

# Discovery Special Academy



## Curriculum Overview

# EYFS Curriculum

Pupils at Discovery Special Academy access a personalised Nursery and Reception curriculum with activities planned to match their developmental stage. Programmes of study are based on Development Matters and differentiated to best meet the needs of learners. This curriculum begins at 0 years and therefore all pupils joining the academy in reception are able to access this. The EYFS curriculum follows the principles of play based, multi-sensory and exploratory learning. Activities in each area are informed by both baseline and continuous assessment and purposefully designed to teach the foundation skills needed to progress. Learning intentions may also be taken from a range of therapeutic sources including but not limited to, sensory integration, speech and language and BLAST, physiotherapy. The nursery curriculum focuses on the Prime areas of Development Matters; communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development, giving all children the foundation knowledge and skills they need to begin their learning journey. When children move into reception, whilst the Prime areas are still incorporated to planning, the Specific areas, mathematics, literacy, expressive arts and design and understanding of the world, are introduced more formally.

The EYFS curriculum at Discovery offers a stimulating, nurturing and safe environment in which pupils can develop socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually. It is focused on the early development of communication and interaction skills and ensuring that pupils are effective communicators. It supports their learning with objects of reference, Makaton, visual cues and communication aids in all areas and activities in the classroom. We recognise and emphasise the importance of developing skills for learning of all pupils with SEND including:

- learning to use their senses;
- learning to develop physical skills for manipulation and mobility;
- developing the 7 areas of engagement
  - responsiveness
  - curiosity
  - discovery
  - anticipation
  - persistence
  - initiation
  - investigation
- developing attention and perceptual skills; and
- developing early communication skills.

These, alongside the characteristics of effective learning for EYFS (see below), are pupils' tools for learning: they are prerequisites to learning and vital elements of the curriculum for pupils with significant special needs. These 'learning to learn' skills will be developed across the curriculum. Pupils engage with activities based around the seven areas of learning, always linking with the characteristics of learning. These activities are based within the context of their relevant MAPP targets.

- playing and exploring - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'
- active learning - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
- creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

A play based exploratory curriculum allows clear development of these skills with 1:1 and 1:2 teaching alongside small group activities such as sharing books and number rhymes. Strategies and interventions such as BLAST also aids communication and language development. Speech and language therapists contribute to the overall planning and development of targets for individual children. The use of photographs and personal interest boxes allows pupils to develop these skills in a familiar context.

To further aid acquisition of communication skills, Discovery Special Academy offers a language rich environment where practitioners are skilled in matching their vocabulary use and level of communication to the pupils while scaffolding their progress. Using labels in all areas of the classroom alongside symbols and the use of signs ensures all pupils can access their environment and are exposed to a variety of vocabulary. Additionally, regular sharing of books and discussion of high quality texts (see below) further embed this. All pupils with SEND need processing time and ensuring language and instructions used by adults are clear and concise alongside thinking time will also allow success.

Creating such a language rich environment is likewise important in supporting our pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL). In doing so, the key principles set out in the EAL policy are embedded throughout the curriculum and are a valued aspect of the inclusive Discovery ethos (see EAL policy). As with all pupils, and following the EYFS model of personalised learning, each pupil's tailored educational offer will be co-created with the child through careful assessment to support their development pathway. This fully supports the ethos, vision and values that Discovery engenders in ensuring that all pupils are given the support they need to make progress through appropriate and personalised learning intentions. For EAL pupils, this includes a focus on language acquisition with staff detailing in their planning the activities, interventions and environmental support that will allow the pupil to achieve this.

### **Themes**

In both Nursery and Reception, teaching and learning is delivered using a range of resources and media, ensuring that pupils are given a breadth of experience at a level that is appropriate to them. They are taught in a creative, practical way, supported in some areas through specialist weeks as well as trips and visits. Each teaching block incorporates suggested high quality children's literature mapped out in a book spine. Teachers base their 2 – 3 week planning blocks on one of the books of their choice from the spine (or another high quality text of their choosing) linking activities across the day to this and to the overarching theme. Further texts will be introduced to the children through the 5 a day reading approach.

EYFS teachers produce a half termly forecast for each individual child based on stage appropriate learning intentions alongside recommendations from other professionals that work with the child. All planned areas include key therapeutic objectives. Activities to support these are clearly shown on weekly planning overviews.

Across the year, some Reception pupils will begin early phonics teaching using a multisensory approach founded on the principles of recognising initial sounds and oral blending. A whole word approach to reading common exception words is also used and emphasised, supported by Makaton actions.

In EYFS, pupils work in the same environment and all academic, therapeutic and social learning is overseen by the class teachers. Learning intentions are carefully planned using knowledge of the pupils' current abilities with regular assessments at the end of each block (see ARR policy for more detail). Pupils work both on a 1:1 level, in small groups and on activities designed to promote independence according to need and individual learning intentions. Pupils accessing the EYFS curriculum are assessed using Mapping and Assessing Personal Progress (MAPP). Learning intentions are taken from a range of relevant sources including, but not limited to, MAPP learning intentions, Development matters, Autism Education Trust Progression Framework, Speech and Language, Physiotherapy programmes and Sensory Diet programmes. These are set according to individual need and tracked through the MAPP assessment framework. Progress is therefore presented and reported for each individual child rather than for a cohort. This is a fluid approach dependent on the pupils' prior attainment and learning profiles.

## EYFS Therapeutic Curriculum

### Sensory Curriculum

A sensory curriculum plays a crucial role in the early years. We recognise that young children are active learners and that they learn through all their senses, through exploration, investigation, experimentation, listening and watching, as well as through play. It is important that the children have opportunities to interpret their environment, to learn to make choices for themselves and to grow in confidence, understanding their value within the academy community.

Children engage in a range of movement activities based on the principles of Madeline Portwood, Sensory Integration, dough disco, TAC PAC and Write Dance to develop their gross motor skills. Fine motor skills are also a focus through a variety of activities developing hand eye coordination such as threading, working with large tweezers, posting objects and using large pegs and boards. Sensory Diets and Sensory Circuits (Jane Horwood) will form an integral part of everyday teaching.

