

ASH LEA SCHOOL

# CURRICULUM



September 2020

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# Introduction

## The Ash Lea Curriculum

If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn.

The changes to the curriculum at Ash Lea began in 2013-2014 and came about because staff felt that the National Curriculum didn't meet the individual needs of the pupils, and the assessment criteria of P levels and National Curriculum levels was not the most appropriate measure of progress and attainment. As part of the desire to develop a child centred curriculum, an INSET day was planned led by Peter Imray who co-wrote Curricula for Teaching Children and Young People with Severe or Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties. He outlined how 'those with SLD learn entirely differently to neuro-typical conventionally developing learners, and as such we are bound to teach them differently and teach them different things.' Alongside this, the school invested in developing play through training from Totem Pole. Gradually the curriculum changed and evolved and this curriculum document reflects the changes we have made.

Penny Lacey, an eminent figure in the field of special education, who worked to create a new curriculum based on a personalised approach to learning, suggested that a curriculum for young people with learning difficulties needs to be constructed around the "twin pillars" of "communication" and "cognition". There needs to be a "move away from a National Curriculum perspective to a developmental perspective" she argues, with "communication" and "cognition" being the principal things which are explicitly taught. For many young people with learning difficulties, subjects such as history and music should serve to provide a context for learning "communication" and "cognition" rather than represent the focus of learning. However, the extent to which different learners with learning disabilities engage with the National Curriculum needs to vary, according to their attainment levels and nature of their SEN. In order to provide pupils across Ash Lea with experiences that are relevant, interesting and challenging, and to identify opportunities for progression, we have adopted a curriculum structure which encompasses 3 broad levels: 'pre-formal', 'semi-formal' and 'formal'. These terms, originally coined by Whitefield SAC (2009), offer a means of making subtle distinctions between not only groups of learners but also the degree of curriculum formalisation they will experience in either building the prerequisites for, or working within, a more 'conventional' National Curriculum type approach.

The levels are not defined by age, but by need and achievement; pupils are therefore able to move flexibly between levels at any point during their school career. Each level covers skills, knowledge and understanding across a range of areas of learning, and they are blended together, so as to facilitate a 'learning flow' between the three. Individual learning

needs are further met through bespoke intervention programmes for enhanced personalisation.

**The Pre-formal Curriculum:** For learners with Profound and Multiple Difficulties (PMLD), working between P1 and P4, and at a developmental level of between 0 and 18 months.

**The Semi-Formal Curriculum:** For learners with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), working broadly between P4 and end of KS1 expectations.

**The Formal Curriculum:** For learners with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) working at end of year 1 expectations or above in the National Curriculum.

Because of the personalised approach to the curriculum we are able to meet the needs of all our pupils. All pupils across the school have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) with targets based on the outcomes in their Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP). These are written and reviewed twice a year in consultation with parents and other professionals. Some pupils receive additional funding e.g. Pupil Premium, Post 16 Bursary and the impact of any interventions funded through these is monitored to ensure that they support progress.

## Curriculum Overview

### **Pre-Formal Level (P1-P4)**

#### **Learning to Learn**

Pupils at very early levels of development (typically assessed at P1 to P3) access a curriculum that enables them to develop a sense of security in the school environment, which is comprehensible and meaningful to them. The focus is upon enabling them to establish positive interactive relationships with others, to proactively explore the world around them, gaining environmental control skills. All pupils will be given maximum opportunities to achieve the highest level of independence possible.

### **Semi-Formal Level (P4-End of year 1 expectations)**

#### **A Life Skills Based Programme**

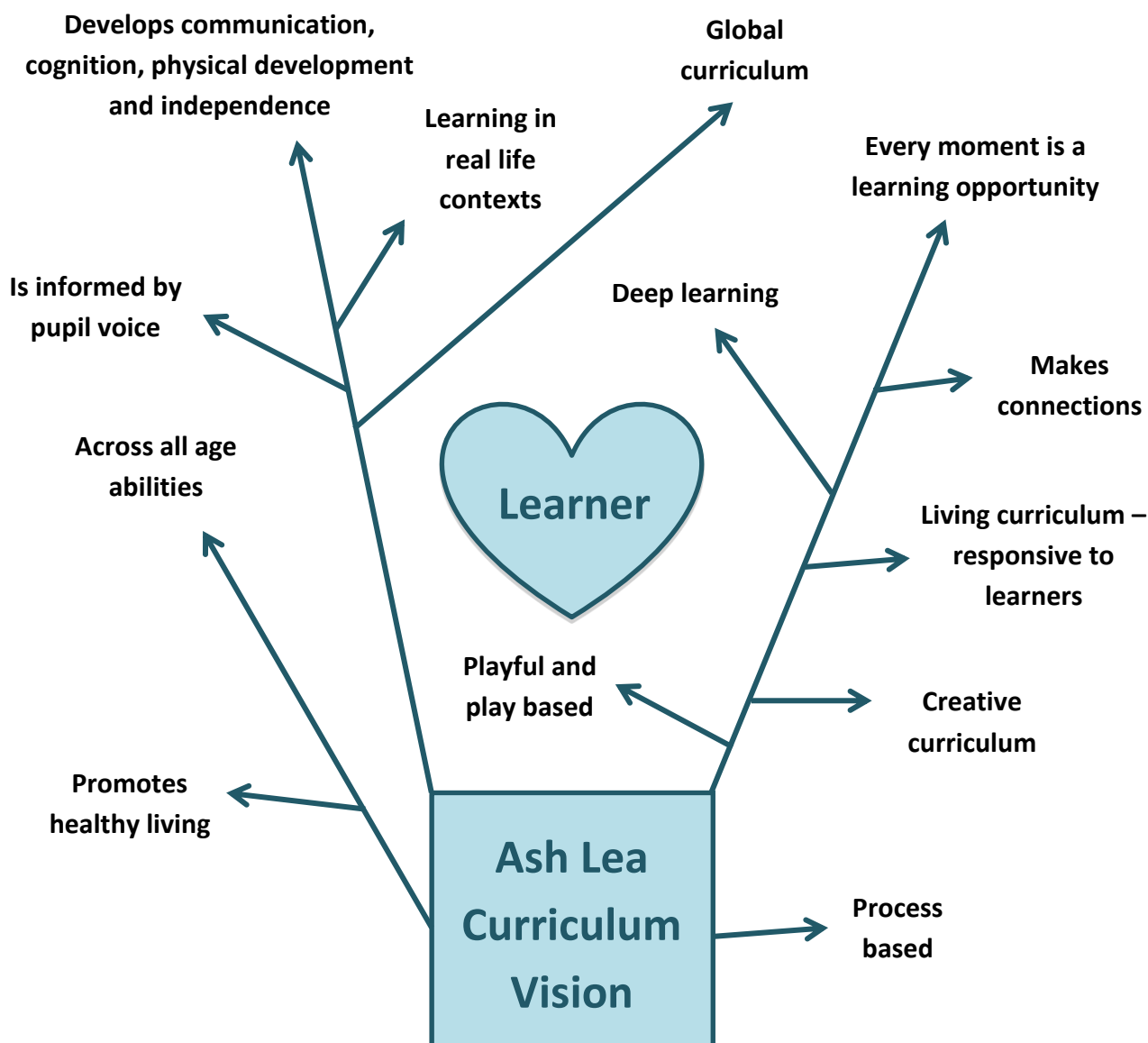
Pupils following our semi-formal curriculum learn best when learning is related to their own experience. Some may learn through play; others will learn more effectively through functional activities, and yet others will respond well to a topic-based approach. The curriculum content echoes the ground covered by the Early Years Foundation Stage (2013) since this framework is not confined to those below the age 5, but rather, extends right across the school where pupils are functioning at P Levels 4 to end of year 1 expectations. However, the teaching approach reflects the age and learning style of the pupils concerned.

### **Formal Level (End of year 1 expectations +)**

#### **An Adapted National Curriculum, Emphasising Life Need**

Pupils experiencing our formal curriculum (those operating within the National Curriculum) access the range of National Curriculum subjects for their Key Stage, modified in the light of their developmental level and special educational needs. Specialist areas (the 'additional curriculum') are covered both within National Curriculum subjects and in discrete lessons (e.g. a pupil may be withdrawn to work on visual perceptual skills or independent mobility). Life skills and independence skills will also form a large part of the curriculum. As the term 'formal' implies, there is a high level of structure. We nevertheless avoid making the formal curriculum too abstract; teachers ensure that learning is linked to practical activities and consolidated and applied in practical sessions. Older pupils working at the formal level may pursue accreditation pathways (e.g. Entry Level and Level 1 courses and exams); they follow the appropriate syllabus in each exam subject.

