

Non-Subject Specific Learners Curriculum Forest Way School



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Curriculum Intent

At Forest Way School, we believe that every student, regardless of their learning needs, deserves access to a rich and inclusive curriculum that prepares them for life beyond school. Our curriculum for Non-Subject Specific Learners (NSSL) is specifically designed for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) who are at the very earliest stages of development.

The NSSL curriculum is built on the four key areas of SEND: Communication and Interaction, Cognition and Learning, Physical and/or Sensory Development, and Social, Emotional and Mental Health. Additionally, we ensure that students experience Enrichment opportunities, where they have varied experiences such as trips, visits and the chance to take part in school wide events such as workshops.

Our NSSL curriculum is centred on the Engagement Model, a framework that assesses and tracks the progress of students who are not yet engaging with subject-specific learning. This model focuses on five areas of engagement, ensuring that we celebrate and build upon every step of a student's development.

Our curriculum is delivered through thematic learning to help students make meaningful connections between what they are learning, enabling them to build on their early communication, physical, personal, social, and sensory skills. (appendix 1)

Our curriculum provides the necessary support and stimulation for students with complex needs, breaking down learning into small, achievable steps and recognizing the vital role of gestures, symbols, and simple language in communication.

The aim of the NSSL curriculum is to support students to be safe, happy, and able to communicate at their own level. We strive to help them reach their full potential and be ready for life beyond school.

Definition of Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties

‘Children and adults with PMLD have more than one disability, the most significant of which is a profound intellectual disability. These individuals all have great difficulty communicating, often requiring those who know them well to interpret their responses and intent. They frequently have other, additional, disabling conditions.

Core and Essential Service Standards, 2017

Curriculum Implementation

Our NSSL curriculum focuses on holistic development, building essential skills and providing enriching experiences tailored to individual needs. Learning is underpinned by communication, interaction, switch use, motor skills (fine and gross), and sensory exploration, which are integrated across all activities.

Core Areas:

- **Communication and Interaction:** Developing receptive and expressive communication skills through various means, including Intensive Interaction where appropriate.
- **Sensory Exploration:** Engaging with the world through sensory experiences, fostering awareness and understanding.
- **Physical Development:** Enhancing gross and fine motor skills through PE, Swimming, Dance Massage, and individual Physiotherapy/Postural Management (where applicable).
- **Cognition and Learning:** Building early Science and Mathematical skills, alongside developing digital literacy through Computing and Switch work. Developing awareness and exploration; control and early problem solving; sequence and pattern, and object permanence.
- **Social, Emotional and Mental Health:** Fostering self-awareness, social skills, and emotional well-being through PSHE, RSE, Aromatherapy Massage and Relaxation.
- **Enrichment:** Suitably adapted activities linked to the areas of learning, such as trips or visitors. Including opportunities for pupils to communicate, interact, problem solve, explore, show awareness and use senses.

This curriculum is flexible and responsive to the individual needs and learning styles of each student, ensuring a stimulating and meaningful educational journey.

Although students on the NSSL curriculum are not working at subject specific level, staff may use the lesson names when completing tapestry observations so parents and the wider community can understand the context of the learning. Additionally this means subject leaders can find the related work during monitoring and evaluation. The nature of how our Non-Subject Specific Learners experience this Curriculum leads to cross-over in most areas.

Communication and Interaction

Forest Way School's communication development is centred on three key areas: Responding, Interacting, and Communicating. The goal is to help students with profound and multiple learning difficulties develop their communication skills at their own pace. Student progress in these areas can be monitored and documented within the Communication Small Steps system.

Responding

Responding is the foundational level where adults and peers are highly attuned to a student's communication attempts. This includes even the most subtle, pre-intentional actions, sounds, or movements.

Ways to support:

- **Responsive Adults:** Teachers and other adults are trained to be highly responsive to a student's communication, even if it's not fully intentional. They act like a mirror, copying sounds or movements to build a connection.
- **Student-Led:** This method allows the student to lead the interaction while the adult follows. This helps students learn to pay attention to others and extend that focus.
- **Fun and Short:** Sessions are kept short and dynamic, involving fun physical contact and vocalizations. They can be very energetic or very quiet and calm, depending on the student.

Students need opportunities to:

- React to their basic needs being met.
- Respond to social cues, like their name being called.
- Show reactions to familiar people, sounds, and objects.

Interacting

Interaction involves using structured and planned activities to help students connect with others and their surroundings.

Ways to support:

- **Tac Pac:** This is an activity that combines touch and music to create a sensory experience. A student is paired with an adult who uses specific tactile actions timed with music. This creates a predictable and safe way for the student to experience their body and their environment, building trust and communication with the adult.
- **Interaction Boxes:** The school creates themed boxes (based on seasons, feelings, etc.) filled with objects that help students make connections and have back-and-forth interactions. This is a step toward intentional communication.

Students need opportunities to:

- Engage with people.
- Show anticipation for familiar activities.
- Communicate preferences for specific people or objects.
- Use gestures, signs, symbols or voices to participate in an activity.

Communicating

Communication is the process of conveying information, ideas, feelings, or thoughts between two or more individuals. It's how we exchange meaning. This can happen in many ways, including through language, writing, symbols, gestures, and behaviour.

Receptive Communication

This is all about a student's ability to **receive and understand** information. The goal is to help them make sense of the world around them.

Ways to support:

- **Sensory Cues:** The school uses consistent routines and cues to help students anticipate what's going to happen. This can include using **Body Signs** (e.g., a specific movement for "up") or **Objects of Reference** (e.g., showing a swimming bag just before a swimming session).
- **Consistency:** Cues are given consistently and right before the activity begins, so students can link the cue to the event.

Expressive Communication

This focuses on how students **express themselves** and communicate their needs or thoughts. For learners working on the NSSL Curriculum this will often involve Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) both as high-tech devices and low-tech communication boards or PECs. This puts a lot of emphasis on always having a total communication environment with AAC easily accessible.