#### Suggested sensory diet/integration activities:

- Outdoor obstacle courses
- Wall push ups – calming, strengthening, prepares hands for handwriting
- Trampoline, rebound.
- Textures – have a variety of different textured fabrics and items – 2 of each. Place one of the items in a bag, place that item and at least one other (increase the number of choices over time) on the table, children feel inside the box and guess which item on the table is in the box. Encourage them to describe the item while they are feeling it, is it rough, smooth, round, long etc.
- Straw games – improves posture, facilitates divergence of the eyes, rests eyes after an extended period of reading/computer work.
- Following a piece of work where children have had to concentrate use a variety of straws, wide, narrow, curly, aquarium tubing. Children blow a variety of objects across the table such as ping pong balls, cotton balls, Styrofoam peanuts etc.
- Dough – calming, provides proprioceptive input, strengthens hands and fingers for handwriting. Hide items in the dough such as everyday objects, letters, numbers etc.
- Dough – describe a simple object to the child, they must make the object using the dough. E.g. a long red snake, a short green snake, make a spider with a round red body and eight yellow legs, model this if children are struggling to interpret to begin with, over time reduce this support. Good for comparative and descriptive language.
- Ball bath – use a pop up tent or small ball pool area. Hide objects of reference, numbers, letters, target words or name. Hide shapes and sort into shapes that are the same.
- Brushes and water on the floor and walls to aid formation. Large chalks on the wall and floor, write numbers as far as they can.
- Threading/tweezer activities

Where appropriate letter formation and handwriting is taught using a multi-sensory approach in the early years and KS1. More formal handwriting is introduced as children make progress and at a developmentally appropriate stage.

Outdoor education is vital in the development of all pupils at the academy and therefore, is an integral day to day learning space. Children are able to access this through free flow in the early years with specific areas and activities designed to further their physical development. Activities supported by occupational and physiotherapists are evident both indoors and outdoors. All areas have sensory spaces and a range of resources

## Informal Curriculum

### **Rationale**

Some pupils at Discovery Special academy access an informal curriculum. An informal curriculum supports those pupils who have significant sensory and communication needs and who require an ongoing sensory-based pedagogical approach, underpinned by the principles of the Engagement Model areas of engagement (exploration; realisation; anticipation; persistence; initiation). Pupils have significant and specific needs in the areas of sensory development, communication and interaction with a potential diagnosis of sensory processing disorder and Autism.

These pupils access a less structured environment incorporating movement and utilising a range of spaces and teaching approaches. The environment is designed to be low stimulus with the ability to change lighting, resources and activities to suit the individual and group needs at any given time. Pupils require 1:1 and very small group activities rather than whole class learning.

Within this informal grouping, pupils will have 1:1 teaching to develop skills in specific subjects. Being able to create areas within the classroom with high levels of storage so resources can be brought out and put away on a daily, and sometimes hourly basis, is key. All planning is personalised and individual learning intentions are set and assessed using MAPP (see below) each term and reviewed every half term.

### **Intent**

The intent of the informal curriculum for pupils is:

- To develop communication using augmented and alternative communication approaches;
- To develop social interaction;
- To control their environment and the world around them developing a sense of agency;
- To make and communicate choices;
- To be safe and able to self-regulate;
- To have confidence and independence;
- To make progress in their learning; and
- To develop holistically with access to a range of therapeutic approaches.

### **Pedagogical approach**

The informal curriculum is entirely personalised to need. Knowledge is taught through a continuum of skills development as set out in the Mapping and Assessing Personal Progress approach (MAPP). Key areas of knowledge are repeated and revisited. In this way, repetition of learning and overlearning leads to generalisation, fluency, independence and maintenance of knowledge over time.

Provision is less formally structured incorporating a range of spaces within the classroom. The environment is designed to be low stimulus with the ability to change lighting, resources and activities to suit the individual and group needs. The main route to learning is through personalised targets with one to one teaching and support. Structured activities and work in small groups is used to develop social communication and interaction. A range of alternative and augmented communication aids are used to allow pupils to communicate choices and to control the world around them. Pupils individual learning intentions will be outlined in their personal learning plans, and they will be supported on a one to one basis to develop knowledge and skills. All pupils access self-regulation opportunities through sensory interventions. Pupils may stay within the informal curriculum throughout their time at the academy.

## **Teaching and learning**

The informal curriculum is taught through the following areas:

- Communication and interaction
- Thinking and learning (Inc. mathematical understanding/reading development)
- Physical and sensory development
- Creative development
- My independence and social and emotional development

Teachers follow the informal long-term planning, ensuring all learning activities are focused on the above elements within the child's personal learning plan. This ensures a clear and progressive approach to the use of books, activities and key skills. Throughout the informal curriculum, the concepts of past, present and future will be explored using language, signs and symbols of yesterday, today, tomorrow as well as then and now/past and present. Different artefacts such as toys and clothes from now and the past will be available in the environment.

As described in the EYFS overview, communication development is paramount to success in the informal classroom. Total communication immersion supported by augmentative and alternative communication aids allows each pupil to develop personally. All tasks and activities are planned with communication in mind with a specific focus on the intended vocabulary for pupils. The aim is to create an environment where children can make choices that support health, wellbeing and a breadth of opportunities.

A multi-sensory approach with access to sensory integration therapy, speech and language therapy, daily movement and fine and gross motor for all pupils is also paramount to success. Learning takes place indoors and out.

## **Assessment**

To identify and celebrate all pupils' progress, including linear and lateral progress, the consolidation and maintenance of knowledge, skills and concepts, and the prevention or slowing of a decline in pupils' performance, pupils accessing an informal curriculum are assessed using Mapping and Assessing Personal Progress (MAPP). Learning intentions are taken from a range of relevant sources including, but not limited to, MAPP learning intentions, PIVATS learning intentions, Autism Education Trust Progression Framework, Speech and Language, Physiotherapy programmes and Sensory Diet programmes. These are set according to individual need and tracked through the MAPP assessment framework (using regular observational assessment to support the engagement model). Progress is therefore presented and reported for each individual child rather than for a cohort.

MAPP progress meetings are held termly alongside Evidence for Learning Reviews with the teaching team. Where there have been concerns, interim reviews may be held half termly (see Assessment, Recording and Reporting policy for assessment timetable and further

# Semi-Formal/Semi-formal plus Curriculum

## **Rationale**

The Discovery long-term plan for the semi-formal and semi-formal plus curriculum has been designed to allow the acquisition of knowledge and understanding needed to progress over time. A coherent learning sequence has been developed to ensure that knowledge is built cumulatively over time. The semi-formal/plus curriculum deliberately allows for over learning, repetition and consolidation, all vital in the development of children with severe learning difficulties. As children progress, teachers will plan to give them opportunities to activate and build on prior knowledge, drawing this from their long term memory, to apply learning, generalise and work independently. The key to developing this knowledge is providing children with first hand experiences linked to their individual needs through personalised planning. Children with severe learning difficulties need to be able to communicate, have control over their lives and have the belief that they can succeed. Ultimately, we aim to build confidence, cultural capacity and raise aspirations for their future life.

