



# Paternoster School

## Teaching Guide for the yellow pathway 2022-23

*'Small school. Big opportunities'*



## Teaching Guide for the Yellow Curriculum

### Introduction

Paternoster School Yellow Curriculum is designed to provide an appropriate and stimulating education for pupils who have,

*'Profound and multiple learning difficulties as well as complex learning needs. In addition to very severe learning difficulties, pupils have other significant difficulties, such as physical disabilities, sensory impairment, or a severe medical condition. Pupils require a high level of adult support, both for their learning needs and for their personal care. They are likely to need sensory stimulation and a curriculum broken down into very small steps. Some pupils communicate by gesture, eye pointing or symbols, others by very simple language. Their attainments are likely to remain in the (former) early P scale range (P1-P4) throughout their school careers (that is below ARE Year 1 of the National Curriculum)'.*

*The Salt Review 2010*

Routes for Learning (2006) further states

*'That the inter-relationship of these disabilities increases the complexity of need, in turn affecting all areas of learning'.*

The terms PMLD and CN are also used to include pupils who may not appear to have profound learning difficulties. These are pupils who may be ambulant and possibly have well established self-care skills in being able, for example, to feed themselves and at least partly dress themselves. They are likely to have a simple understanding of cause and effect and may even have attained at least partial contingency awareness. These pupils may have additional learning difficulties such as autism but will not generally have the physical and multiple disabilities which Jean Ware described as the 'M' in PMLD/CN (Ware, 2003). Nonetheless, the intellectual and cognitive impairments of this group will restrict their development to around P4 and below although some may well achieve slightly above this mark.

This curriculum document recognises that children, young people, and adults with PMLD/CN have unique abilities and ways of learning.

Routes for Learning (2006) states that

*"whilst (pupils with PMLD/CN have an entitlement to a curriculum and assessment framework which is fit for purpose and meets their specific needs, there is little benefit.....if they are included in structures which fail to do this".*

We understand this to mean that for those who are likely to remain within developmentally early intellectual parameters for the whole of their school lives, (that is, in the main at or below former P3(ii) of the National Curriculum, though some may achieve as high as P4/5 especially in PSHE areas), the National Curriculum on its own, or even as the basis for a curriculum document, may have limited benefit.

Barry Carpenter is persuasive in his argument that the burning question for teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is how to engage learners, and that this process of engagement must be at the heart of any curriculum development (Carpenter, 2010). For those with PMLD/CN, learning is best done when every moment and situation is regarded as a learning opportunity (Routes for Learning, 2006). It could be argued for example, that necessities like toileting and feeding directly impinge upon the school's ability to educate, since doing it efficiently, safely and with care and consideration, takes up so much of the school day. Yet these are precisely the areas of learning which challenge us to use learning time effectively and this document attempts to do so (see for example under 'Routines' below).

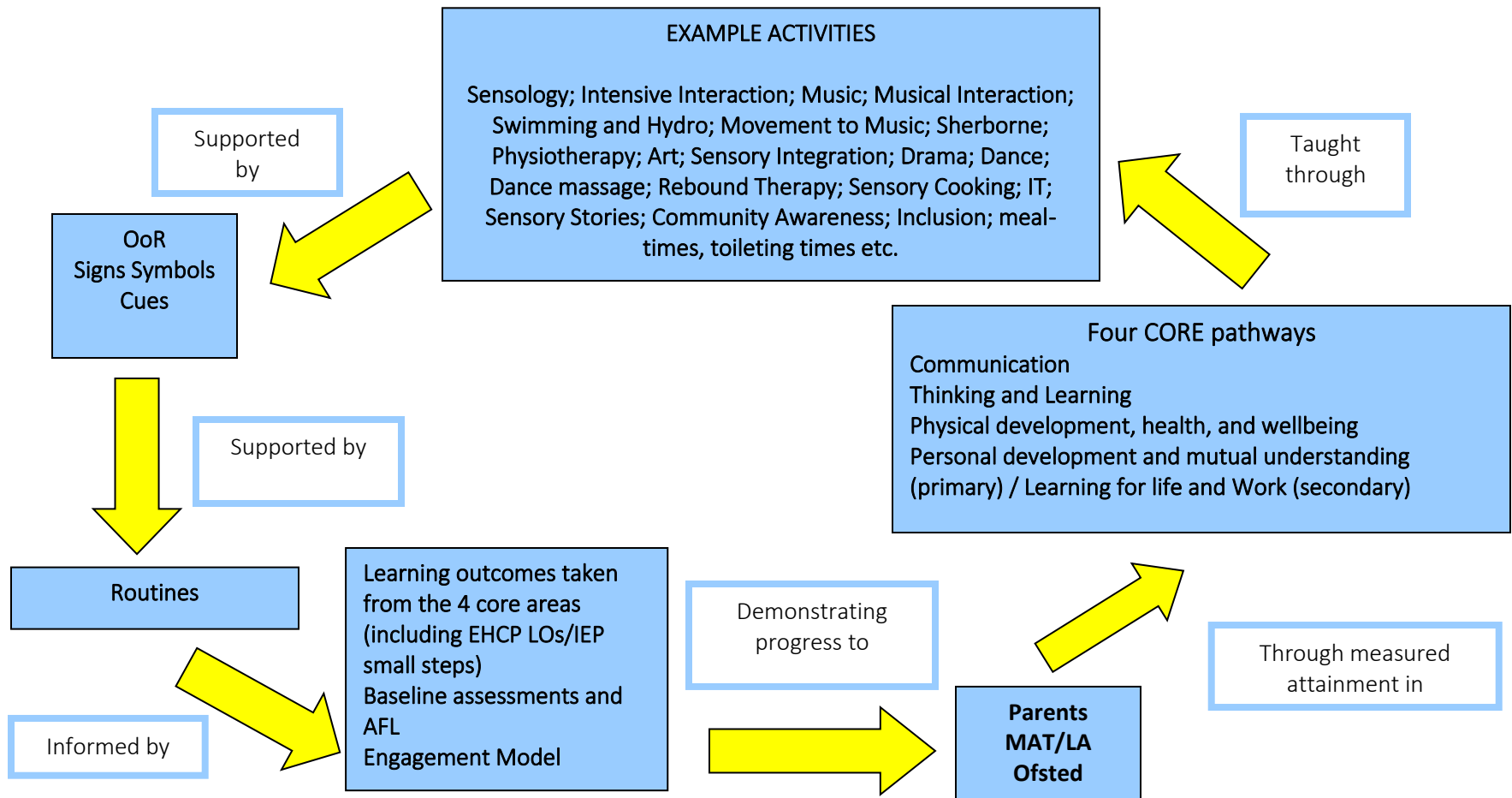
Our Yellow Curriculum is broad, balanced, and appropriate to the needs of the child. It recognises how our pupils learn by supporting and developing their strengths and abilities and focuses on developing the learner's understanding of the world around him/her, and of social interactions and relationships. It is delivered in a wholly integrated manner, incorporating learning, therapy and health needs and many opportunities to practice and achieve these learning goals are offered in a wide range of settings. We recognise and understand that factors such as the time of day, comfort, environment, or choice of positioning may affect a pupil's ability to concentrate and therefore learn.

