway writing sessions include writing for different purposes



and in different styles. For sensory learners eye-gaze technology and sensory approaches are utilised.

## Maths

The Maths curriculum is based on the theories of Les Staves, and supports learners to acquire the skills needed to understand mathematical concepts in a hierarchical manner. The importance of ensuring mathematical language is securely linked to the concepts it represents before progressing to the next stage is emphasised. Given that many pupils with SEND have significant speech and language delays, this is vital for long term mathematical understanding and progress. *Numicon* is used to support development of number concepts. For sensory learners eye-gaze technology and sensory approaches are utilised.

## Understanding the world

‘Understanding the world’ encompasses science, technology, PSHE and humanities.

‘Jigsaw’ is a new programme we are using to deliver SEMH education. It covers a broad range of topics relevant to the chronological and cognitive developmental stages of the learners including:

- Mental health and wellbeing
- Relationships & sex education (RSE)
- E-safety

**Lunchtimes, playtimes, outdoor breaks / outdoor learning, assemblies and enrichment activities** provide an important opportunity for consolidation and generalisation of skills learnt in these sessions. Day to day events provide many opportunities for pupils to discover, apply and generalise their learning with the support of adults. E-safety week provides a focus for whole school work and culminates in an assembly.

## Expressive Arts and Design

*‘Artistic activities directly exercise and strengthen the cognitive and physical skills that generally challenge special needs children, such as oral, tactile, visual, sensory and motor skills, while supporting the development of appropriate self-expression.’*

Expressive arts and design activities are delivered through activities linked to the termly theme. There is also a dynamic programme of activities that form this area of the curriculum including:

- Opportunities to watch or take part in musical or theatrical performances
- Taking part in workshops delivered by external groups



## Sensory & Physical Development



The Sensory & Physical Development aspect of the curriculum equips our learners with the skills they need to become adults who are as independent and healthy as possible, and who are aware of their own and others' physical needs.

*'Through my experience of teaching and observing human movement I have come to the conclusion that all children need to be at home in their own bodies and so to gain mastery'*  
(Victoria Sherbourne 1990)

The Sensory/Physical Development aspect of the curriculum focuses on **moving** (gross motor skills), **handling** (fine motor skills), and **health & self-care**. It includes:

- PE, swimming
- Personal, social and health education (PSHE)
- Physiotherapy
- Hydrotherapy
- Rebound therapy
- Body awareness
- Sports day
- Sensory diet

Outdoor learning and play opportunities also contribute to the Physical Development curriculum, as these provide safe spaces for learners to move and explore the world around them.

The school has a leader for physical needs who co-ordinates and supports a range of interventions, as well as ensuring our learners' individual care and medical needs are fully met.

A school nurse, an occupational therapist, a speech and language therapist, and a team of physiotherapists all support the sensory and physical development of our learners.

## Social, Emotional & Mental Health



Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) education at New Siblands equips our learners with the skills they need to navigate the world. The curriculum supports them to develop into happy and healthy, independent and resilient adults with the confidence to use their voice and be heard.

At New Siblands we place the highest value on teaching our learners about SEMH because research shows high incidence of poor physical health and social isolation in adults with LDD. They are also more likely to be the

victims of abuse. We aim to empower our learners to develop self-awareness, resilience and the skills for self-advocacy so that they can achieve better outcomes.

The SEMH aspect of the curriculum focuses on **making relationships, self-confidence and self-awareness**, and **managing feelings and behaviour**. We are introducing the Jigsaw programme of study to implement much of the SEMH curriculum.

It includes:

- Personal, social & health education (PSHE)
- E-safety
- Positive behaviour education
- Emotional regulation
- Well-being
- Pupil voice
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education (SMSC)
- British values

Inclusion and enrichment opportunities also contribute to SEMH education, as they provide safe spaces for pupils to apply and generalise their learning in a range of contexts.

