



Spiral School

Exploratory Phase



Intent





Exploratory Phase

How do the learners learn on this pathway?

Exploratory phase learners learn through exploring the world around them. Learners in this phase access exploratory sessions that enable them to develop independence towards their skills-based objectives. The Areas of learning are designed to teach the learners in this phase the essential knowledge they need in order to develop the skills and concepts required to achieve the independence we aspire towards.

Developing the use of functional expressive communication is central to learning. Children are encouraged to engage and form secure relationships with adults to support their engagement in adult-led activities. Independence is always encouraged through a tiered system of adult modelling, sabotage and reducing adult support. Behaviour for learning is also essential to the Exploratory curriculum. Exploratory staff use consistent strategies for each individual learner to support them to be in a sensory and emotionally regulated state ready to learn.

Within the exploratory phase both Mathematics and English skills are embedded within each area of learning. The skills within these are then taught in a purposeful manner, following the phases approach to learning. Teaching these skills and concepts through each area of learning support the learners to develop a functional level of mathematics and English.

Exploratory classes use the curriculum themes as vehicles for skills-based learning. Class staff teams take the learners motivators into account to promote learner engagement. Teaching and learning is strengthened through the learners' motivation towards exploring the activities provided. Adults support the learners to access activities with functional self-help, play and communication skills. A mixture of child-led and adult-led learning enables a good working relationship between learners and staff in the Exploratory Phase.

The classes in the Exploratory Phase offer a skills-based curriculum, where appropriate, using elements of TEACCH approach. Each class utilises and develops learner skills to encourage exploration to develop growing independence.



Implementation





Curriculum Overview

Learners at Springside follow the curriculum as detailed below. Rather than lessons, we refer to the activities our learners undertake as 'areas of learning'. These areas of learning are delivered using a variety of approaches. This skeleton scheme of work is then adapted as appropriate to the learners' abilities and interests for each learning area, providing a broad, balanced and enriched curriculum. The curriculum is further enhanced through our Learning for Life themes and enrichment, these are established in Assemblies, embellished in half-termly 'Learning for Life' experience days and the areas within this are threaded throughout each area of learning, used as hooks for learning.

Although classes will personalise their approaches to the individual learners, to facilitate and ensure consistency within a phase, learners experience a number of phase specific 'non-negotiable' elements within each classroom these are the approaches to learning that will be similar within a phase.

PSHE, RSE, RE, SMSC (including British Values) underpins all practice and are taught throughout each area in an holistic manner. Some topics within these are taught, as appropriate in discrete sessions in the Investigative phase. Each area of learning is taught sensitively and inclusively, with respect to the backgrounds and beliefs of learners and parents while always with the aim of providing learners with the knowledge they need.

Areas of learning	
Exploratory Curriculum	
▶	My Independence
▶	My Communication
▶	My Play and Leisure
▶	My Physical well-being
Approaches to Learning	
Skills, concepts and essential knowledge delivered in a highly structured, sensory and physical way.	

Progression within each area focuses on developing the thinking and problem-solving skills of our learners. This is supported through a reducing level of support in a 5-tiered system. This is Memory building; Sabotage and recognition of a problem; Independent solutions; Generalisations; Self-belief and confidence. The skeleton curriculums used are derived from Equals and the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