Ways to support:

- **Imitation:** The ability to copy sounds, words, or actions is a fundamental step. Staff support this by imitating the student, which encourages them to repeat the behaviour and learn to copy others.
- **Turn-Taking:** This is a key social and communication skill. Students are given many opportunities to practice taking turns in games and activities. The turns are kept very short at first and gradually increased to build confidence and independence.

Cognition and Learning

At Forest Way School, our curriculum for cognitive development is designed to provide a structured, progressive framework for children in the early stages of development. Our goal is to equip them with the foundational skills needed to explore and understand their environment. This is achieved through exploring early mathematics, science, and the use of assistive technology, including switches, eye-gaze systems, and AAC devices.

These core skills serve as the essential foundation for accessing broader enrichment subjects, such as humanities and the arts. We have structured our approach into four interconnected stages:

Awareness

The initial stage focuses on developing awareness, helping students to simply notice their surroundings. We begin by facilitating recognition of salient, proximal stimuli, such as a hand touching their arm or a bright light in their field of vision. This progresses to extending their focus to a wider range of stimuli, including subtle sounds and sights, and eventually, to objects and events at a greater distance. The ultimate objective is for students to achieve the ability to transfer their attention between different stimuli within a complex, stimulating classroom setting.

Exploration

Once students have developed a foundational level of awareness, we encourage active exploration of their environment through sensory engagement. We provide opportunities for them to track moving objects, attend to sounds activated from a single source, and discover the effects of their own actions. The aim of this stage is to help students, often through accidental discovery, recognize that their movements can influence the world around them, even before they grasp a specific cause-and-effect relationship.

Control and Early Problem Solving

This stage introduces the critical concept of cause and effect, transitioning students from random actions to deliberate ones. We begin with contingency responding, where a student's action leads to an effect, but the one-to-one relationship is not yet fully understood. For example, a student might repeatedly activate a switch even after the reward has already occurred. The goal is to advance to contingency awareness, where they comprehend that a single, specific action produces a single, specific response. This is a crucial milestone, particularly for students with profound and multiple learning disabilities, as it fosters a sense of agency and control. We also develop other early problem-solving skills, such as object permanence—the understanding that an object continues to exist even when it is not visible.

Sequence and Patterns

The final stage focuses on establishing an understanding of the world's predictable nature through sequences and patterns. We create opportunities for students to engage in turn-taking activities, anticipate routine events, and recognize familiar places. We teach them to solve simple problems by understanding the underlying pattern, such as placing objects into a container in a sequential manner or operating a toy that requires a series of actions. This stage helps them build the mental framework necessary for understanding routines and solving more complex problems in the future.

Sensory and Physical

Student working on the NSSL Curriculum use a range of senses to engage with their environment. While the five basic senses—sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste—are fundamental, it's also crucial to consider the vestibular system, which governs balance and head movements, and the proprioceptive system, which provides awareness of body position and movement.

When planning activities for students with PMLD, it is vital to be selective and intentional about which sensory modalities to focus on, as some students may experience conflicting sensory inputs. At Forest Way School, we offer a variety of sensory-based activities, including sensory massage and aromatherapy, as well as outdoor play to stimulate movement-related senses. Sessions are designed to concentrate on one or more senses at a time—for example, combining calming music with the scent of incense.

Supporting the Sense of Touch

Some learners with PMLD, particularly those with sensory impairments, may be tactile-selective. This can be due to hypersensitive skin, poor tactile discrimination, or a general defensiveness toward certain textures or stimuli. These learners may avoid touch or react aversively to specific sensations. It's important to understand that even if a student tolerates a new stimulus, they may not yet be able to process that information effectively.

Research suggests that for typically developing infants, "close senses" such as touch and movement are more developed early on compared to "distance senses" like vision and hearing.

Students with PMLD can acquire sensory information through:

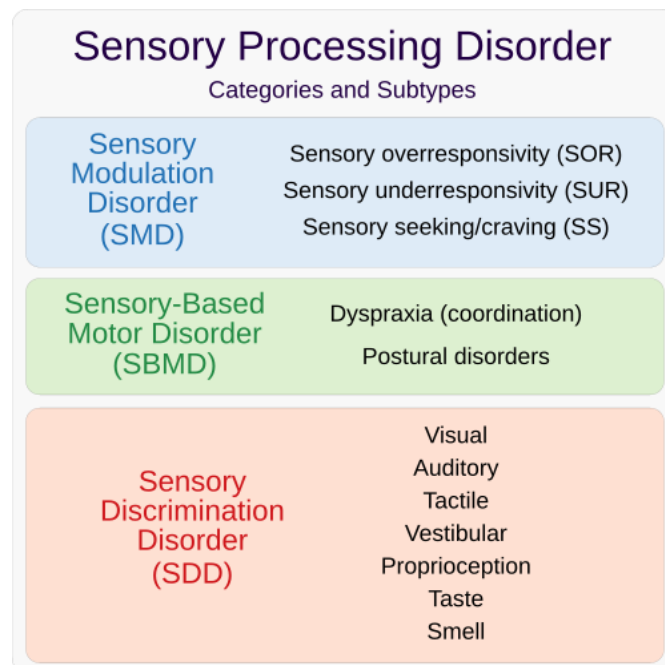
- **Haptic perception:** Direct interaction with objects using their hands.
- **Tactile perception:** Information received by the whole body through touch, including temperature, pressure, and pain sensitivity.

Staff support the development of touch through a structured, three-phase approach:

1. **Coactive:** The adult works from behind the student, gently guiding their hands to hold or manipulate an object. This phase helps the student move from resistance to passive cooperation.
2. **Co-operative:** The adult continues to work behind the student to help them hold and manipulate objects. As the student begins to respond, the adult can move to the front, encouraging a more cooperative engagement. Eventually, the student will begin to take the lead in the interaction.
3. **Reactive:** The student begins to imitate the adult's actions and then initiates their own. The adult works in front of the student, who starts to independently locate, grasp, and manipulate objects, demonstrating a new level of sensory processing and motor skill.

