

The Milestone School Curriculum Document for Pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD)

Introduction

The Milestone School PMLD curriculum is designed to provide an appropriate and stimulating education for pupils who have

'Profound and multiple learning difficulties as well as complex learning needs. In addition to very severe learning difficulties, pupils have other significant difficulties, such as physical disabilities, sensory impairment or a severe medical condition. Pupils require a high level of adult support, both for their learning needs and also for their personal care. They are likely to need sensory stimulation and a curriculum broken down into very small steps. Some pupils communicate by gesture, eye pointing or symbols, others by very simple language. Their attainments are likely to remain in the early P scale range(P1-P4) throughout their school careers (that is below level 1 of the National Curriculum)'. The Salt Review 2010

Routes for Learning (2006) further states

'That the inter-relationship of these disabilities increases the complexity of need, in turn affecting all areas of learning'

The term PMLD is also used to include a number of pupils who may not appear to have profound learning difficulties. These are pupils who may be ambulant and possibly have well established self-care skills in being able, for example, to feed themselves and at least partly dress themselves. They are likely to have a simple understanding of cause and effect, and may even have attained at least partial contingency awareness. These pupils may have additional learning difficulties such as autism, but will not generally have the physical and multiple disabilities which Jean Ware described as the 'M' in PMLD (Ware, 2003). Nonetheless, the intellectual and cognitive impairments of this group will restrict their development to around P4 and below although some may well achieve slightly above this mark.

This curriculum document recognises that children, young people and adults with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) have unique abilities and ways of learning.

Routes for Learning (2006) states that

"whilst (pupils with PMLD) have an entitlement to a curriculum and assessment framework which is fit for purpose and meets their specific needs, there is little benefit.....if they are included in structures which fail to do this"

We understand this to mean that for those who are likely to remain within developmentally early intellectual parameters for the whole of their school lives, (that is, in the main at or below P3(ii) of the National Curriculum, though some may achieve as high as P4/5 especially in PSHE areas), the National Curriculum on its own, or even as the basis for a curriculum document, may have limited benefit. Similarly, assessment models such as P Scales or variations of this (Pivats, 'B' Squared and Classroom Monitor being the most common) which use linear developmental progression, do not adequately reflect the real progress and development which we know that those pupils with PMLD can make.

Barry Carpenter is persuasive in his argument that the burning question for teachers in the 21st Century is how to engage learners, and that this process of engagement must be at the heart of any curriculum development (Carpenter, 2010). For those with a PMLD, learning is best done when every moment and situation is regarded as a learning opportunity (Routes for Learning, 2006). It could be argued for example, that necessities like toileting and feeding directly impinge upon the school's ability to educate, since doing it efficiently, safely and with care and consideration, takes up so much of the school day. Yet these are precisely the areas of learning

which challenge us to use learning time effectively and this document attempts to do so (see for example under 'Routines' below).

Our PMLD curriculum is broad, balanced and appropriate to the needs of the child. It recognises how our pupils learn by supporting and developing their strengths and abilities and focuses on developing the learner's understanding of the world around him/her, and of social interactions and relationships. It is delivered in a wholly integrated manner, incorporating learning, therapy and health needs and many opportunities to practice and achieve these learning goals are offered in a wide range of settings. We recognise and understand that factors such as the time of day, comfort or choice of positioning may affect a pupil's ability to concentrate and therefore learn.