Curriculum Themes



Spiralside School Curriculum Theme Mapping

Term	YEAR A			YEAR B		
	Experiential	Exploratory	Investigative	Experiential	Exploratory	Investigative
Autumn 1	Superheroes – Families and People Who Care For Me			Our World - Who am I?		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Super worm - Super me 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People who help us - Our local community - My favourite things - My hobbies/interests/talents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People who help us - Super me - Super fiction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recycling fun - What a wonderful world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exploring the local community - Exploring senses relating to seasons - Families - Favourite foods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our community - Recycling in our school
Autumn 2	Celebrations - Religions			Colours and Light – Changing Bodies		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Christmas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Christmas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Christmas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Over the rainbow - Christmas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exploring light on different materials - Colour sorting/mixing - Christmas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Glasses and lenses - Christmas
*teacher to meet across phases to agree which festivals to be covered to ensure breadth of experience over phases and time.						
Spring 1	Around the World – Who am I			Tell me a Story – Caring Friendships & Respectful Relationships		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - but we get stuck in the ...jungle? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore a country. Each class to choose a country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local geography - Park - Holidays - Post cards - Travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Each class to choose a story to experience in more detail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Each class to choose a story to experience in more detail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Each class to choose a story to experience in more detail
Spring 2	Changes – Changing Bodies			Explorers - British Values		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Colour and texture - The colour monster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Colour and texture - Plants - Spring changes - Baby animals - Easter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Art - Poetry - Colour /food (irreversible changes) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To infinity and beyond 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hunts (Treasure/Bear/Bird/Easter egg) - Forest exploration - Rumble in the Jungle - Den/Bird house building - Mud play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Map reading - Treasure maps - Dinosaurs - Outdoor learning activities - Space
Summer 1	On the Move – Online Relationships			Circus – Internet Safety		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Magic Train ride 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore of the differing types of transport – car, bus, train, truck, aeroplane, boat. - Thomas the Tank Engine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transport - PE - Exercise - My independence - My travel planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The big top 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clowning around. - Having fun/telling jokes - Circus skills - Bright colours - Dressing up - Magic - Dumbo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Colour - Circus skills/acts - Circus animals? - Jokes - Co-ordination/balance
Summer 2	Water – Being Safe			The Great Outdoors – Being Healthy (including drugs, alcohol, tobacco) and basic first Aid		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In and on the sea - Slippery fish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seaside - Exploring water play - Floating/sinking - Sea life animals - Exploring pond life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oceans and seas - Water cycles - Investigating water and its properties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oh I do like to be beside the seaside 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exploring animals from a place you can visit e.g. farm, zoo, great outdoors (mini-beasts). - Bug houses - Sand play - Weather - Outdoor sports - Favourite places to visit in the Summer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safe outdoor exploration

*PSHE, Relationships Education, SMSC (Including British Values) themes

Example Timetable



EXAMPLE EXPLORATORY CLASS TIMETABLE	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri
9.00-9.15	My Independence - Preparing for school/ My Play and Leisure (Classroom)				
9.15-9.35	My Physical and Wellbeing - Sensory Circuit (Classroom/ outdoor learning area)				
9.35-10.00	My Communication - Good Morning session (Classroom)				
10.00-10.20	My Independence – Wash Hands (RRS learning – article 24)		My communication/My Physical and Wellbeing – Snack/Drink time (RRS learning – article 12)		
10.20-10.25	My Independence/ My Physical and Wellbeing - Coats/Waterproofs/Wellies/Hats/Sun Cream on (Classroom) (weather dependant)				
10.25-10.45	My Play and Leisure – Play skills (Playground)		My Physical and Wellbeing – Play skills (Playground)		
10.45-11.15	My Communication, Imperative – Intensive Interaction/PECS (Classroom) (RRS learning – article 12)	My Communication, Following instructions - leisure activities (Sensory integration room)	My Communication, Declarative - Turn taking (Soft Play)	My Communication, Narrative - Story Time (Focus room)	My Communication, Imperative – Intensive Interaction/PECS (Classroom) (RRS learning – article 12)
11.15-11.45	My Independence – My cooking (Food Technology room)	My Independence – My dressing (Classroom)	My Independence – My shopping (Drama room)	My Independence – My travel (various)	My Play and Leisure, Leisure – Yoga (Classroom)
11.45-12.15	My Independence - Coats/Waterproofs/Wellies/Hats/Sun Cream on (weather dependant)				
	My Play and Leisure - PLAY SKILLS		My Physical and Wellbeing - WASH HANDS		
12.15-1.00	My Independence – Wash Hands/ Walk to Dining Hall				
	My Physical & Wellbeing/My Independence –LUNCH TIME (Small Dining Hall)				
	My Physical & Wellbeing – Sensory Circuit				
1.00-1.15	My Independence - BRUSH TEETH		My Communication - Good Afternoon session		
1.15-2.00	My Play and Leisure, free play – carousel of different types of free play (Classroom and Outdoor learning area)	My Play and Leisure, Structured play – carousel of different types of structured play (Classroom, Outdoor learning area and soft play)	My Play and Leisure, Leisure – Art (Classroom)	My Physical Well-being, PE – Gymnastics (Main Hall)	My Play and Leisure, Leisure – Music (Classroom)
2.00-2.30	My Physical Well-being, Mental Health and Well-being – Whole School Assembly (Main Hall)	My Physical Well-being, Physical activities – Wheeled toys (Playground)	My Physical Well-being, Healthy eating – Trying new fruits (Classroom)		My Physical Well-being, Mental Health and Well-being – Phase Assembly (Classroom)
2.30-2.45	My Play and Leisure, Leisure - Drop Everything Except Reading DEER (Classroom)				
2.45-3.00	My Play & Leisure – WOW moment celebration		My Independence/My Physical and Wellbeing – Put on coats on		