## **Intent**

The intent of the semi-formal/plus curriculum for pupils is:

- To communicate with familiar and unfamiliar adults and peers;
  - To equip children and young people with the knowledge they need in the world beyond the academy;
  - To have confidence and independence;
  - To value each other and act in a responsible and ethical way;
  - To have a sense of self so they can become engaged citizens;
  - To make good personal progress in all subject areas;
  - To support children and young people to successfully prepare for adulthood;
  - To attain meaningful and relevant qualifications to support them in the future; and
- 
- To develop holistically with access to a range of therapeutic approaches.

## **Teaching and Learning**

### **Semi-Formal**

Pupils access a structured classroom routine with a multi-sensory approach to learning. A range of approaches are utilised, with one to one and small group teaching being the main routes to learning. Subject specific learning takes place within the core areas on an individual and very small group basis. Pupil's smaller working memory means repetition of skills and over learning is essential for developing fluency. Opportunities for pupils to think and problem solve as independently as possible are provided.

Alongside this, pupils have access to area provision designed to develop key social, emotional and communication skills and independence. Pupils are supported to develop key life skills, including toilet training, feeding skills, dressing and personal hygiene. Pupils may (but not always) move into the semi-formal plus curriculum during their time at the Academy.

### **Semi-Formal Plus**

Pupils begin to access a more structured teaching and learning environment still with a focus on multi-sensory learning. Subject specific learning takes place within the core areas, which may still be on an individual and small group basis with some whole class learning sessions. The wider curriculum will be taught in a stage appropriate manner following the TVEd semi-formal to formal routes for learning. Pupils continue to have a personalised

learning plan. Repetition and over learning continue to be essential to develop fluency. Pupils are supported to develop their social, emotional and communication skills and independence.

The focus at all stages remains on ensuring that our pupils are effective communicators, supporting their learning with objects, Makaton, visual cues and communication aids.

If children are identified as ready through ongoing assessment, some pupils will make the transition from a semi-formal curriculum, to a semi-formal plus pedagogy where the emphasis is on making progress in core curriculum areas. If a group of pupils is identified as being able to access a formal pedagogy in one specific subject, they will be grouped accordingly to allow access to this.

## **English**

Each year group has a suggested book spine (see content document) to ensure high quality texts are used to deliver learning. These books drive core communication skills, literacy development and support the teaching of other subject areas where appropriate. This allows a fluid, cross-curricular approach across the day supporting the semi-formal pedagogy. These books also form part of the 3 a day reading approach, alongside other texts, to develop a love of reading. In Year 9+, classes complete at least one hour's dedicated reading per week, during English lessons. Staff can select books from the suggested selection, as well as from their own knowledge and passion for books.

The focus of English in the semi-formal classroom is to develop early reading and writing skills based on phonics and the construction of simple sentences. From year 9 onwards, the focus is on continuing to ensure that pupils maintain and develop a good standard of literacy and work towards attaining appropriate accredited functional skills qualifications. Environments will be developed to be reading and writing rich encouraging pupils to develop independent skills and access exploratory learning in order to see themselves as readers and writers. Therefore, in year one and two, the focus is on the development of vocabulary, writing signs and symbols, labels, lists and captions linked to phonics development, mark making and emergent writing skills.

Alongside this, physical development of gross and fine motor skills will form an integral part of the communication, language and literacy curriculum. For narrative books, once children are confident in repeated phrases, refrains and predictions in familiar texts, the Talk for Writing approach will be introduced for oral retellings.

Once these early skills and self-perception are embedded, more structured approaches can begin to be utilised in the semi-formal plus environment. At this stage, the talk for writing approach will be extended and developed to offer pupils a structure through which they can further develop and embed sentence construction and early writing skills. This will be supported through the use of text maps using symbols.

Throughout the SF curriculum, those pupils who are at an appropriate developmental stage are taught to read through the teaching of initial sound recognition and oral blending (Phase 1). When confident in this stage, pupils then learn how to read words using Read write Inc. approach (Phase 2). A whole word approach to reading common exception words is also used and emphasised supported with Makaton actions.

Once children transition to a semi-formal+ pedagogy, they will begin to work with sentence types and comprehension question formats. High quality literature to support this will be carefully selected to create an appropriate book spine. In addition, functional writing will be emphasised to ensure that pupils are prepared for adult life. As above, appropriate accreditation will be sought, ranging from Entry Level 1 Functional Skills English through to Level 1 Functional Skills English.

## **Mathematics**

Mathematics teaching throughout the SF curriculum will embody the principles of active and exploratory learning based on concrete materials, moving into pictorial and abstract once children are developmentally ready.

Number rhymes and stories will form the basis of early mathematical teaching and will allow pupils to develop number awareness. From here, pupils will be taught in 1:1, small group and, where appropriate, whole class sessions to develop understanding of number in a stage appropriate manner. Environments will incorporate number activities to offer further exposure and opportunity for independent, exploratory learning. Opportunities for pupils to generalise skills and retrieve knowledge will be purposely built into learning to aid independence, fluency and maintenance. Statistics will be reinforced and taught through science and humanities. From year 9 onwards, pupils will continue to focus on number and shape, space and measure, applying it in a range of real-life scenarios. This will lead to pupils have the opportunity to gain a range of appropriate accredited functional skills qualifications.

### **Science and foundation subjects**

In both the semi-formal and semi-formal plus classrooms, programmes of study are based on P levels and the revised National Curriculum. Overarching subject plans ensure progress within curriculum areas such as science, humanities, physical education and personal education and learning intentions are mapped out and tracked on the TVEd semi-formal – semi-formal plus framework. In the early stages of the semi-formal curriculum (year 1/2), subjects will be taught through a combination of subject experiences and the teaching of key facts (including key vocabulary) with an emphasis on knowing more and doing more, building the foundations of the semi-formal curriculum. As pupils progress through the semi-formal curriculum, the teaching of key subject knowledge will be fully developed and pupils will know more, remember more and do more.

In order to support preparation for adulthood, from year 9 onwards, science and foundation subjects will be grouped according to the following areas; STEM, Social and Cultural, Physical Development, Creative Arts and Community Engagement. This will promote generalisation of skills and encourage pupils to consider concepts and ideas more deeply. The afternoon timetable will be dedicated to each of the five aspects, and named Explore and Expand curriculum, giving pupils dedicated time to become fully immersed in learning.