## Curriculum Vision

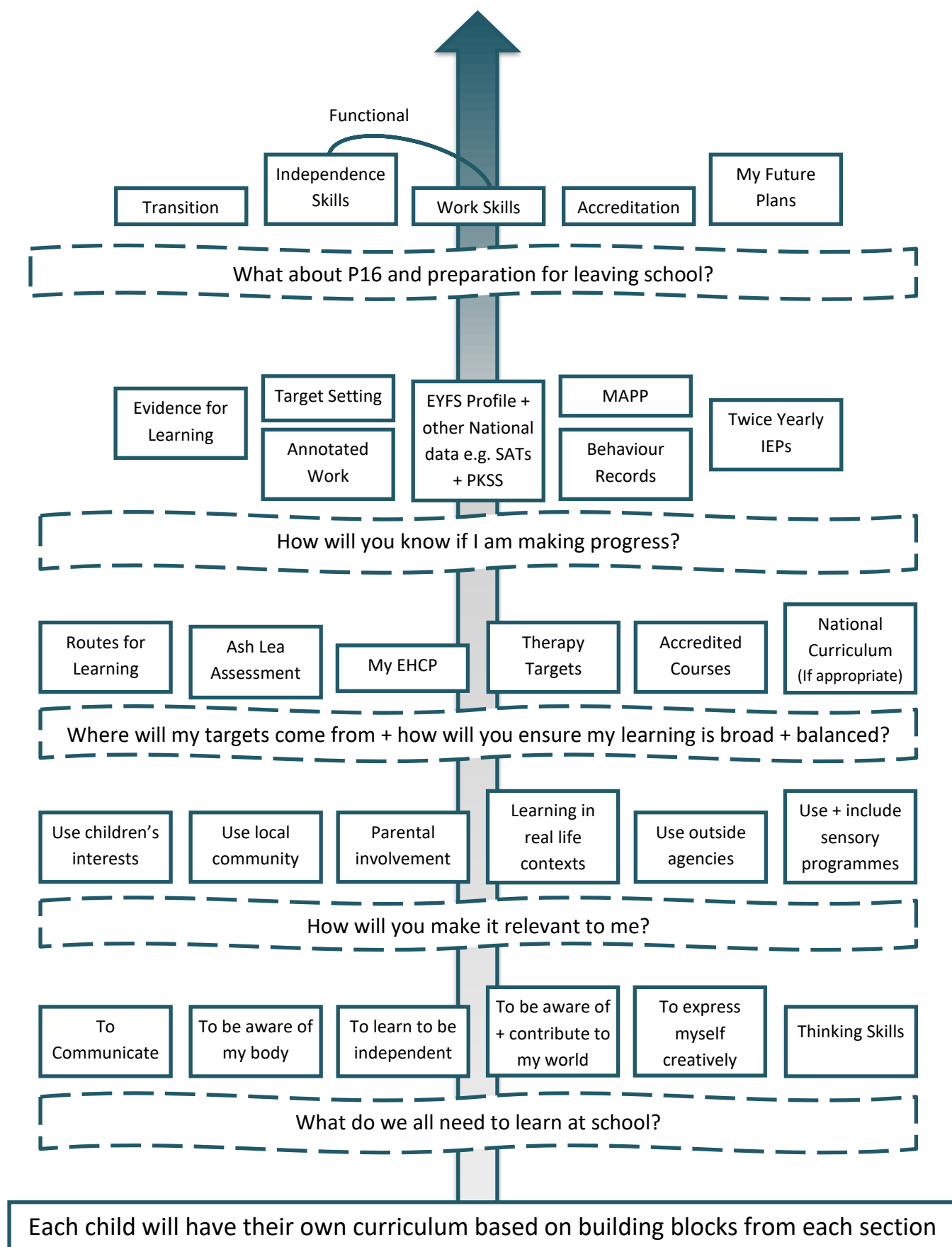


## Chronological Progression

There needs to be breadth of learning throughout pupils' time at school, especially if they will be staying within the same learning cohort (pre-formal etc.). There should be variation in experiences / learning within a topic, whilst ensuring that the learning is developmentally appropriate.

Each pupil drives the direction and content of their own 'curriculum'. Whilst there may be whole school / phase / learning cohort 'topics', the planning, learning and delivery may differ between classes. Priorities based on IEP targets, EHC outcomes, pupils' age, need, motivation and learning style will help build the curriculum.

# Curriculum Progression





# EYFS

Pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are usually in mixed key stage classes due to small numbers of children of this age in school. They follow the statutory EYFS framework (which also forms the basis of the semi-formal curriculum).

## The areas of learning and development

There are seven areas of learning and development that shape the EYFS programme. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. These three areas, the prime areas, are:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development.

Children are also supported in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

## Characteristics of Effective Learning

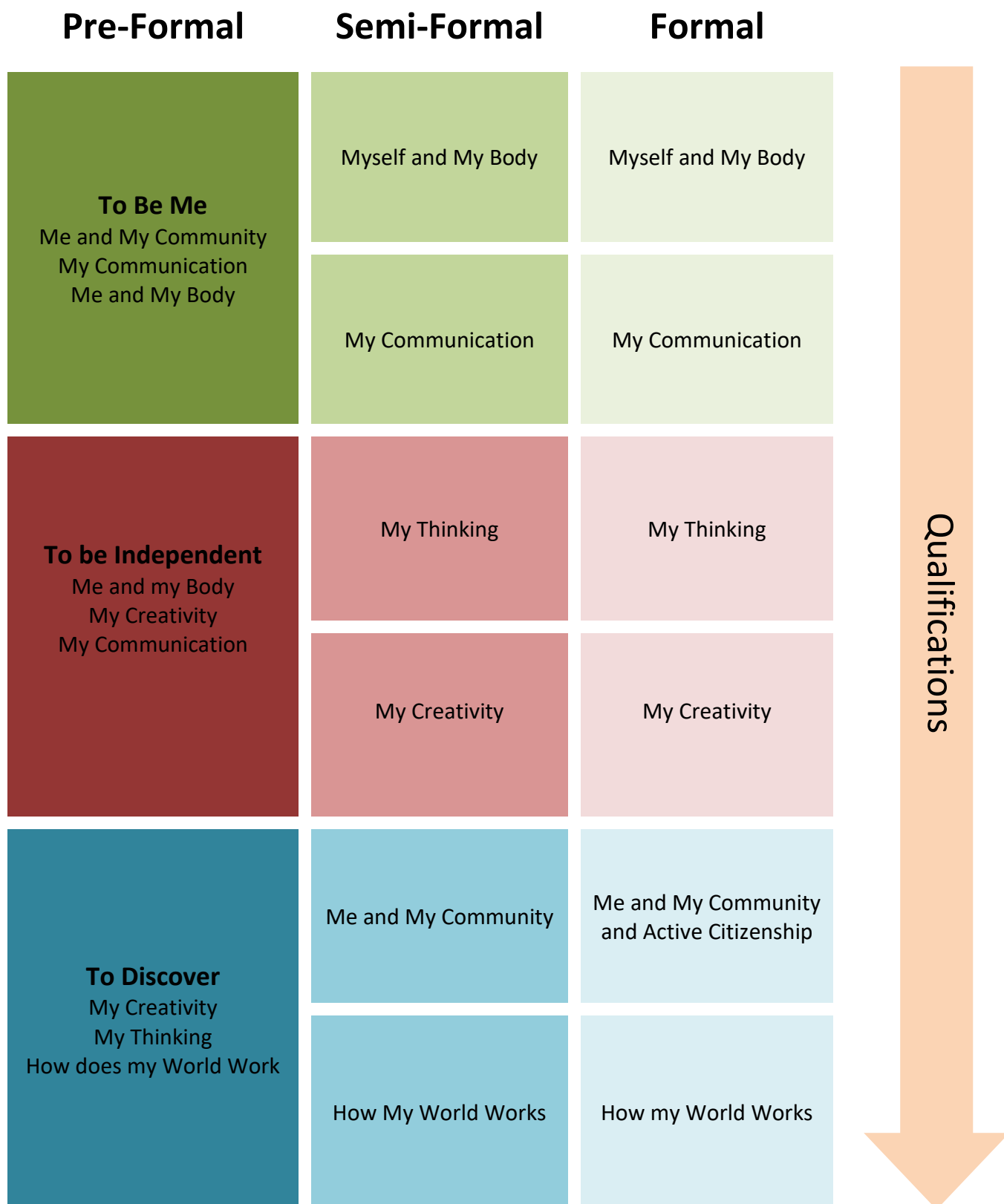
Throughout the EYFS curriculum, staff reflect on the characteristics of effective learning, which include:

- 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; and
- Creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

These characteristics of effective learning continue to be central to the Ash Lea curriculum paths when pupils move on from EYFS.



# Curriculum Map



# Pre-Formal Curriculum

## Curriculum Mind Map - Pre-Formal Learners



## Approaches to teaching and learning, we believe our pupils need

### To be ready to learn...

It is essential that our pupils are comfortable and ready to learn. To enable this, we have fewer structured 'taught' sessions to ensure that pupils' sensory, physical or care needs can be met and that our pupils are as functional as possible. We work with physiotherapists and occupational therapists to establish what this is.

### To be as independent as possible...

Our pupils need support in many areas of their lives, however they need to be skilfully supported to be as independent as they can be. Independence is often read as independence in self-care skills. These are of course valuable and desirable, but our first goal is to enable pupils to be independent in their play, actions and discoveries.

*"Independence is not the ability to conform but rather the ability to take control over the experiences that go on around them, this is vital for our pupils in the pre-formal curriculum where they are likely to have limitations on their ability to be functionally independent in many areas" - Five Acre Wood School.*

For our pupils to develop and progress it is important that their actions need to be their own. Our staff are there to enable this. We need to ensure that our pupils do not develop 'learned helplessness'. This moment of discovery needs to be enabled and allowed.

*"When you teach a child something, you take away forever his chance of discovering it for himself". –Jean Piaget*

Whilst striving to achieve we need to allow our pupils to make mistakes in order to develop problem solving and persistence.

### Time...

In order for the moment of discovery to come and real learning to occur, our pupils need us to wait and be given the time and space to process and discover.

Our pupils are given an appropriate amount of time for their learning needs, not only in readiness to learn, but within each action.