Non-negotiable elements

What does our provision look like?

- ▶ All learners Personalised Learning Plans are woven through the day.
- ▶ Learners will access learning activities with personalised objectives and outcomes to develop their own personalised skills.
- ▶ Learners work towards their personalised objectives in a sequential way – developing independent achievement through adult modelling, sabotage and adult support which is reduced over time.
- ▶ A curriculum focus on functional communication, independence, sensory regulation and developing social skills.
- ▶ A clear routine for all learners with visual aids to cue the learners into transitions.
- ▶ Personal care and self-help skills embedded into the curriculum and routine.
- ▶ All learners to start the day with sensory integration and to have regular sensory breaks across the school day.
- ▶ Opportunities for the learners to be supported on a 1:1 basis for focus work.
- ▶ Access to structured Whole School and Phase Assemblies





Interventions

In order to further personalise our offer to ensure we fulfil the needs of our learners we undertake various interventions as appropriate for the individual learner.

Wilderness Therapy -

Learners take part in therapeutic activities, in natural environments, designed to meet developmental milestones.

Emotional support e.g. Therapeutic Inclusion (Th.Inc®) -

Learners participate in nurturing and transformative play activities to support their emotional development.

Rebound Therapy -

Learners with profound and complex needs benefit from stimulation of the digestive system, also used for Learners who require physical development.

Behaviour Support Plans -

Learners who require additional personalised support to communicate appropriately will have Behaviour Support Plans.

Approaches used

What approaches and teaching styles are used to deliver our areas of learning?

- ▶ Total communication approach – using symbols (PECS/PODD), sign-along, AAC, intensive interaction, Objects of Reference and simple/direct verbal language to aid language understanding and promote functional expressive communication.
- ▶ Messy play activities (incl. Write-dance, Dough Disco, Arts & Crafts and Food Technology).
- ▶ Oral skills (incl. teeth brushing and other oral desensitising activities).
- ▶ Learning for Life curriculum - My Music, My Dance, My Drama and My Art
- ▶ Outdoor Play (incl. My Outdoor school and Wilderness Therapy)
- ▶ Phonics/Reading skills (incl. story massage, sensory stories and DEAR (drop everything and read – daily!).
- ▶ Sensory integration (incl. sensory circuits)
- ▶ Calming sessions (incl. yoga)
- ▶ Jabadao – promoting social/communication/physical/sensory skills.
- ▶ Developing communication and social skills through music (incl. Charanga, Shabang and Kids Rock!)
- ▶ Using themes and subject areas as vehicles to skill-based learning. (E.g. using a story to develop anticipation, engagement and communication skills).
- ▶ Educational visits – enabling the learners to generalise their skills to environments in the local community.
- ▶ Access to soft play to develop social skills.
- ▶ Access to Large Hall/ MUGA for My Physical Well-being sessions.