The Explore and Expand curriculum has been carefully selected and designed to ensure pupils with severe learning difficulties develop their expertise within a field of study. Preparation for adulthood and extensive personal development are the driving aims to support our pupils to live successful and purposeful lives where they continue to be enquiring and inquisitive.

Using academy produced Knowledge Organisers, teachers produce a half-termly forecast based on stage appropriate learning intentions ensuring appropriate interest for the age of the pupils in terms of content. Key therapeutic targets are mapped out onto appropriate frameworks.

### **Subject planning**

The pages below outline the subject areas and book spines for each cohort (Y1/2, Y3/4, Y5/6, Y7/8 and 9). Below that are the semi-formal/plus planning formats. Following this, English and mathematics blocks for each cohort are also mapped

All subjects are taught in a way that is meaningful, relevant and enjoyable for pupils. Subjects are delivered using a range of resources and media, ensuring that pupils are given a breadth of experience at a level that is appropriate to them. These are taught in a creative, practical way, supported in some areas through specialist weeks as well as trips and visits.

### **Assessment**

Regular assessments ensure that all learning and therapeutic intentions are appropriate, meaningful and ensure best progress. Alongside the planned assessments and data captures, staff are continuously assessing the progress of pupils to allow high quality provision and expectations using a range of relevant assessment tools (see Assessment, Recording and Reporting policy for assessment timetable and further detail)

## **Semi-formal/Semi-formal plus science and foundation subjects**

**Science and foundation subjects will be taught through a multi-sensory curriculum. Learning intentions will be taken from the TVEd Semi-Formal/Plus curriculum overview.**

### **Science**

All pupils learn science at a level that is appropriate to their developmental stage, not specific age. Relevant concepts are taken from earlier stages in the national curriculum but taught through age appropriate materials. For example; pupils in year 6 may learn about states of matter (taken from the Y3/4 program of study) through exploring the effects of dropping mints into fizzy liquids. Reversible and irreversible changes, which is a concept introduced in KS1, could be taught to older pupils through cooking linking it with life skills.

In science, the focus is the provision of an active, stimulating learning environment; use of step by step activities; relevant multi-sensory activities; effective communication; science equipment; legal and safety considerations and the support that can be offered by other adults. Activities in science have the following characteristics that help pupils with SEND to achieve success:

- they are about first-hand experience;
- knowledge and skills can be developed in small steps through practical activity;
- science activities can capture the imagination;
- working in groups encourages participation and interpersonal communication; and
- working on a variety of activities allows pupils to share their strengths and help each other

Lessons encourage pupils to explore and understand the world around them through a sensory and practical approach to learning. Choosing familiar contexts and providing appropriate activities motivates and stimulates pupils and helps them gain a better knowledge and understanding of the world. Use of the local environment provides pupils with a broad range of learning experiences.

Practical work is modified and adapted for pupils with physical difficulties and computer modelling is used where appropriate. Understanding cause and effect and how their actions can change this plays an important role in scientific discovery within the school. A multi-sensory approach gives pupils more opportunity to learn effectively in a way suited to their abilities. Pupils are encouraged to use all their senses, not only visual observations. Therefore, pupils with some sensory loss are more able to participate actively in the practical activity.

Practical work and language development are mutually supportive. Pupils are supported to develop their scientific language in the following ways:

- using the 'talk for writing' model when explaining experiments;
- hearing and using words in a meaningful context;
- sensory approaches to support scientific understanding. For example, pictures are not adequate to make clear words such as rough, hard, damp, greater than, elastic or insulating; and
- using a range of methods to communicate their scientific information, either orally or in a written form. It is not always necessary to write down results; and the use of a variety of different forms of recording; diagrams, discussion, drama, video, tape recording, photographs, drawings, paintings, zig zag books and on computers.

### **Design and technology**

Design and technology (DT) can be a particularly inspiring, rigorous and practical subject for pupils with SEND. Using creativity and imagination, pupils can design and make products that solve real and relevant

problems within a variety of contexts, considering their own and others' needs, wants and values. They acquire a broad range of subject knowledge and draw on disciplines such as mathematics, science, computing and art in order to design and make high quality prototypes and products for a wide range of users. They learn how to critique, evaluate and test their own ideas and the works of others. Projects are chosen that are relevant and appropriate to the needs of the pupils; for example, Y6 pupils making desk tidies for younger pupils and KS1 pupils mark make and draw pictures of themselves and create moving images using split pins and body parts.

Within the DT scheme of work there is a focus on health and well-being linked to food technology. Pupils learn about the nutritional values of a range of foods and how they impact on their development and future health. They are supported in understanding how to make the right choices for a balanced diet that is not restrictive. Food technology skills are introduced when pupils have developed the physical skills necessary to do this.

In both DT and food technology, involvement is carefully planned to allow all pupils to be included in different ways. As the academy does not cater for pupils with the most profound and multiple needs, all pupils are able to access some form of design and food technology whether this is cutting, mixing or pouring ingredients or working with tools that are appropriate to need. Pupils with the most severe disabilities use appropriate equipment and are supported by staff in the school. Specific equipment will be explored through collaborating with other special providers to look at any specific adaptations that can be made for individual needs.