### Philosophy

Paternoster School believes that how we are (as adults and essential facilitators in learning) directly affects how our pupils are and how well they learn. We must, therefore, all always take individual responsibility for being and remaining positive with our learners.

- Learners are a priority. Have high expectations and be sensitive to the learners' likes and dislikes, preferences and needs. One learner may have a visual impairment (VI) and will need support through different channels such as touch and sound. Another learner may be tactile defensive and have a hearing impairment (HI) needing support through visual and/or olfactory channels. Take time to get to know the learners, actively involve them in discussions and plan appropriate support.
- All learners are treated as intentional communicators. Any attempts at communication (vocalising, eye contact, gestures, shiver, cough, laugh etc.) are responded to either by verbalising, commenting on what has happened or copying sounds. The fundamental principles of Intensive Interaction (Hewett and Nind, 1998; Nind and Hewett, 2001; Nind and Hewett 2005) should be used throughout the day with all learners as a matter of course and as a 'way of being'. Be anticipatory; be positive – projecting a feeling of happiness; be calm; be aware of the learner's moods and feelings; use pauses; follow the learner's lead; give control to the learner wherever you can; give eye contact; smile; vocalise along with the student or in turn taking, mirror bodily movements.
- Greet learners in the same way each time you greet them – keep your voice (tone, cadence) smell (scent, aftershave), touch (where you touch, how much pressure) etc. consistent; thus helping to ground the learner in familiar and comfortable relational experiences.
- Keep learners informed about what is happening in their day and daily routines as they happen. Learners are not just passive but should be encouraged to participate in and know as much about their own routines as you do.
- Keep language simple but do not assume the learner cannot understand what you are saying and doing. Language must of course be used with developmentally early learners, but should be used carefully, in moderation, at the appropriate level for each pupil and for the situation. It should also be used repetitively so that pupils have many opportunities to understand meanings in real and concrete ways. Possible ways of doing this are:
  - (i) Keep talking in class to a minimum and in relation to the lesson. Social chat between adults should be limited to mealtimes and coffee breaks, but the learners should be included. Humans have sympathetic nervous systems and can pick up on the emotions and feelings of those around them. The students will feel the staff members' excitement and feel part of a group.
  - (ii) Using words selectively like we would use signs and symbols with the more able. Use only the key words in a sentence so that *'We're going to do some painting now and I want everyone to sit round the table and concentrate on the sensory feel of the paint, the primary colours and the effect they have on each other when mixed'* becomes *'Now we're going to paint.....wet.....dry.....red.....yellow.....orange.'*
  - (iii) Using repeat phrases for stock occasions such as those noted in the *Routines* section below. It doesn't matter what these are as long as they are adopted by everyone
  - (iv) Supporting key words with personal Objects of Reference, signing if possible and symbols if appropriate to the developmental level of the pupil
  - (v) Using call and response as a language teaching tool in drama, storytelling and poetry (see below)

