



**Explorers PMLD Curriculum (Primary)  
Cycle – Year 1 – Primary year N - Y4**

**Curriculum Map: 2025-26**

The pre-formal EQUALS curriculum pathway reflects the complex range and diverse needs that our children and young people encounter. This approach provides an overview as to empower teaching staff to develop a very personalised curriculum that integrates each young person’s medical, physical, emotional and educational needs. Every child and young person’s journey are unique to them. Planning is tailored to the young person to ensure that care and education is interwoven throughout their day. Staff work closely with families and professionals involved directly with the individual, ensuring consistency and making sure all their needs are met.

Our class environment is inclusive, responsive, flexible, creative, fun and nurturing. We celebrate all small step progress and recognise that every small achievement is meaningful.

We use key frameworks to inform and shape our teaching alongside staff observations, EHCP and PLG targets.

- Cherry Garden Branches on EFL - Child-centred and non-linear, allowing for flexible, individualized learning and showing lateral progress.
- Routes for Learning: Supports planning for individuals with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), focusing on communication, cognition, and social interaction.
- The Engagement Model: Helps assess progress through five areas—initiation, persistence, anticipation, exploration, and realisation—highlighting how young people engage with their environment and experiences to inform teacher planning.

Year 1	Autumn	Spring	Summer
Topic	Toys	Spring and Growth	Creatures Great and Small
Communication and Interaction	<p>Communication and Interaction are focused on personalised learning, directly informed by the individual’s EHCP outcomes and broken down into Personal Learning Goals (PLGs). Communication skill development is interwoven throughout all activities and daily routines. We adopt a Total Communication Approach, where all forms of communication are recognised, supported, and celebrated. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Body language, eye contact, facial expressions, gesture, and pointing</li> <li>• Vocalisations and Intensive Interaction</li> <li>• Signing systems such as BSL and Makaton</li> <li>• TaSSeLs and Canaan Barrie (Body Signing)</li> <li>• Use of pictures, photographs, symbols, and AAC (e.g. switches, talk pads, PECs, core boards)</li> <li>• Choice making, music, object cues, and objects of reference</li> </ul> <p>All students are supported to develop their understanding of what is happening now and next, to engage with those around them, and to make meaningful choices.</p>		

We embed the fundamentals of Intensive Interaction throughout the day, celebrating and valuing each child and young person's unique communication style.

Our activities include:

- Sensory Stories
- Story Massage
- Tacpac
- Attention Autism

These are repeated weekly over a term to allow students to become familiar with the sessions and to develop key communication skills such as sensory awareness, sequencing, turn-taking, anticipation, language comprehension, interaction, signalling, memory, and vocalisation.

Our circle time greeting and morning sessions provide opportunities to:

- Respond to others
- Practise turn-taking and greetings using specific AAC
- Develop an understanding of sequencing and daily routines using object timetable cards or individual objects of reference

Each student has a communication profile aligned with their SALT/SCARC targets and advice, supporting the development of:

- Expressive language skills
- Requesting
- Choice-making
- Social communication

Communication and Interaction are not confined to just these specific sessions—they are embedded in every aspect of the day.

### Cognition and Learning

Our approach to cognition and learning is rooted in personalised learning, directly informed by each individual's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) outcomes. These outcomes are broken down into Personal Learning Goals (PLGs), which guide all activities and routines. Cognitive skill development is interwoven throughout the day, ensuring that learning is meaningful and embedded in real experiences.

Play is recognised as a vital cognitive process, especially for children with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD). While their play skills may be limited, play remains central to their learning experiences.

Our Learning Environment Promotes:

- Play-based exploration: Children and young people explore and make sense of their environment in personally meaningful ways.
- Recognition and response to stimuli
- Understanding cause and effect
- Memory building through repetition
- Shared attention and turn-taking

We embrace Lilli Nielsen's Active Learning approach, which promotes the development of early play skills by creating a sensory-rich environment that encourages interaction and discovery. This includes:

- Tactile, auditory, and visual feedback
- Freedom to explore without hand-over-hand guidance

- Safe, stimulating spaces where children can initiate learning independently

We believe that children learn best when they are free to explore and engage with their environment in ways that are meaningful to them.

We Focus on the Following Key Areas of Cognitive Development:

- Problem Solving and Curiosity: Encouraging children to investigate, experiment, and find solutions.
- Memory and Attention: Building memory through repetition and fostering sustained attention.
- Concept Formation: Supporting understanding of abstract concepts such as size, shape, texture, and spatial relationships.
- Language and Communication Links: Promoting engagement with the environment through vocalisations, gestures, and interactions that lay the foundation for expressive and receptive communication.

Our Activities Include:

- Sensory exploration such as messy play, sensory art, and sensory cooking
- Sensology
- Technology including cause-and-effect software, toys, and switch skills
- Interactive music, number songs, rhymes, and music therapy
- Discovery boxes and curiosity bags
- Sensory room and sensory exploration

Cognition and Learning are not confined to just these specific sessions—they are embedded in every aspect of the day.

**Social, emotional and Mental Health**

Our approach to SEMH is holistic and individualised, grounded in EHCP outcomes and Personal Learning Goals (PLGs). We focus on the whole child or young person, including their emotional wellbeing, sensory needs, and communication. This is delivered through relationship-based practice and experience-led, exploratory learning.