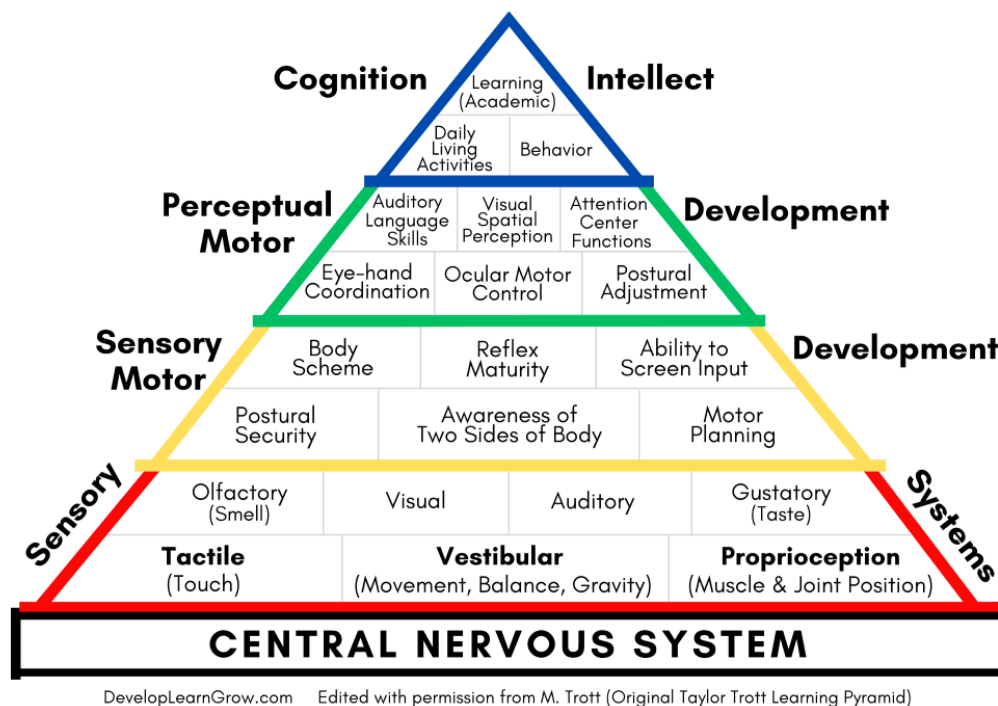
Sensory processing

It is important to consider that students may have sensory processing differences and may even have **Sensory processing disorder (SPD)**. SPD is a condition in which the brain has trouble receiving and responding to information from the senses. People with SPD may be overly sensitive (hypersensitive) or under-responsive (hyposensitive) to sights, sounds, touch, taste, smell, balance, body position, or internal sensations. This can make it difficult to react appropriately to daily situations.



Sensory processing difficulties can be a significant obstacle to a student's ability to learn and make academic progress. These challenges can be a serious barrier to learning, and students experiencing them require targeted interventions to support their development.

It's recommended to seek the advice of an **Occupational Therapist** if you observe signs of sensory processing difficulties in a student. Without the ability to effectively process sensory information, students may struggle to engage in learning and reach their full potential.



It's important to recognize that some students may not fully overcome their sensory processing challenges. However, by providing them with planned and appropriate experiences, we can support them in staying regulated and reaching their full potential. These interventions are crucial for helping them navigate their environment and succeed in their learning journey.

Sensory diets

A sensory diet is a personalised plan of activities designed to help a student regulate their sensory needs throughout the day. These activities aim to improve a student's ability to focus, manage their energy levels, and adapt to their environment.

The goal of a sensory diet is to help students achieve a "just right" state of alertness. For those who are easily overstimulated, the plan may include calming activities. Equally, for students who are under-stimulated, the plan may incorporate activities that help them feel more alert.

By consistently using a sensory diet, students can become more aware of their own sensory needs and learn to independently choose activities to help them regulate themselves. This self-awareness is a key step toward greater independence and successful engagement in learning and social activities.

Sensory diets should be created by an occupational therapist who evaluates the student, creating a sensory profile and, but similar activities can be included in daily routine.

Physical Development

Children with physical impairments or developmental needs require frequent opportunities for both supported and independent movement and interaction.

At Forest Way School, our physical development curriculum focuses on enhancing gross motor skills, fine motor skills, and body awareness through a variety of structured activities and individualized programs, including physiotherapy and sensory circuits. Students are given opportunities to experience:

- Tactile and sensory stimulation: Massage of limbs and exposure to various textures.
- Total body movement: A range of movements, speeds, and positions to build spatial awareness.
- Passive and co-active movement: Gentle, supported limb movements and "hand-under-hand" guidance.
- Water mobility: Free movement in water to promote a sense of weightlessness and independence.

Body Awareness

Body awareness, also called proprioception, is crucial for understanding one's position in space and interacting with the world. Activities should be designed to promote coordination and communication between both sides of the body, a concept known as crossing the midline.

What is Crossing the Midline?

Crossing the midline refers to the ability to move a hand, foot, or leg across an imaginary vertical line that divides the body into left and right sides. It also involves twisting the body or leaning across this line. This is a powerful tool that shows both sides of the brain and body are working together.

On a physiological level, for an individual to perform these actions, the brain must efficiently communicate between its left and right hemispheres to send motor information to the body.

This is a foundational skill for gross motor, fine motor, cognitive, and sensory-based development. When a child struggles with crossing the midline, it can impact their ability to perform a wide range of functional tasks.

Fine Motor Skills

Fine motor skills refer to the ability to make small, controlled movements with the hands and fingers. These movements include tasks such as grasping small objects, using scissors, manipulating buttons or zippers, and writing with a pencil.