# Paternoster School Yellow Curriculum Map



## Four Core Pathways

<b>Yellow Curriculum</b>			
By the time the pupils leave our school they will be able to communicate their wishes, needs and thoughts simply and effectively and will be self-fulfilled in a cared for environment. They will be valued and purposeful members of the local and wider community.			
<b>Communication</b>	<b>Thinking and Learning</b>	<b>Physical development, health, and wellbeing</b>	<b>Personal development and mutual understanding (primary)</b>  <b>Learning for life and work (secondary)</b>
Communication, Language, and Interaction	Maths English (early reading and writing)	PD PSHE/RSE	PSHE/RSE RE

- Curriculum content is derived from our four core pathways (above), which are both highly interrelated and dependent on each other, as well as pupils’ individual EHCP Learning Outcomes and IEP small steps. All subject areas, activities and learning experiences (including foundation subjects) are delivered through these four pathways.
- Learning takes place through experiences and activities that are planned around the robust assessment of pupils’ needs in these areas and can be linked, where appropriate, to the school’s annual topics. There is not a definitive list of activities and teachers are free to choose which activities they want to teach and how they want to teach them. A weekly timetable would contain a suitable mix of activities. In practice much of the teaching (especially 1:1 teaching) will be carried out by our learning partners (LPs) and all references to teachers encompasses, for this section at least, all those who teach learners i.e. both teachers and learning partners.
- All pupils following the Yellow Curriculum have a Happiness Profile, which grows with them through their journey at Paternoster School and is a complete overview of the pupil. Parents and therapists contribute to this document.

## How activities are taught

Teachers must ensure that the curriculum on offer to each learner is broad and balanced and covers all core areas. All activities will be taught to accommodate either Skills Based or Process Based Learning.

**Skills Based Learning** recognises that certain skills need to be acquired by much practice. A footballer will hone the skill of taking penalties by constant and repetitive practice. It is not necessary for this practice to take place within the context of a complete game of football, just as it is not necessary for a pupil to eat lunch in order to practice holding a spoon. The skill can be transferred to the relevant situations once it has been acquired, or even partially acquired in the case of the PMLD/CN pupil. Skills Based Learning will be assessed by using targets which should be achievable within one term. It is important, therefore, that teachers have clear and realistic individual learning outcomes. Skills Based Learning may cover eating and drinking; noticing stimuli; responding consistently to one stimulus; contingency responding; contingency awareness; tracking; object permanence; selecting from two or more items. Skills Based Learning should only be practiced (with those with a PMLD/CN) when the class can give one to one teaching and learning opportunities.

**Process Based Learning** (Collis and Lacey, 1996; Hewett and Nind, 1998; Nind and Hewett, 2001; Hewett, 2006) is a holistic approach which can be defined as the process of the teaching becoming the objective. Learning is taken as a whole rather than through teaching to specific individualised targets. Intensive Interaction (Nind and Hewett, 2001) is perhaps the best example of Process Based Learning where ‘tasklessness’ is at the centre of the interactive process. Interactors are urged to follow, celebrate, and extend; ‘tune in’ to the learner and look for communication moments; creating the communicative flow being the objective of the session. Although the teacher may prompt and try different strategies to elicit progress it is not up to the teacher to decide specific targets. The learner decides where the interactive process will go; the pace and direction of learning, and therefore the pace and direction of teaching will be decided by the learner. The assumption of Process Based Learning provides a platform for varied and disparate learning to take place, and individual progression may only be recognised in retrospect, at the end of each session, week, half-term, term and/or year. (Ware, 2003; Imray, 2005; Hewett, 2006; Aird, 2009; Lacey, 2009; Carpenter, 2010).

## **Activities**

The purpose of this section is to give a brief outline of each of the suggested activities which teachers may timetable as regular weekly events. This is not a definitive list of activities, however, and is a work in progress; new activities will be added as ideas develop. Computing is, of course, integral to our PMLD/CN curriculum and will be taught through many of the activities. As previously stated, this is not prescriptive and we are not directing teachers to teach all the activities suggested, though there is an expectation that many of them will be covered. All these activities assume that learning will primarily be Process Based in nature.

## **Sensology**

Sensology is the work of Flo Longhorn and Richard Hirstwood. It embraces the importance of the theory of early learning through sensory stimulation, sensory experiences and multi-sensory environments. At its most simplest, Sensology is sensory stimulation or ‘practising with the senses’ (Hirstwood 2005). ‘**The Sensology Workout – waking up the senses**’ by Flo Longhorn is an invaluable and clear guide to implementing this sensory education.

## **Communication**

For pupils with PMLD/CN, communication forms the basis of all activities. Pupils are baselined on our Communication Pathway and learning outcomes are set, which are worked on in most learning activities.

**SULP/Language Group:** SULP aims to provide a ‘cohesive framework within which to develop children’s interpersonal and social abilities from a communication and thinking perspective.... it provides a series of multisensory activities that enable learning to build gradually from comprehension to use’ (Rinaldi 2009)

SULP focuses on eye contact, listening, turn taking, prosody (rate and volume) and proxemics (awareness of personal space) and *Self/Other Awareness*: you and your body, interests and friendships, self-esteem- strengths and weaknesses. The group should be based on and reflect the needs of the pupils. The group should follow a set format and focus on encouraging the following types of skills: recognising and responding to adults, turn taking, initiating contact, imitation, and social interaction through a variety of different activities and games.

