

## Engagement Curriculum and Assessment Overview

### PART ONE: INTENT

**Context:** It is fundamentally important, when undertaking any Quality Assurance activity within the Engagement Pathway, to understand the highly complex needs of the pupils and the significance of their journey from baseline. This document provides the essential foundation for understanding each pupil's profile, the rationale for their placement on the Engagement Pathway, and the specialist provision required to ensure safety, relational stability and meaningful progress. Quality Assurance cannot be done superficially, as it is important to understand the complexity behind every behaviour within the Engagement Pathway.

- Baseline matters — progress is measured from a point of profound need, not age-related expectations.
- The pathway is specialist — not a “lower” curriculum, but a *different* one.
- Provision is skilled and intentional — not supervision, but therapeutic, relational, and developmental work.

The Engagement Pathway is designed for learners with severe and complex needs who are working consistently and over time within the early developmental range (previously P3–P6, now replaced by the Engagement Model for P1–4 and the Pre-Key Stage Standards for P5–8).

**Pupil Profile:** Learners on this pathway typically have **Complex Learning Difficulties (CLD)** and share many characteristics with pupils with **Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD)**. These include communication, self-regulation, attention, memory, processing speed, abstract thinking, generalisation, problem-solving, and the impact of trauma on pupils' ability to feel safe, regulated and ready to learn. Many also experience differences in social communication, social interaction, and cognitive flexibility, and a significant proportion are autistic or neurodivergent. Pupils' needs are pervasive rather than isolated, meaning they affect multiple areas of development simultaneously. Their profiles rarely align neatly with a single diagnostic category. Many pupils experience overlapping neurodevelopmental conditions alongside the impact of trauma, disrupted attachment or adverse experiences. This makes it neither accurate nor helpful to attribute their presentation to one-dimensional diagnostic thinking. At Cleaswell Hill School, we believe it is essential to have a holistic approach to understanding need and designing provision that genuinely supports progress.

Behaviours that challenge are understood within a neuroinclusive framework as meaningful responses to unmet needs, differences in communication, sensory regulation, emotional understanding, or experiences of uncertainty. Such behaviours are not viewed as intentional or oppositional, but as communicative and relational signals that guide adult response and environmental adjustment.

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The Engagement Pathway is identified for pupils with low or no tolerance of others, behavioural dysregulation, and multiple interacting needs, diagnosis alone is not a reliable predictor of curriculum access. So the school begins with a holistic view that considers:

- developmental history
- communication profile
- sensory processing
- emotional safety and trauma impact
- cognitive profile (attention, memory, processing, problem-solving)
- relational capacity
- triggers, stressors and protective factors

The areas of 'The Grid' are continually reviewed and adapted to respond to pupils' changing and fluctuating needs. Staff work highly reflectively to respond to behaviours through minute-by-minute forensic level analysis to then inform consistent application of approaches that support regulation and readiness to learn. An adaptable and bespoke curriculum is designed around each pupil, incorporating extensive therapeutic input, PBS green scales and aspects of the PHSEE framework. A multidisciplinary approach is key to supporting the pupils for sustained optimal emotional regulation and achievement and supporting the holistic development of the pupil.

Some pupils demonstrate motor skills that are broadly in line with their developmental age; however, this can be misleading when viewed in isolation, as their wider complex profiles affect how safely and purposefully they can use those motor abilities. As a result, even when pupils appear physically capable, their emotional, cognitive and behavioural needs mean that safety, supervision and engagement require highly skilled staff who can anticipate triggers, co-regulate, support relational safety, scaffold regulation, and maintain a secure environment. At CH we relate this to Maslow's theory. For pupils with complex needs, Maslow's foundational tier — **safety, trust and emotional security — is the gateway to all learning**. Trauma, dysregulation and sensory overwhelm can keep pupils operating in survival mode, making relational safety and co-regulation the essential first steps before any curriculum engagement is possible. **Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. Psychological Review.**

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**Rationale:** The curriculum within the Engagement Pathway is **intentionally and unapologetically flexible**, reflecting the Neuroinclusive Education Network (NEN) principle of understanding the individual child and adapting provision accordingly. This flexibility is essential, as it allows provision to be fully personalised, recognising that there is no single pathway to learning or progress.