### **Physical development/education**

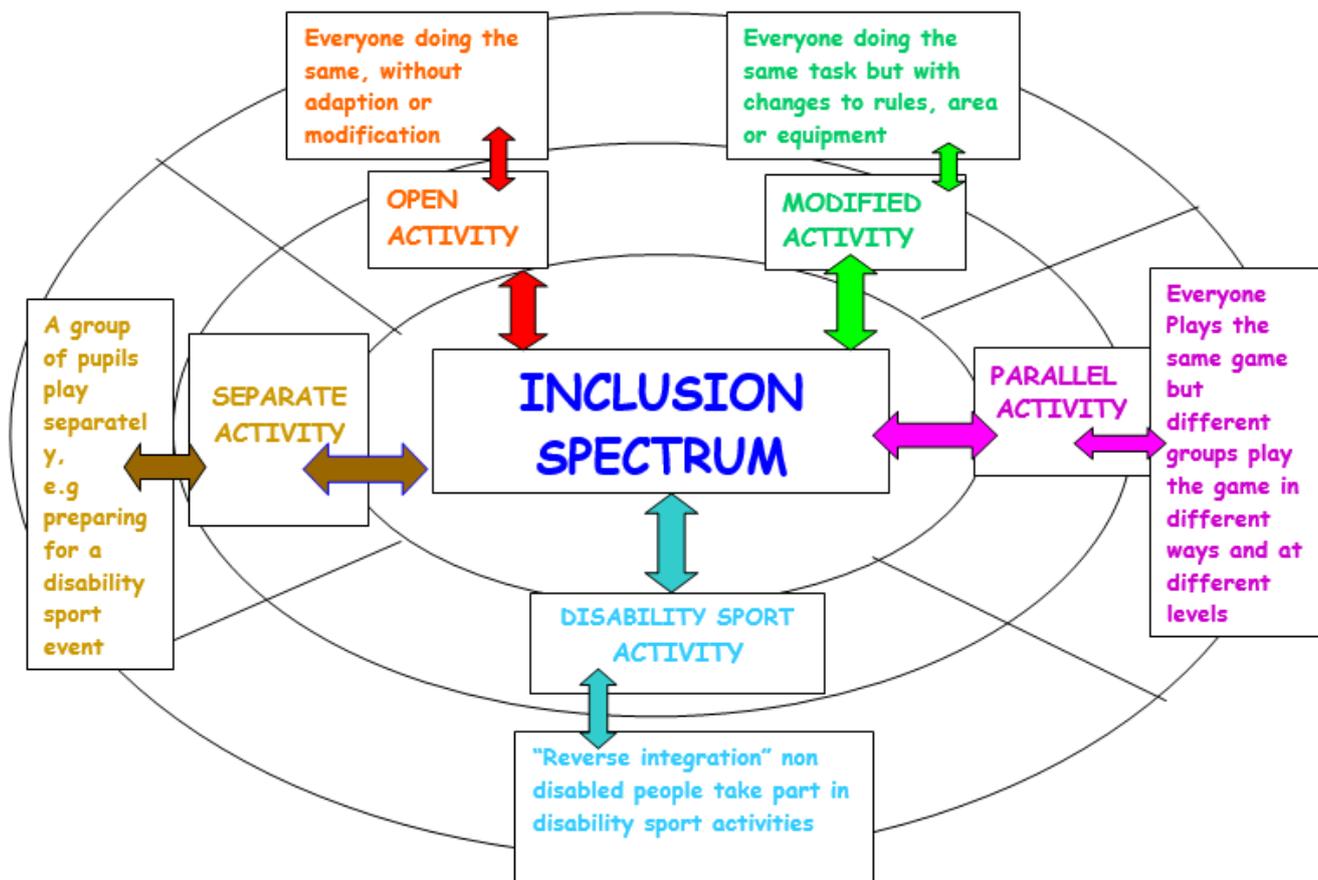
In EYFS and Informal classes the curriculum ensures all aspects of physical development are incorporated, including various sensory, therapeutic and gross/fine motor skills. Where appropriate, dependent on the levels of social interaction and understanding, some children from informal classes will join semi-formal/+ PE sessions.

In the semi-formal/+ curriculum, PE is taught discreetly and follows P levels and the National Curriculum, dependent on developmental stage. Additional sports and PE funding is used to compliment the teaching by allowing access to therapeutic equipment, spaces and activities.

Sport plays a major role in the inclusion of all groups in society. Therefore, at Discovery, all pupils, irrespective of age, gender, ability, race or SEND have a genuine and equal opportunity to participate in sport at all levels and in all roles.

Through the TVEd all ability sport and health policy based around the inclusion spectrum, pupils engage in a range of activities tailored to their individual and group needs. The inclusion spectrum is an activity-centred approach to the inclusion of pupils who have different abilities in physical education games programmes. In a games or physical activity context, inclusion can be achieved by changing the environment of the activity or the way in which the activity is presented.

The inclusion spectrum provides deliverers of PE and sport with options and different methods of delivery. By delivering activities differently we can balance the needs within the group. This avoids the situation where more able pupils benefit at the expense of those whose skills are still developing.



## Computing

Computing explores the areas of computer science, information technology and digital literacy. All pupils have access to a diverse computing curriculum at an appropriate level to their stage of development. At the earliest stages this may involve writing a set of commands for a bee-bot, pro-bot or roamer.

Pupils also explore the digital world around them understanding that, from the alarm that wakes them up each morning or the microwave they use for breakfast, to the more focused work and IT they use in the academy, computing has a huge impact on their everyday lives.

ICT is used and applied by all pupils for a range of purposes, such as:

- engaging with a range of stimuli, for example, tracking images across a computer screen or listening to pre-recorded sound effects;
- working with computer-generated models, for example, choosing from two options to complete an on-screen pattern;
- affecting the environment, for example, using a switch to start music, to attract the attention of others or to start a dialogue;
- promoting independence, for example, using a joystick to steer a powered wheelchair around the academy;
- enabling and improving communication, for example, taking photographs to improve presentation, using a speech output device to show choice or using email;
- providing a source of information, for example, using television, email, the internet (including access to the academy website) to develop lifelong skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> century; and
- using assistive technology to aid learning, communication and interaction, for example, using eye gaze to access the curriculum or to explore cause and effect.

When used correctly and matched to the needs and the capabilities of the pupil through comprehensive assessment, ICT can be a great equaliser. However, time needs to be devoted to this often on a 1:1 basis in

order to teach the appropriate skills. Therefore, the development of the ICT curriculum draws on the expertise of IT specialists in SEND. The curriculum is adapted not only in terms of content for each individual, but also in terms of accessibility for example through the use of switches, eye gaze and speech recognition software.

Through the semi-formal/+ curriculum, as well as continuing with basic computing awareness and programming simple robots, pupils begin to work on more complicated algorithms. Pupils also continue to explore the digital world around them as well as understanding how to use computers to create, store, retrieve and edit a variety of work.

Throughout the academy, there is a focus on e-safety delivered to parents but this becomes more explicitly taught to pupils as they move through KS1, KS2 and into KS3. One of the most important aspects of understanding in computing, particularly for more vulnerable pupils, is how the network of the web operates. Pupils are given a stage appropriate understanding of how to keep themselves safe online, for example by not sharing personal information or by knowing who they can tell if they think something is happening that worries them. The importance of parental involvement in keeping children safe online is also crucial. This understanding of e-safety is vital in the current digital age in order to allow children safe and secure access to digital content.

ICT is used and applied by all pupils for a range of purposes in order to aid access to learning and maximise progress.

### **Humanities**

We want geography to inspire in pupils a curiosity and fascination about the world and its people. Geography is about the people and places around us and in order to develop geographical understanding, learning begins with the pupils' immediate environment and the people who are important to them. Learning about their homes, their journeys to school, the physical and human features around their school and the jobs that the significant people in their lives do fosters an understanding of geographical concepts.