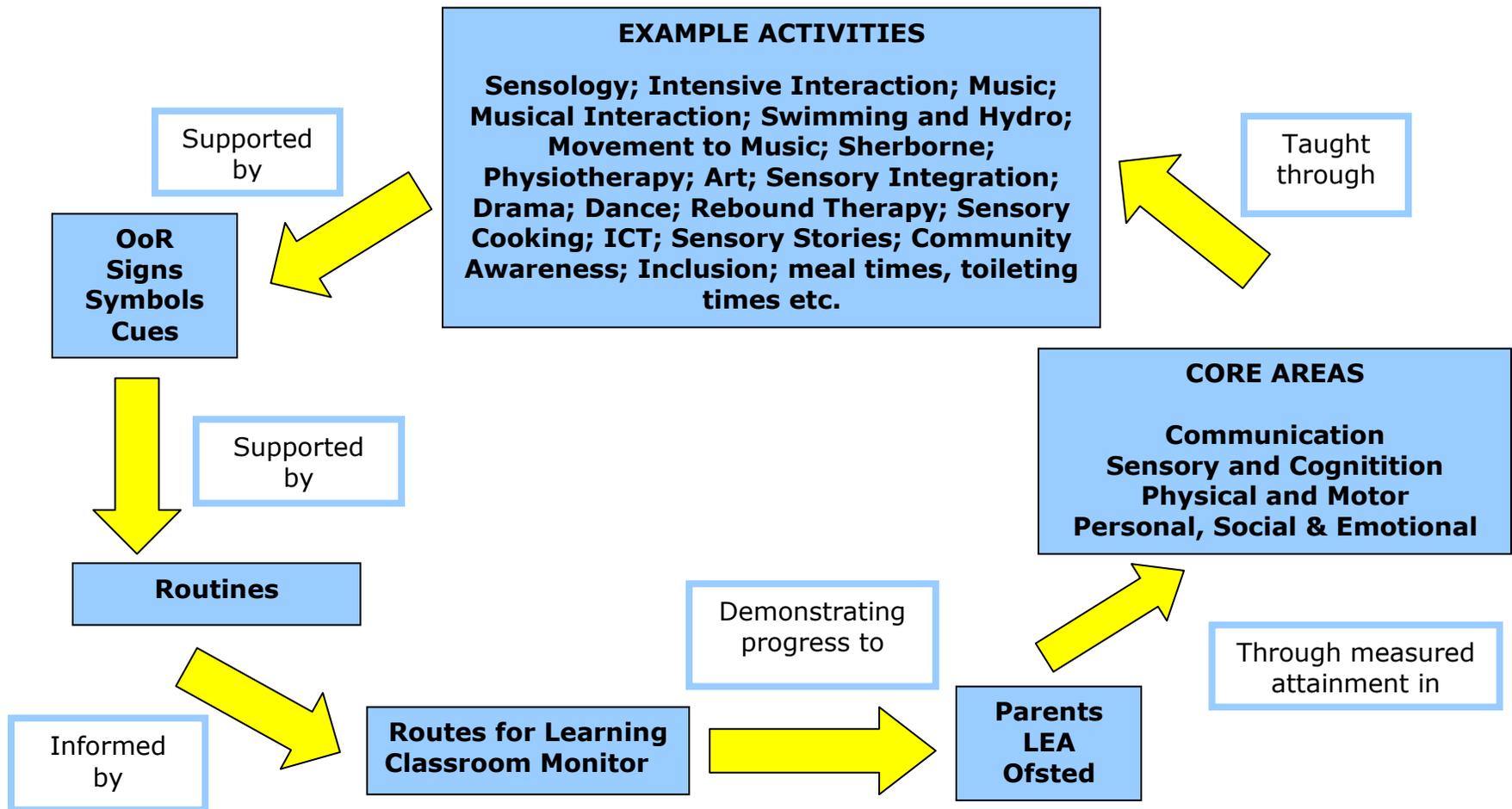
Philosophy

The Milestone School believes that how we are (as adults and essential facilitators in learning) directly affects how our pupils are and how well they learn. We must, therefore, all take individual responsibility for being and remaining positive with our learners at all times.

- Learners are a priority. Have high expectations and be sensitive to the learners' likes and dislikes, preferences and needs. One learner may have a visual impairment (VI) and will need support through different channels such as touch and sound. Another learner may be tactile defensive and have a hearing impairment (HI) needing support through visual and/or olfactory channels. Take time to get to know the learners, actively involve them in discussions and plan appropriate support.
- All learners are treated as intentional communicators. Any attempts at communication (vocalising, eye contact, gestures, shiver, cough, laugh etc.) are responded to either by verbalising, commenting on what has happened or copying sounds. The fundamental principles of Intensive Interaction (Hewett and Nind, 1998; Nind and Hewett, 2001; Nind and Hewett 2005) should be used throughout the day with all learners as a matter of course and as a 'way of being'. Be anticipatory; be positive – projecting a feeling of happiness; be calm; be aware of the learner's moods and feelings; use pauses; follow the learner's lead; give control to the learner wherever you can; give eye contact; smile; vocalise along with the student or in turn taking, mirror bodily movements.
- Greet learners in the same way each time you greet them – keep your voice (tone, cadence) smell (scent, aftershave), touch (where you touch, how much pressure) etc. consistent; thus helping to ground the learner in familiar and comfortable relational experiences.
- Keep learners informed about what is happening in their day and daily routines as they happen. Learners are not just passive but should be encouraged to participate in and know as much about their own routines as you do.
- Keep language simple but do not assume the learner cannot understand what you are saying and doing. Language must of course be used with developmentally early learners, but should be used carefully, in moderation, at the appropriate level for each pupil and for the situation. It should also be used repetitively so that pupils have many opportunities to understand meanings in real and concrete ways. Possible ways of doing this are:
 - (i) Keep talking in class to a minimum and in relation to the lesson. Social chat between adults should be limited to social times, for example, mealtimes and coffee breaks, but the learners should be included. Humans have sympathetic nervous systems and can pick up on the emotions and feelings of those around them. The students will feel the staff members' excitement and feel part of a group.
 - (ii) Using words selectively like we would use signs and symbols with the more able. Use only the key words in a sentence so that *'We're going to do some painting now and I want everyone to sit round the table and concentrate on the sensory feel of the paint, the primary colours and the effect they have on each other when mixed'* becomes *'Now we're going to paint.....wet.....dry.....red.....yellow.....orange.'*

- (iii) Using repeat phrases for stock occasions such as those noted in the *Routines* section below. It doesn't matter what these are as long as they are adopted by everyone
- (iv) Supporting key words with personal Objects of Reference, signing if possible and symbols if appropriate to the developmental level of the pupil
- (v) Using call and response as a language teaching tool in drama, storytelling and poetry (see below)