### Consolidation...

Repetition is key to building our pupils' skills and understanding; within the structure of the day, sessions throughout the term and within the session itself. 'Burst-pause' and its repetition within most sessions give pupils the opportunity to communicate their

preference. In order to progress, our pupils need to revisit activities frequently to consolidate their learning.

### **Chronological Progression...**

There needs to be breadth of learning throughout pupils' time at school, especially if they will be staying within the same learning cohort (pre-formal etc.) There should be variation in experiences / learning within a topic, whilst ensuring that the learning is developmentally appropriate.

Each pupil drives the direction and content of their own 'curriculum'. Whilst they may be whole school / phase / learning cohort topics, the planning, learning and delivery may differ between classes. Priorities based on IEP targets, EHC outcomes, pupils' age, need, motivation and learning style will help build their curriculum.

### **Appropriate and meaningful communication...**

Communication is at the heart of everything we do. The curriculum includes frequent opportunities for the pupils to develop their communication skills, from being reactive to finding alternative ways to communicate with intent.

Being able to communicate our thoughts and intentions and to be responded to in an appropriate way, is one of our basic human needs. For our pupils, however, there are many and varied barriers to being able to achieve this. The complex needs that many of our pupils face, means that they may not be able to develop language skills in the same way as a 'neuro-typically' developing child.

Each individual's communication pathway will be unique. Pupils' communication styles and preferences are assessed and developed, with help and guidance from the Speech and Language team, so that communicative opportunities can be maximised. Vocalisations, movements, gestures and other non-verbal methods of communication will always be acknowledged as it is from here that pupils may be able to develop the building blocks for more formal methods of communication.

Some pupils will have great success with low tech ways to communicate and others with high tech equipment. For some, it will possibly be a combination of the two. Intensive Interaction, Partner Assisted Scanning, eye gaze technology are all part of the palette of methods used to enable expression.

It is vital that, whilst working with our pupils, staff use language in a clear and succinct way. We always assume that, even when our pupils appear to be working at the earliest developmental levels, that they understand nothing and everything: We use key words, objects and environmental cues of reference and ensure appropriate processing time. At the same time, our language is always respectful (talking to our pupils in the first person and without talking 'about them') and we don't shy away from using complex language within the learning (choosing complex pieces of literature to represent during our 'Story' sessions, for example).

Moreover, we endeavour to understand where our pupils are 'at' to ensure that we don't ascribe qualities to responses that are unjustified or untrue.

*"Communicating with learners at their level, not just physically by working with learners on the floor or kneeling down if they are in wheelchairs, but also remembering that language can be a means of control by those who have it and against those who don't if we use it too much and without thought". Peter Imray and Viv Hinchcliffe, 2013*

## Assessment and recording

Whilst we always respect and acknowledge our pupils' achievements and actions, the curriculum for pre-formal learners is process not product driven. It is within this process that our pupils learn. We concur with the Bridge Curriculum that "Recording and reporting on progress is absolutely vital to the success of Process Based Learning and we strongly recommend that each teaching session ends with a plenary, where the whole class pauses the formal teaching process in order to celebrate success, record specific pupil progress, pick up areas of concern, and inform the next lesson".

The way in which our pupils learn, directly affects the way in which we assess our pupils' development. Each individual pupil is on their own 'learning journey'; and as such each pupil needs to be assessed on their own pathway.

With this in mind, the pupils' learning journeys will evidence the individuals' progress. For many of our pupils, their progress will not be able to be charted in a linear way but, they will show the developments in a more lateral sense and may show breadth and depth of learning.

In order to gain as broad a picture of the way our pupils learn as possible, we will be using "Evidence for Learning" to collect and collate clear information about individual pupils. Staff must be certain that the pupils are credited for what they can do by themselves and not what we interpret as being their true intent. Evidence for Learning

*"We often try to shield our fragile learners from failure and 'pretend' they have succeeded when they haven't... It is imperative that staff work with the learners to ensure that there is a deep and abiding understanding that making mistakes is entirely normal. Encouraging persistence means we are giving learners the opportunity to succeed on their own". Peter Imray and Val Hinchcliffe*

Once the evidence has been collated, we will choose from a 'basket of indicators' to map their development. Like all aspects of their development, these will be chosen with the individual in mind.

- Routes for Learning (Welsh D Of E, 2006)
- The Engagement Model (2020), based on the Engagement Profile Scale (Carpenter et al. 2011)
- MAPP (The Dales School, 2011)
- Discussions with Parents and Professionals.

This informs which targets should be worked on within IEPs. By working in this way, we will be able to demonstrate that pupils have made true progress; which in turn will lead onto the next key stage of development. These valuable and deeply learned skills will have a direct impact on the quality of their lives.

## **Thematic Learning**

We have established a cycle of themes that covers four years. At our curriculum's core is 'What our pupils need to learn'. This thematic learning is the means of delivering this. This is the 'Provision' and means through which IEPs are worked on. Those planning will ensure that there is a balance throughout the year and the choice of themes is designed to incorporate this.

Repetition is essential for all these discreet sessions, but this 'pace' is always led by the learning needs of the group that is being planned for. Sometimes these sessions can be 'teacher led' with a structure, or may be set out in the class to allow for supported pupil-led exploration with only a small amount of teacher led introduction.

Learning opportunities for pupils accessing a pre-formal curriculum should be concrete and real. Real objects should be used or very tangible representations of things / feelings / atmospheres. Language needs to be clear and expressive.

## **Supporting staff**

Staff should be familiar with each pupil's IEP and 'working with me' documents and complete 'evidence for learning' records where IEP targets are being met or progressed towards. They should be familiar with planning so that they need minimal guidance, particularly during pupil-led exploration sessions. They should also be used to create an atmosphere or drama when necessary.

## **Events of reference**

Given the assumption that our pre-formal learners are working at very early developmental levels we need to support this understanding by giving each lesson or activity an event of reference; using an object that can be explored as multi-sensorially as possible. 'Setting the scene' is essential. The use of music, lights, smells, projections or staff actions that help those who may have multi-sensory impairments understand what is about to happen.

## **Discovery**

This session is inspired by scientific or geographical aspects of each 'theme'. This sets the scene for predominantly pupil led exploration.

## **Culture**

This incorporates religious beliefs and practices, traditions, traditional stories, foods, cooking and home life.

## Art and Exploration

The focus for this can be around an artist and / or technique depending on the topic. There may be an end product but this is never the primary driver for the activity. Planning may also include the emotions portrayed in a piece of artwork too.

## Story

This is taken from a poem, story, drama or passage of history. This may be used in full or abridged versions. Teachers should not shy away from using complex language within these stories from pieces of literature, but they should always ensure that there is always a non-language-based means of understanding the context.

## Music

This area of learning can take its inspiration from a composer or a piece of music. Planning ideas could also come from the music traditions of a country or its instruments. Where possible real instruments should be used as well as voice. Pupils should be enabled, using appropriate technology or assistance to create sounds themselves.

## Visits

Visits should try and incorporate pupils' learning need or have a link to the theme for that term. Visits are staff intensive and require a great deal of planning, therefore teachers must reflect of the purpose of visits.

## Physical Development

Many pre-formal learners have physical challenges that need addressing in order for them to learn. There may be discreet sessions with physiotherapists (hydrotherapy, box sitting, functional skills, passive movements, positioning) or occupational therapists (working on pupils' sensory modulation needs). These elements should be incorporated into each pupil's day if needed to enable learning; positioning and passive movements for function or sensory modulation preparation to be ready and calm enough to absorb and take part in learning.

## Break

This is an important social time for all pupils. Some may use the motivation of food to practise communication skills or practise eating and drinking skills. Socialising is important to model. This is a time when the adults can share their news and when pupils can share theirs (through diaries and home to school switches). This needs to be inclusive and respectful.



## **Leisure and Interests**

Play and visits may link in with the topic or visits may offer other purposeful learning opportunities based on IEP priorities. Pupils are continuously supported to develop their own interests with which they can engage with as independently as possible.

# Semi-Formal Curriculum

## What do we mean by ‘Semi-Formal Curriculum’?

This handbook is an overview of the semi-formal curriculum at Ash Lea School.

The term ‘Semi-Formal Curriculum’ is based on the ideas of Penny Lacey (2011).

The semi-formal curriculum at Ash Lea School is for children and young people with severe learning difficulties.

Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD):

- Consistently and over time working between P4 and at or below the end of KS1 expectations of the National Curriculum
- Have difficulties with communication
- Have difficulty with abstract concepts
- Have difficulties with concentration and attention
- Have difficulties with short- and long-term memory, sequential memory and have limited working memory
- Have poor general knowledge
- Have difficulties with problem solving
- Have difficulties with generalising understanding

(Imray and Colley, in print)

Our Semi-Formal Curriculum (based on the curriculum at Swiss Cottage School) has its own alternative curriculum areas, each designed to support the overall development of a young person with SLD.

How does the Semi-formal Curriculum run through the school?

At Ash Lea, learners follow the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Curriculum (or a pre-formal curriculum if this is more appropriate) until the end of EYFS. Because of variable numbers of EYFS children in school, pupils in EYFS are integrated into Primary classes. As there is a great overlap between EYFS curriculum and the semi-formal (and formal) curriculum in school, the transition to the semi-formal curriculum at Key Stage 1 is seamless.