Rather than being defined by a fixed structure for a cohort, the curriculum is shaped around the individual learner, informed by their unique profile of strengths, interests, needs, communication preferences and sensory differences. Progress is understood as individual, non-linear, and relational, supported by secure relationships, emotional safety, meaningful engagement, and positive learning environments

### Curriculum Aims

The overarching aims of the Engagement Pathway curriculum are to support pupils to:

- **Have a voice** – develop functional and self-affirming communication so they can express needs, preferences, choices and views in ways that are respected and responded to.
- **Reach their potential** – build on individual cognitive strengths to support purposeful, functional learning and increasing autonomy and independence.
- **Feel happy, safe, and valued** – experience emotionally and sensory-safe environments that support regulation, wellbeing, and positive relationships through co-regulation and emerging self-regulation strategies.
- **Develop independence** – participate as autonomously as possible in meaningful, everyday activities within school and beyond.

### Curriculum Principles

The Engagement Pathway curriculum is underpinned by four core principles:

- **Child-centred** – All planning and provision begin with a respectful understanding of the individual learner's strengths, interests, needs and preferences.
- **Target-driven** – The curriculum and learning priorities are rooted in the four areas of need identified in each child's EHCP ensuring that provision is purposeful, relevant, and personalised.

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- **Engaging** – Themes and “hooks” provide meaningful motivating contexts for learning. These themes:
  - expose learners to a rich and varied language environment,
  - provide opportunities to introduce and increase motivators,
  - maintain novelty while respecting predictability
  - gently support flexibility by broadening learners’ experiences within emotionally safe boundaries.
- **Holistic** – Staff draw on a broad, evidence-informed toolkit of strategies and approaches to support the whole child, recognising the interconnection between communication, regulation, relationships, learning and wellbeing. A balance of structure and flexibility ensures that personalised learning intentions are embedded meaningfully across everyday experiences and not taught in isolation.

### **PART TWO: IMPLEMENTATION**

#### **Building a personalised curriculum**

**Step 1: Start with the child** - At the heart of the curriculum is the learner as the individual. Planning begins with a deep, collaborative understanding of each child, developed through partnership with teachers, therapists, families, and where possible, the learner themselves

- **Identifying Needs:** Priority targets are agreed for each of the four areas of the EHCP through a multidisciplinary approach, ensuring that each learner’s most significant areas for development are clearly identified. For some pupils, this will result in a broad range of targets across all four areas. For others, assessment may indicate a need for increased focus and intensity within one or two priority areas for a period of time, which may represent a significant proportion of their educational experience. [Key Stage and Yearly Targets are recorded and assessed using Earwig.](#)
- **Recognising Strengths:**  
[Baseline assessment using IDAF](#) Baseline assessment using the IDAF framework identifies cognitive strengths, learning profiles, and areas of capability, ensuring that expectations remain ambitious and strengths-based. The framework draws on Cherry Garden, SCERTS, the AET Progression Framework, Portage, and Equals/MAPP milestones, supporting inclusive and neuroaffirming assessment practice.

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- **Understanding Interests and Motivators:**

[Engagement Profiles](#) are used to identify what captures each child's attention, supports persistence, and sustains motivation. This information directly informs curriculum delivery ensuring learning experiences are meaningful and responsive. This aligns with the Engagement Model's focus on exploration, realisation, anticipation, persistence, and initiation.

**Step 2: Personalised Curriculum** - Once this information is established, a personalised curriculum is developed for each child, recognising that equitable provision means different learners experience learning differently. As a result, no two learners' experiences will look exactly the same.

While the *content* of learning is individualised, the *structure* of the day remains largely consistent to support predictability, emotional safety, regulation and a sense of security. This includes routines such as morning play and regulation, snack time, lunchtime, and end-of-day activities. [\(see example timetable\)](#).

Within this structure, learners access a range of sessions, activities and interventions across the day, selected in response to individual need. These may include: Play skills, Sensory play, Box time, Jabadao, Cooking/Food exploration, trips and visits, community visits and therapeutic interventions such as hydrotherapy, rebound therapy, and intensive interaction. [\(see toolkit of teaching approaches\)](#).

Within any session, pupils may be working towards the same, similar, or entirely individual learning targets, reflecting their individualised targets, reflecting inclusion thought adapting teaching and environments to support wellbeing and success.