The Milestone School PMLD Curriculum Map



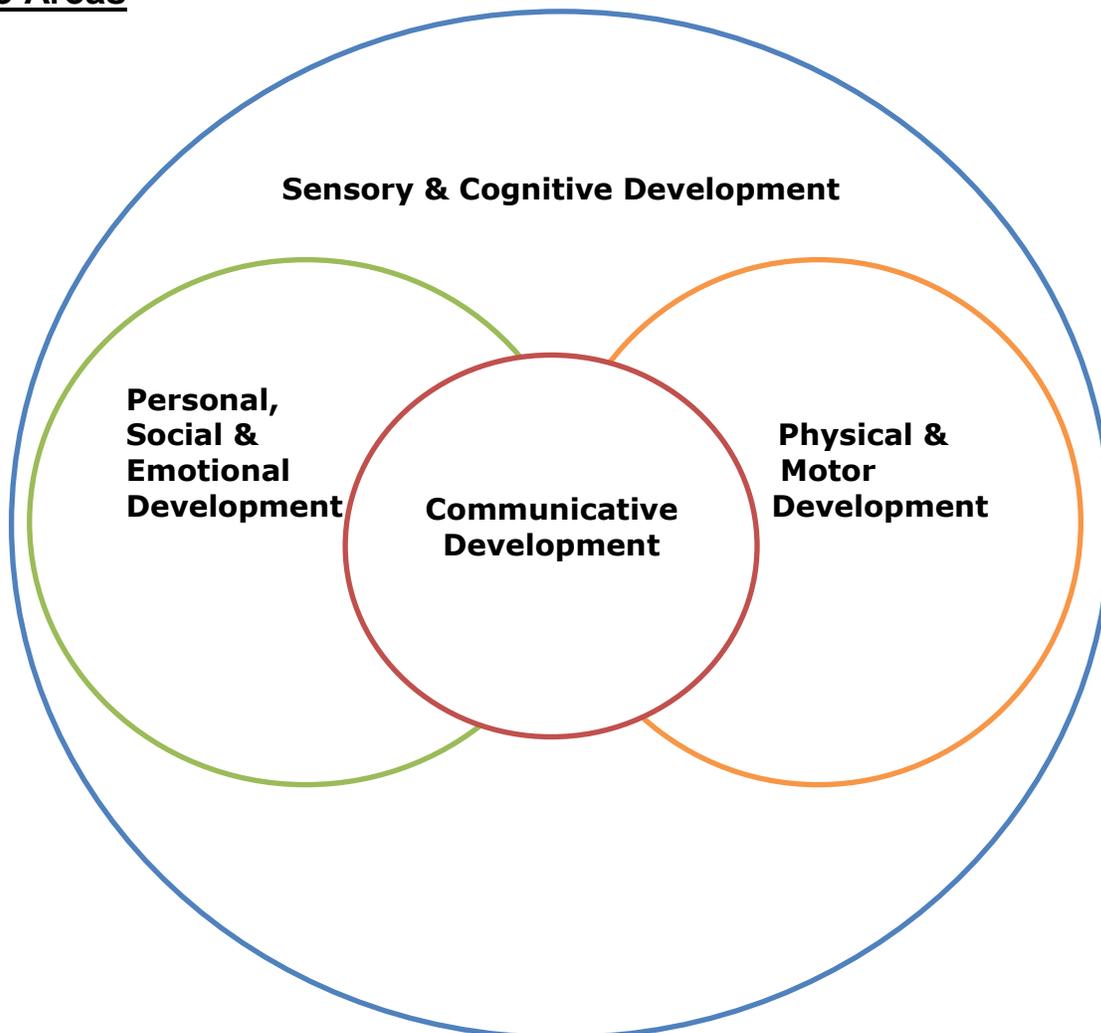
The Milestone School PMLD Curriculum

Core Strands

- Sensory and Cognitive Development
- Communicative Development
- Physical and Motor Development
- Emotional and Social Development

The P1 to P4 curriculum delineates these four Core Areas of Learning, which are both highly interrelated and dependent on each other and can be visually mapped out as below. They will be taught through activities and linked, where appropriate, to each Key Stage Curriculum. There is not a definitive list of activities and teachers are free to choose which activities they want to teach and how they want to teach them. An example weekly timetable noting a suitable mix of activities and Core Strands is given below. In practice much of the teaching (especially one to one teaching) will be carried out by our TAs and all references to teachers encompasses, for this section at least, all those who teach learners i.e. both teachers and teaching assistants.

The Core Areas



How activities are taught

Teachers must ensure that the curriculum on offer to each learner is broad and balanced and covers all of the Core Strands. All Activities will be taught to accommodate either Skills Based or Process Based Learning.

Skills Based Learning recognises that certain skills need to be acquired by much practice. A footballer will hone the skill of taking penalties by constant and repetitive practice. It is not necessary for this practice to take place within the context of a complete game of football, just as it is not necessary for a pupil to eat lunch in order to practice holding a spoon. The skill can be transferred to the relevant situations once it has been acquired, or even partially acquired in the case of the PMLD pupil. Skills Based Learning will be assessed by using targets which should be achievable within one term. It is really important, therefore, that teachers have clear and realistic individual objectives. Skills Based Learning may cover eating and drinking; noticing stimuli; responding consistently to one stimulus; contingency responding; contingency awareness; tracking; object permanence; selecting from two or more items. Skills Based Learning should only be practiced (with those with a PMLD) when the class can give one to one teaching and learning opportunities.

Process Based Learning (Collis and Lacey, 1996; Hewett and Nind, 1998; Nind and Hewett, 2001; Hewett, 2006) is a holistic approach which can be defined as the process of the teaching becoming the objective. Learning is taken as a whole rather than through teaching to specific individualised targets. Intensive Interaction (Nind and Hewett, 2001) is perhaps the best example of Process Based Learning where 'tasklessness' is at the centre of the interactive process. Interactors are urged to follow, celebrate and extend; 'tune in' to the learner and look for communication moments; creating the communicative flow being the objective of the session. Although the teacher may prompt and try different strategies to elicit progress it is not up to the teacher to decide specific targets. The learner decides where the interactive process will go; the pace and direction of learning, and therefore the pace and direction of teaching will be decided by the learner. The assumption of Process Based Learning provides a platform for varied and disparate learning to take place, and individual progression may only be recognised in retrospect, at the end of each session, week, half-term, term and/or year. This retrospective target setting is legitimated by the tendency of objectives based teaching to narrow the learning opportunities offered to those with a PMLD whose learning cannot be guaranteed to be either linear or conventional (Ware, 2003; Imray, 2005; Hewett, 2006; Aird, 2009; Lacey, 2009; Carpenter, 2010).

