



Name of Policy: Curriculum Policy Engagement Pathway (formerly PMLD)  
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**Woodlands Meed Equalities Statement is available on the website:**  
[www.woodlandsmeed.co.uk](http://www.woodlandsmeed.co.uk) under policies.

### **Woodlands Meed's Overall Aims:**

## **Building Unique Futures Together**

This includes:

- Providing a safe, secure environment
- Recognising the individual needs and strengths of each child
- Planning and facilitating unique, enjoyable opportunities to maximise learning and potential
- Working with parents/carers and outside agencies to achieve the best for each child
- Ensuring opportunities from the wider community are utilised.

## **What do we mean by Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities?**

Profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) refers to individuals who have severe cognitive impairments combined with other complex needs, such as physical disabilities, sensory impairments, or medical conditions. People with PMLD typically require a high level of support with all aspects of daily living and communication. Many pupils with either PMLD or severe learning difficulties will follow the Engagement pathway at Woodlands Meed.

## **Engagement Pathway Ethos**

- Everything we do should begin with the needs of the learner—a thorough understanding of who they are and a commitment to meeting their learning needs in the most meaningful way.

- We believe a learner's needs should be viewed holistically, with equal consideration and value given to all areas of development. Their social and emotional well-being is vital and must be understood within the context of their family or home setting, as well as how they present in the school environment.
- We are committed to working positively and respectfully with each learner's unique combination of chronological age and developmental stage.
- We respect our pupils and young people as learners, giving them time to respond, react, and initiate.
- We believe learners need to feel safe and secure in all environments, and we strive to create a strong sense of safety and belonging for every learner.
- We believe all adults who work in, study at, or visit our school must respect learners as individuals—seeking to understand them, getting to know them as people, caring for them, and responding to their individual needs.
- We believe that every learner should be **Celebrated, Appreciated, Respected, and Encouraged.**

## **Managing Complex Needs**

All our learners have a degree of physical disability and associated learning, sensory and/or other medical related difficulties resulting in complex needs. This means we need to have a range of procedures in place to ensure learners' individual needs are identified and met to guarantee maximum access to the curriculum and learning opportunities.

Individual Health Care Plans will be written by the Specialist School Nurses in conjunction with parents and the class team which will highlight the child's needs, the training and the ongoing support required to ensure a safe and full school life in a holistic way. In addition to medical needs, plans will also consider any known long term pain issues and muscular-skeletal discomforts (alongside a treatment plan) and may require input from specialised therapists (e.g. SALT, Physiotherapy or OT).

The Specialist School Nurses will ensure that appropriate and individualised training for specific health needs is provided to class staff, supporting safe and adequate provision throughout the year. The level of support required from the nursing team will vary from learner to learner and may change at any time. This support may also include direct pupil care when necessary.

## **Teaching and Learning**

### **Organisation of the school day**

Extensive research shows that learners with PMLD (Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities) and SLD (severe learning disabilities) learn best through routine. As such, we provide a daily plan with consistent routines within a responsive environment. The needs of these learners, as assessed through the Engagement Model, can be effectively supported through structured daily routines.

Timetables used in Engagement classes reflect both individual and group needs, incorporating routine-based learning opportunities throughout the school day. The timetable format illustrates how these opportunities are embedded into the daily schedule. Appendix 1 provides an example of a daily class timetable for learners following the Engagement Pathway.

The remainder of the timetable aligns with the planning expectations and activities outlined in the Curriculum section of this policy.

### **Preparation for Learning**

The significant physical needs of our learners mean that positioning and the use of orthotics are essential parts of their daily routine. Choosing positions that meet physical needs while also enabling learning opportunities is fundamental to effective teaching and learning. For some learners, the chosen position may not support active engagement with the environment but is crucial for their physical well-being. At such times, a learner may appear unoccupied, while they are working hard physically to maintain the position.

The Pre-Formal Curriculum / Engagement Pathway has been written and personalised to reflect all aspects of a learner's day. These are cross-referenced with each learner's EHCP targets and the Engagement Model to ensure that they offer meaningful learning opportunities across all curriculum areas.

### **Support Staff**

People are our most valuable resource in school—and remain the most responsive resource available to us.

At times, support staff will be required to work with individual learners or small groups, following teacher-designed activities and daily routines that provide meaningful learning opportunities. All staff are expected to contribute to learner records by documenting both general observations and progress against targets set by the teacher. These records are regularly reviewed and monitored by the class teacher.

Support staff attend regular class meetings, where they are actively encouraged to contribute to discussions about all aspects of a learner's education and to share their views on how effectively the class is meeting its aims. Some of the more experienced

staff may also take on the role of a key person for one or more learners, maintaining aspects of the learner's Pre-Formal Curriculum assessment and playing an active role in setting targets based on these assessments.

### **Multi-Disciplinary Working**

Woodlands Meed works effectively with both on-site and visiting professionals—for example, during Annual Review meetings, medical clinics, social care meetings, or emergency meetings. The school hosts multi-disciplinary meetings for each learner as required.