## **Sensory stories**

On a general level, sensory stories are excellent vehicles for delivering whole school or class thematic topics in an interesting, exciting and wholly developmentally sympathetic manner.

The 10 essential elements of a story can be taken as:-

1. Give it a beginning – introduce the story by ‘sitting up straight’, ‘looking and listening’, ‘once upon a time’ for younger learners, story chairs or cushions to indicate the speaker, an object of reference and/or a musical cue for the story.
2. It should have relevance to the participants.
3. Use repetition – you just cannot get enough!! Use repetition in the story itself through a strap line that’s repeated at regular intervals, rather like a short chorus in a song.
4. Keep the actual story/episode short – and therefore easily remembered – though the telling of it may take half an hour or so, by the time you’ve introduced props and time for each learner to be actively involved in the story.
5. Use all and every means of communication – signing, speaking, action, facial expression and props – but remember that the best storytellers primarily use their voices to paint the pictures.

6. Use language selectively. You may use difficult language, but only if it has relevance to the story. So you could make a sensory story from *The Tempest* and use the original Shakespeare as it has that wonderful rhythmic quality which makes poetry such a good base. Use call and response to bring out the rhythm.
7. Introduce sequences of dramatic events and make it exactly the same every week in order to encourage anticipation of events.
8. Make it exciting and dynamic. Give it emotional content with at least one major high point in the story.
9. Give it an ending.
10. Build in (and allow) as much audience participation as possible.

Once devised, the same story should be repeated weekly for at least half a term (and probably longer) so that learners have a real opportunity to become familiar with it and so practice their sequencing, turn taking, anticipatory and memory skills – all essential base elements of communication. There is no reason why secondary aged students should not be involved in sensory stories. There are some wonderfully gory, disgusting, and rude stories available e.g., Pete Wells' poems which are free on his website.

### **Intensive Interaction**

Intensive interaction is supported by some or all of Music, Swimming and Hydrotherapy, Cooking, Sensory Stories, Massage, Art, Sensory Integration, Switching Skills, Drama, Dance, Movement and Physiotherapy, Rebound Therapy and Community Awareness. At its best Intensive Interaction is done all the time as a matter of course, but to get to that state it is advisable to give it at least one regular weekly slot on the timetable for all PMLD/CN groups, and perhaps as often as once a day for the younger groups.

Melanie Nind and Dave Hewett have written several books on the subject, perhaps the easiest read being Nind M. and Hewett D. (2001) **A Practical Guide to Intensive Interaction**. Even easier is Dave Hewett's DVD (obtainable from [www.intensiveinteraction.co.uk](http://www.intensiveinteraction.co.uk)) which is excellent, concise, and detailed.

### **Sensory Cookery**

This is another classic process-based activity that allows an infinite variety of sensory exploration and experience for pupils with PMLD/CN. For those wishing to equate traditional National Curriculum subjects to this document, cookery is a fantastic vehicle for mathematical thinking and scientific exploration. Depending on the cognitive abilities of the learner, just the process of baking a cake covers areas like size, quantity, position, measurement, weight, structure of properties, temperature, sequencing, cause and effect, estimation, counting, addition and subtraction, fractions, division etc. The state of the finished cake is neither here nor there – this is process based teaching and learning rather than objectives (skills) based teaching and learning - of course we can always buy a cake to eat at the end of the lesson!

### **Music and Music Therapy**

Music is a fantastic medium for motivating learners of all abilities, especially if we get away from the idea of conventional tunes and allow, encourage, facilitate our PMLD/CN learners to make musical notes for themselves, especially using music technology along the lines of *Drake Music*. It really doesn't matter what order the notes are in as long as the learner is playing because they want to, rather than because they are being made to by hand over hand holding of a drum stick or other beater. Nor do teachers need to be able to play an instrument (though of course it helps if you can) since the musical playing should be done by the learners rather than us.

Music can allow our learners to:

- have fun and to develop an inner satisfaction at communicating effectively
- tolerate the closeness of another person
- enjoy being with another person
- initiate and maintain social interaction
- develop and understand early communication, such as meaningful eye contact, body language, facial expression, anticipation and turn-taking exchanges
- develop sound production and vocal imitation skills
- explore and understand the given physical environment
- develop and refine an understanding of cause and effect, both socially (how their behaviour affects others) and physically (how their behaviour affects the environment)

- develop physical imitation skills
- develop extended 'conversation' using a combination of the above skills, together with any language the learner might possess, meaningful or otherwise
- develop self-esteem from knowing that the person interacting with them is also enjoying the interaction i.e. they want to be there
- develop a sense of their own feelings and emotions.

## Music Interaction

This is strongly based on the principles of Intensive Interaction and has been primarily developed by Wendy Prevezer (2000) and Margaret Corke (2002). Corke (2002) argues convincingly that a voluntary, active input from the learner is absolutely essential for growth and learning to take place. We therefore need to move away from the traditional music sessions where only conventional tunes are played and move towards sessions where we use music to teach interactive and communicative skills.