Inclusive Opportunities

What are inclusive opportunities in the Exploratory Phase?

It is important that our learners have planned and incidental opportunities to mix with their peers across school and where possible the wider community, including our local mainstream schools.

Springside School is part of the IPLCN - Inspirational Professional Learning Community Network alongside many local mainstream schools.

Within this, opportunities for theme days and events are planned across each academic year where our learners join their peers from these schools to take part.

Some learners may join for assembly whilst others may share a story together; our learners in the Investigative phase often really enjoy reading stories to their peers within other classes and phases.

In addition, where appropriate, our learners may access lessons with their mainstream peers at our co-located school Hamer.





Physiotherapy

What does physiotherapy look like in the Exploratory Phase?

Physiotherapy is an integral part of the day for some of our learners. We recognise it is paramount that we look after and maintain our learners bodies so that they are able to grow and thrive.

If any of the learners in the Exploratory phase have individual physiotherapy programmes, they are followed as detailed on their plans.

These may include a stretch programme, exercises and the practise of skills such as sitting, standing and walking.

Occupational Therapy

What does Occupational therapy look like in the Exploratory Phase?

For some of our learners, specialist seating systems are needed, these form part of the learners 24hr postural management programmes and allow active learning with hands to happen.

Occupational therapists may look at hand function and sometimes assess the need for hand splints.





Speech and Language

What does Speech and Language Therapy look like in the Exploratory Phase?

Learners in the Exploratory phase are at various stages of language development. Within the phase and school as a whole we use a total communication approach.

Communication with learners is via verbal language, signing, symbols as well as alternative augmentative communication.

Speech and language therapists provide advice and write individual programmes; where needed they also assess and offer advice for safe eating and drinking. Our staff then implement these programmes.

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Behaviour Support Plans

What role do behaviour support plans have within the the Exploratory Phase?

Behaviour support plans are devised for our learners who require more specific support to communicate their emotions.

The key principle of the plans are to help the learners to communicate positive and negative emotions in an appropriate way; this is to reduce and remove barriers making it difficult for them to access the world around them.

Plans are key to ensure learners receive a consistent response from all those adults working with them.

All Behaviour support plans are individualised, focus heavily on what the learner is feeling at different times and during different experiences and activities.

They then set out known supportive strategies to help regulate a learners emotions to help prevent them becoming unregulated.

All behaviour support plans are written as a class team with input from any relevant professionals and most importantly the family of the learner.

These are then reviewed regularly and updated as required.





Hydrotherapy

What does Hydrotherapy look like in the Exploratory Phase?

For any learners in our phase who have been assessed by Physiotherapists, guidance is then provided and a list of activities planned for the learner.

Learners access our hydro pool which is located on site, and are supported in the water with a member of the class team.

The lovely warm water allows learners muscles to relax and stretch, learners work hard in the water and are often exhausted when they get out!



Visual Stimulation

What does visual stimulation plans look like in the Exploratory Phase?

Some of our learners will have a visual impairment, this may or may not have been diagnosed.

Therefore we look at how to develop learners visual skills through a range of activities both in a classroom environment or in the light stimulation room.

Some learners will have a visual passport and targets are set by Rochdale Additional Needs Service (RANs) - Visual Impairment team for these learners.





Rebound Therapy

What does Rebound therapy look like in the Exploratory Phase?

Rebound therapy is the controlled use of a trampoline for physical exercise and therapy.

Learners lay or sit on the trampoline, supported by experienced, trained and familiar staff.

Often the learners physiotherapy programmes can be practised on the trampoline, learners are able to develop their core strength and head control in a very fun and sensory session.