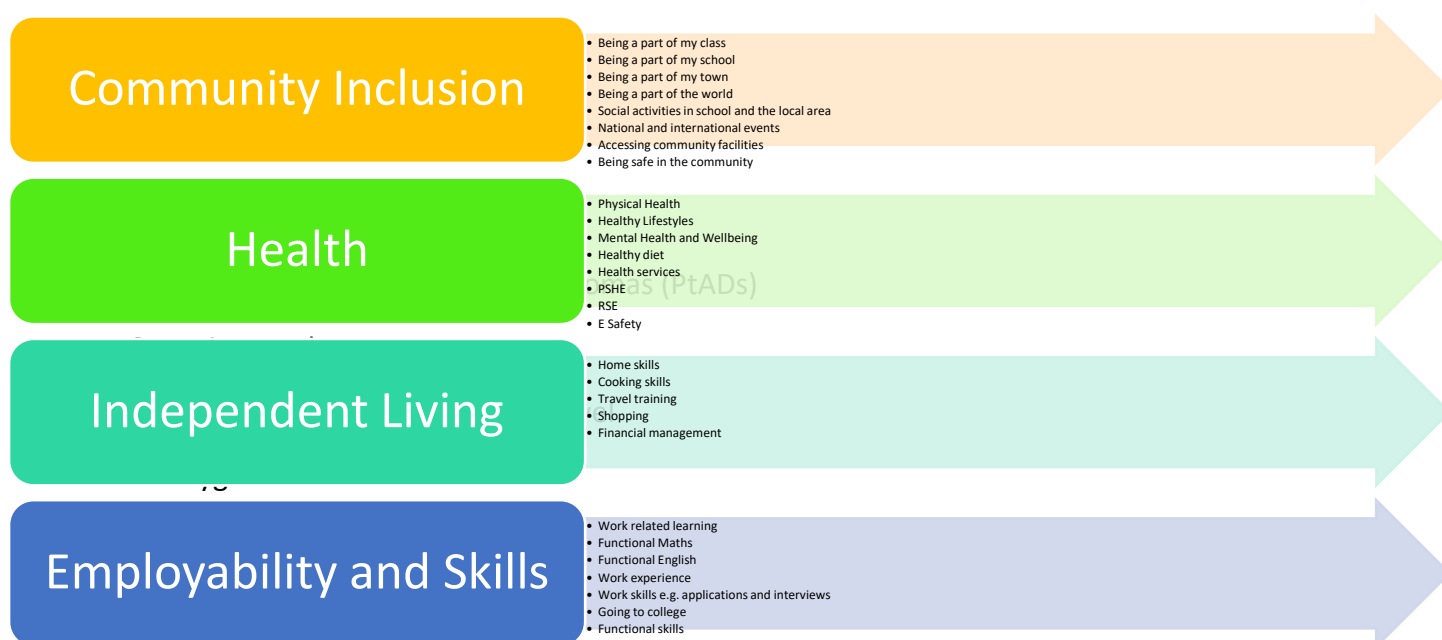
There is a SEMH leader whose role is to coordinate and develop the whole school approach to SEMH. In addition, early interventions to support positive mental health and well-being are in place through an Emotional Learning Support Assistant (ELSA) who undertakes 1:1 or small group activities with specific learners, and two Mental Health First Aiders who can support learners to manage difficult situations or issues as they arise.

A Behaviour and Sensory Processing Leader coordinates positive behaviour programmes. She works with the occupational therapist to ensure that sensory processing needs are understood and supported in school.

## Preparation for Adulthood (PfA)

The Preparation for Adulthood curriculum is designed to support our P16 learners to develop the skills and knowledge they need to access services that will improve their quality of life and to begin to understand the options and choices available to them when they leave New Siblands. There is a strong focus on preparing learners for their next phase. Learners develop skills for independence, social skills and basic skills for functional use of Maths and English. They are supported to understand how to be safe, healthy and fulfilled in the wider world.

Students work towards four separate diplomas which have been developed to reflect the four strands of South Gloucestershire's pathways into adulthood: Employability and Skills, Health, Independent Living and Community Inclusion.