They argue the following:

- that it allows and encourages valid musical experiences
- it allows and encourages personal interactions
- it is a motivational communicative tool
- it is suitable for all learners (PMLD/CN, SLD or ASD) who are at the earlier stages of communicative development
- it does not require musical ability on the part of the teacher and is a lot of fun

Musical Interaction requires:

- **Us** – through face, body language and voice;
- **Social interaction games** – such as burst-pause; anticipation games; rough and tumble; give and take; physical activities (clapping, tickling, rocking, rowing, peek-a-boo, hide and seek, throwing things backward and forward);
- **Music** – anything which makes sounds, including voices;
- **Structure to the lesson** – all round in a circle; a musical introduction; an (age appropriate) hello song; time for small group and peer interactions; time for one to one interactions; an (age appropriate) good-bye song.

## Movement and Physiotherapy; Swimming and Hydrotherapy

Formal sessions of both physio and hydro will clearly need the input of the Physiotherapy department, but there is much that we can do in the classroom, especially if we encourage the physios to give us practical and do-able programmes for each learner who needs one. It is an unfortunate fact that physiotherapists skilled in PMLD/CN are in very short supply and we therefore need to work in close partnership with those that we have.

## Positional Changes

The least that should happen is for two positional changes to be built into the timetable each day for those in wheelchairs. It makes sense to make this a fun time by perhaps singing a 'stretching song' call and responding a 'stretching poem' or using it as an opportunity for a more Yellow Intensive Interaction session.

Besides stretching and moving positions, pupils should also use their standing frames and walkers where appropriate.

## Movement to music sessions

These are an excellent way of building muscle memory and improving both gross and fine motor control. At its simplest this might take the form of an aerobics session where a particular piece of music e.g. 'Bonkers' by Dizze Rascal - indicates a particular movement – say rocking back and forth or swinging arms from side to side. At first this movement would need to be very heavily physically supported by an adult and indeed there may be an element of considerable resistance which the adult would need to be sympathetic to. Over time however, we would be looking for a deeper understanding of what might be required, less resistance, moving towards passive co-operation, to active co-operation, to independent movement. This area relies heavily on the work carried out by Chris Knill in the 1980's and 1990's (Knill, 1992) and is currently supported by Holistic Music for Children. This latter programme covers the four areas of body awareness, moving sounds, discovery, and singing and learning; details being available at [www.holisticmusicforchildren.co.uk](http://www.holisticmusicforchildren.co.uk)



## Massage

Pupils with PMLD/CN are likely to have limited awareness of their own bodies. They may not know how their body parts are connected (our proprioceptive sense) and may not know where their bodies are in relation to the space around them (our vestibular sense). These two kinaesthetic senses need to be worked on as much as the conventional five and massage can be an excellent focus.

Massage sessions might

- concentrate on a particular area of the body per half term
- last for up to 20 minutes
- use base oils but not essential oils (which may cause sensory confusion)
- be a quiet, calming and relaxing activity.

**Proprioceptive Massage** - Bluestone (2002) - comes from the HANDLE Institute in America (the Holistic Approach to Neuro-Development and Learning Efficiency), under the direction of Judith Bluestone. She believes this approach:

1. Organises mental processing
2. Influences the body's biochemistry
3. Helps mould the actual structure of the brain.

As far as we are aware there is no independent research to confirm or deny the above claims. The process, however, makes sense for those who may find the conventional skin on skin massage challenging. Proprioception refers to the brain's unconscious sense of body in space. The brain processes information from the other senses to give an understanding of its wholeness; to determine where our bodies are in relation to the environment around us and where the various parts of the body are in relation to one another – for example, where our knees are in relation to our thighs etc. For students with damaged or incomplete sensory awareness (virtually all PMLD/CN pupils) this can be problematic and will undoubtedly need developing.

Massage of the proprioceptive sites of the body is carried out by using a small (tennis sized) soft foam ball instead of the hand, this avoiding skin on skin touch which some may find extremely problematic. Always try and remember to:-

- Work on the back of the body
- Start and finish at the top of the spine
- Apply firm and lingering pressure when you finish at the top of the spine
- Roll the ball in the same direction and apply equal pressure throughout
- Roll the ball slowly
- Talk your partner through the massage – naming body parts in simple clear language helps to reinforce body awareness
- Be sensitive to the communications of your partner

## Dance Massage

Dance massage was initiated and developed by Naomi Rosenberg, a specialist teacher of young people with hearing impairment ([www.naomirosenberg.co.uk/dance massage](http://www.naomirosenberg.co.uk/dance%20massage)). It allows pupils to experience a unique, tactile dance experience; it is an interactive, non-verbal form of communication combining the soothing, sensory experience of massage with the rhythm and energy of music.

## Sherborne Developmental Movement

This was developed by Veronica Sherborne, and was based on Laban's analysis of movement and movement qualities – this looks to extend the movement repertoire and vocabulary of learners; and explore the areas of body and spatial awareness, relationships and creativity. Those wanting to develop this very interesting work should attend specific Sherborne training.

