



Unique People,  
Individualised Approach

## Curriculum Policy

At Peak school we work with students with a wide range of needs. All have Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) or Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) and some have additional needs including Physical impairment (PI), Visual Impairment (VI), Autism (ASD), challenging behaviour in and sensory processing difficulties which can in many instances prove to be a significant barrier to their learning. The majority of students have a communication difficulty and rely on augmentative communication systems such as: Objects of Reference (OR); pictorial/symbolic communication (PECS / Social scripts / social stories); Makaton signing to convey their wants and needs, while others need the adult working with them to interpret their responses / behaviours.

### PMLD Definition

- Consistently and over time working within P1-3 ish
- Preverbal in terms of communicating their needs and wants only and may not be an intentional communicator
- Totally physically reliant of others
- Significant difficulty in understanding abstract concepts
- Unable to follow instruction
- Limited Understanding of cause and effect

### SLD Definition

- Consistently and over time working at P4 ish and at or below Level 1 ish of the NC
- Difficulties with communication
- Difficulties with concentration and attention
- Difficulties with abstract concepts
- Difficulties with short and long term
- Difficulties with sequential memory
- Limited working memory
- Poor general knowledge
- Difficulties with problem solving
- Difficulties with generalising understanding

(Imray and Colley, 2017)

The previous Peak School curriculum was based on the Equals schemes of work (adapted from the NC pre 2014) and focussed on subject specific learning. For our students these traditional subjects are very hard to access and as a result making learning meaningful is a challenge within the majority of curriculum areas. All of our students require an 'additional' curriculum which is designed to meet their individual needs through a range of 'extra' curricula activities and experienced throughout their school day.

As the 'additional' curriculum is more person centred and directly linked to individual needs its importance becomes greater and more relevant and meaningful for the individuals. Progress for our students in terms of National curriculum subject areas can often be difficult to assess, whereas progress within the 'additional' curriculum areas is often more easily seen.