Our RSE curriculum focuses on relationships, building trust and emotional safety. We support the development of:

- Joint attention, turn-taking, and shared joy
- Recognition of familiar people and forming attachments
- Understanding social routines through objects of reference, photos, or sensory cues

We support health through:

- Understanding personal care routines (e.g. toileting, dressing, hygiene)
- Learning about body awareness and safe touch
- Promoting healthy eating, hydration, and physical activity through sensory cooking, movement, and hydrotherapy

Emotional wellbeing is supported through:

- Positive relationships
- Feeling safe
- Having needs met in a nurturing environment

We develop social interaction through:

- Intensive Interaction
- Sensory stories and play
- Group activities and community visits

Mental health is promoted by:

- Recognising and responding to emotional cues (e.g. facial expressions, vocalisations)
- Providing calming sensory experiences (e.g. massage, music, hydrotherapy)
- Supporting self-regulation through routines and sensory circuits
- Building emotional resilience and connection

All learning is embedded in real-life experiences, play, and sensory exploration. We encourage:

- Emotional expression
- Self-regulation
- Social connection
- Engagement, curiosity, and joy in learning

We value trust as the foundation of all relationships and support our young people to develop positive relationships through Intensive Interaction, which helps build communication and emotional connections. We also foster social relationships through community-based experiences.

Our Activities Include:

- Sensory stories – to develop emotional connections, build trust and emotional safety, and create shared joy
- Musical experiences – to support emotional expression, co-regulation, and turn-taking
- Sensory experiences – including body awareness, Tacpac, and sensory circuits to support emotional control and self-regulation
- Messy play – focusing on exploration, emotional release, and tactile engagement
- Outdoor learning – for sensory stimulation, emotional wellbeing, and curiosity
- Body awareness activities – to support calm, emotional regulation, and stress reduction
- Choice-making skills – to promote autonomy and decision-making
- Independence skills – including lunch routines, eating and drinking skills, personal care, and dressing skills. These support key life skills, body awareness, and understanding of body parts and intimate care routines
- Parachute games – to develop joint play and turn-taking

Social, emotional and mental health skills are not confined to just these specific sessions—they are embedded in every aspect of the day.

## Sensory and Physical

Physical and sensory development is embedded in every aspect of daily life through routine, play, and sensory experiences. As with all areas of our curriculum, we focus on process-based learning, where even the slightest movement is recognised as a form of communication and exploration—not just a means to an end. This approach is rooted in personalised learning, guided by EHCP and PLG targets.

We work closely with both Physiotherapy and Occupational Health teams to implement a 24-hour postural support programme, ensuring our young people are regularly repositioned using a variety of specialist equipment. These positional changes are integrated into personalised timetables, alongside physiotherapy programmes, stretches, and time out of equipment for independent movement or movement to music sessions. These opportunities allow children and young people to experience free movement, develop muscle memory, gain a deeper sense of their own bodies, and enjoy freedom from the restrictions of postural equipment.

During these times, 'Active Learning' (Nielson) activities and strategies are used to promote both gross and fine motor movements such as reaching, striking, grasp and release. We encourage active participation, where young people are active initiators, not passive recipients. Physical movement is central to exploration and learning. In both the classroom and outdoor learning environments, we provide developmentally appropriate activities designed to encourage spontaneous movement, exploration, and interaction.

Sensory learning is used to engage our young people across all our senses. We recognise that many of our learners have sensory impairments or require a higher degree of sensory input to regulate and engage. Using the Engagement Model—exploration, realisation, anticipation, persistence, and initiation—we observe and provide sensory activities designed to help children and young people build their awareness, communication, and interaction skills through sensory materials and opportunities.

There are opportunities within every activity and routine for sensory learning and communication development. Through consistent and responsive staff, our young people build trust, anticipation, and understanding, which supports the development of their skills. We revisit the same sensory activities over extended periods to build recognition, anticipation, and realisation skills—supporting memory, confidence, and deeper engagement.

Our Activities Include:

- Body Awareness and Movement Programmes, such as: Holistic Movement for Children and Knill Body Awareness
- Waveney Gym: A safe, soft environment where rebound therapy skills are developed using trampolines.
- Hydrotherapy: Individualised physiotherapy exercises delivered in warm water.
- 24-Hour Postural Support Plans, including:
  - Positioning, seating, and mobility aids such as the Acheeva bed.
  - Equipment like standing frames, walkers, therapy wedges, sideliners, and therapy balls to promote upright posture and core strength.
- Fine Motor Skill Development through:
  - Massage stories, messy play, sensory cooking, and sensory art.
  - Dance massage and story massage.
- Movement to Music Programmes and Special Yoga
- Motor Activity Training Programme (PE)

- Outdoor Play Equipment, including:
  - Wheelchair swings and wheelchair-accessible trampolines.
  - Daily Routines that support cooperation and independence in Feeding, dressing, and personal care.

Physical and sensory learning skills are interwoven across all areas of learning, supporting communication, cognition and learning, emotional regulation, social and emotional needs, mental health, and independence.