## MOVE (Mobility Opportunities Via Education)

This is fundamentally a way of working more than anything, where concentration is given to maximising the opportunities of *all* learners to move independently at least in part and at least during some periods in each day. More information can be obtained from their website at [www.disabilitypartnership.co.uk](http://www.disabilitypartnership.co.uk)

## Rebound Therapy

This is the therapeutic use of a trampoline to develop and promote motor skills, body awareness, balance, co-ordination and communication. It is designed to accommodate pupils' individual abilities and disabilities, whilst drawing upon their previous experience and likes and dislikes. Improved health and fitness and greater independence are encouraged, whilst fun, enjoyment and the opportunity to succeed are of paramount importance. Rebound Therapy is accessible to pupils with a range of special educational needs such as specific physical difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders, learning difficulties, challenging behaviour, and/or co-ordination problems.

## Yoga

Working with PMLD/CN pupils requires finding different and innovative ways of reaching our students. Yoga (incorporating massage and relaxation) with special needs pupils is experimental and intuitive and can be adapted to meet the needs of the individual. It aims to work towards:

- improving body awareness,
- improving gross and fine motor coordination,
- increased flexibility
- strengthening of muscles
- enhancing the use of touch and smell
- improving both verbal and non-verbal communication as well as greater social communication.

Those wishing to develop this should attend special training. More information can be obtained at [www.yogawithnerissa.co.uk](http://www.yogawithnerissa.co.uk)

## Creative arts

Such activities as drama, movement, dance, music, and art are fantastic opportunities for communicating without language necessarily being the prime means. They are also first rate opportunities to practice inclusive teaching and learning across all intellectual ability ranges - see for example *Odyssey Now*, Nicola Grove and Keith Park's version of the adventures of Odysseus which manages to bring all the five areas of the creative arts noted above into one project – Grove & Park (1996).

## Art

Care needs to be taken to ensure that learners are participants rather than merely observers (of the adults making the work) or possibly worse, objects to do things to – making learners put their hands in paint in order to create a picture full of handprints for example. Like music above – we need to move away from the idea of conventional paintings, and allow, encourage, facilitate our PMLD/CN learners to make art for themselves. The key to teaching Art is that the process of undertaking the sensory experiences relating to the materials and the cognitive experiences derived from combining materials is far more important than the finished work.

## Drama

This is an excellent vehicle not only for teaching non-verbal communication – the expression of the face and the posture of the body when one is frightened for example – but also for setting this in context. Those with PMLD/CN are likely to have extremely limited opportunities to play in the sense that conventionally developing children do as a matter of course (Sherrat and Peter, 2002; Grove, 2005) and we take their understanding of non-verbal communication at our peril. Similarly, it is extremely difficult to teach language in the conventional sense to those whose language skills are cursory and usually non-existent. Overt language teaching therefore is often tokenistic and meaningless, merely causing more confusion to those who have no voice.

## Call and Response Park, 2004

This offers a real opportunity to be directly and meaningfully involved in language at a very basic level and is a very strong vehicle for inclusive work. Poems, stories and plays can be performed in a similar way, using call and response (one person calling out a line which is immediately repeated by everyone else, a method which produces a very rhythmic and powerful communicative atmosphere). The piece can be divided into short verses or sections, with possibly a 'cap line' or sound effect at the end that everyone does together. In this way the verses are easy to learn and provide an opportunity for pupils with spoken or signed language skills to lead the activities in an inclusive setting. This of course does not mean that only people

who have speech can join in these activities. There are many other ways of participating, including rocking, stamping, clapping, vocalising, using VOCAs, and merely enjoying the process of being part of the rhythm of the group.

### **Community and Integration Activities**

PMLD/CN pupils form a small but growing number of children in generic special schools. 'Fitting in' is not always easy or considered appropriate by everyone. It is, therefore, important to raise the profile of our pupils. Opportunities within school are usually around social activities, workshops etc. but wherever possible appropriate academic integration should be facilitated. Being part of the wider community should be a regular activity for all pupils and can take many different forms from a walk to the local park, shops, cafe, library etc. to joining in local clubs. Encouraging groups /individual pupils from mainstream schools to come into school to help with activities such as Sherborne Movement, Chris Knill, Tacpac etc., as well as arranging return visits by our pupils, are excellent ways of developing links within the wider community.

### **Nature Detectives: sensory learning through the seasons:**

This is an exciting and unique learning opportunity for pupils with PMLD/CN and sensory impairment to learn through what they do, through what they encounter and through what they discover. In this year long sensory project our pupils will learn about outdoor environments, themselves and each other, while also learning outdoor skills. These experiences will compound and consolidate the pupils' learning skills of enquiry, experiment, responses, reflection and cooperative learning. Activities will take place in a variety of places, including natural environments where the pupils can see, hear, touch and smell the real thing in an arena where actions have real results and consequences. All activities will be linked to department curriculum topics where appropriate.

### **TACPAC**

TACPAC combines the sense of touch and music through social interaction. It is delivered via an interaction between two people, a giver and a receiver. The session is structured and takes place in an emotionally safe environment, clear of other sensory interferences. TACPAC is hugely beneficial for children with sensory impairment, developmental delay, complex learning difficulties, tactile defensiveness, and limited or pre verbal levels of communication.