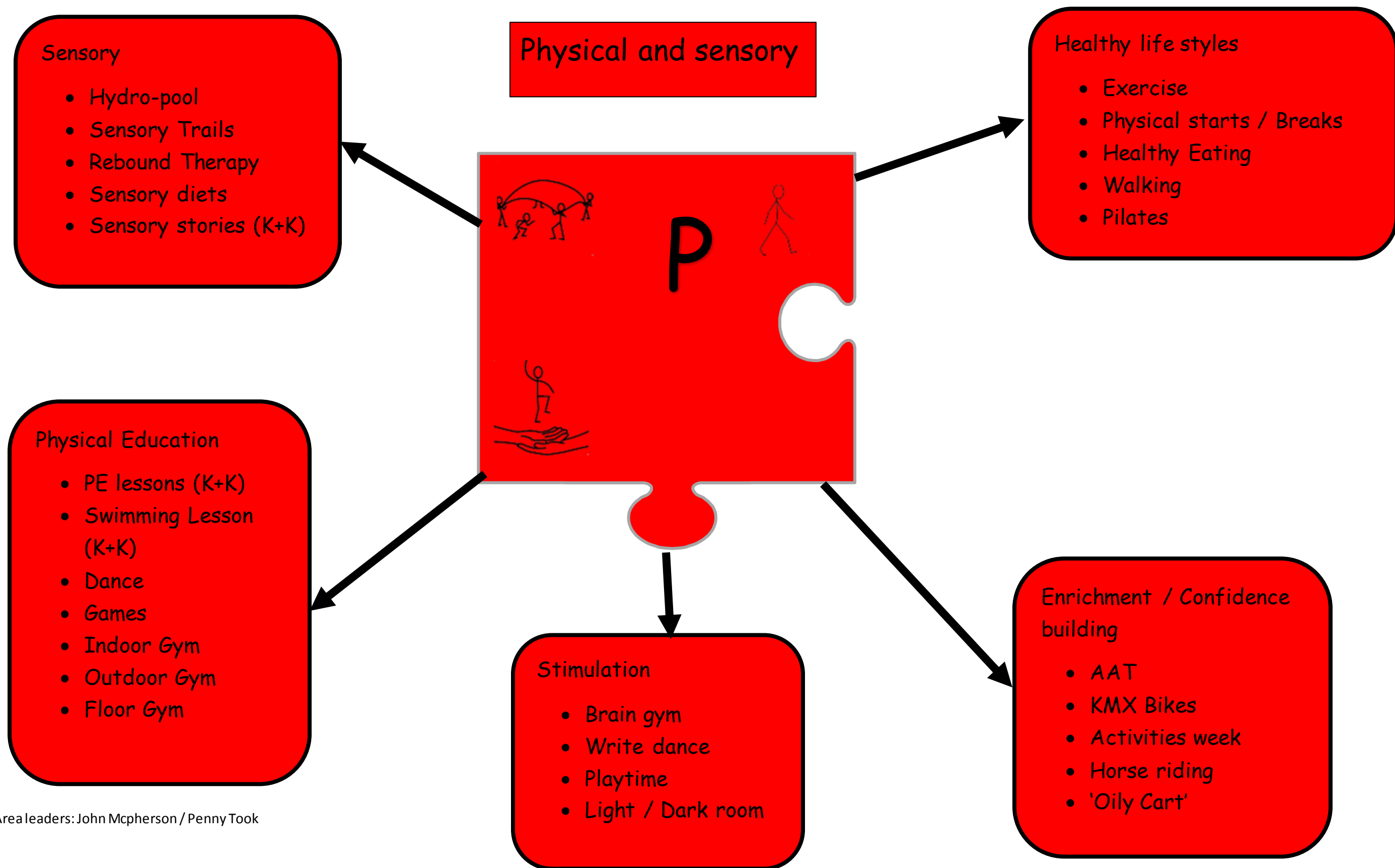
As a school we propose moving away from the traditional curriculum framework based on National curriculum subject to a bespoke, person centred approach for our the education of our students. The curriculum will be based around 4 key areas:-

Physical and Sensory domain

Emotional and expressive arts

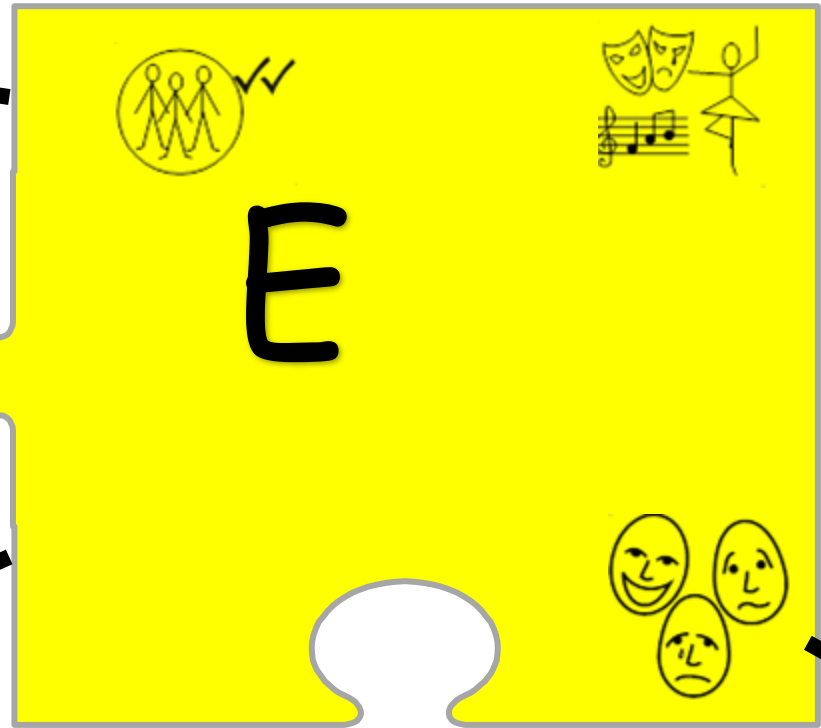
Accessing the world (including communication)