Developing and refining fine motor skills requires coordination and control of the small muscles in the hands and fingers, which support a child's ability to perform more complex tasks such as drawing, painting, and playing musical instruments.

We focus on the progression of fine motor skills, including reaching, grasping, releasing, and manipulating objects. Student progress in these areas can be monitored and documented within the Writing Small Steps system.

Reaching:

Students are encouraged to:

- Bring hands to the midline.
- Bend and straighten arms.
- Reach for and grasp objects using both whole-hand and pincer grasps.

Grasping:

Activities are designed to help students:

- Swipe, open, and close their hands.
- Grasp and hold objects using a palmar grip or pincer grip.
- Use their hands to press switches or buttons.

Releasing:

Students learn to:

- Voluntarily release objects.
- Pass objects from hand to hand.
- Place or drop objects into containers.

Manipulating:

Opportunities are provided for students to:

- Take objects to their mouths (early development).
- Use fingers to press buttons and keys.
- Throw or post objects into containers.

Gross Motor Skills

Gross motor skills are the coordinated movements of the body's large muscles, such as those used for walking, jumping, and running. These skills develop in a top-down, or head-to-toe, sequence. Core and upper body control (trunk, elbows, wrists, and fingers) is typically established before lower body control (hips, legs, feet, and toes).

It's important to note that many students, due to various needs, will not follow this typical developmental progression and may require additional support to develop these skills. Our program provides targeted support to help students build essential gross motor skills, including improved sitting, standing, walking, and overall mobility. Student progress in these areas can be monitored and documented within the Writing Small Steps system.

Sitting:

Where appropriate, students are supported to:

- Develop and maintain head control.
- Sit with varying levels of support (fully supported, chair with sides, stool).
- Move limbs and their torso while seated.

Standing:

Students are given opportunities to:

- Stand with and without support.
- Pull themselves to a standing position.
- Pivot and move their limbs while standing.

Walking:

When appropriate, students work on:

- Walking with different levels of support (gait trainer, one or two hands held, unsupported).
- Changing directions.
- Walking on various surfaces, slopes, and steps.

Mobility:

Students are encouraged to explore different types of movement, such as:

- Crawling, rolling, or sliding.
- Pushing and pulling objects.
- Moving over and under obstacles.
- Using playground equipment like swings and slides.

Water Mobility:

Water provides a unique environment for practice. Students are supported to:

- Enter and exit the pool as independently as possible.
- Move arms and legs to propel themselves.
- Tolerate getting their face wet and blow bubbles.
- Practice movements like walking and jumping, which can be easier to perform in water due to weightlessness.

Postural care

Postural care is a vital approach to protecting and restoring the body shape and muscle tone of individuals with limited mobility. When someone can't change their position on their own, they depend on others for support. This is especially true for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities, who are at a high risk of body shape distortion because they often stay in the same position for long periods.

According to Public Health England, this distortion isn't inevitable. By using the right equipment and positioning techniques, you can help protect the body shape of people with movement difficulties. Postural care is a fundamental need, and early intervention is crucial, but it's never too late to begin protecting a person's body shape and improving their well-being.

At our school, students who need this support will have a specific manual handling plan and postural care plan. If a student doesn't have a plan and you have concerns, please contact the physiotherapy administration team. For students with a postural care plan, lying out and postural changes are an important part of their physical development and should be incorporated into their daily routine.

Social, Emotional and Mental Health

Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) development is a key part of student well-being, and we focus on three core areas: Confidence and Self-Belief, Interaction and Relationships, and Our Community.

Confidence and Self-Belief

This area focuses on helping students feel secure and valued. We provide students with opportunities to:

- Show they feel happy, calm, and secure.
- Express their personal likes and dislikes.
- Make choices that influence their environment.
- Feel valued and know that their needs are being met.
- Be with adults who respect their decisions.

Interaction and Relationships

This area is designed to help students build healthy social connections. We provide opportunities for students to:

- Interact with people they know.
- Collaborate with familiar people on tasks.
- Anticipate and engage in social activities and events.
- Communicate when they need a break from social interaction.
- Show a preference for certain people, objects, and activities.
- Respond with interest to the actions of others.
- Play actively with others and lead interaction games.
- Share focus on an object or activity with someone else.
- Seek and maintain the attention of others.
- Be aware of the people around them.
- Understand the expectations of group activities.

Our community

This area helps students navigate and engage with the world around them. We provide opportunities for students to:

- Show an awareness of different environments.
- Express their likes and dislikes for various settings.
- Anticipate visits to a specific environment.
- Respond to interesting things they encounter in their environment.
- Visit diverse places beyond home and school to prepare for adulthood.
- Respond and react to new people—like visiting performers—in a familiar setting.

Wider Curriculum and Enrichment

At Forest Way School, we believe in a holistic approach to education. Our students engage in a diverse range of enriching opportunities that prepare them for life beyond the classroom. These subjects are adapted to be accessible and appropriate for students with PMLD, ensuring they have the same opportunities as their peers to explore and learn.

These experiences include aspects of:

- Humanities: Religious Education (RE), Geography and History
- Arts and Creativity: Music, Drama, Art, and Design & Technology.
- Physical and Outdoor Activities: Physical Education (PE), Gardening, and Forest Schools.
- Life Skills: Self-care and independence skills, including hygiene and cooking
- Community Skills- from KS3 onwards.

Forest Way School is committed to providing a rich and comprehensive education for all students. Our approach emphasizes offering a diverse range of experiences to serve as a foundation for learning. By providing meaningful and engaging experiences, we aim to connect students with the world around them

Experiential Learning and Community Connections

A key part of our enrichment curriculum is bringing the world to our students. We regularly welcome visiting groups, such as Wheels4all, and theatre and music companies such as Carrot Productions and Bamboozle, to provide immersive and sensory-rich experiences.