### **Multi-sensory environments**

Multi-sensory environments are designed to promote intellectual activity and to encourage relaxation. They can be used as a tool for achieving specific and measurable educational and therapeutic goals as well as a relaxing and explorative experience. A multi-sensory environment is a dedicated space or room where sensory stimulation can be controlled (intensified or reduced), presented in isolation or combination, packaged for active or passive interaction, and matched to fit the perceived motivation, interests, leisure, relaxation, therapeutic and/or educational needs of the user. They offer children with PMLD/CN the opportunity to enjoy and control a variety of sensory experiences. Limitations of movement, vision, hearing, cognitive ability, constrained space, behavioural difficulties, perception issues, pain, and other problems create obstacles to their enjoyment of life. Multi-sensory stimulation provides opportunities for bridging these barriers and can give these pupils a sense of autonomy and control.

MSE rooms may include:

- Projectors and screens including lighting effects, such as projectors with wheels that disburse light patterns throughout the room, bubble lamps, spotlights, star panels, fiber optics, UV lights, mirror balls and even Christmas lights.
- Sensory activities such as blowing bubbles, finger painting, and using play dough.
- Tactile experiences such as touching various, changing textures.
- Cause and effect items such as the use of switches to allow pupils to control items within his or her environment, and toys that provide visual effects, vibrate, make noise, or have a tactile feel.
- Soft items on the floor such as mats, pillows, or beanbags.
- Sound effects such as children's music, nature sounds, or animal sounds.
- Selected rhythmical music with a variety of tone, pitch, rhythm, and spacing can be used to soothe children.
- Tasting experiences of different flavoured drinks and foods
- Motion stimulation

## Cues

Underpinning the delivery of activities will be the extensive use of cues. These essentially fall into the category of AAC (Alternative and Augmentative Communication) and will include touch cues; sound cues; Objects of Reference (OoR); signing; symbol use and photograph cues.

### Sensory cues:

Pupils at a very early stage of development, particularly those with sensory impairments, are likely to need to start with 'sensory cues'. Some cues will be particular to individual pupils, for example singing a particular song. Other sensory cues are built into the activity e.g: the smell of lunch or the sound of the bus engine. Use natural cues wherever possible, maybe exaggerating them e.g: jingling the bus keys or knocking the spoon against the bowl, anything that may help pupils to associate that cue with what is going to happen next. Make sure the cues happen just before the activity begins so there are only a few seconds between the cue and the activity. Keep repeating your sensory 'signifier' throughout the time you are working with pupils so they can practice recognising it. Pupils need to be given a consistent routine to help them begin to learn to distinguish activities and people so eventually they can begin to learn to anticipate what is going to happen to them. For example, it might be helpful to adopt the following:

- Lifting pupils' arms before lifting them from chairs or floor
- Making an upwards or downwards movement on the pupil's body to signify being lifted or lowered in a hoist.
- Putting your hands down behind the pupil's back before pushing the wheelchair
- Staff having a sensory 'signifier' (e.g. smell, touch, vocal cue) so pupils can begin to recognise different people

See below for the most frequently used types of sensory cues:

#### 1. Tactile signing

This is used to support the early stages of communication in children with complex learning needs. It is a system of cues to aid understanding and alert the learner that something is about to happen. These cues support words that are used in daily routines and frequently occurring activities. We use the approaches proposed in the Tassels programme which include hand under hand signing and on-body signing. The adult provides the level of assistance necessary for the learner to communicate effectively and engage as fully as possible in communication exchange.

#### 2. Sound cues

These are usually pieces of music, but logically could be any sound, which can be played to indicate the start and/or end of a particular event or activity. We might play for example, *Perfect Day* (Lou Reed) as learners come into the classroom from the bus; *Scheherazade* (Rimsky-Korsakov) to indicate the start of a story-telling session; *Must I Paint You a Picture* (Billy Bragg) at the start of the art sessions etc. The piece played is not important, as long as the same piece is played every time for a short time (say 30 seconds).

#### 3. Smell cues

These operate on the same principle as sound cues, but of course they linger much longer and therefore need to be used with care. A smell for the day might however be a useful additional cue – its fish and chips so it must be Friday. Work will be undertaken by the PMLD/CN curriculum group to standardize both OoR and touch and smell cues throughout the school.

## Object Cues

From these sensory cues, pupils can begin to increase the number of cues for the different activities about to take place. These can be the objects that are part of the activity, for example, an object that is a cue for a drink should be the cup that the pupil usually uses or a child's swimming costume is given to them before they go off to their swim session. It should be offered as a cue as the drinking activity begins. It is hoped that the pupils will eventually learn to anticipate the drink by opening their mouths as the cup is presented. All routine activities should have a sensory cue of some kind. It depends on the activity as to what the cue should be, but for most pupils with PMLD/CN it is not helpful at this stage, to have lots of different cues for different activities. It may be better to have a single cue for work time with another for toilet and another for eating/ drinking. In addition, a cue for going outside could also be added, and also for any activities or places that are used regularly.