As they progress, teaching equips pupils with knowledge about the differences between places and people. Pupils explore natural and human environments closer to home through trips and visits before looking at the differences between their local environment and those in other parts of the world. As pupils' understanding deepens, their growing knowledge about the world will help them to understand the interaction between physical and human processes and how we as people can change this. For example, understanding how building more houses means there are fewer green spaces around us or how planting flowers can make the school grounds more attractive.

A high-quality history education helps pupils gain a coherent knowledge and understanding of Britain's past and that of the wider world. We want to inspire pupils' curiosity to know more about the past. Teaching gives pupils the skills to ask questions, think critically and explore different sources of evidence. History helps pupils to understand the complexity of people's lives, the process of change, the diversity of societies and relationships between different groups, as well as their own identity and the challenges of their time. History also allows pupils to develop their understanding of time, sequence and progress.

The concept of the past can often be challenging to pupils with SEND. Therefore, historical understanding is introduced at a very personal level. Exploration into their own history and how they have grown, developed and changed is explored through personal timelines created from the pupil's own possessions and photographs. This offers pupils a concrete and practical context in which to explore a quite abstract concept; the passing of time. Pupils with SEND can sometimes find sequencing events in time a difficult area, cross-curricular history and mathematics can support this offering a different context in which to rehearse skills. Visual timetables in every classroom linked to images of clocks (when ready) supports in the development of this concept.

In order to comprehend the concept of historical figures, pupils learn about current famous names and personalities developing an understanding of why they are famous and what it is they have done to become a public figure. This is related to the historical figures they are exploring and how their actions made them famous in their time.

As with all areas, careful planning and thought to the materials used to present concepts ensures that learning is accessible to pupils throughout their educational journey at the academy.

### **Creative arts curriculum**

A well-developed music and art programme is central to a sensory, physical and therapeutic approach. All pupils are encouraged to express their innermost thoughts and feelings through art, music, literature and crafts; exercising imagination, inspiration, intuition and insight.

Discovery is a creative school with high aspiration in the use of the creative curriculum to support therapeutic as well as academic development. The creative curriculum offers a way of developing their creativity as a means of self-expression, encourages pupils to explore their ideas and movements, the opportunity to develop workshops and performances which combine dance, music and art. Through engaging with a range of specialist artists pupils are offered a wide variety of creative experiences both on and off site.

### **Music**

In line with curriculum 14, the music curriculum gives all pupils opportunities to make and listen to music from a wide range of musical genres and using different musical instruments. Pupils learn to sing and have the chance to play and experience musical instruments, learning how to play instruments such as xylophones and glockenspiels.

This curriculum is adapted to suit the needs and abilities of each learner but allows the same broad and balanced curriculum entitlement that all pupils receive. Music brings people together and allows all pupils to express their creativity whether that is through singing, use of instruments or by listening to and responding to what they hear with words, movements or gestures. Adaptations to musical instruments are made to allow pupils with physical disabilities to use them such as attaching instruments to gloves with Velcro. A range of different areas and resources can be used to enable musical exploration such as the use of sensory paddles and switches to change the mood of a sensory room by changing and selecting different music. The use of iPads in music allows pupils to record, listen to and develop their musical enjoyment. By continually seeking out new ways to be innovative and exploring new ways to break down the environmental barriers, all pupils, no matter the severity of need can be engaged in enriching musical activities and experiences from a range of musical genres and times.

Music has been shown to improve emotional health and well-being and is naturally multi-sensory through sound, vibration, touch and vision. Music allows pupils to express their learning and emotions in a different way and can also support communication. Music can be a powerful tool in engaging pupils who would otherwise find it difficult to express their emotions. TVEd has already held a number of successful performing arts events that have included pupils from each academy in mainstream and SEND provision that have given some of the most vulnerable pupils a voice. Parents and the local community have also been involved in these events. Music is a hugely powerful tool in bringing together a diverse range of people and children from across the Tees Valley. Music and sensory drama at Discovery incorporates the use of sensory spaces and opportunities to work with a range of music specialists.

## **Art**

Art, craft and design embody some of the highest forms of human creativity. A high-quality art and design education engages, inspires and challenges pupils, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to experiment, invent and create their own works of art, craft and design.

As pupils progress, they think about art and artists and the contribution they have made to the culture and creativity of our nation. As with all areas of the curriculum, for pupils with SEND, this is stage appropriate and personalised. Artists will be carefully chosen to allow sensory exploration of art. For example, Giuseppe Arcimboldo offers a wealth of imagery using the natural world, fruit and flowers which offers many opportunities to teachers and pupils. Similarly, Andy Goldsworthy uses natural materials to create sculptures, an art form which is easily made accessible to a range of needs and abilities. Artists who use digital imagery also offer another way to adapt and include all children in artistic endeavours and understanding.

As well as following an art curriculum, art is used as a form of therapy allowing pupils another medium through which to explore, express and understand their emotions and encourage pupils to look at their work, for example using a large piece of foil or sand paper as the art surface. Pupils paint, draw with crayons, or collage on these surfaces providing extra sensory input. Using a stand-up table mirror or an actual window with window crayons, window chalk, or window markers, pupils can draw a reflection of themselves or mark make part of the outdoor scenery. All art work allows freedom of expression and the development of creativity. Finding a range of materials and tools with which pupils can work, and being creative with the surface on which they work or the permanence of their art, opens up opportunities in art.

Staff within TVEd already have training and expertise in the area of drawing therapy and are available to the Discovery Special Academy to introduce and develop such therapies through practice and staff training. Art therapy offers a non-threatening environment in which to explore feelings and emotions without adult judgement.

### **Year 9 Explore and Expand curriculum**

**The Explore and Expand Curriculum has been conceived to enable pupils to continue to develop their knowledge and skills of foundation subjects, such as history and art, plus broaden their experiences of a wide range of learning to support preparation for adulthood.**

#### **STEM**

Explore and Expand STEM incorporates science, D&T and computing. It aims to develop skills in:

- Problem solving
- Collaboration
- Fostering creativity
- Critical thinking
- Logical thinking

It also seeks to provide pupils with relevant skills to promote employability by giving them future proof skills that feed into a range of work places.

#### **Social and Cultural**

Explore and Expand Social and Cultural incorporates history, geography and RE. It aims to develop knowledge and understanding of the world around us, whilst also encouraging pupils to take an interest in their own and different cultures and communities. We aim to introduce pupils to significant people, places and events, opening their eyes to a wider world.