A developmental perspective informs the curriculum at Ash Lea, where the starting point is each individual learner. The curriculum areas within our Semi-formal Curriculum therefore, address the priority areas relating to the development of young people with SLD: communication, cognition, self-care and independence. Many similarities and links can be seen with the prime areas of the EYFS Curriculum.

The curriculum at Ash Lea is also cross-curricular. Through a rolling plan of termly themes, children and young people experience varied contexts for learning, and encounter each of the foundation subjects within the UK National Curriculum. However, the definitive feature of our semi-formal curriculum is its own alternative curriculum areas, addressing the priority needs of our SLD population. Much of the teaching and learning will be through play and leisure and

the school is adopting the Equals Play and Leisure Scheme of Work which staff at Ash Lea were involved in writing.

This handbook details each curriculum area, within the school's semi-formal curriculum and the different strands within them, to support teacher planning.

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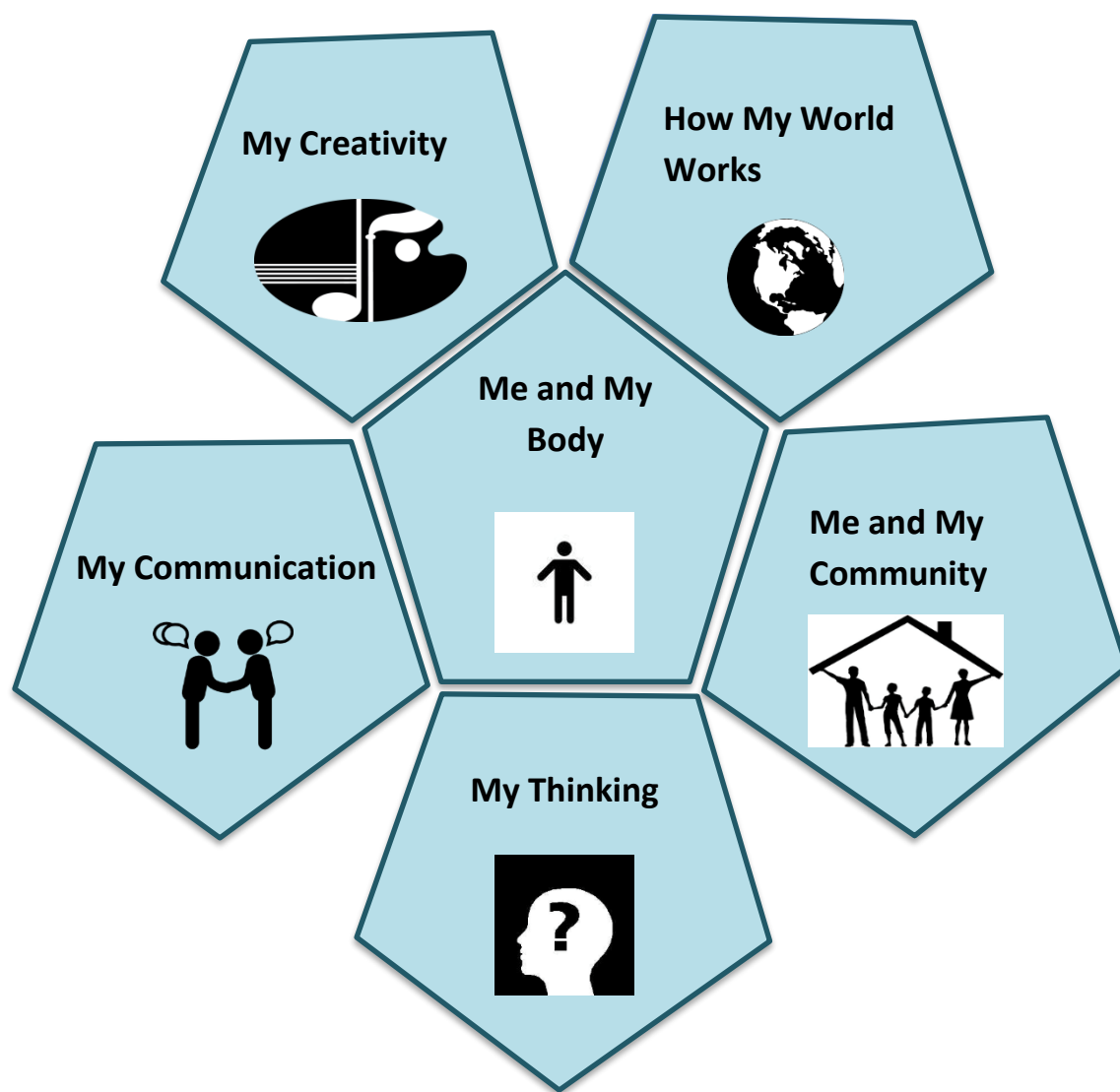
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## Our Curriculum Areas

Our Semi-Formal curriculum has its own curriculum areas, which are different to the subjects on the UK National Curriculum: My Communication, My Thinking, Me and My Body, How My World Works, Me and My Community, My Creativity.

There are overlaps between our semi-formal curriculum areas and subjects on the UK National Curriculum. However, our semi-formal curriculum areas are designed to offer something totally distinct, to directly address SLD learning need, rather than an adaptation of the national curriculum in any form. It is as response to the small amount of available research into severe learning difficulties and our own reflections on teaching children and young people with SLD needs.

In a similar fashion to subjects on the UK National Curriculum, we have identified the component “strands” which make up each curriculum area. This is to give each curriculum area fuller definition, and to support classroom teams to plan, report, and set appropriate developmental learning intentions.



**ICT across all subjects**

## What is included in the curriculum areas?

	EYFS Areas	National Curriculum areas
<b>Me and My Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal, Social and Emotional Development</li> <li>• Physical Development</li> <li>• Understanding the World</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Science</li> <li>• PSHCE</li> <li>• Food tech</li> <li>• P.E.</li> <li>• R.E.</li> </ul>
<b>My Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication and Language</li> <li>• Literacy</li> <li>• Expressive Arts and Design</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English</li> <li>• Art</li> <li>• Drama</li> <li>• Music</li> </ul>
<b>My Thinking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maths</li> <li>• Understanding the World</li> <li>• Communication and Language</li> <li>• Literacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English</li> <li>• Maths</li> <li>• DT</li> <li>• Science</li> </ul>
<b>My Creativity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expressive Arts and Design</li> <li>• Communication and Language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music</li> <li>• Art</li> <li>• Drama</li> <li>• Language</li> </ul>
<b>Me and My Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the World</li> <li>• Personal, Social and Emotional Development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language</li> <li>• Geography</li> <li>• History</li> <li>• R.E.</li> <li>• PSHCE</li> </ul>
<b>How my World Works</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the World</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Science</li> <li>• DT</li> </ul>

## Termly Themes across the school

Termly themes are in place across Key Stages 1-4 to provide a context for learners to engage with the curriculum. The themes or topics add a dimension to all curriculum areas and to connect them. Because the pupils are in mixed key stage classes, the themes have been planned for Primary and Secondary.

The rolling plan of themes has not been written to enable progression. Learning and progress is through the six areas of the semi-formal curriculum. The rolling plan of topics is about providing varied contexts for learning.

## Curriculum Topic Cycle

	<b>Autumn</b>	<b>Spring</b>	<b>Summer</b>
<b>Year 1</b>	Fantasy	Agriculture	The Olympics
<b>Year 2</b>	Space – the earth and beyond	Popular Culture	Animals
<b>Year 3</b>	Me and My Body	How Things Work	People of the World
<b>Year 4</b>	The Elements	Looking after Our World	Journey to the Past

## The role of play

Play will be taught every day both in and out of the classroom. For many it will form the bedrock of their education and will be MUCH more important than teaching literacy and numeracy. Ash Lea school were involved in the development of the Equals schemes of work for play and leisure and are following these across the semi-formal curriculum.

### Functions of play

- To learn new skills in a safe environment
- To explore own body and senses and the surrounding world
- To develop a safe understanding of emotions of both self and others
- To experience interaction with others
- To develop flexibility of thought
- To develop Theory of Mind

Those with SLD are unlikely to learn spontaneously and will find the art of generalising one learned experience of play into another very difficult (Athey, 2007). There are many aspects of free play in particular that those with SLD will find challenging, e.g. they will have difficulties with the abstract nature of creative play, they will have poor expressive and receptive communication skills and they may well have problems with flexibility of thought, perhaps engaging in rigid routines which prevent the development of play skills. They will be delayed in their understanding of representation, which is critical to symbolic play. The lists of limiting factors may explain why children with SLD struggle to play but the fact that they struggle to play may also contribute to the establishment and continued existence of these limiting conditions. If we can teach children with SLD to play, we can help them to break into

creativity, thinking, problem solving, formulating and maintaining relationships, purposeful self-engagement, narrative and storytelling, theory of mind and developing self-confidence, self-belief and self-esteem.

For those who are at the earliest stages of intellectual development, play and playing games . . .

“Are not time out from real work; they are the most intensive developmental work you can do”

**(Nind and Hewett, 2001; p66)**

#### Levels of Play

- Sensorimotor/exploratory
- Relational – exploring properties of objects
- Functional play – using as designed
- Symbolic or pretend play – using something to stand for something else
- Socio-dramatic – acting out situations with roles

**(Sherratt and Peter, 2002)**

This is not necessarily a linear process . . . . .