### Key features:

- Develops the highest level of independence possible for each student according to their physical, cognitive and developmental abilities (choices, skills, and mobility)
- High aspirations for learners to gain paid or voluntary employment where appropriate
- Provides good quality information about future options for education, employment and housing supports positive choices, including an independent transitions advisor
- Literacy, numeracy, communication and social skills developed, applied and generalised
- Importance placed on developing a strong sense of belonging to school, local, national and international communities
- Participation in social and cooperative activities support the development of positive relationships
- High levels of support to enable students to understand how to have good physical and mental health and to make positive choices to maintain these
- Learners are supported to engage in hobbies and activities that enable them to self-occupy and use their free time in a meaningful and fulfilling way
- Repetition and 'over-learning' to ensure application and generalisation of skill

## Key features of our pedagogy (how we teach)

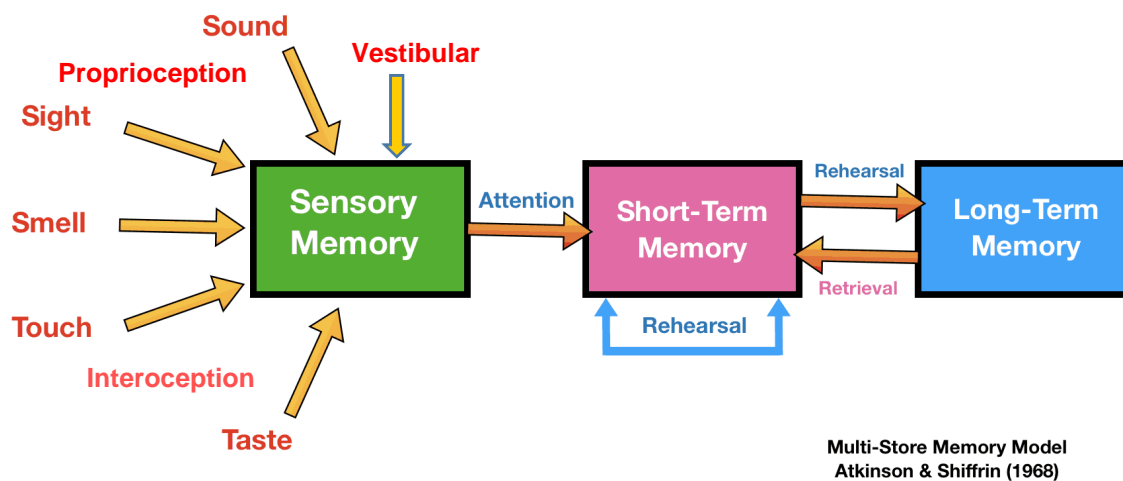
### Heuristic teaching

*‘(a method of teaching) allowing students to learn by discovering things themselves and learning from their own experiences rather than by telling them things’*

*Cambridge English Dictionary*

All of our learners benefit from repeated opportunities to explore resources and gain results through trial and error. They may adapt their methods to achieve a desired end, and through this they demonstrate that they can process, retain and apply information.

### Long term learning



*‘Learning is a step-by- step process that relies on the successful completion of individual learning activities for the accumulation of knowledge. Children with working memory impairments often fail in the classroom because the working memory loads of each activity exceed their capacities. When the working memory system fails, children forget what they are doing and this can lead to inattentive behaviour. The end result is frequent lost learning opportunities, and consequently slow rates of educational progress.’*

(Gathercole & Alloway, 2008).

Our learners are at early stages of cognitive development and require carefully linked and layered learning programmes to embed concepts into their long-term memory. They need activities to be designed in such a way as to enable an alteration in their long term memory so that concepts become embedded. We therefore reduce memory loads in the classroom by breaking tasks and instructions down into smaller steps, frequently repeating important

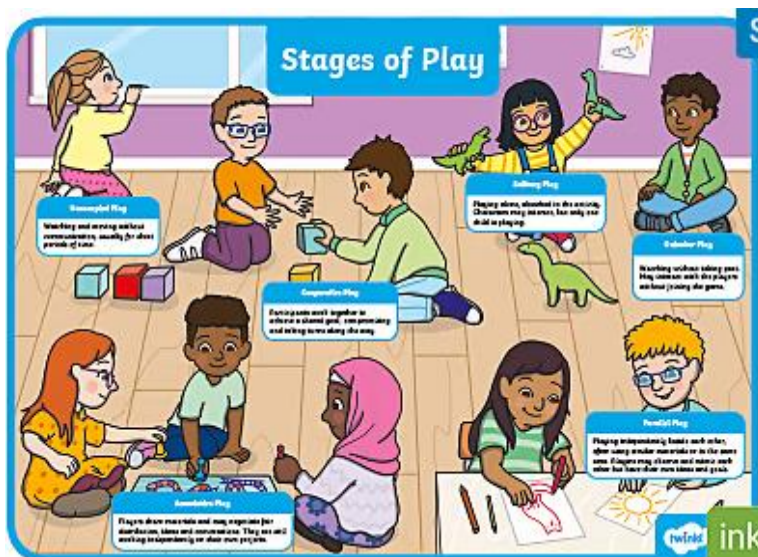
information, re-presenting information and encouraging the use of memory aids. Allowing time for learners to process and apply information is essential.