Knowledge and Know-How (more traditional subjects)



Area leaders: John Mcpherson / Penny Took

# Emotional and Expressive Arts



- ### Art
- 'Traditional' themed Art sessions
  - Free expression
  - Model making (e.g. junk modelling / clay work)
  - Tactile art activities
  - Natural materials
  - Music and musical interaction (including Paul and Dance)
  - Visiting artists
  - Drama

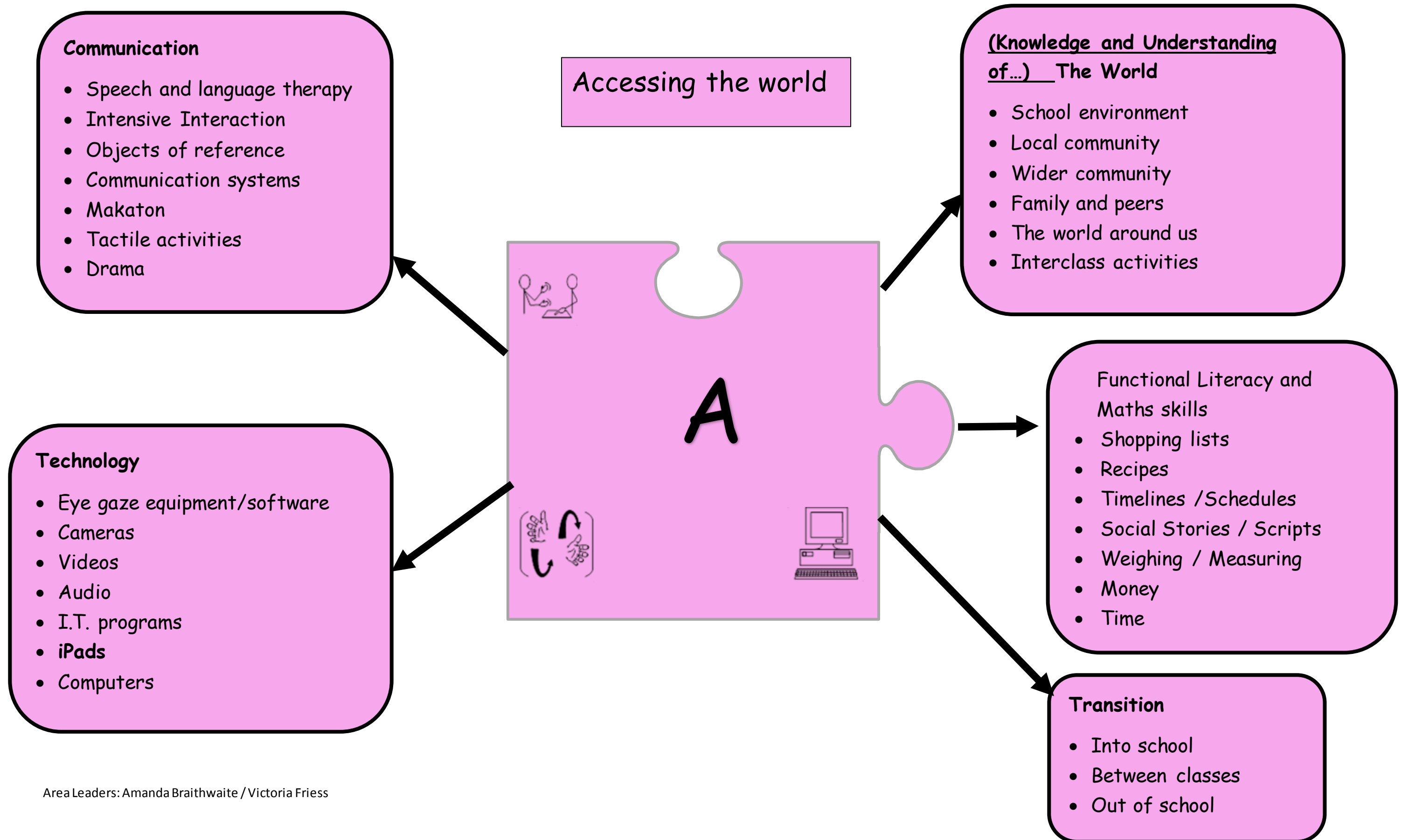
- ### Behaviour
- Functional Assessment (e.g. MAS)
  - Behaviour support planning
  - Arousal scale (and monitoring)
  - Incident recording and debriefing
  - Reward / motivational systems
  - Personal care
  - Sex and sexuality
  - Friendships