Rebound has many other benefits and can be used to develop areas such as communication as well as height and depth perception.

In addition there are many physical benefits, Rebound stimulates the digestive system, can improve bowel function and help clear toxins from the body.

Therapeutic Inclusion

What does Th.Inc® look like in the Exploratory Phase?

The Therapeutic Inclusion Room is part of a whole school approach which has allowed it to develop over time and become a successful, supportive intervention for our learners at Springside School.

It aims to meet the needs of our learners who require additional support in fully accessing school through supporting both social and emotional needs.

The Th.Inc. Room is a specially allocated and developed room which offers a comfortable and nurturing environment.

At Springside School we have allocated staff members who are trained in the use of low-level therapeutic approaches to support learners in both individual and group sessions.

The Th.Inc. Room combines therapeutic, nurturing and educational approaches.

Throughout each session learners participate in nurturing and transformative play activities to support many aspects of emotional development. Resources created can be used to support each learner in all aspects of their school day, as well as home life, to ensure generalisation of the many skills developed.





Swimming

What does swimming look like in the Exploratory Phase?

At Springside we have 2 pathways for our learners who are learning to swim. Some of our learners require individualised sessions to familiarise themselves with the water and develop their confidence and competence. This generally takes place using our in house Hydrotherapy pool.

In addition we utilise the local swimming baths at Castleton where qualified swimming teachers work with our learners to increase their independence within the pool.

Music Therapy

What does Music Therapy look like in the Exploratory Phase?

Within the Exploratory phase we may utilise Music therapy to improve the physical and emotional health and well-being of our learners.

The music therapy session may include listening to music; vocalising along to the music; moving to the beat of the music; feeling the vibrations of the instrument; meditating or playing an instrument.

In many cases within the Exploratory phase we use this as a way of encouraging our learners' communication through music therapy and often find it is a motivating activity.





Wilderness Therapy

What does Wilderness Therapy look like in the Exploratory Phase?

Wilderness therapy is an outdoor, capacity building, developmental intervention programme for small groups of learners.

Within the Exploratory phase our learners who access this are learning to safely explore their environment and the boundaries within it.

Learners are given activities with the aim of allowing them to explore safely and to explore the effect they can have on the world around them.

Within the intervention they will explore the concept of “I am doing” and the here and now.

Sensory Integration

What does Sensory Integration look like in the Exploratory Phase?

Within the Exploratory phase we utilise sensory integration as relevant for each learner.

For some learners we plan in sensory breaks, these can take place within the classroom, outside or using a specialist room.

For other learners the approach to sensory integration is more subtle and may be utilising equipment to help that learner regulate whilst engaging in other areas of learning.





Impact





My Independence

What do learners develop a knowledge of in this area of learning?



We believe in teaching our learners how to be as independent as possible in every area of life, prioritising safely accessing the world around me. Functional mathematics and English skills and concepts are taught through each element. The following are areas that may be covered as appropriate to each individual.



My cooking - Learners develop pre-cooking skills. They will know how to: safely use a knife; make drinks (including measuring amounts); make basic foods; using electrical equipment; clean and avoid germs/bacteria; weigh; measure and estimate.



My dressing - Learners develop a knowledge of key body parts; before knowing how to: identify different items of clothing; dress for the weather; reduce aversions to certain clothing; know an item is too big or small; put items on and take them off and match colours/ items (e.g. socks). They will also have knowledge and understanding of privacy.



My shopping - Learners will explore money (exchanging coins; the value of coins, change). They will explore how to: identify what items are needed; create a shopping list; buy items; store items; as well



My travel - Learners will know how to walk independently around school and the school grounds; locating places and people; road safety (looking for traffic, crossing a road, using crossings).

My Communication

What do learners develop a knowledge of in this area of learning?