#### Social dimensions of play

- Solitary
- Parallel
- Shared
- Turn-taking
- Co-operative

There are two broad types of play that we aim to develop

- Free play – process based, fluid rules, child led, adult modelled and may cover all levels and social dimensions of play
- Structured play (games) – product based, rule bound, adult led, adult modelled

## How do we know if it is working?

The curriculum is monitored and evaluated to ensure that it is working, through a rigorous quality assurance process. Each pupil's progress is discussed as part of the teacher's appraisal/performance management. Pupil progress meetings take place with the phase leader twice a year and include triangulation of available data and assessments, work scrutiny and observation/pupil voice.

School uses a 'basket of indicators' to capture the full picture of pupil progress. The range of measures and assessments used are different across the key stages in school. These measures include:

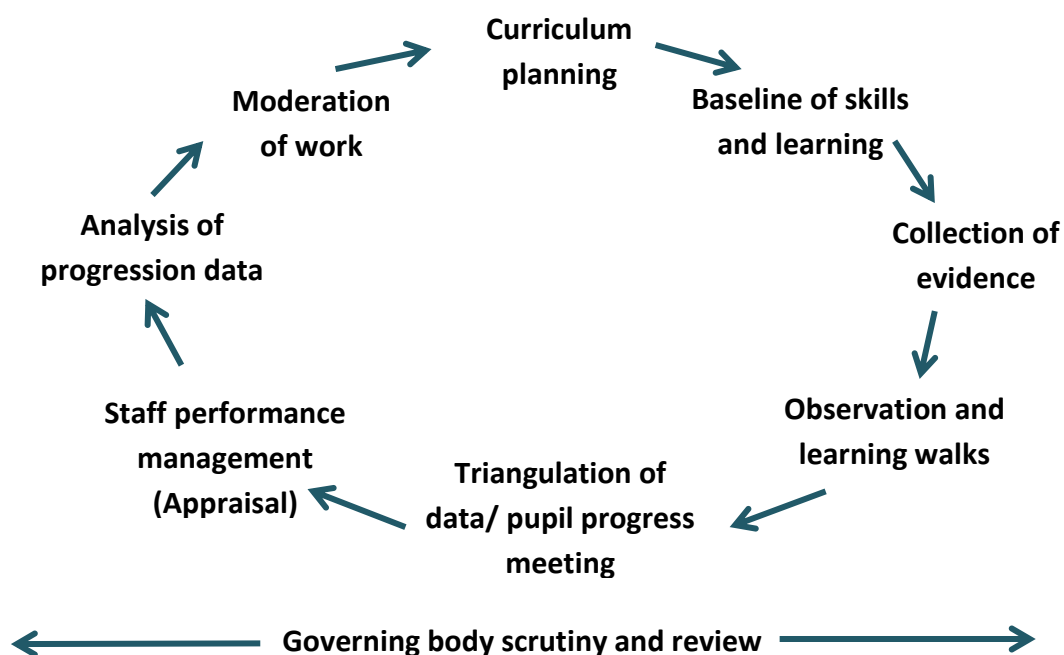
- Twice yearly IEP monitoring based on priorities in pupils' EHC plans for all pupils



- Ash Lea Assessment levels
- Development Matters for EYFS
- MAPP
- Behaviour data
- Personal care and independent living records e.g. eating or toileting records
- Therapy targets
- Evidence for Learning data
- Externally accredited courses e.g. entry levels
- Pre-key Stage Standards and end of year NC expectations (however this is only a secondary measure, other measures more accurately demonstrate progress and attainment within the semi-formal curriculum)

In order to validate our assessments, teachers take part in cross school moderation and work scrutiny and samples of work are also moderated across schools as part of the Nottinghamshire Special Schools' Assessment Group.

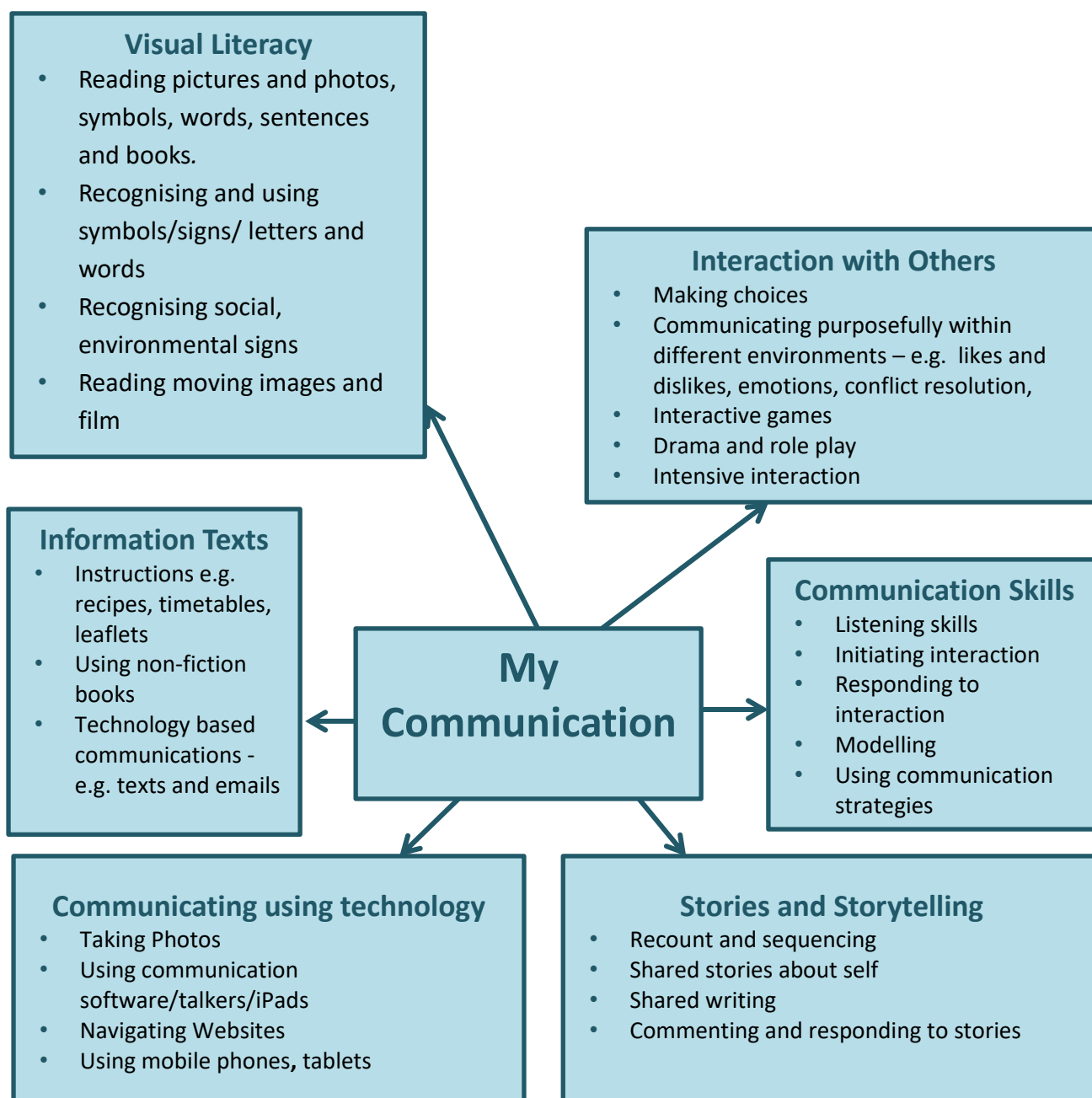
Monitoring and evaluating curricular impact