### **Physical Development**

Explore and Expand Physical Development incorporates PE, sensory/therapy and dance. It aims to empower pupils to lead healthy lives, both physically and emotionally, and give them the tools to independently focus on their own well-being in preparation for adulthood.

### **Creative Arts**

Explore and Expand Creative Arts incorporates music, art, film and drama. It aims to give pupils the opportunity to explore a range of arts and media, whilst also encouraging them to be creative, inquisitive and expressive.

### **Community Engagement**

Explore and Expand Community Engagement includes careers, enterprise, volunteering, supporting our community and work experience. It aims to support pupils to have an awareness of community and how they can contribute, preparing them for adulthood and supporting them to lead fulfilling lives. It aims to support pupils to become confident, productive and valuable citizens.

## Whole Academy Areas

### Spiritual, moral, social and cultural

SMSC is provided in all formal and informal settings and permeates every aspect of the academy's work. It is embedded in the culture of the academy, modelled by staff and pupils throughout the day, taught formally in personal, social, health, economic (PSHE) and religious education (RE) lessons and recognised and celebrated alongside academic achievement. Through the academy's SMSC curriculum, British values are promoted. Themes and topics are planned out in the overview of the curriculum and are mapped into medium and short term planning. The following outlines the vision and values that the SMSC curriculum embodies at Discovery.

The curriculum includes:

**self-knowledge:** an awareness of oneself in terms of thoughts, feelings, emotions, responsibilities and experiences; a growing understanding and acceptance of individual identity; an ability to build up relationships with others. Some pupils will need to be helped to understand who they are and how they are separate from other people. Pupils will be helped to understand what they are good at, through praise, reward and celebration. For many pupils, the PSHCE curriculum will focus on aspects of self-knowledge: from the very practical aspects of *who am I?* to more fundamental questions of *what am I good at? what do I still need help with? and how can I move forward?*

A key area of our work is the development of positive relationships. Although most SEND pupils can make positive relationships with the adults who reach out to them and empathise with them, they often find it harder to develop friendships with peers. Therefore, in order to help pupils to develop the confidence and skills needed to form positive relationships, members of staff model key behaviours throughout academy life. These skills are also taught in PSHE, supported through group resilience sessions, social skills activities and promoted on the playground. Through these supported activities, pupils are given strategies to develop relationships with their peers.

**Feelings and emotions:** the sense of being moved by beauty or kindness; hurt by injustice or aggression; a growing awareness of when it is important to control emotions and feelings, and how to learn to use such feelings as a source of growth. The academy uses specialist resources to help pupils understand their feelings and emotions. Pupils are helped to express feelings and emotions through a range of activities. The use of a nurturing approach as well as music and rebound therapy (rebound once we have moved to the new building in 2022) supports individual pupils to express, understand and manage their emotions.

Teachers and assistants receive specialist training in supporting pupils who have complex emotional needs linked to their medical diagnoses. Pupils are supported through positive, caring relationships underpinned by a desire to promote independence.

Further skills that help pupils at the academy to become team workers, reflective learners and independent enquirers are embedded in the subjects of the national curriculum as well as the SMSC programme of study. Developing these skills helps pupils with learning difficulties to work with others, improve their own learning and performance, and solve problems.

**Respect and tolerance:** this is the understanding that everyone is different and hold their own beliefs and values. If these beliefs and values do not directly harm or intentionally hurt others then they should be equally valued. Activities allow pupils to respect one another and to learn to support each other. This allows them to begin to understand how we can live in harmony together, respecting one another's cultures and traditions.

As part of this area of the curriculum, for pupils in upper KS2 who are developmentally able to understand and respond, there will be a focus on keeping safe that will include:

- substance education;
- sex and relationships education;
- e-safety; and
- community safety.

As part of the SMSC curriculum the academy has a pupil council, allowing pupils to be included in the direction and development of the academy's environment and enrichment activities. Pupils attend regular meetings with a lead member of staff where they discuss any relevant issues and areas that they would like to be developed in the academy. Pupils work together to put ideas into practice supporting fund raising within the academy and for external charities making close links with local communities to support and help those around them. In this way, important, fundamental British values can be taught in a real-life context.

RE is taught through both the SMSC curriculum and subject work and teaches children about the world views and faiths of others and about the concepts of understanding and tolerance. Each topic incorporates links to RE, British values and SMSC education. These are written into the overviews for each key stage. The RE co-ordinator will review this annually outlining the specific RE areas to cover in future planning.

### **British Values**

Ofsted outline fundamental British Values:

- Democracy
- Individual Liberty
- The Rule of Law
- Mutual Respect
- Tolerance and respect of individuals and diversity

These areas form part of the everyday ethos and values at the academy as outlined below.

**Democracy** – We make decisions together and have our own opinions. We work together to make choices and influence change. When we are ready, we learn about democracy in our society and hold elections for our pupil council.

**Individual Liberty** – We can make our own choices and are encouraged to do this in a variety of ways (including PECS). We understand that we are all allowed to make choices as long as they don't harm or hurt others. We learn to understand there are consequences to our actions.

**The Rule of Law** – We have academy 'Steps to Success' that help us to make the right choices. When we are ready, we learn that this helps us in our journey to becoming independent adults and about the rules of our country.

**Mutual Respect** – We work together to help each other and learn about relationships. We value each other.

**Tolerance and respect of individuals and diversity** – We learn about the beliefs and traditions of other people. We know that we are all different and value this, ensuring our academy environment and resources reflect and celebrate the diversity within the academy and beyond. We also understand that we do not act in way that hurts or harms other people.

At Discovery Special Academy we also value the importance of taking care of our environment and this is reflected in the academy design and the spaces that are created within this. We learn about ways we can help to look after our environment and about the natural world around us.

We also value the links we can make with the community. You can see the work we have done with the local community displayed in and around our academy. This supports British Values and teaches us the importance of helping others.

### **Preparing for adulthood**

The themes of preparing for adulthood underpin all aspects of the curriculum as we advocate equal life chances for all pupils as they move into adulthood.

Preparing for adulthood means preparing for:

- Higher education and/or employment – including exploring different employment options such as volunteering, enterprise activities and supported employment, alongside opportunities for paid employment and self-employment.
- Independent living – this means young people having choice, control and freedom over their lives and the support they have, their accommodation and living arrangements, including supported living.
- Community inclusion – having friends, participating in and contributing to the local community.
- Good health – being as healthy as possible, including physical health and mental well-being.

We recognise that preparing for adulthood should begin as early as possible to support pupils and families to have high aspirations for the future. Therefore, the curriculum at Discovery Special Academy is designed to develop skills for adulthood throughout all pathways in ways that are relevant to the stage of development of each pupil.