We believe in teaching our learners how to communicate appropriately and functionally, making their needs and wants known. We want our learners to find the most effective method of communicating for them, providing them with ways of supporting this if they are not understood. We utilise verbal language, symbols and Signalong sign language as appropriate.



Imperative communications - these are primarily based on meeting specific or general wants and needs. Learners learn about choice making, how to appropriately ask for things, say "I want", "yes" and say "no".



Following instructions - Learners know to follow a simple, single instruction initially, we use motivating situations such as snack time or leisure time. Learners begin to recognise, understand and follow instructions in everyday life, e.g. 'Push/pull on doors'.



Declarative communications - Learners know how to gain the attention of another person, maintain communication, how to show you are listening, the conventions of conversation e.g. your turn, my turn.



Dynamic communications - learners understand declaratives, these are generally funny or dramatic, these could be jokes or catchphrases from favoured characters, learning when they can be used.



Narrative - learners are able to tell stories, retell events, retell events that have happened to them and what are key details.





My Play and Leisure

What do learners develop a knowledge of in this area of learning?



We believe in teaching our learners how to play, to play with others, as well as ensuring their lives are enriched through experiencing a range of leisure activities to widen their interests. Functional mathematical and English skills are taught through this area.



Structured play - this includes structured one to one & small group games (these may include activities such as pass the parcel); 'activity' games e.g. 'I sit on the swing and you push'; board/ card games; all sports; electronic games.



Free play - Solitary play (learners are taught to safely exploring the world around them); Parallel play (playing alongside others); Shared play (allowing others to also use an activity/game/toy/resources); Turn-taking play 'your turn/ my turn'; co-operative play (both involved in play together e.g. a class shop or building together with lego).



Leisure - learners will experience and explore a range of activities, at an appropriate level that they may wish to continue in their leisure time. The aim is to widen their areas of interest. This may include sporting leisure activities, yoga, crocheting, listening to different genres of music; playing instruments; creating artwork or dancing.

My Physical Well-being

What do learners develop a knowledge of in this area of learning?



We believe in teaching our learners how to be healthy and to develop an understanding of how to keep myself healthy, learning about healthy foods and different ways to exercise, including the effects these have on my body. Functional mathematics and English skills and concepts are taught through this area of learning.



Healthy Eating and lifestyle - elements taught within this include: to handle, experience and taste healthy foods that may be unfamiliar; knowing what are healthy drinks and exploring the concept of developing leisure interests are the 'move, eat, sleep, relax' focus.



Mental Health and Well-being - we teach learners to recognise and value themselves; explore differences and similarities; different interests; learning to 'fail' safely and knowing it is ok; knowing, recognising and communicating different emotions; know the skills and concepts around relaxing.



PE, Sport, Games and Aquatics - learners are taught to prepare for activity as a regular routine; participate in and enjoy different skill based physical activities; in year 6 (at least) learners are taught to safely access the water and develop basic swimming skills.



Physical activities - learners are taught that physical activity can be fun, how to take pride in responsibility and not always taking the quickest and easiest option. Learners are taught to develop their gross motor skills; participate in a range of different games and to select, access and use a wheeled toy appropriately e.g. bicycle.





Learning for Life

Curriculum Area

This is not taught as an area of learning, instead these are used as ways of teaching, we call these 'vehicles'.

To provide learners with an enriched curriculum, we thread RE, PSHE, British Values and SMSC through each area of learning. We ensure this is pertinent and accessible to our learners, these underpin the school life and ethos. We do this by ensuring our learners experience the core values of these with a specific focus placed on a theme each half term.

We use the 'vehicles' of My Outdoor School, My Music, My Dance, My Drama and My Art. These provide our learners with a vibrant, interesting and enriched curriculum.

'50 things to do before I leave Springside' - linked to the half termly theme, we provide learners with a variety of experiences and creating memories. These are threaded through the curriculum as well as being the focus during our half termly 'Learning for Life' days.