Learners are supported to use their prior knowledge when learning new information as this promotes that learning. This resonates with the Ofsted inspection framework which affirms that that progress is defined as pupils 'knowing more and remembering more'.

## Thematic learning

Learners with PMLD and SLD require a coherent learning approach that links areas of learning in a holistic way to enable them to make sense of their learning and relate it to their own carefully sequenced experiences. Therefore, we adopt a thematic approach to delivering learning which encourages a broad understanding of subjects within contexts that are familiar and relevant to our learners.

## Learning through play



Play is an essential aspect of learning. It provides essential opportunities for learners to show how they understand the world and operate within it. Play itself moves through clear stages which provide indicators of a learner's developmental stage. Through play, our learners can acquire, apply and generalise social, communication, imaginative and independence skills.

At New Siblands, learners have frequent opportunities for self-directed play to enable them to explore and develop their skills. In class, play resources are often linked to the curriculum theme so to support them to consolidate and generalise their learning. Staff may act as play partners; playing alongside/with the pupil to encourage the development of their play and their learning. Staff use approaches such as encouraging joint attention, modelling skills and scaffolding learning.

## Outdoor learning

*‘Children with SEN benefit from how the outdoors relieves stress and anxiety, develops social skills, motivates learning across the curriculum (and beyond) and allows them to be practical, responsible and productive members of the community.’*

*Emily Genochio*

As well as supporting learning in areas of cognition and learning, outdoor learning sessions provide opportunities to develop, consolidate and generalise skills for physical, creative and social development. Each classroom at New Siblands has an outdoor learning space which may be shared with a partner class. Both sites also have a larger designated outdoor learning/forest skills area where classes have timetabled activities.



In addition a residential at an outdoor activities centre is offered in KS3 and pupils in KS4 & KS5 can undertake the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme.

## Inclusion

All learners at New Siblands have the opportunity to access inclusion activities. An inclusion activity is one which allows them to work in a new context and / or with peers or learners of a different age that they wouldn't usually work with. Activities are pitched with an appropriate level of challenge for the learner(s) in order to ensure a positive experience.

Inclusion activities are highly motivating and engaging for our learners and frequently allow them to demonstrate application and generalisation of skills that they have been developing in their familiar classroom context.