These meetings are primarily attended by therapy and education staff, who work together to agree on priorities for each learner and to plan the actions needed to ensure all needs are met, along with clarity on who is responsible for each action. The use of the Pre-Formal Curriculum as a shared assessment tool supports and enhances multi-disciplinary collaboration by enabling joint target setting and the clear identification of priorities.

### **Inclusion**

Woodlands Meed School promotes inclusion and takes all reasonable steps to ensure that children and young people are not discriminated against or treated less favourably than other learners. The school works in partnership with families and other agencies to act in the best interests of each learner and to maximise educational opportunities.

Learners with PMLD at Woodlands Meed are included in all school activities—for example, Christmas plays, assemblies, and sports days. Every effort is made to ensure that pupils with PMLD can interact with other students at appropriate times throughout the school day and week.

PMLD learners have access to all specialist rooms, outdoor areas, and classrooms within the school. This also includes the use of school minibuses for off-site trips and access to suitable equipment. PMLD students are given opportunities to have their thoughts and ideas heard by staff and the student council, particularly in discussions about future plans and developments at Woodlands Meed.

## **The Pre-Formal Curriculum**

### **AIMS**

1. To provide an effective learning environment where, through assessment, a detailed and shared understanding of a learner's needs is known by all the professionals from an education and therapy setting.
2. To provide a consistently responsive environment within which every learner's ability to communicate is respected, responded to and developed.
3. To provide throughout the day a range of consistent routines and meaningful opportunities that allow learners to develop intentionality and exercise control of their learning environment.

The curriculum pathway for learners with PMLD at woodlands Meed school is the **Pre-Formal Curriculum** with support of the **Engagement Model** outlined by the DfE. Please see the attached appendix to view the link between the two frameworks and areas of learning. ([Appendix 2 and 3](#))

### **The Pre-Formal Curriculum**

*Woodlands Meed Pre-Formal Curriculum  
Enhancing life through exploration, experiences and opportunities*

Woodlands Meed's Pre-Formal Curriculum is based on the Engagement Model and has been adapted specifically for Woodlands Meed, incorporating elements from various other programs used in special schools.

This curriculum is suitable for learners with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) or severe learning disabilities (SLD). However, it may also be appropriate for any pupil who is disengaged from their learning.

Each learner's EHCP will be used as a guide to help organise their learning effectively. However, it will not serve as the curriculum itself. The curriculum is structured around subject areas and termly topics. These topics should be seen as a vehicle for introducing new learning experiences, including cultural enrichment, and will support each learner in making progress on their individual learning journey.

- **Communication and Interaction** - Communication and Interaction are delivered through individual learning intentions, whole-body communication (such as TACPAC and massage), interactive songs, sensory stories, routines, repetition, the curiosity programme and Attention Autism. The classroom and resources are themed around a topic or event, and communication is integrated throughout the curriculum.
- **Cognition and Learning** - Cognition and learning are delivered through individual learning intentions, ICT (iPads, interactive screens, switches, and eye gaze), sensory room exploration, sensory play, cause and effect activities,

sequencing, food technology, early numeracy, the curiosity programme and problem solving. The classroom and resources are themed around a topic or event, and cognition is integrated throughout the curriculum.

- **Physical and Sensory** - Physical and sensory development is delivered through individual learning intentions, physiotherapy, P.E., occupational therapy, water skills and swimming, rebound therapy, enrichment activities, messy play, massage, and TACPAC. The classroom and resources are themed around a topic or event, and physical and sensory learning is integrated throughout the curriculum.
- **Social, Emotional and Mental Health** – Social, Emotional, and Mental Health is delivered through individual learning intentions, self-help skills, travel training, enrichment, social opportunities, and managing emotions. The classroom and resources are themed around a topic or event, and emotional, social, and mental health learning is integrated throughout the curriculum. Self-help skills include eating and drinking, dressing and undressing, medical care, manual handling, and personal care. Pupils may have an individual eating and drinking care plan developed by SALT (Speech and Language Therapy).

### Our pupils

Pre-Formal pupils are incredibly curious and excited about the world and all it has to offer. We are committed to providing our students with opportunities to develop these qualities throughout their learning, as they are tenacious, persistent, communicative, and social. We encourage active participation from all our pupils in every aspect of school life.

Each pupil has unique talents and needs; therefore, individualised learning opportunities and teaching strategies are essential for their progress within our programme.