These interactions are designed to be an integral part of their learning, helping them to engage with different art forms and cultural experiences in a way that is tailored to their needs.

This approach ensures that students are actively participating in a vibrant and varied educational environment. It reflects our commitment to offering a truly inclusive and enriching experience for every student.

Supporting Students

Our Non subject specific learners face significant challenges in their education. They have a profound learning difficulty in addition to other physical or sensory difficulties.

To overcome these barriers and thrive, students require a specialized approach to education, including:

- A significantly adapted curriculum that focuses on meeting individual needs
- Instruction delivered at a slower pace, with plenty of opportunities to repeat and practice foundational skills.
- Specialized, collaborative support from multiple agencies, such as health and social care professionals.
- Modifications to their physical environment to make it more accessible and supportive.
- Access to a wide range of specialist resources.
- A high level of individualized care and support.
- Empathetic and highly trained staff who can empower them to learn and grow.

The learning environment

To ensure our learning environment is effective for students with physical and sensory impairments, we prioritize creating a space that is adaptable, safe, and rich in sensory opportunities.

This includes:

- **Diverse Learning Spaces:** We offer a variety of learning spaces, including a dedicated outside sensory area, to provide students with different environments for exploration.
- **Minimal Sensory Clutter:** Our learning spaces are designed with minimal visual and aural distractions. We use good light sources to highlight a specific person or object, and high-quality sound sources to enhance focus.
- **Safe and Adaptable Spaces:** We provide safe spaces for students to move freely, including room to move arms and legs when on the floor and open space for navigating the room. There are also designated areas for relaxation and postural care.

Barriers to Learning:

Learning for students with complex needs is influenced by a range of factors that can either support or present barriers to their progress. We consider these factors in two main categories: internal and external.

Internal Factors

These are related to the student's personal physical and emotional state. They include:

- **Physical and Medical Conditions:** This covers a wide range of conditions, from physical and sensory impairments to the effects of medication.
- **Bio-behavioural State:** A student's level of alertness and arousal, which can range from deep sleep to agitated, is crucial. Optimal learning occurs during a quiet alert or active alert state. We understand that factors like hunger, tiredness, and health can affect this state.
- **Communication:** A student's ability to communicate, whether through verbal or non-verbal means, is a key factor in their engagement.
- **Behavioural Needs:** We need to consider the impact of social interaction, emotional state, and behavioural difficulties, as well as repetitive behaviours.

External Factors

These are elements within the student's environment that can impact their learning. They include:

- **Learning Environment:** We recognize the importance of the classroom setting, including lighting, noise levels, visual clutter and overall organization. A safe and comfortable environment is crucial for effective learning.
- **Accessibility:** Activities need to take place within the student's vision and reach. This may include enlarging visuals and using rise and fall tables.
- **Relationships:** Positive relationships between staff and students are fundamental to fostering a supportive learning atmosphere.
- **Routines and Repetition:** Students with complex needs often benefit from a high degree of repetition to anticipate and learn from activities. We need to create a structured, predictable environment with clear cues for the beginning and end of activities.
- **Personal and Family Circumstances:** We understand that a student's home life and broader socio-economic circumstances can affect their readiness to learn.

Our staff are trained to consider these factors on an individual basis. They use observation and understanding of each student's communication and needs to create a personalized learning approach.

Hand under hand

Forest Way does not use the hand-over-hand teaching technique.

We have made this decision based on current research and best practices, which show that this method is ineffective and potentially harmful.

Key reasons for our policy include:

- Ineffectiveness: Brain mapping studies show that the brain "shuts down" during hand-over-hand, making passive modelling a more effective alternative.
- Lack of Clarity: It is impossible to know if the student or the assistant is truly performing the task.
- Student Well-being: The technique can cause sensory overload and violates the student's right to bodily autonomy and consent.

What is the hand-under-hand approach?

The hand-under-hand approach is a way of interacting and communicating using touch. To support using hand-under-hand, you can simply place their hand gently on top of yours. Using this approach, the students can:

- Have more control.
- Play a more active part in tasks and learning.
- Focus on the objects they touch and not just on the other person's hands.
- Connect to the world.
- Learn at their own pace.

With the hand-under-hand approach, if the person decides they want the activity to end, they can simply take their hand away at any time. This offers choice, control and a sense of freedom. It's a great approach to trying new activities, like introducing a child to a new way of playing.

Students may be hesitant to put their hand directly on an unknown object but using hand-under-hand they can still join in. e.g., Staff holding the pen and then the student moves the staff member's hand.

The technique allows the student time to sense the movement of your hand, understand it is safe, and feel comfortable enough to try it themselves more independently if possible.

Key Principles of Our Approach

We use a "co-production" model, which means staff work "with" students, acting as facilitators of learning rather than simply doing "to" them.

Holistic Learning

We ensure the curriculum is holistic and person-centred. Key elements include communication, social interaction, independence, and multi-sensory and physical therapies.

Embedded Skills

Core skills in English and Maths are embedded naturally within the curriculum. For example, problem-solving skills might be developed through activities that teach concepts like object permanence, while communication skills are constantly practiced.

Routine and Repetition

We understand that routine and repetition are essential for learning. Activities are repeated many times to help students learn and anticipate what's coming. Once a skill is learned, we introduce variations to add new challenges.

Real-World Experience

The curriculum provides opportunities for learning across the student's entire schedule, with specific subjects serving as the context for these experiences. Students can also participate in work-based learning opportunities to apply their skills in real-world settings.

Positive Relationships

Building strong, positive relationships between students and staff is crucial to developing skills and knowledge.

Planning

When planning, teachers should take the following into consideration:

- Prior learning – needs to be assessed accurately and in detail
- Age appropriateness
- Materials and resources – are you using a multisensory approach?
- The Engagement Model areas: exploration, realisation, anticipation, persistence, initiation
- The appropriate Key Stage themes to ensure ongoing diversity of coverage.