Routes for Learning (2006) advocates that learning for those with a PMLD is best done holistically, that is, as a complete and self contained exercise, rather than as a series of separate skills chained together. This is because a child, young person or adult with PMLD has much more chance of understanding and connecting the process, sequence, and materials needed to wipe a runny nose if the learning takes place when she has a runny nose. The child, young person or adult with PMLD has much more chance of understanding and connecting the process and sequence of a story when a story is actually being enacted, and the learner is an essential part of that enactment (Park, 2004; Grove, 2010). All sorts of learning may take place here – sequencing, memory of events, anticipation, tracking, object permanence, emotional experience and understanding, contingency responding, contingency awareness, peer and adult interaction, sensory exploration, sensory tolerance etc. – but limiting the recording of progress to one or two previously defined SMART targets is likely to produce at best, limited opportunities to expand learning. At worst, target driven teaching will lead teachers to teach to the next level as defined by various assessment documents which break down the P Scales into very small steps, whether the objective is appropriate for the individual pupil or not, and whether the target is of interest to the individual or not. Targets not achieved, because the pupil is not motivated to achieving them or because the target is too cognitively or physically challenging for the pupil to achieve, will be dropped or more likely, linger on indefinitely in an increasingly diluted and meaningless form.

Where targets are relevant they will more than likely be SCRUFFY (Lacey, 2010):

Student led, **C**reative, **R**elevant, **U**nspecified, **F**un, **F**or Youngsters; a slightly tongue in cheek approach, but one nonetheless that recognises that those with PMLD are poor consumers of SMART targets.

It is pertinent to note that our interest in developing how children might take more responsibility for the direction of their own learning is reflected in both the Rose Report (2009) on primary curriculum development, QCA in the Personal Learning and Thinking Skills Framework for secondary curriculum development (QCA, 2009) and QCA Developing Skills (QCA 2009).

Activities

The purpose of this section is to give a brief outline of each of the suggested activities which teachers may timetable as regular weekly events. This is not a definitive list of activities, however, and is a work in progress; new activities will be added as ideas develop. ICT is, of course, integral to our PMLD curriculum and will be taught through many of the activities. As previously stated this is not prescriptive and we are not directing teachers to teach all of the activities suggested, though there is an expectation that many of them will be covered. All of these activities assume that learning will primarily be Process Based in nature.

Sensology (covering the Core Strands of Communication, Sensory & Cognition, Physical and Motor and Social Interaction)

Sensology is the work of Flo Longhorn and Richard Hirstwood. It embraces the importance of the theory of early learning through sensory stimulation, sensory experiences and multi-sensory environments. At its most simplest, Sensology is sensory stimulation or 'practising with the senses' (Hirstwood 2005). '**The Sensology Workout – waking up the senses**' by Flo Longhorn is an invaluable and clear guide to implementing this sensory education.

Communication

For PMLD pupils communication forms the basis of all activities, however, it can still be valuable to have a Language focused or a Sulp group.

Sulp: Sulp aims to provide a 'cohesive framework within which to develop children's interpersonal and social abilities from a communication and thinking perspective.... it provides a series of multisensory activities that enable learning to build gradually from comprehension to use' (Rinaldi 2009)

The sessions focus on *communication*: eye contact, listening, turn taking, prosody (rate and volume) and proxemics (awareness of personal space) and *Self/Other Awareness*: you and your body, interests and friendships, self esteem- strengths and weaknesses. Sessions follow a set format to build familiarity and should be done in consultation with a trained teacher/SLT.

Language Group: The group should be based on and reflect the needs of the pupils. It can be run by the class staff or a SLT but working together will produce the best results. The group should follow a set format and focus on encouraging the following types of skills: recognising and responding to adults, turn taking, initiating contact, imitation and social interaction through a variety of different activities and games.

Sensory stories (covering the Core Strands of Communication, Sensory and Cognition, Physical and Motor)

On a general level, sensory stories are excellent vehicles for delivering whole school or class thematic topics in an interesting, exciting and wholly developmentally sympathetic manner.

The 10 essential elements of a story can be taken as:-

1. Give it a beginning – introduce the story by 'sitting up straight', 'looking and listening', 'once upon a time' for younger learners, story chairs or cushions to indicate the speaker, an object of reference and/or a musical cue for the story.
2. It should have relevance to the participants.
3. Use repetition – you just cannot get enough!! Use repetition in the story itself through a strap line that's repeated at regular intervals, rather like a short chorus in a song.
4. Keep the actual story/episode short – and therefore easily remembered – though the telling of it may take half an hour or so, by the time you've introduced props and time for each learner to be actively involved in the story.
5. Use all and every means of communication – signing, speaking, action, facial expression and props – but remember that the best storytellers primarily use their voices to paint the pictures.
6. Use language selectively. You may use difficult language, but only if it has relevance to the story. So you could make a sensory story from *The Tempest* and use the original Shakespeare as it has that wonderful rhythmic quality which makes poetry such a good base. Use call and response to bring out the rhythm.
7. Introduce sequences of dramatic events and make it exactly the same every week in order to encourage anticipation of events.
8. Make it exciting and dynamic. Give it emotional content with at least one major high point in the story.
9. Give it an ending.
10. Build in (and allow) as much audience participation as possible.