- ### Emotional Regulation
- Deep pressure (including independent self-regulation)
  - Relaxation techniques (e.g. deep breathing)
  - Calming spaces and places
  - 'Go' Systems
  - Communication
  - Physical exercise
  - Confidence building activities (horse riding/Walks)

- ### Sensory Awareness
- Sensory room
  - Sensory activities
  - Sensory diet
  - Desensitisation activities
  - Deep pressure

- ### Systems
- CAMHS support / Advice
  - OT
  - Home/school liaison
  - Integration opportunities
  - Low demand approaches

- ### Therapy (linking play)
- Play time
  - 'Formal' play skills sessions
  - Music (listening / playing)
  - Physical activity
  - Sensory diets
  - Creative approaches
  - Music / Art / Play therapy
  - Hydropool



## Knowledge and Know-How (academic Knowledge )

### Numeracy skills Development

- Number rhymes
- Number / Quantity recognition
- Shapes
- Weighing
- Measuring

### Towards Adulthood

- Work related skills
- Work experience
- Life skills development
- Cookery
- Independence
- Travel and community access
- College
- Transition days

### Literacy skills Development

- Sensory stories / Story sacks
- Nursery Rhymes / Stories / poetry
- Library visits
- Reading development
- Writing development
- Phonics
- Letter/sound word recognition

### Traditional curriculum subject

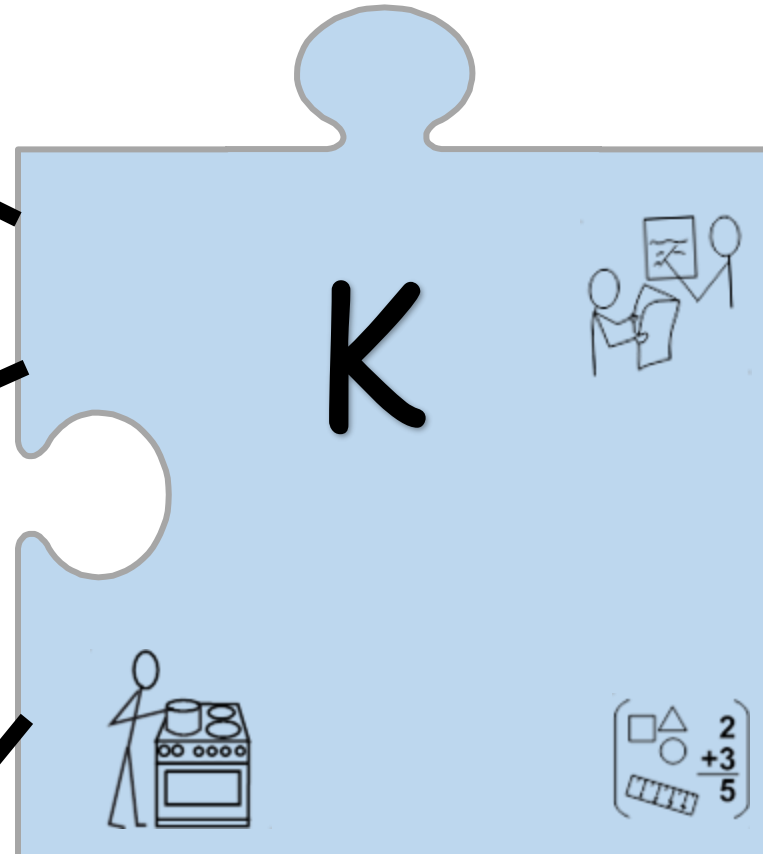
- Themed Approach
- EYFS early learning goals
- Equals schemes of Work
- National Curriculum subjects
- OCR