The Class Team

Our educational approach at Forest Way School is built on a foundation of highly trained, collaborative staff who prioritize the individual needs of each student.

Staff need to have access to and have read all the supporting documents relating to each student.

All students will have:

- EHCP and outcomes
- Learner Passport

Additionally, student may have

- Engagement support plan
- Crisis Plan
- Care Plan
- Eating and drinking plan
- Communication Passport
- Moving and handling risk assessment
- Health professional programmes

These documents should be in the class Yellow Folder so supply and new staff can access them to ensure continuity for students

Teaching and Learning

Our staff:

- **Teach with purpose:** Staff have a deep understanding of each student's key targets and know exactly what they are teaching and why.
- **Adapt to individual needs:** We provide suitable resources and adjust our approach to sufficiently challenge each student. Staff use their initiative to adapt activities and always have a "Plan B" ready if the initial approach is not working.
- **Encourage consistent engagement:** We maintain a dynamic learning atmosphere where waiting times are minimal and individually appropriate. Students are actively engaged with activities, both independently and with staff support.
- **Foster communication and fun:** Staff communicate at a level students can understand, using supportive Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) when needed. We also create an atmosphere of fun and enjoyment, encouraging peer interaction and collaboration whenever possible.

Staffing and Collaboration

Effective staff collaboration is key to our success. We operate as a cohesive team with shared goals, and our staffing ratios are carefully planned to meet each student's needs.

- **Individualized support:** We provide a high level of adult support, planning for a combination of direct teaching, structured turn-taking, and opportunities for students to have time alone for relaxation and reflection. This includes a higher staff ratio (1:1 or 1:2) where needed during higher risk activities to ensure safety.
- **Cohesive team:** Staff know their roles and responsibilities throughout the day and work together to support each other and the children.
- **Effective planning:** Teachers, support staff, and visiting therapists meet regularly to discuss individual student progress and agree on key targets.
- **Expertise in challenging behaviours:** Our staff are skilled in working with students whose behaviour can be challenging and are equipped with strategies to manage and support them effectively.

Physical Care and Safety

We always prioritize the physical well-being and safety of our students.

- **Safe and respectful handling:** All staff are trained in safe and respectful moving and handling practices.
- **Promoting independence:** We expertly assist students in using their equipment and continually encourage them to move for themselves as much as they can.
- **Health and comfort:** We ensure students' positions are changed regularly to promote their comfort and overall health.

Pupil Progress and Assessment:

The SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 identifies the need for a graduated approach towards the identification of children who may have SEND. This is a circular model using assess, plan, do, review.

5.38 All settings should adopt a graduated approach with four stages of action: assess, plan, do and review.



Assessment for Learning

Assessment is a critical component of the educational process, serving to track progress, plan future instruction, and facilitate communication with parents and students. It encompasses how teachers support learning, monitor student progress, and identify the necessary next steps.

For students following the NSSL curriculum, self-assessment is not a viable option. Therefore, staff members are responsible for observing and interpreting a student's responses and efforts. This process involves addressing three key questions:

- Where is the learner now? This assesses the student's current level of understanding and skill.
- Where is the learner going? This determines the learning goals and desired outcomes for the student.
- How are they going to get there? This outlines the strategies and support required to help the student achieve their goals.

At Forest Way we have a basket of indicators that are used to assess progress and inform next steps. These include Baselineing, Learner Passports, Lesson Observations and Small Steps assessments. (See Appendix 2)

Baselineing

A baseline study is an essential component of monitoring and evaluation. It helps in understanding current interests, areas of strength, identifying gaps, and identifying appropriate interventions.

Each Autumn term student's Engagement Assessment Baselines are updated.

Small Steps

This is an assessment tool that breaks down Pre-Key Stage Standards into small steps relating to development in Communication, Writing, Reading, Maths and Science.

Small Steps assessments allow staff to indicate what the learner has achieved and allow teacher to track progress and achievements.

Small Step Assessment Codes

0	Not Covered
1	No response (Passive Experience)
2	Full support (Responsive to Experience)
3	Physical prompting (Full modelling/scaffolding throughout activity)
4	Verbal prompting (Frequent modelling from an adult)
5	Gestural prompting (Initial modelling from an adult)
6	Independent (Independent with appropriate learning aid, no adult intervention e.g. visual learning aid, prompt sheets, numicon, number line)
7	Independent and completely consolidated in every environment (Independent without learning aids or adult support)
8	Mastery (Functional mastery applied in any setting)

Students may not be working at the level to make progress against the Small Steps assessments. As such they only need to be completed where it is appropriate.

Observations

Observations are recorded on Tapestry. Mainly observations are focused and based on a planned activity, so that you can assess a particular area of learning. At other times your observation will be based on stand out moments from the day.

Some examples of what you may find out from observation are:

- assessing learning and development
- Interests and enjoyments
- identifying specific learning needs
- following up something that you have noticed informally and want to find out more
- which schemas children are developing
- starting points for intervention
- to get to know a student better – open-ended

Interpreting the nuanced behaviours and responses of students can be very challenging. To accurately document and understand a student's reactions, staff must first establish a strong, lasting rapport with them. This foundational relationship is essential for making meaningful interpretations of a student's progress and needs over time. (see appendix 3)

Learner Passports

The SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 sets out several legal expectations to review progress regularly and update each student's EHCP each year.

9.166 EHC plans should be used to actively monitor children and young people's progress towards their outcomes and longer-term aspirations. They must be reviewed by the local authority as a minimum every 12 months.

9.167 Reviews should also gather and assess information so that it can be used to support the child or young person's progress and their access to teaching and learning.

The Learner Passport at Forest Way is a comprehensive document designed to track and support a student's educational journey. It's the primary tool for recording a student's specific needs, learning preferences, and communication methods.

Each Learner Passport holds a student's specific targets from their Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). A tracking grid is included to allow staff to record weekly observations and check progress toward these goals. Staff are expected to provide evidence for at least three targets per student each week.