Once devised, the same story should be repeated weekly for at least half a term (and probably longer) so that learners have a real opportunity to become familiar with it and so practice their sequencing, turn taking, anticipatory and memory skills – all essential base elements of communication. There is no reason why secondary aged students should not be involved in sensory stories. They don't need to be childish – you can make them as gory, disgusting and rude as you like! Type Pete Wells into a search engine – his new website is still under construction – to get lots of free secondary PMLD downloads.

Intensive Interaction (covering the Core Strands of Communication, Sensory and Cognition and Social Interaction)

Intensive interaction is supported by some or all of Music, Swimming and Hydrotherapy, Cooking, sensory Stories, Massage, Art, Sensory Integration, Switching Skills, Drama, Dance, Movement and Physiotherapy, Rebound Therapy and Community Awareness. At its best Intensive Interaction is done all the time as a matter of course, but to get to that state it is advisable to give it at least one regular weekly slot on the timetable for all PMLD groups, and perhaps as often as once a day for the younger groups.

Melanie Nind and Dave Hewett have written several books on the subject, perhaps the easiest read being Nind M. and Hewett D. (2001) **A Practical Guide to Intensive Interaction**. Even easier is Dave Hewett's DVD (obtainable from www.intensiveinteraction.co.uk) which is excellent, concise and detailed.

Sensory Cookery (covering the Core Strands of Sensory and Cognition, Physical and Motor)

This is another classic process based activity that allows an infinite variety of sensory exploration and experience for pupils with PMLD. For those wishing to equate traditional National Curriculum subjects to this document, cookery is a fantastic vehicle for mathematical thinking and scientific exploration. Depending on the cognitive abilities of the learner, just the process of baking a cake covers areas like size, quantity, position, measurement, weight, structure of properties, temperature, sequencing, cause and effect, estimation, counting, addition and subtraction, fractions, division etc. The state of the finished cake is neither here nor there – this is process based teaching and learning rather than objectives (skills) based teaching and learning - of course we can always buy a cake to eat at the end of the lesson!

Music and Music Therapy (covering the Core Strands of Communication, Sensory and Cognition, Physical and Motor, Social Interaction)

Music is a fantastic medium for motivating learners of all abilities, especially if we get away from the idea of conventional tunes and allow, encourage, facilitate our PMLD learners to make musical notes for themselves, especially using music technology along the lines of Drake Music. It really doesn't matter what order the notes are in as long as the learner is playing because they want to, rather than because they are being made to by hand over hand holding of a drum stick or other beater. Nor do teachers need to be able to play an instrument (though of course it helps if you can) since the musical playing should be done by the learners rather than us.

Music can allow our learners to:

- have fun and to develop an inner satisfaction at communicating effectively
- tolerate the closeness of another person
- enjoy being with another person
- initiate and maintain social interaction
- develop and understand early communication, such as meaningful eye contact, body language, facial expression, anticipation and turn-taking exchanges
- develop sound production and vocal imitation skills
- explore and understand the given physical environment
- develop and refine an understanding of cause and effect, both socially (how their behaviour affects others) and physically (how their behaviour affects the environment)
- develop physical imitation skills
- develop extended 'conversation' using a combination of the above skills, together with any language the learner might possess, meaningful or otherwise
- develop self-esteem from knowing that the person interacting with them is also enjoying the interaction i.e. they want to be there
- develop a sense of their own feelings and emotions.

Musical Interaction (covering the Core Strands of Communication, Sensory and Cognition, Physical and Motor, Social Interaction)

This is strongly based on the principles of Intensive Interaction and has been primarily developed by Wendy Prevezer (2000) and Margaret Corke (2002). Corke (2002) argues convincingly that a voluntary, active input from the learner is absolutely essential for growth and learning to take place. We therefore need to move away from the traditional music sessions where only conventional tunes are played and move towards sessions where we use music to teach interactive and communicative skills.

They argue the following:

- that it allows and encourages valid musical experiences
- it allows and encourages personal interactions
- it is a motivational communicative tool
- it is suitable for all learners (PMLD, SLD or ASD) who are at the earlier stages of communicative development
- it does not require musical ability on the part of the teacher and is a lot of fun

Musical Interaction requires:

- **Us** – through face, body language and voice;
- **Social interaction games** – such as burst-pause; anticipation games; rough and tumble; give and take; physical activities (clapping, tickling, rocking, rowing, peek-a-boo, hide and seek, throwing things backward and forward);
- **Music** – anything which makes sounds, including voices;
- **Structure to the lesson** – all round in a circle; a musical introduction; an (age appropriate) hello song; time for small group and peer interactions; time for one to one interactions; an (age appropriate) good-bye song.

Movement and Physiotherapy; Swimming and Hydrotherapy (covering the Core Strands of Sensory and Cognition, Physical and Motor)

Formal sessions of both physio and hydro will clearly need the input of the Physiotherapy department, but there is much that we can do in the classroom, especially if we encourage the physios to give us practical and do-able programmes for each learner who needs one. It is an unfortunate fact that physiotherapists skilled in PMLD are in very short supply and we therefore need to work in close partnership with those that we have.

Positional Changes

The least that should happen is for two positional changes to be built into the timetable each day for those in wheelchairs. It makes sense to make this a fun time by perhaps singing a 'stretching song' call and responding a 'stretching poem' or using it as an opportunity for a more informal Intensive Interaction session.

Besides stretching and moving positions, pupils should also use their standing frames and walkers where appropriate.