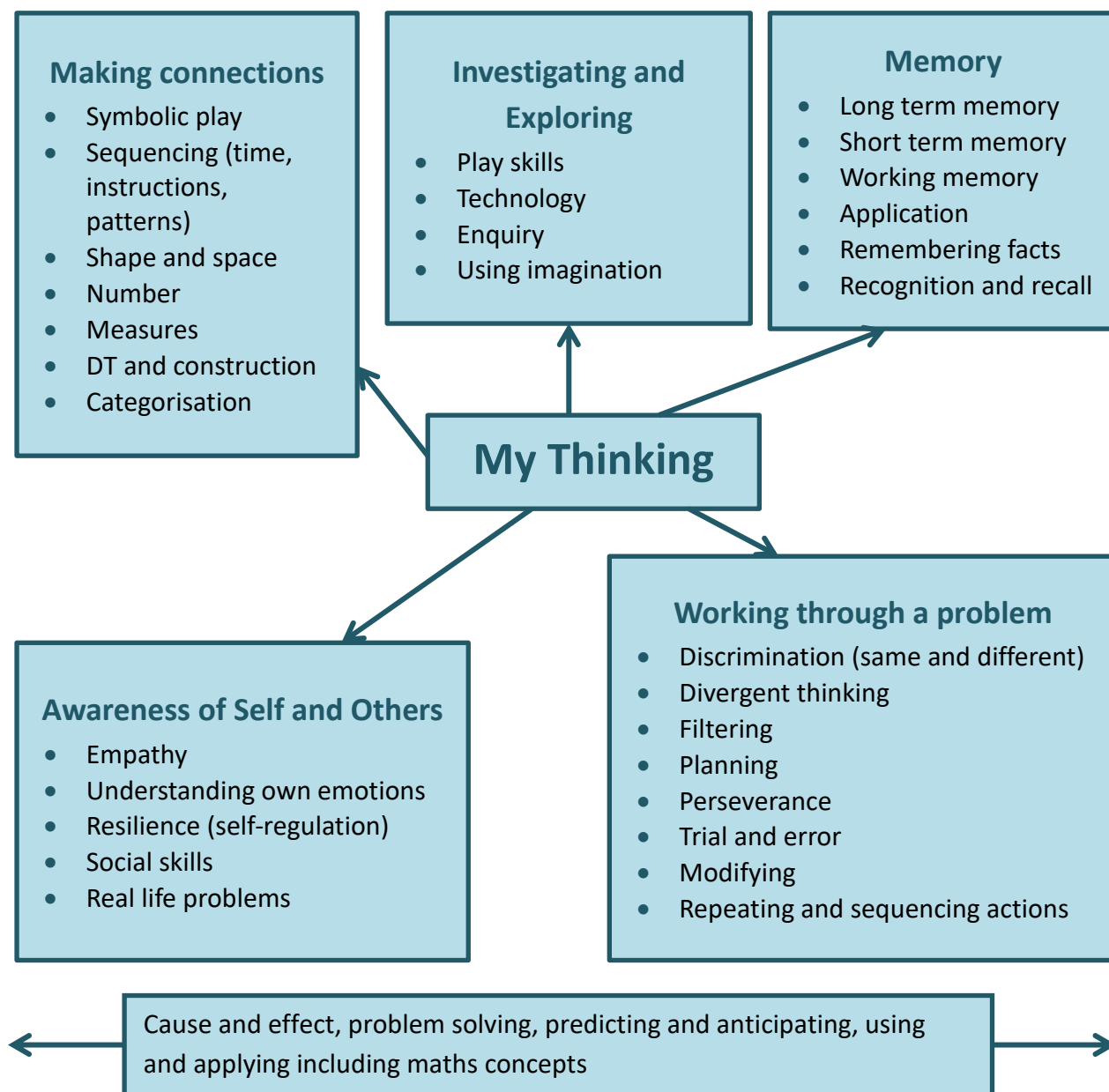
## Curriculum Areas



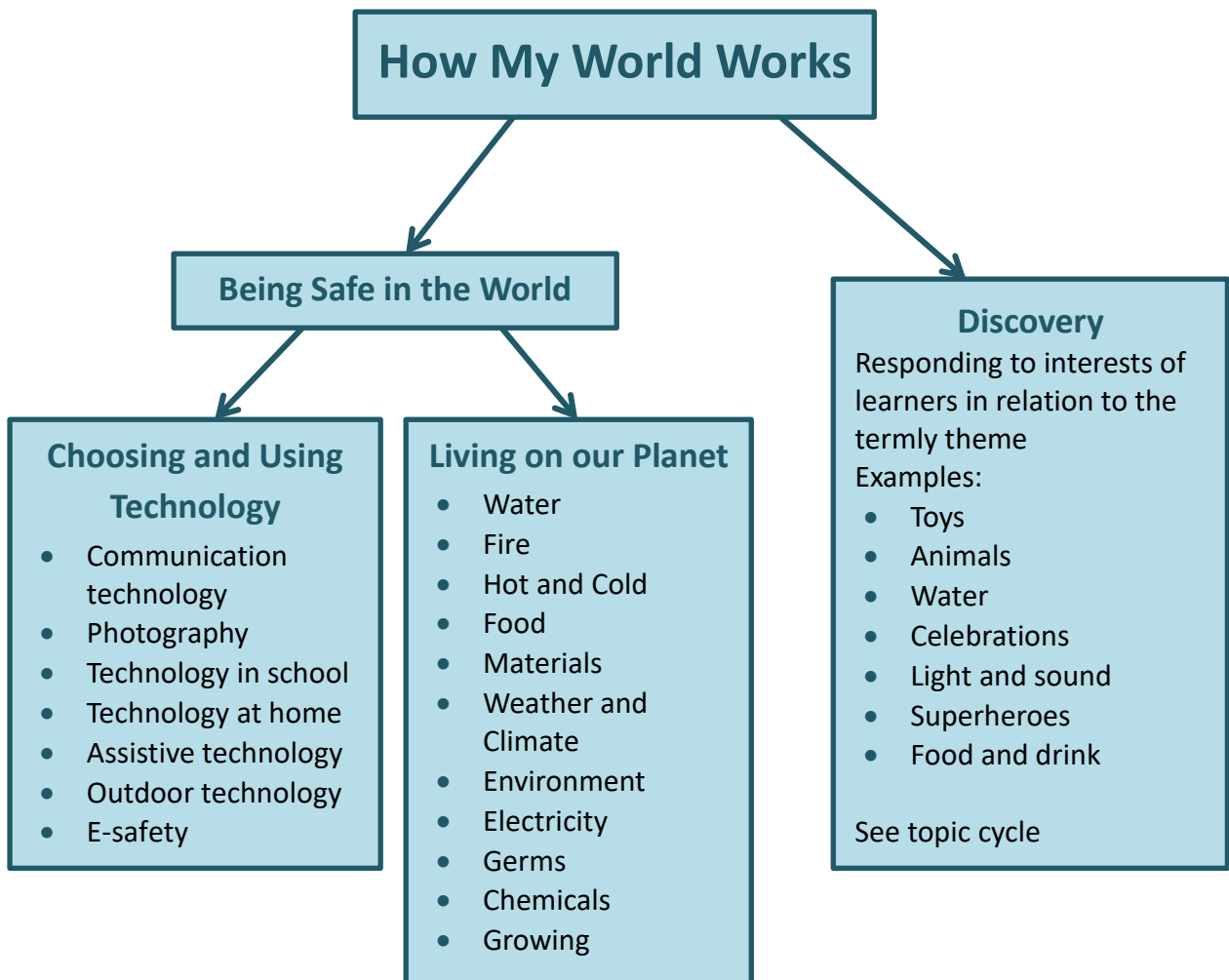
In this area, learners enhance their overall health and well-being. They also learn about personal care, healthy eating and safer lifestyle choices. This curriculum area also has a strong emotional and social dimension. Learners are supported to understand their feelings and their behaviours



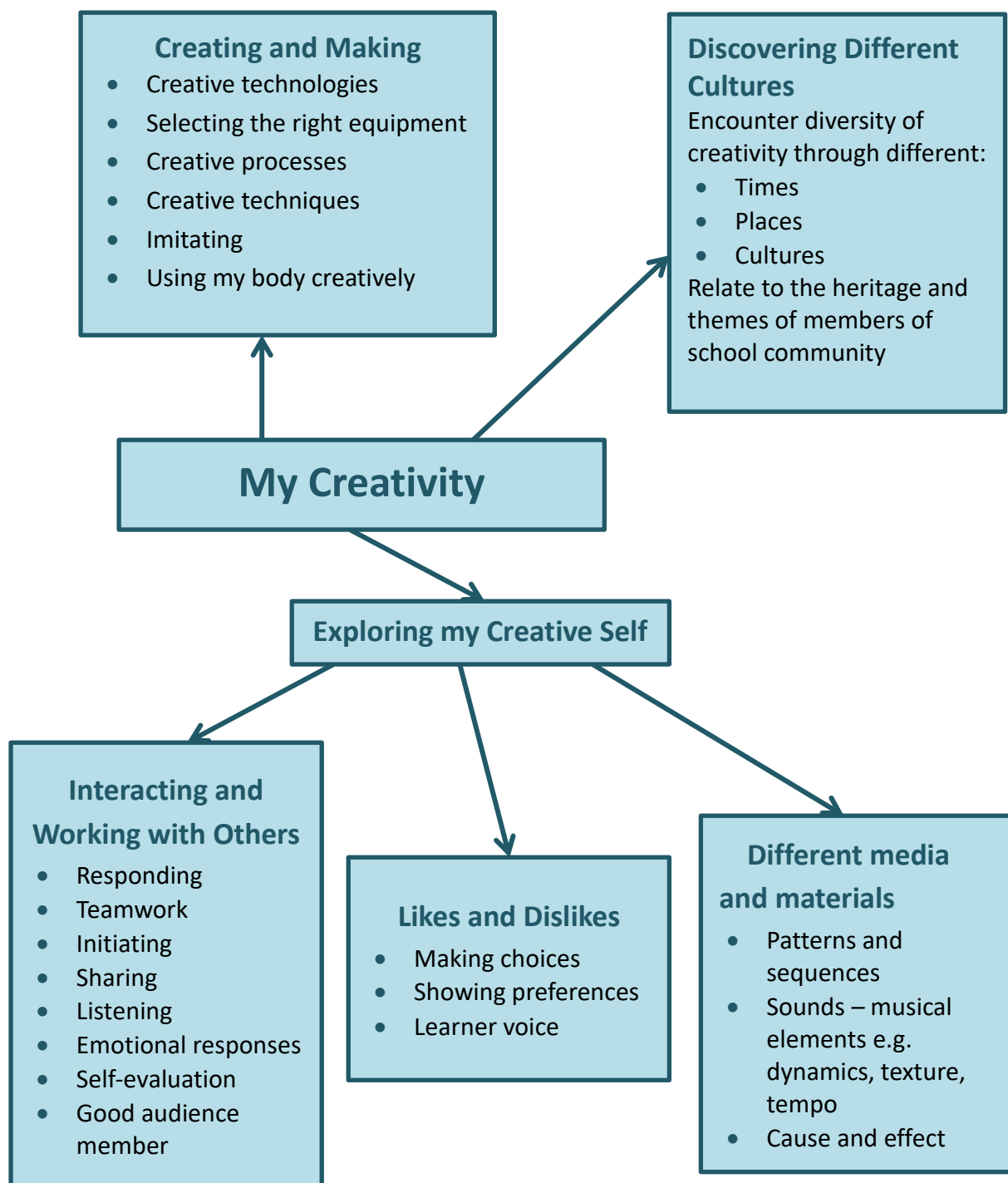
In this area, pupils develop their expressive and receptive skills through speaking and listening or drama activities. They also work with basic functional literacy for everyday life, such as social signs. In addition, they encounter literacy and inclusive writing activities. Where appropriate; interventions such as Switch on Reading and Writing and Letters and Sounds Phonic approach are used to support the development of core literacy skills.