### The Pre-Formal Curriculum supports our Pupils to become:

1. Engaged learners: Pupils who are motivated to participate in learning and are suitably empowered to access what is being taught
2. Communicators: Pupils who are actively communicating with others and/or their immediate environment using whatever form of communication is appropriate for them.
3. Problem Solvers: Learners who are sufficiently resilient in their attention to experiment and identify a solution to a new learning challenge
4. Unique Learners: Learners who have very distinctive, idiosyncratic learning styles that are in direct relation to their individual profiles of learning difficulties, sensory impairments and disabilities

5. Immersed Learners: Learners who are demonstrably responsive to the specialist, personalised provision we provide with respect to their individual circumstances

6. 21st Century Learners: Learners who can use modern technology to help overcome some of their difficulties and enhance their potential for learning

7. Acquirers of knowledge: Learners who can use literacy skills to access information from their environment and express and apply their new-found knowledge

## **The Engagement Model**

### The 5 areas of engagement

The model breaks engagement into 5 areas, which are interrelated. They are not hierarchical, and there is no expectation that pupils need to demonstrate progress in all 5 areas. In summary, the 5 areas are:

- **Exploration** – whether a pupil can build on their initial reaction to a new stimulus or activity (e.g. they display more than an involuntary or startled reaction, and may notice it or reach out to it)
- **Realisation** – how a pupil interacts with a new stimulus or activity or discovers a new aspect of familiar ones (e.g. they display behaviours that show they want more control)
- **Anticipation** – how a pupil predicts, expects or associates a stimulus or activity with an event (e.g. they anticipate a familiar activity is about to start or finish by interpreting cues or prompts)
- **Persistence** – whether a pupil can sustain their attention in a stimulus or activity for long enough that they can actively try to find out more and interact with it
- **Initiation** – how much a pupil investigates a stimulus or activity in order to bring about a desired outcome, acting spontaneously and independently without waiting for direction

### **Data collection and progress analysis**

Data collection and progress analysis is purely for the schools and teachers own purpose to identify the learner's level of engagement. This information will not be sent to the DFE as outlined in 'The Engagement Model guidance manual'.

Data collection will consist of looking at the observation slips written out by a learner's key worker, photographs and video recording evidence. As well as dates of when targets were worked on and achieved, this will also link in with Next Steps. An engagement profile builder is completed (See appendix 4) that will indicate how the learner responded to lessons/activities that are a part of a routine or repeated lesson/activity and the learner should realise the expected outcome form the activity presented. The second part of the profile builder is that of an unknown activity that

the learner has had no engagement with. The learners' reactions are recorded. This information will formulate an engagement profile, which is updated termly as to identify any changes in the way the learners react to activities. (Appendix 5)

## **Planning**

Planning is carried out in three stages:

### 1. Long Term Planning

- Identifies the main themes to be covered
- Offers a termly overview of topics
- Ensures continuity and progression

To view the Long-Term Plan, please see [Appendix 6](#)

### 2. Medium Term Planning

The topics that are outlined in the Medium-Term Plan will run over a 2-week cycle to follow the 5 areas of engagement outlined in the 'Engagement Model'. The first week will focus more on exploration, persistence and initiation. The 2nd week will focus on all 5 areas but specific focus on realisation and anticipation.

However, learners work on their own objectives, targets and programmes throughout the term. Generally, learners participate in the sessions that are most relevant and of most benefit to them in addition to their individual programmes. This is further developed by adding successful activities/ resources/interactions etc. to personalised curriculums to further develop over time.

To view an example of the Medium-Term Plan, please see [Appendix 7](#).

### 3. Short Term Planning

It must be noted that the PMLD classes may adjust their planned activity according to the timetable dependant on the learning disposition and readiness of the learners; therefore, the use of a flexible and fluid Timetable, which is not bound by time, is necessary. The main aim of Short-Term Planning is to aid the teacher and support staff in carrying out planned activity sessions and daily routines on a day-to-day basis.

To view an example of the daily timetable, please see [Appendix 1](#)

## **Assessment, recording and reporting**

### Assessment

The Assessment framework that Woodland Meed makes use of for assessing learners with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties is that of observational assessment. This is central to understanding what the pupil knows and what they can

do, looking at the learner holistically. Improving learners' ability to use their senses as well as their motor skills and communication. Assessments are conducted regularly throughout the academic year so that they can demonstrate whether the learner is able to sustain the new skills, concepts and knowledge taught within the school day.

Recording progress should recognise the learners' individual needs and show their success, however gradual it might be. When evidence of the learners' responses, achievement, maintenance or regression is observed, photographs, Audio or a recorded image can be used to document this.

Reporting to parents should not include a numerical scale or provide a quantitative score. A written qualitative narrative should be composed to report to parents on the outcome of the year's progress, maintenance or regression. This report should be accessible with language that effectively describes the achievements and evidence of progress of the learner in a positive, inclusive and jargon-free manner.

## **Communication**

At Woodlands Meed, we use a Total Communication approach. Pupils are exposed to Makaton signing, speech, symbols, photos, objects of reference, and AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication). The communication system that works best for each individual pupil is identified and used consistently to support their understanding and expression.

We aim to provide a consistent, responsive classroom environment where every learner's ability to communicate is respected, acknowledged, and developed. Our goal is to support each pupil's progress from pre-intentional to formal communication. To maintain a consistent communication-rich environment, time and opportunities for meaningful communication exchanges must be embedded throughout the day. This is achieved during daily routines and structured activities, where staff actively engage with learners to encourage and develop their communication skills.