Movement to music sessions (covering the Core Strands of Sensory and Cognition, Physical and Motor)

These are an excellent way of building muscle memory and improving both gross and fine motor control. At its simplest this might take the form of an aerobics session where a particular piece of music – say 'Bonkers' by Dizzee Rascal - indicates a particular movement – say rocking back and forth or swinging arms from side to side. At first this movement would need to be very heavily physically supported by an adult and indeed there may be an element of considerable resistance which the adult would need to be sympathetic to. Over time however, we would be looking for a deeper understanding of what might be required, less resistance, moving towards passive co-operation, to active co-operation, to independent movement. This area relies heavily on the work carried out by Chris Knill in the 1980's and 90's (Knill, 1992) and is currently supported by Holistic Music for Children. This latter programme covers the four areas of body awareness, moving sounds, discovery, and singing and learning; details being available at www.holisticmusicforchildren.co.uk

Massage (covering the Core Strands of Sensory and Cognition, Physical and Motor) Pupils with PMLD are likely to have very little awareness of their own bodies. They may not know how their body parts are connected (our proprioceptive sense) and may not know where their bodies are in relation to the space around them (our

vestibular sense). These two kinaesthetic senses need to be worked on as much as the conventional five, and massage can be an excellent focus.

Massage sessions might

- concentrate on a particular area of the body per half term
- last for at least 20 minutes
- use base oils but not essential oils (which may cause sensory confusion)
- be a quiet, calming and relaxing activity.

Proprioceptive Massage - Bluestone (2002) - comes from the HANDLE Institute in America (the Holistic Approach to Neuro-Development and Learning Efficiency), under the direction of Judith Bluestone. She believes this approach:

1. Organises mental processing
2. Influences the body's biochemistry
3. Helps mould the actual structure of the brain.

As far as we are aware there is no independent research to confirm or deny the above claims. The process, however, makes sense for those who may find the conventional skin on skin massage challenging. Proprioception refers to the brain's unconscious sense of body in space. The brain processes information from the other senses to give an understanding of its wholeness; to determine where our bodies are in relation to the environment around us and where the various parts of the body are in relation to one another – for example, where our knees are in relation to our thighs etc. For students with damaged or incomplete sensory awareness (virtually all PMLD pupils) this can be problematic and will undoubtedly need developing.

Massage of the proprioceptive sites of the body is carried out by using a small (tennis sized) soft foam ball instead of the hand, this avoiding skin on skin touch which some may find extremely problematic. Always try and remember to:-

- Work on the back of the body
- Start and finish at the top of the spine
- Apply firm and lingering pressure when you finish at the top of the spine
- Roll the ball in the same direction and apply equal pressure throughout
- Roll the ball slowly
- Talk your partner through the massage – naming body parts in simple clear language helps to reinforce body awareness
- Be sensitive to the communications of your partner.

Dance Massage (covering the Core Strands of Communication, Sensory and Cognition, PSE and Physical and Motor)

Dance massage was initiated and developed by Naomi Rosenberg, a specialist teacher of young people with hearing impairment (www.naomirosenberg.co.uk/dance_massage). It allows pupils to experience a unique, tactile dance experience; it is an interactive, non-verbal form of communication combining the soothing, sensory experience of massage with the rhythm and energy of music.

Sherborne Developmental Movement (covering the Core Strands of Sensory and Cognition, Physical and Motor)

This was developed by Veronica Sherborne, and was based on Laban's analysis of movement and movement qualities – this looks to extend the movement repertoire and vocabulary of learners; and explore the areas of body and spatial awareness, relationships and creativity. Those wanting to develop this very interesting work should attend specific Sherborne training.

MOVE (covering the Core Strands of Communication, Physical and Motor, Sensory and Cognition)
(Mobility Opportunities Via Education)

This is fundamentally a way of working more than anything, where concentration is given to maximising the opportunities of *all* learners to move independently at least in part and at least during some periods in each day. More information can be obtained from their website at www.disabilitypartnership.co.uk

Rebound Therapy (covering the Core Strands of Communication, Physical and Motor, Sensory and Cognition and Social Interaction)

This is the therapeutic use of a trampoline to develop and promote motor skills, body awareness, balance, co-ordination and communication. It is designed to accommodate pupils' individual abilities and disabilities, whilst drawing upon their previous experience and likes and dislikes. Improved health and fitness and greater independence are encouraged, whilst fun, enjoyment and the opportunity to succeed are of paramount importance. Rebound Therapy is accessible to pupils with a range of special educational needs such as specific physical difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders, learning difficulties, challenging behaviour, and/or co-ordination problems.

Yoga (covering the Core Strands of Communication, Sensory and Cognition, Physical and Motor)

Working with PMLD pupils requires finding different and innovative ways of reaching our students. Yoga (incorporating massage and relaxation) with special needs pupils is experimental and intuitive and can be adapted to meet the needs of the individual. It aims to work towards:

- improving body awareness,
- improving gross and fine motor coordination,
- increased flexibility
- strengthening of muscles
- enhancing the use of touch and smell
- improving both verbal and non-verbal communication as well as greater social communication.

Those wishing to develop this should attend special training. More information can be obtained at www.yogawithnerissa.co.uk

Creative arts (covering the Core Strands of Communication, Sensory and Cognition, Physical and Motor, Social Interaction and Inclusion)

Such activities as drama, movement, dance, music, and art are fantastic opportunities for communicating without language necessarily being the prime means. They are also first rate opportunities to practice inclusive teaching and learning across all intellectual ability ranges - see for example *Odyssey Now*, Nicola Grove and Keith Park's version of the adventures of Odysseus which manages to bring all the five areas of the creative arts noted above into one project – Grove & Park (1996).