### Personal safety skills

- Road safety skills
- Staying safe in the community
- Staying safe online
- Self help
- Towards independence

### Personal Interest / Self Occupation

- Hobbies
- Sports
- ICT / DVD
- Music
- Play skills
- Games
- Turn taking
- Walking
- Puzzles



Area Leaders: Dave Jones / Rebecca Ball

Each student's curriculum will be drawn from each of these areas, and will be closely linked to individual needs. For example a student with PMLD will have a large portion of their curriculum drawn from the physical and sensory domain and Accessing the world, whereas a student with ASD may have a larger portion of their curriculum drawn from Accessing the world and Knowledge and understanding.

The Rochford review states "Schools already have the freedom to use any curriculum they feel is appropriate for the needs and requirements of these Pupils" (who are not engaged in subject specific learning) - this refers to pupils functioning below P8.

### **Evidence to support our curriculum Model**

The National Curriculum was introduced into school in 1988 and has proved incontrovertibly that pupils and students who are working on the SLD spectrum (working consistently and overtime between p4 and the early reaches of the NC) **DO NOT** succeed within it (Ndaji and Tymms, 2009; Imray, 2013)

This suggests that pupils with SLD start and finish their educational careers below or at best, near to the beginning points of the National Curriculum. If pupils with SLD could succeed with an academic, linearly developmental, they wouldn't, by definition have SLD (Imray and Colley 2017).

In 2015 (OFSTED data) 92% of England's Special schools were rated as 'good' or 'outstanding', therefore the lack of progress within the NC model for students with SLD cannot be a matter of poor teaching or low expectation.

"By definition, exceptional students require an extraordinary response from educators - something different from the ordinary, even if the ordinary is good.....Failure to create these explicit structures to accommodate students at the extremes of performance distribution inevitably results in their neglect. They are forgotten. They don't just fail a little. They fail a lot and their noses are rubbed in their failures" (Kauffman, 202, 259).

Our own assessment data clearly shows that our students make very limited progress throughout their school career. In order to be successful in reading, writing and maths pupils need to have good working memory (the ability to add information to what you already know), and this is something all of our students struggle with. In order to improve working memory you need to have good short term memory, abstract thinking, ability to read and ability to think sequentially, all of which, given the definition of SLD, our students have difficulties with. Therefore improving their working memory is likely to be limited and therefore their academic progress will be similarly affected.

Therefore the questions we have asked ourselves and other stakeholders are

1. Do we continue to pursue an academic (NC) model in the hope that some pupils might (some day) succeed?
2. Do we continue to pursue an academic (NC) model accepting any limited progress as 'success'?
3. Do we pursue a curriculum relevant to individual learners' needs and at which s/he can succeed?

The answers we got back were resounding in favour of curriculum change and a model that moves away from the traditional NC model and is relevant to the individual learners' needs and in which they are able to succeed.

Therefore our curriculum will

1. Be developmental in nature - learners will join and leave at stages appropriate to them.
2. Not be related to age or key stage
3. Not exclusively linked to the National Curriculum
4. Have learning intentions rather than objectives or targets and should not be concerned with pre-determined outcomes