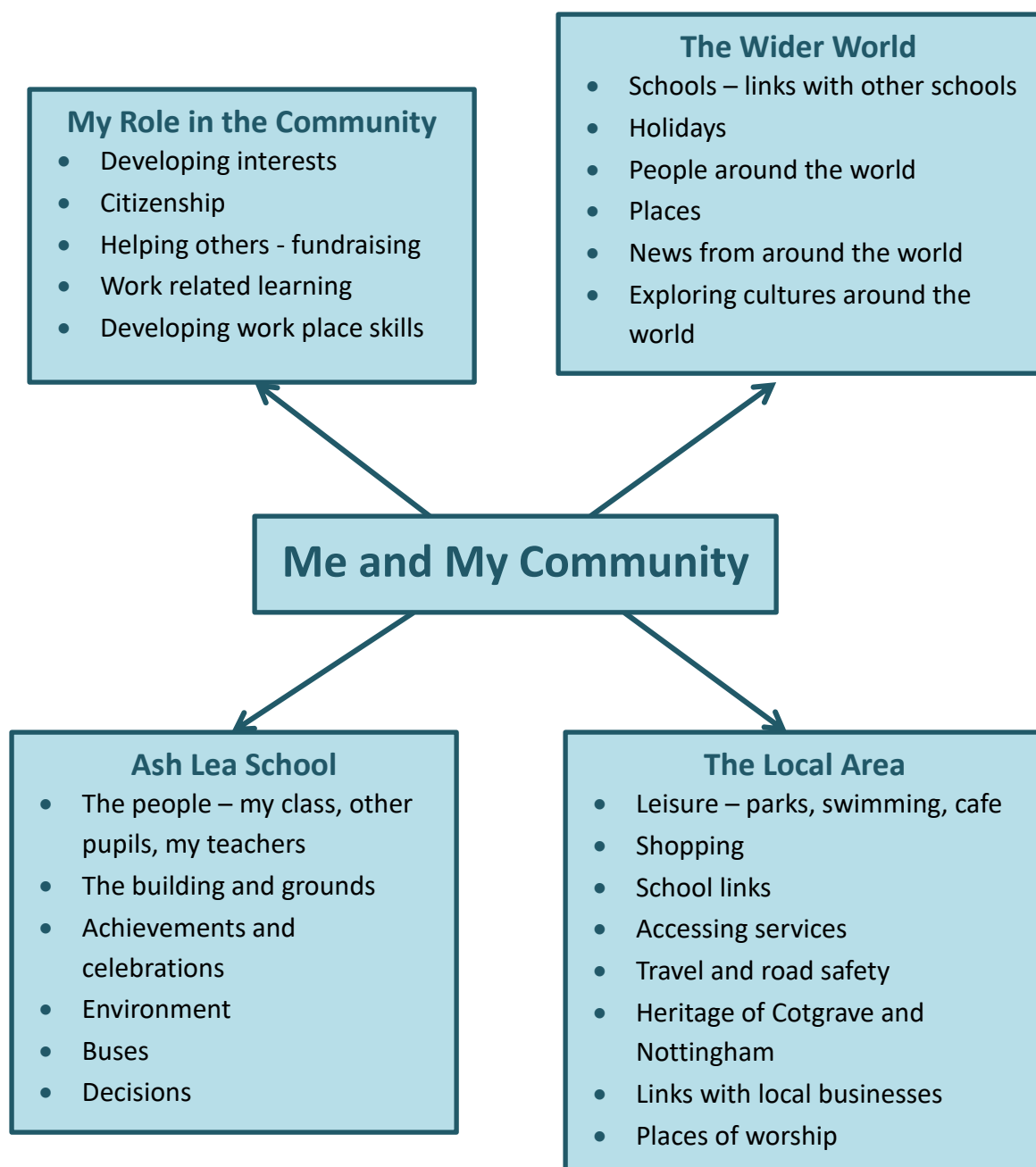
This area develops thinking skills in their broadest sense and includes maths. In 'My Thinking', learners encounter situation-based and contextualised problem-solving activities. This area explores patterns and sequences, social and moral dilemmas, language for thinking, pattern, memory, and ways of finding new information. This will be enhanced through Catch up Maths where it is appropriate.



This area focuses on practical skills and understanding and has a largely scientific dimension, looking at, for example, living things, electricity and sound. The curriculum area also emphasises effective engagement with technology, including computers, phones and household appliances.



This curriculum area is supported through, music, art, drama etc. to provide a meaningful context for learners to develop, within the priority areas of communication, cognition (thinking) and personal and social development. It creates opportunities for the transference and generalisation of class-based learning.



In this curriculum area learners develop their understanding of the people around them. They explore diversity within class and school through areas such as religion and heritage. They also explore the local area and how to access services. This curriculum area has strong links with work related learning. The emphasis is on participating in the community e.g. self-advocacy. This area explores global citizenship, as well as rights and responsibilities.



# Formal Curriculum

## What does it look like?

### English

- In the Secondary department the National Curriculum is followed, often in an adapted form.
- In Key stage 4 and Post-16 accredited courses are followed with a functional focus.



### Maths

- In the Secondary department the National Curriculum is followed, often in an adapted form.
- In Key Stage 4 and Post-16 department accredited courses are followed with a functional focus.



In the Primary department, pupils follow the pre formal or semi-formal curricula, differentiating for any more formal learners and including more formal subject specific teaching as appropriate.

Throughout school, pupils' attainment levels are mapped to ascertain which pupils will follow a more formal pathway leading to accreditation in English and maths (or other curricular areas). Their needs are met through differentiating the semi-formal curriculum and interventions such as Switch On and Catch Up. Our definition of a formal learner is a pupil who is most likely to gain accreditation at entry level 3 by the end of year 11 in English and Maths, with the aim of progressing to a Level 1 qualification, roughly equivalent to low grade (1-4) GCSE, by the end of year 13. There would be opportunity for review each year.

Pupils capable of achieving this higher level need to be encouraged to do so in order to access appropriate opportunities when leaving school, such as further education and employment.

Throughout the Secondary phase it will become apparent that some pupils will not be capable of achieving a Level 1 qualification in English and Maths eventually. These pupils will still access English and Maths in order to maintain skills already acquired and to learn to apply knowledge and skills in functional ways. Alternatively, the outcomes of English and Maths sessions may be focused on developing skills such as independence or specific thinking skills such as problem solving.

We also recognise that there are those pupils identified as being on the "cusp". These are pupils that may continue to follow a semi-formal curriculum with aspects of a more formal curriculum even if they are unlikely to achieve a Level 1 qualification by the end of their school career. These pupils may demonstrate an aptitude or enjoyment in acquiring more formal skills and are still making progress.

We acknowledge that some pupils may not achieve this level of qualification in English and Maths but could in other areas of the senior curriculum, for example vocational or independence skills. Pupils will be given this opportunity as appropriate.

### **My Creativity**

Pupils access opportunities for creative development through Art, Design and Technology, Dance and Music.

These may be taught discretely or through a cross-curricular thematic unit.

### **My Thinking and How My World Works**

Pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of the world through accessing elements of History, Geography, Science and RE

Main objectives in this area centre on developing general knowledge. We believe our pupils need an awareness of world events both past and present as well as awareness of the world around them, both that which they can access and that which is remote. The key outcomes will not just be subject specific, but rooted in personal and social development and aimed at developing specific thinking skills.

### **Me and My Body**

Pupils will access a wide range of physical activities aimed at promoting physical fitness and developing life-long interests and habits.

### **Life skills**

The development of life skills is a primary aim in the formal curriculum as we aim to prepare our pupils for independent or semi-independent living. All pupils will access learning in the following areas:

Cooking, Shopping, Home management, Personal safety, Personal hygiene, Road safety, Independent travel, Dressing skills, Work experience / vocational skills, Social skills, Constructive use of leisure time, ICT at home and in the community

### **Thinking skills**

Developing thinking skills is a primary aim in all that we do.

Thinking skills are the mental processes that we apply when we seek to make sense of experience. Thinking skills enable us to integrate each new experience into the schema that we are constructing of "how things are".

Thinking Skills are mental processes we use to do things like: solve problems, make decisions, ask questions, construct plans, evaluate ideas, organise information and create objects.

Thinking skills are integrated into the curriculum through less directive approaches, the use of play, as well as open ended and exploratory activities

### **Individual Education Plans**

Each pupil works towards an IEP identifying which aspects of the curriculum are prioritised for each individual.

# Post 16 Provision

Because of the enhanced physical provision in our extended building we now have Post 16 unit, including a Common Room space, catering for the range of pupils who attend Ash Lea School. We also welcome pupils who transfer from mainstream settings and less frequently other special schools. This has expanded the range of learning needs within this cohort of learners.

## Vision Statement

Our vision is for all pupils to have a purposeful and aspirational planned route through their final years at Ash Lea to equip them to live a fulfilled and autonomous life.