Art (covering the Core Strands of Sensory and Cognition, Physical and Motor) clearly has the potential to be a major vehicle for sensory cognitive development)

Care needs to be taken to ensure that learners are participants rather than merely observers (of the adults making the work) or possibly worse, objects to do things to – making learners put their hands in paint in order to create a picture full of handprints for example. Like music above – we need to move away from the idea of conventional paintings, and allow, encourage, facilitate our PMLD learners to make art for themselves. The key to teaching Art is that the process of undertaking the sensory experiences relating to the materials and the cognitive experiences derived from combining materials is far more important than the finished work. If it's artistically good enough for Kandinsky and Jackson Pollock, then it's certainly good enough for us.

Drama (covering the Core Strands of Communication, Sensory and Cognition, Physical and Motor, Social Interaction and Inclusion)

This is an excellent vehicle not only for teaching non-verbal communication – the expression of the face and the posture of the body when one is frightened for example – but also for setting this in context. Those with PMLD are likely to have extremely limited opportunities to play in the sense that conventionally developing children do as a matter of course (Sherrat and Peter, 2002; Grove, 2005) and we take their understanding of non-verbal communication at our peril. Similarly, it is extremely difficult to teach language in the conventional sense to those whose language skills are cursory and usually non-existent. Overt language teaching therefore is often tokenistic and meaningless, merely causing more confusion to those who have no voice.

Call and Response (covering the Core Strands of Communication, Sensory and Cognition, Social Interaction) Park, 2004

This offers a real opportunity to be directly and meaningfully involved in language at a very basic level and is a very strong vehicle for inclusive work. Poems, stories and plays can be performed in a similar way, using call and response (one person calling out a line which is immediately repeated by everyone else, a method which produces a very rhythmic and powerful communicative atmosphere). The piece can be divided into short verses or sections, with possibly a 'cap line' or sound effect at the end that everyone does together. In this way the verses are easy to learn and provide an opportunity for pupils with spoken or signed language skills to lead the activities in an inclusive setting. This of course does not mean that only people who have speech can join in these activities. There are many other ways of participating, including rocking, stamping, clapping, vocalising, using VOCAs, and merely enjoying the process of being part of the rhythm of the group.

Community and Integration Activities (covering the Core Strands of Communication, Sensory and Cognition, Social Interaction)

PMLD pupils form a small but growing number of children in generic special schools. 'Fitting in' is not always easy or considered appropriate by everyone. It is, therefore, important to raise the profile of our pupils. Opportunities within school are usually around social activities, workshops etc. but where ever possible appropriate academic integration should be facilitated. Being part of the wider community should be a regular activity for all pupils and can take many different forms from a walk to the local park, shops, cafe, library etc. to joining in local clubs. Encouraging groups /individual pupils from mainstream schools to come into school to help with activities such as Sherborne Movement, Chris Knill, Tac pac etc., as well as arranging return visits by our pupils, are excellent ways of developing links within the wider community.

Nature Detectives: sensory learning through the seasons: (covering the Core Strands of Communication, Sensory and Cognition, PSE and Inclusion)

This is an exciting and unique learning opportunity for pupils with PMLD and sensory impairment to learn through what they do, through what they encounter and through what they discover. In this year long sensory project our pupils will learn about outdoor environments, themselves and each other, while also learning outdoor skills. These experiences will compound and consolidate the pupils' learning skills of enquiry, experiment, responses, reflection and cooperative learning. Activities will take place in a variety of places, including natural environments where the pupils can see, hear, touch and smell the real thing in an arena where actions have real results and consequences. All activities will be linked to the KS3 Active Learning Curriculum topics where appropriate.

Cues

Underpinning the delivery of activities will be the extensive use of cues. These essentially fall into the category of AAC (Alternative and Augmentative Communication) and will include touch cues; sound cues; Objects of Reference (OoR); signing; symbol use and photograph cues.

Sensory cues:

Pupils at a very early stage of development, particularly those with sensory impairments, are likely to need to start with 'sensory cues'. Some cues will be particular to individual pupils, for example singing a particular song. Other sensory cues are built into the activity e.g: the smell of lunch or the sound of the bus engine. Use natural cues wherever possible, maybe exaggerating them e.g: jingling the bus keys or knocking the spoon against the bowl, anything that may help pupils to associate that cue with what is going to happen next. Make sure the cues happen just before the activity begins so there are only a few seconds between the cue and the activity. Keep repeating your sensory 'signifier' throughout the time you are working with pupils so they can practice recognising it. Pupils need to be given a consistent routine to help them begin to learn to distinguish activities and people so eventually they can begin to learn to anticipate what is going to happen to them. For example, it might be helpful to adopt the following:

- Lifting pupils' arms before lifting them from chairs or floor
- Making an upwards or downwards movement on the pupil's body to signify being lifted or lowered in a hoist.
- Putting your hands down behind the pupil's back before pushing the wheelchair
- Staff having a sensory 'signifier' (e.g. smell, touch, vocal cue) so pupils can begin to recognise different people

See below for the most frequently used types of sensory cues:

1. Touch cues

These are very simple additional physical cues to the PMLD learner that again, might help them to make sense of their world. It is very difficult to over-emphasise the total lack of control that the developmentally early learner has over their life, and we therefore have an obligation to give any additional help that we can give. Jean Ware (2003) makes for interesting reading in this respect. At the simplest level they are physical assists to understanding, so that a couple of taps on the back of the leg to an ambulant PMLD learner indicates that you are asking them to sit down; or brushing both arms in a downward motion simultaneously is an indication (as a physical mirroring of the finished sign) that the session/activity has ended. But this concept can easily be extended into all areas of the school day, from a tap on the right shoulder to indicate that you are turning a wheelchair to the right, to brushing an upward or downward movement on the arm to indicate the pupil is to be hoisted up or down.