This document serves as a vital part of the school's reporting process. It's used to inform parents and professionals about a student's progress and is also sent as supporting evidence during the student's Annual Review.

Curriculum Impact:

Our **Non-Subject Specific Learning curriculum** is a flexible and personalized program designed to have a profound and lasting impact on our students' lives. It goes beyond traditional academics to nurture each student's unique potential, providing a rich and individualized educational journey.

Through this curriculum, students will:

Build Confidence and Connections

Students are empowered to express themselves and build meaningful relationships. By focusing on both receptive and expressive communication, and using techniques like Intensive Interaction, they develop the skills to share their needs, form friendships, and engage more meaningfully with the world.

Enhance Physical and Sensory Awareness

Engaging in activities like dance, PE, and swimming helps students improve their gross and fine motor skills. They also get opportunities for sensory exploration to better understand and confidently interact with their environment. When applicable, the integration of physiotherapy and postural management ensures their physical well-being is a core part of their learning.

Develop Essential Life Skills

The curriculum lays the foundation for lifelong learning. Students build foundational skills in early science and mathematics and develop digital literacy, through switch work and computing. They learn to solve problems, recognize patterns, and understand cause and effect, which are essential for future learning.

Boost Emotional Health and Well-being

We prioritize the emotional health of our students. Through PSHE, RSE, and relaxation techniques like aromatherapy massage, they develop self-awareness and social skills. This focus helps them manage their emotions, build confidence, and form positive relationships.

The true impact of the NSSL curriculum is measured by each student's personal growth and increasing independence. While their learning may not be at a subject-specific level, it is still rich and varied. By incorporating core skills like communication, interaction, and sensory exploration into every activity, from a swimming session to a trip to a local park, we ensure that every experience contributes to a well-rounded and impactful educational journey.

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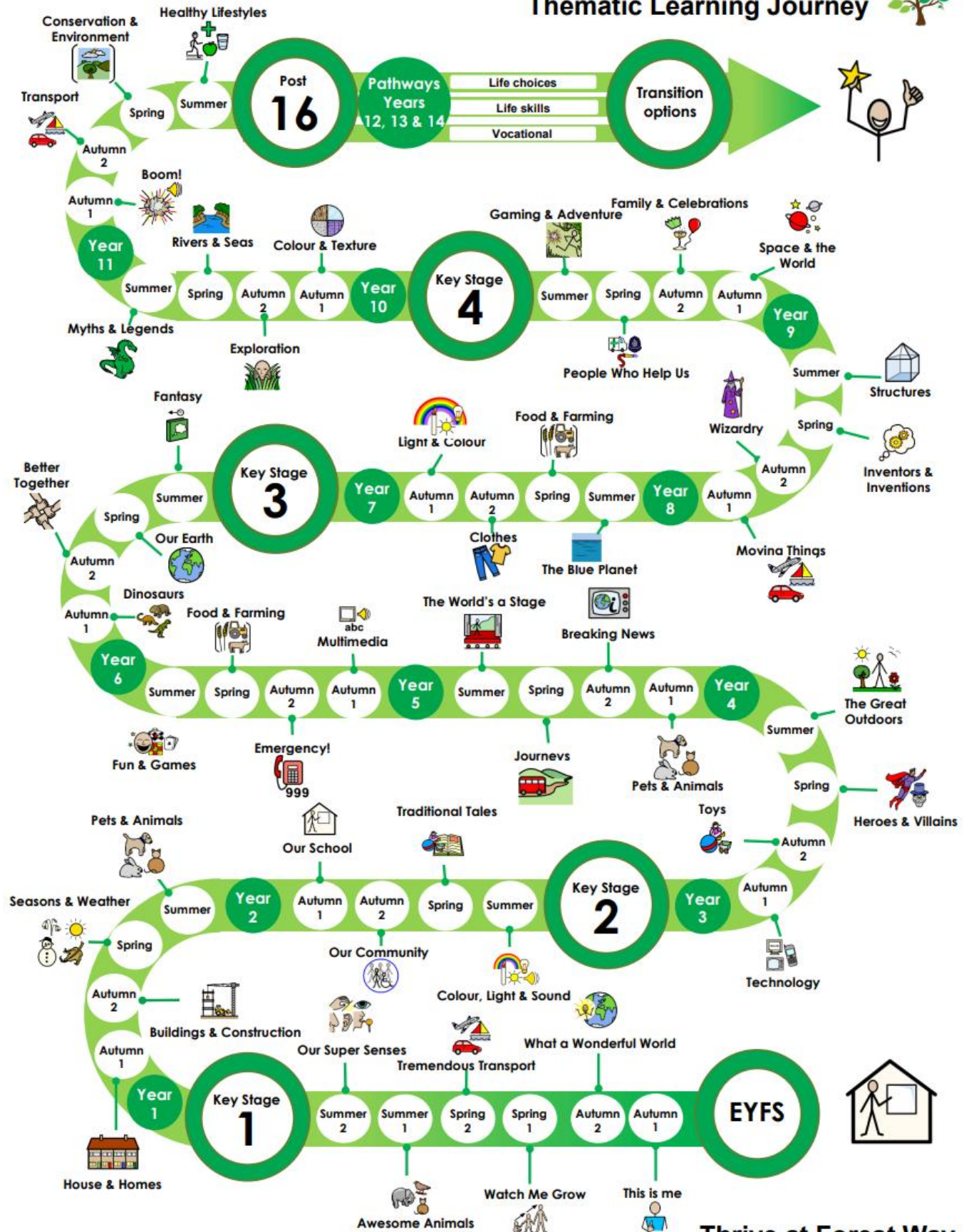
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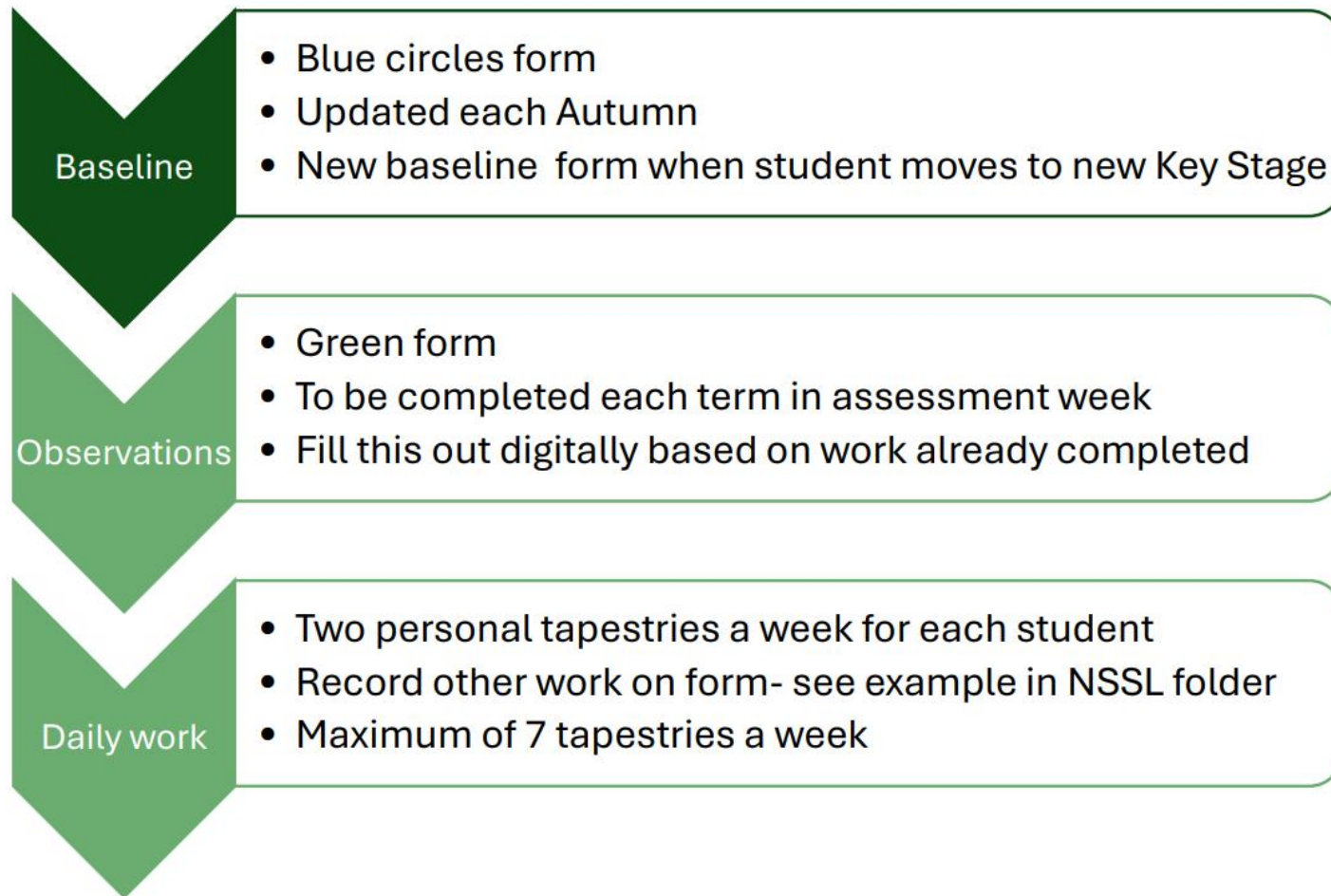
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Appendix 1- The Thematic map