## How is this achieved?

To enable this, all pupils follow a 'Study Programme'. This programme has three strands; Core Subjects, Life after Ash Lea and Personal and Social Enrichment. Each pupil follows their own bespoke 'Study Programme' with appropriate elements from each strand. Furthermore, as with all pupils at Ash Lea, post 16 pupils have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) with targets based on their EHCP outcomes.

EHCP reviews consider transition to life after Ash Lea from Year 9 onwards and each element of 'Preparing for Adulthood' constructs a 'Transition Plan' for each pupil, which is reviewed at each annual review meeting. This may also inform EHCP outcomes and in turn IEP priorities and the construct of each individual's Study Programme. The preparing for adulthood sections are and names that we use for this at Ash Lea are; Community Participation, Autonomy, Employability / Further Education, Independent Living, Good Health and Communication. We offer accredited courses for each strand of the Study Programme where this is meaningful and relevant. Below are links to the accrediting bodies that we currently use.

<https://www.asdan.org.uk/courses/courses-for-your-setting/send-provision>

<https://www.aimawards.org.uk/learners/about-us/>

<https://www.aqa.org.uk/>

## Study Programme

### Core Subjects

These broadly cover English, mathematics and communication at a level that is meaningful and functional. All pupils have an accredited pathway for these core subjects and are accessed through sessions and activities that are appropriate for each learner. Core subjects are applied and embedded within and without the school community.

## Life After Ash Lea

In Post 16, pupils have numerous transition opportunities to appropriate Post 18 settings. Transition events are held with Post 18 providers and the school's transition lead (Andrea Patterson) who facilitates an annual meeting with transitions representatives and pupils and their families, with a view to signposting them to the right agencies at Year 9.

The school has a Careers Strategy that has three strands dependent on learning needs and EHCP aspirations. Work experience opportunities are offered both internally and externally. We have good relationships with external partners who support us to provide exciting and relevant vocational experience. We actively encourage choice making, ensuring that pupils are key participants in making everyday decisions as well as those about their futures. We recognise the importance of building on interests and provide leisure opportunities as well as ample socially inclusive opportunities to develop relationships with peers both within and outside of school. We offer accredited courses which cover vocational and employability skills. All pupils leave Ash Lea Post 16 with an exciting portfolio of qualifications to demonstrate their strengths and achievements to their next providers.

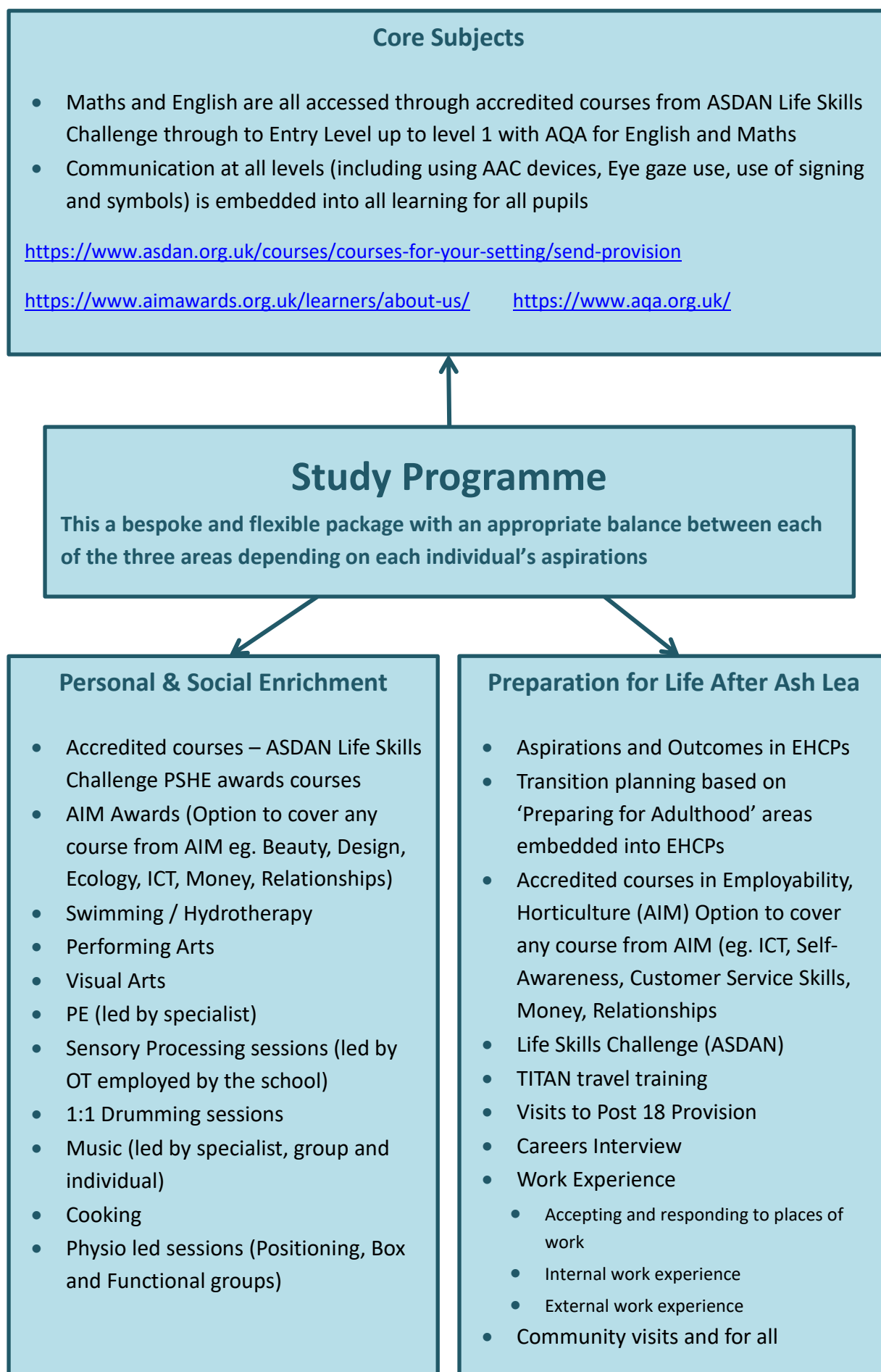
We work with future destinations for a smooth and successful transition and the success of these placements is testament to this.

## Personal and Social Enrichment

We recognise the importance of enrichment and of the arts to broaden pupils' horizons and provide experiences to support personal growth and creativity. We offer Performing Arts, Art, Music, PE, Cooking, Swimming as well as Hydrotherapy, discreet physiotherapy sessions supported by physiotherapists, sensory processing support and emotional regulation groups led by the school's OT.

## Preparing for Adulthood and Transition Planning

EHCP reviews consider transition to life after Ash Lea from Year 9 onwards and each element of 'Preparing for Adulthood' constructs a 'Transition Plan' for each pupil, which is reviewed at each annual review meeting. This may also inform EHCP outcomes and in turn IEP priorities. The 'Preparing for Adulthood' sections are 'Employment', 'Friends, Relationships and Community', 'Independent Living' and 'Good Health' and names that we use for this at Ash Lea are; Community Participation, Autonomy, Employability / Further Education, Independent Living, Good Health and Communication.



# Teaching of R.E.

R.E. remains a statutory subject in Key Stages 1-4. Religious education covers Christianity and other faiths. R.E. at Ash Lea is included at an appropriate level and, in many classes will form an integrated part of Me and My Body and Me and My Community within the semi-formal curriculum and Culture within the pre-formal curriculum. The aim of religious education is not only to learn about different religions and faiths, but also to help the pupils understand cultural differences and similarities, and to promote greater respect and tolerance of others.

We bring the classes together regularly throughout the week for assemblies, which are used as a time for thought, reflection and celebration. It is therefore regarded as a valuable teaching and learning opportunity.

Whilst collective worship is broadly Christian in nature, it does also focus on other religious beliefs and festivals. We strive for an atmosphere of trust and respect where pupils can examine, question and further develop their thinking.

## Relationship, Sex and Health Education

The aim of RSHE is to equip children and young people with the information, skills and values to have safe, fulfilling and enjoyable relationships, and to take responsibility for their health and wellbeing within an appropriate understanding of their current capabilities and needs. The school has a scheme of work threaded through all 3 curricular pathways to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils as well as meeting its statutory obligations in relation to RSHE. Everyday emotional, relational and physical support will form an invaluable basis for RSHE provision, alongside regular discrete sessions that focus on specific topics and areas of the RSHE schemes of work.



# British Values

British Values is threaded through all 3 pathways of the curriculum and is recognised in all classes. The four areas of BV are:

- Democracy – this can most clearly be seen through sharing ideas, turn taking, respecting others' ideas and working together.
- Rules of Law – this includes managing own behaviour and emotions, looking after the environment, looking after and respecting each other and learning about right and wrong.
- Individual Liberty – having a go, developing self-esteem, trying their best and taking risks.
- Mutual Respect and Tolerance – this includes celebrating cultures, valuing all and their opinions

# Acknowledgements

Before writing the Ash Lea curriculum, we researched and read from many sources including special schools' curricula, books and research papers. Some of these sources have formed the basis of our curriculum.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the following:

**Swiss Cottage School curriculum which was hugely influential in the writing of the semi-formal curriculum**

**Five Acre Wood School curriculum handbook**

**Peter Imray and Viv Hinchcliffe - Curricula for Teaching Children and Young People with Severe or Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties**

**Penny Lacey**

**The Debdale Federation – Curriculum Progression**

**Equals Play and Leisure schemes of Work**