The table below shows some of the ways the preparing for adulthood themes are approached within the academy.

### **Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)**

At Discovery Special Academy we believe that ‘Through Discovery we Grow’. This is at the heart of everything we do and so we believe that Preparation for Adulthood begins through exploration and investigation and the development of focus and attention. With this in mind, we introduce our students, from EYFS onwards, to a range of activities designed to stimulate intrigue and interest into the world of work and develop the communication skills, confidence, resilience and problem-solving skills needed to be successful. This builds to incorporate a wide-ranging careers programme to guide our students through their choices in life.

Throughout key stage 3 and 4 careers and enterprise skills will be interwoven through all curriculum routes, with some focused delivery and also the themes and skills of careers and enterprise linked into wider curriculum learning. This will consist of employability and enterprise skills including:

- personal organisation
- personal presentation
- communication skills
- self-help and independence skills
- team work
- enterprise projects
- creativity
- problem solving

Work experience opportunities for all pupils within the academy will form an important aspect of the careers provision. This could include helping in the dining hall, the office and the academy grounds. External work experience opportunities will take place throughout the secondary years on an individual needs basis

## Whole Academy Therapeutic Interventions

Central to the success of the curriculum above is the integration of therapeutic approaches. While this has been discussed in each key stage there are approaches and pedagogies that will arch across the whole academy. These include:

- Symbol Exchange Communication
- Makaton
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)
- Intensive Interaction
- Sensory diets and Sensory integration programs (working in partnership with Treetops OT)
- Sensory stories and multi-sensory approaches
- Visual supports (timetabling, schedules, key rings)
- Objects of reference
- Inclusive technology (assistive technology, switches, eye gaze)
- Fun with Food
- Proprioceptive massage
- TAC PAC
- SCERTS
- Movement programmes/ Sensory Circuits

All therapies are considered an integral part of pupil's education and are carefully planned using specialist knowledge in a transdisciplinary model. The multidisciplinary team works together to provide a holistic approach encouraging independence, opportunities for greater access to the curriculum and the development of children's physical and social wellbeing.

As the academy develops, it will also offer therapeutic enrichment activities including access to rebound therapy and light and sound therapy during holidays and at weekends. These enhanced therapies will be available to pupils and families who attend the academy in the first instance and then on a broader basis to others.

By offering a variety of experiences, pupils' horizons will be broadened, again impacting on their ability to access the wider curriculum. Enrichment also develops self-esteem, personal resilience and commitment to learning as well as cultural aspects of the curriculum. Taking part in competitive events allows pupils to experience success and challenge in a controlled and safe environment. Parents can celebrate the achievements of their children.

### **Sensory Circuits**

Sensory circuits are physical activities that help to alert, organise and then relax the senses of the pupils so that they are ready to take part in class activities. Participating in a short sensory motor circuit is a great way to alert or calm pupils and settle them into the academy day.

Sensory circuits are available to all pupils through personalised timetables. Timetables also allow pupils to access regular sensory input throughout the day as required including planned activities that support a sensory diet (see examples below).

### **Aim of circuits**

- To focus concentration in readiness for learning
- Encourage the development of sensory processing skills
- Support the development of self-regulating arousal levels

Areas	English and Communication	Mathematics
Straw activities. Straws and tubes of different widths and lengths. Children blow through the straws to move objects such as cotton balls, ping pong balls, styrofoam peanuts.	Textures – developing language, description. Hide objects in rice/dried beans/sand. Children close eyes (allow to look if needs to at first) and see if they can find the other texture e.g. pom poms, photograph. Write a caption about how the materials felt.	Brushes and water/chalks on the floor and walls for number formation and mark making, record numbers as far as they can, write number sentences.
Obstacle course – using the equipment from movement skills make a course. Incorporate numbers/letters e.g. along the course have numbers 1 - 3, stop when they find the first one in the sequence, repeat till all numbers are found and sequenced (progress to 5 and then 10).	Straw activities. Straws and tubes of different widths and lengths. Children blow through the straws to move objects such as cotton balls, ping pong balls, styrofoam peanuts. (set out for after children have finished writing activity – improves posture, facilitates divergence of eyes and rests eyes (good for after computer work)	Dough – hide objects in dough, count the objects, find the number and make the number from dough. Hide numbers in dough and pupils say number hidden.
Pop up tent ball pool. Children find different objects in the tent and name/ sort. Hide letters of names and action words, find the letters and make the words. Find topic related objects and describe/discuss.	Vertical surfaces for letter/word formation. Use large chalks on the wall outside and white board outside. (Cursive script)	Trays with different textures in such as sand, rice, jelly etc. Hide smiley faces in, how many smiley faces can the children find?
Trampoline – bounce only when you hear a clap, bounce to a steady beat. Try to stay on the same spot on the trampoline with each jump (build up to this!)	Follow a simple recipe such as monster face sandwich, tortilla pizza, fruit salad, taste the food as you make it, talk about the textures, taste. Encourage all children to put food to mouth if not willing to eat. Make into a tasting game, have foods hidden, very small pieces and children get an explorer point if taste.	Wall push ups, or have the children see if they can push against the wall to move it – count the number of push ups, can they do a given number of push ups?
Papier mache, clay, finger painting, hand prints. Encourage children to put hands in different textures.	Ball pool. Children find different objects in the tent and sort. Hide letters of names and action words, find the letters and make the words	Use large magnetic numbers and smiley faces or animals on a vertical surface such as the heater to order numbers, make sentences, match numbers and amounts.

### Sensory Garden

Pupils have access to a sensory garden and this allows opportunity for free play and choices for exploration and learning. Providing school grounds with sensory stimulation can encourage mental development, health improvements, emotional growth and social integration, in addition to increasing the learning motivation of the pupil, especially through being in contact with animals and plants.

### Trips and residential visits

Trips and visits form an essential part of the academy curriculum. Pupils will be offered a variety of trips and experiences linked both to topic work and as part of their social and emotional development. All trips and visits are carefully planned and organised with accessibility of venues and areas considered. These are dependent upon the topic and focus of the class and will be decided upon by the class teacher each term. Some of these additional educational experiences may take place on the academy site through specialist companies such as 'Zoo Lab' who bring a range of animals into the academy for pupils to handle or visiting artists or drama groups who re-enact events from history.

From year 5, pupils will be offered the opportunity to attend a residential visit at an outward bound centre. This will be at a centre that is fully accessible and has staff who are able to support the pupil's needs.