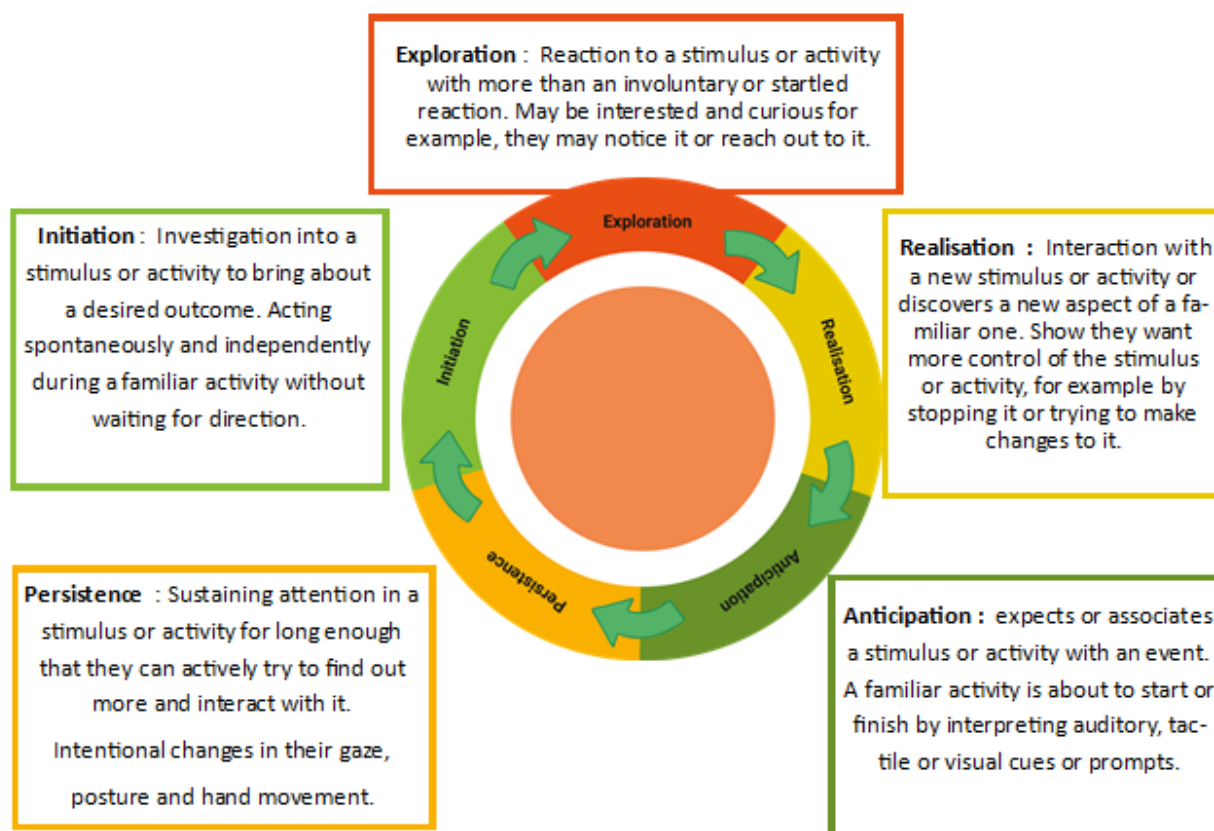
The range of inclusion activities includes working in another class at New Siblands; working with a group from a different school; work experience; taking part in community activities such as Thornbury Carnival. Inclusion may be delivered to individual learners or groups.

## Engagement for learning / personalisation

*‘Without engagement there is no deep learning, effective teaching, meaningful outcome, real attainment or quality progress’*

*(Carpenter 2010)*

Five areas of engagement are used by teachers to assess pupils’ engagement in developing new skills, knowledge and concepts in the school’s curriculum by demonstrating how pupils are achieving specific outcomes.



## Independence

Developing independence is vital for New Siblands learners. Being as independent as they possibly can enables them to express their needs, preferences and abilities, and to fully prepare for adult life. Opportunities to develop independence skills are embedded in all areas of the curriculum. Independence skills are acquired and practiced in the safety of familiar classroom environments, and extended through the wider curriculum and through inclusion and enrichment activities. The Preparation for Adulthood curriculum for learners aged 16-19 requires the application of all previously learnt skills for independence, as learners prepare for their transition from New Siblands to their next setting.



## **Learning environments**

The learning environments at New Siblands are set up to maximise learning opportunities and independence for all of our pupils. Classrooms have a main room and a workroom that can be set up to balance the needs of different learners with a group that may contain both highly sensory learners and learners that require a low-stimulus environment. In cases where a sensory environment is over-stimulating we recommend that a lower stimulation environment forms the basis for the room and high sensory resources are easily available for learners that need them.

Learning environments are also those outside of the classroom, such as the outdoor learning areas and playgrounds. Both sites have a sensory studio which can be used to create a highly sensory environment. White classroom is a small room on the primary site which is very low sensory and is used for individual interventions. The local community is a wider learning environment that will also be accessed by our learners.

## **Transitions**

Transitions between environments or activities can be very challenging for our learners. They are supported in the same way across the school using visuals, timers and verbal prompts from adults. Each class has a visual timetable for the whole group on display. Many learners have a 'now and next' board to support their understanding of what is going to happen and to prepare them for it.