### **Step 3: Hooks and themes**

Sessions, activities and learning opportunities are linked to termly themes or "hooks," which provide opportunities to expose learners to a rich variety of language, introduce new motivators for learning, and ensure experiences remain varied, novel, and engaging. These themes are carefully introduced to maintain emotional safety while gently expanding experiences and supporting cognitive and sensory flexibility. [\(appendix 4 – 3 yearly curriculum overview\)](#).

Learning is recognised as both planned and incidental. Opportunities for choice, exploration, and interaction are deliberately embedded throughout the day, including daily routines such as personal care, developing independence, tidying, and organising belongings and transitions. [\(see weekly timetable – supporting adult's role\)](#).

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Pacing is intentionally flexible and responsive, with engagement, regulation, and wellbeing prioritised over rigid timings.

### **Step 4: Planning**

Teachers and class leads design each session with clear intention, outlining the session content, anticipated outcomes and links to individualised targets. Planning remains responsive and reflective, allowing adjustments based on engagement, regulation, and learning observed in real time. ([see weekly planning](#)).

### **Step 5: Assessment**

#### **1. Pre-Annual Review Preparation**

Prior to the annual review meeting, the IDAF is updated and existing yearly targets are reviewed. Each target is evaluated using the agreed progress scale ([see progress scale](#)).

#### **2. Annual Review Target Setting**

During the annual review, new Key Stage targets (where applicable) and yearly personalised targets are set in collaboration with parents/carers, therapy teams, and external agencies (if involved). Target writing is informed by a range of frameworks, including the IDAF (incorporating Cherry Garden, Pre-Key Stage Standards, and Equals curriculum) and the AET Progression Framework.

#### **3. Post-Review Target Upload and Baseline**

Following the annual review, all agreed targets are uploaded to Earwig. Each target is baselined using the progress scale, accompanied by a baseline comment to capture the learner's starting point.

#### **4. Ongoing Observation and Evidence Collection**

Daily and weekly observations are recorded to capture progress towards yearly targets, as well as incidental learning and engagement indicators across the curriculum.

#### **5. Half-Termly Progress Commentary**

Every half term, teachers provide a written commentary on progress towards each yearly target, alongside an updated grading judgement.

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### 6. **Half-Termly Moderation**

Internal moderation takes place each half term to ensure consistency, accuracy, and shared understanding of progress (see moderation example).

### 7. **Termly Engagement Profile Update**

The Engagement Profile is reviewed and updated each term to reflect changes in learner engagement, strengths, and emerging needs.

### 8. **Annual Report**

The annual report aligns with the annual review cycle to ensure coherence between assessment, reporting, and target-setting processes

## **PART THREE : Impact**

| <b>Outcome Area</b> | <b>What Children Will Achieve</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Overall Impact      | Children will communicate, engage, regulate, and develop independence while making meaningful individualised progress across all EHCP areas of need                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Communication       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• communicate effectively using their preferred method (AAC, signing, speech, gesture)</li><li>• make requests, comment, ask and answer questions</li><li>• engage in shared attention, turn-taking and reciprocal interaction</li><li>• express needs, choices, feelings and ideas</li><li>• follow functional instructions and routines appropriate to their level</li><li>• experience increased functional communication, supporting reduced distress-related behaviours</li></ul> |
| Cognition           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• develop functional daily living skills</li><li>• engage positively in meaningful learning experiences</li><li>• show curiosity, attention and persistence</li><li>• develop early problem-solving and thinking skills</li><li>• generalise learning across different environments</li><li>• make progress towards personalised PLIM and EHCP learning targets</li></ul>                                                                                                              |

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|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| SEMH               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• build trusting, secure relationships with adults and peers</li><li>• develop emotional regulation strategies through co-regulation</li><li>• participate in group activities where appropriate</li><li>• express emotions safely and appropriately</li><li>• show resilience when faced with new or challenging experiences</li></ul> |
| Physical & Sensory | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• develop independence in functional daily living skills</li><li>• improve fine and gross motor skills</li><li>• access sensory regulation opportunities that support readiness to learn</li><li>• increase awareness of their own sensory needs</li><li>• build physical confidence, mobility and coordination</li></ul>               |