## Objects of Reference

OoRs were originally pioneered by RNIB for use for with very young VI pupils as a precursor to brail (Ockelford, 2002). The ultimate aim for using OoRs is that learners will offer them to staff independently as an indication that they would like a drink now or the toilet now. This is perhaps a long shot for most developmentally early learners, but if we don't give the option, we won't get the result. OoR are designed to be concrete representations of abstracts (words) and therefore should represent as near as possible the actual event. For some things (like lunch or drinks) this is relatively easy, but for others (such as Interaction) this is going to be very difficult, and to some degree we are going to have to go with an abstract concept. Some pupils may make symbolic use of objects of reference where the object used is representative of the activity. For example being shown (or feeling) a small red cup but actually using a larger blue cup for drinking. Pupils need to be around number 41 on the Routes for Learning (expresses preference for items not present via symbolic means) for objects of reference to make sense. Some pupils at this stage might be able to understand and use a few words or even recognise a few pictures (e.g. of themselves or their family/classmates).

We can use OoRs in two basic ways.

- a) As an introduction to every discrete teaching session on the timetable, before the session starts. This directly assists PMLD/CN learners to make sense of a world where everyone but themselves is in control. There is after all no guarantee that PMLD/CN learners can understand what we are saying. OoRs, therefore, act like a timetable and support the spoken word.
- b) As an introduction to set, routine times of every day, toileting, drinks, lunch etc. These OoR should be fixed and very accessible within the classroom, particularly for ambulant users.

## Symbols and Photographs

It is possible that most pupils with PMLD/CN will be cognitively unable to recognise symbols, but it may well be pertinent for the more able, that is those who might be considered to be border-line SLD. They are probably best used as aids to developing choice, e.g. laminating onto switches to indicate, for example, which one operates the hello switch.

## Signing

Again, it is not clear if the majority of those with PMLD/CN will understand signing, but it remains inherently good practice to sign as appropriate in school. All teachers must take responsibility for signing so that pupils can pick it up if they want to.

## Routines

Also underpinning the delivery of Activities will be the extensive use of routines, a very much under-rated and underutilised opportunity to teach and learn. The very act of going to the toilet (or more probably for someone with PMLD/CN, going to the changing area) is a real opportunity to learn provided the same routine is used every single time by all members of staff. The same time(s) of the day, utilising the same changing areas, using the same language, the same OoR, the same verbal cues (of say *1,2,3, lift*) when changing pads etc. Ensuring consistency in routines allows pupils to build upon previous learning experiences and to have many opportunities to practice and learn over their lifetime in school. Other routine times which must be consistent will be arriving at and leaving school; lunchtimes; break times; assemblies; the start and end of the day; the start and end of lessons. Cues which might help with establishing these routines might include using music, smells, touch cues, OoR etc.

## Assessment and Recording

Recording and reporting on progress is vital to the success of Process Based Learning. Class teams should record pupil progress as a session unfolds e.g. using a 'WOW' sheet or *post it notes* to record notable progress. Recording and reporting can also be aided immensely by simple use of video. It enables staff to pick up on all sorts of things they might have missed as well as provide evidence of progress for end of year reports. At the end of most teaching sessions, the whole class pause the formal teaching process to celebrate success, record specific pupil progress, pick up areas of concern, and inform the next lesson. The teaching team will reflect on what they have seen and heard, considering the lesson itself, as well as each individual learner. The success, maintenance or regress of each learner will be recorded e.g. Learner A may have tracked the

teacher for 5 seconds during a sensory story and shown excitement as it got closer to his turn to press a switch. Next time, will Learner A track for longer; at what point in the story does he start to get excited; will he get excited earlier in the story; does he show similar excitement for other parts of the story?

Assessment, at regular intervals and in the most rigorous and accurate forms possible, is an absolute necessity if we are to be certain about providing an appropriate and individualised curriculum for each learner. It informs teaching, drives the recording of progress and is key to the successful education of our learners.

Pupil progress is assessed in the following ways:

1. From September 2021, pupil progress has been assessed three times a year using the Engagement Model, as this fulfills the statutory requirements from September 2020.
2. Pupils are baselined and set learning outcomes and IEP small steps in each of the four core areas of the Yellow Curriculum (Communication, Language and Interaction, Cognition and Learning, PSHE and PD). These LOs are the same as pupils' EHCP LOs and small steps. Progress made towards these LOs is assessed each term and results are analysed individually.
3. Teachers of the Yellow Curriculum currently use progress sheets and learning journals with the MAPP maintenance continuum scales to record an individual pupil's progress towards their learning outcomes including EHCP learning outcomes, which should be achievable by the end of a key stage, broken down into small achievable steps and continuously assessed. This progress is recorded termly, and results analysed individually. The MAPP continuum scales will be used to measure the progress made by a pupil within a step.
4. All pupils following the Yellow Curriculum have a Happiness Profile, which grows with them through their journey at Paternoster School and is a complete overview of the pupil. Parents and therapists contribute to this document.

Adapted and developed from The Bridge School Short PMLD/CN Curriculum with the kind permission of Peter Imray.

A Fidderman (April 2012) Updated June 2022

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