Forest Way School Thematic Learning Journey



Appendix 2- NSSL Assessment and Moderation



Appendix 3- Writing an Effective Observation

Start with a clear Learning Outcome/ Learning intention

Focus on the Child: Always start with phrases like: "I can...", or "We are learning to..."

Use Action Words: Pick words that show what children will do or show – use the lenses of engagement terms

Be Clear and Measurable: How will you know they've got it? What will you see or hear?

Keep it Short: Learning intentions should be quick and easy for children to grasp. One or two simple sentences are best.

e.g. "I can take turns with a friend and use communication resources to ask for a toy."

Focus on the Achievement (The "What They Can Do Now"):

Instead of a play-by-play, summarise the key learning or new skill demonstrated. What was the outcome of their engagement?

Use the language of the Engagement profile and include if they needed full/ frequent or initial modelling.

Example: "Maya explored the sand, successfully constructing a 'sand mountain'. She persisted for over 5 minutes independently using her left hand to hold a range of tools. Maya was able to share resources with her peers but needed frequent modelling and adult prompts. Great Work Maya you initiated exploring the sand and showed how focused you can be when you are highly motivated"

End with a next step

Next steps are fundamental to effective learning and development. They act as the bridge between current understanding and future growth, providing direction, motivation, and a framework for progress. An effective next step should adhere to the **SMART** criteria:

S - Specific: Clearly state what the learner will do, what skills they will apply, and in what context. Avoid vague language.

M - Measurable: How will you know the learner has achieved the next step? What observable behaviour or outcome will demonstrate success? Include criteria for success (e.g., number of times, percentage accuracy, level of independence).

A - Achievable & Ambitious: Is it realistic for the learner to achieve this step given their current abilities and the available support? It should challenge them without being overwhelming.

R - Relevant: Does the next step directly contribute to the overall learning aim or objective? Is it meaningful for the learner's development?

T - Time-bound (or Context-Bound): When will this be achieved, or in what specific contexts will it be practiced/assessed? This provides a sense of urgency and helps with planning.

e.g. "Next Step: During unstructured play, with one verbal prompt Maya will initiate a turn in a game by pointing to 'my turn' on classroom communication resources"