When learners join New Siblands both they and their families are given an induction booklet and invited into the school so that useful information can be shared. If a new learner needs an individual programme of transition, this is arranged for them, according to their need.

Similarly there are programmes put in place for transitions to new classes and across sites.

P16 learners are well prepared for their transition to a new setting through the curriculum content. An independent transitions advisor begins to support families from Y9. Every year there is a transitions fair in the autumn term, attended by local providers, to support learners and their families to understand the options available to them.

## Curriculum Impact

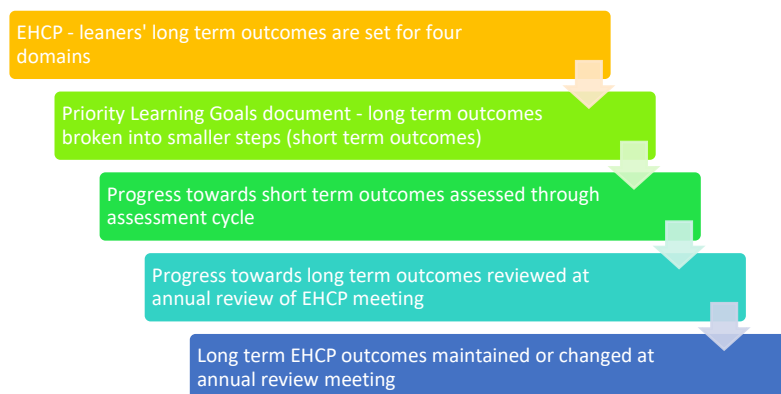
### Assessment for Learning

Assessment for Learning is the way that we ensure our learners can understand what they are doing well and what they need to next to make progress. All learners' successes are celebrated in order to develop their confidence for learning and willingness to undertake more challenging learning.

Learners are given instant feedback in a way that is accessible for their level of cognition. This might be a reward, such as bubbles, a high five, or verbal feedback in simple language, e.g. 'good listening'.

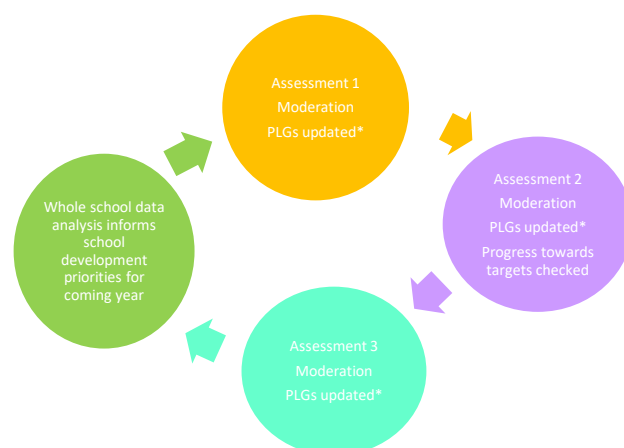
### Assessment

Each learner has priority learning goals (PLGs) on the app which break down the agreed long term outcomes for each EHCP domain into smaller steps.



Three times a year there are assessment points. At each assessment point, interventions may be reviewed to ensure they are effective in supporting progress. Moderation of assessments take place both internally and externally at these points.

Whole school data is analysed by the school leadership team at the end of each year and informs priorities for the following year.



\*If EHCP outcome is met, new long term outcomes are added at the next annual review meeting

## **Curriculum review**

The needs of learners at New Siblands are constantly changing. The curriculum is therefore intentionally flexible or 'dynamic' in order that we can constantly adapt in order to meet these needs. The content must be relevant and if a learner cannot learn from the way we teach, we will change this so that they can. Professor Barry Carpenter describes this as 'bringing the curriculum to the child'.

In order to keep our curriculum under review school leaders get feedback from teachers and class teams to review how well it is meeting needs. We evaluate progress data, behaviour records, case studies, feedback from families, reports from therapists or other external professionals and information from EHCP annual review meetings. Research and evidence based initiatives may also inform the way we develop our practice.

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**New Siblands School would like to acknowledge and thank the following schools who have supported us to develop aspects of our curriculum.**

Brays School

Brookfields School

Fountaindale School

Linwood School

Red Oaks Primary School

Saxon Hill Academy

Vale of Evesham School