2. Sound cues

These are usually pieces of music, but logically could be any sound, which can be played to indicate the start and/or end of a particular event or activity. We might play for example, *Perfect Day* (Lou Reed) as learners come into the classroom from the bus; *Scheherazade* (Rimsky-Korsakov) to indicate the start of a story-telling session; *Must I Paint You a Picture* (Billy Bragg) at the start of the art sessions etc. The piece played is not important, as long as the same piece is played every time for a short time (say 30 seconds).

3. Smell cues

These operate on the same principle as sound cues, but of course they linger much longer and therefore need to be used with care. A smell for the day might however be a useful additional cue – its fish and chips so it must be Friday.

Work will be undertaken by the PMLD curriculum group to standardize both OoR and touch and smell cues throughout the school.

Object Cues

From these sensory cues, pupils can begin to increase the number of cues for the different activities about to take place. These can be the objects that are part of the activity, for example, an object that is a cue for a drink should be the cup that the pupil usually uses or a child's swimming costume is given to them before they go off

to their swim session. It should be offered as a cue as the drinking activity begins. It is hoped that the pupils will eventually learn to anticipate the drink by opening their mouths as the cup is presented. All routine activities should have a sensory cue of some kind. It depends on the activity as to what the cue should be, but for most pupils with PMLD it is not helpful at this stage, to have lots of different cues for different activities. It may be better to have a single cue for work time with another for toilet and another for eating/ drinking. In addition, a cue for going outside could also be added, and also for any activities or places that are used regularly.

Objects of Reference

OoRs were originally pioneered by RNIB for use for with very young VI pupils as a precursor to brail (Ockelford, 2002). The ultimate aim for using OoRs is that learners will offer them to staff independently as an indication that they would like a drink now or the toilet now. This is perhaps a long shot for most developmentally early learners, but if we don't give the option, we won't get the result. OoR are designed to be concrete representations of abstracts (words) and therefore should represent as near as possible the actual event. For some things (like lunch or drinks) this is relatively easy, but for others (such as Interaction) this is going to be very difficult, and to some degree we are going to have to go with an abstract concept. Some pupils may make symbolic use of objects of reference where the object used is representative of the activity. For example being shown (or feeling) a small red cup but actually using a larger blue cup for drinking. Pupils need to be around number 41 on the Routes for Learning (expresses preference for items not present via symbolic means) for objects of reference to make sense. Some pupils at this stage might be able to understand and use a few words or even recognise a few pictures (e.g. of themselves or their family/classmates).

We can use OoRs in two basic ways.

- a) As an introduction to every discrete teaching session on the timetable, before the session starts. This directly assists PMLD learners to make sense of a world where everyone but themselves is in control. There is after all no guarantee that PMLD learners can understand what we are saying. OoRs, therefore, act like a timetable and support the spoken word.
- b) As an introduction to set, routine times of every day, toileting, drinks, lunch etc. These OoR should be fixed and very accessible within the classroom, particularly for ambulant users.

Symbols and Photographs

It is probable that the majority of those with PMLD will be cognitively unable to recognise symbols, but it may well be pertinent for the more able, that is those who might be considered to be border-line SLD. They are probably best used as aids to developing choice, e.g. laminating onto switches to indicate which switch operates the somersaulting pig and which operates the CD player.

Signing

Again it is not clear if the majority of those with PMLD will understand signing, but it remains inherently good practice to sign as much as we can to everyone in the school, whether they need it to communicate or not. All teachers must take responsibility for signing so that pupils can pick it up if they want to.

Routines

Also underpinning the delivery of Activities will be the extensive use of routines, a very much under-rated and under utilised opportunity to teach and learn. The very act of going to the toilet (or more probably for someone with PMLD, going to the changing area) is a real opportunity to learn provided exactly the same routine is used every single time by all members of staff. The same time(s) of the day, utilising the same changing areas, using the same language, the same OoR, the same verbal cues (of say *1,2,3, lift*) when changing pads etc. Ensuring consistency in routines allows pupils to build upon previous learning experiences, and have many hundreds – possibly many thousands – of opportunities to practice and learn over their lifetime in school. Other routine times which must be consistent will be arriving at and leaving school; lunchtimes; break times; assemblies; the start and end of the day; the start and end of lessons. Cues which might help with establishing these routines might include using music, smells, touch cues, OoR etc.

Assessment and Recording

Recording and reporting on progress is absolutely vital to the success of Process Based Learning. Class teams should record pupil progress as a session unfolds; using a 'WOW' sheet or *post it notes* to write a couple of words as an aide memoire (e.g. 'John track 5 seconds') can be a simple and effective system. Recording and reporting can also be aided immensely by simple use of video. It enables staff to pick up on all sorts of things they might have missed as well as provide evidence of progress for end of year reports. Most teaching sessions end 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 teaching team will reflect on what they have seen and heard, taking the lesson as a whole but more importantly, each individual learner, one at a time. The success, maintenance or regress of each learner will be recorded, e.g. Learner A may have tracked the teacher for 5 seconds during a sensory story and shown excitement as it got closer to his turn to be tickled. Perhaps next time, Learner A will track for longer; at what point in the story does he start to get excited; will he get excited earlier in the story; does he show similar excitement for other parts of the story?

Assessment, at regular intervals and in the most rigorous and accurate forms possible, is an absolute necessity if we are to be certain about providing an appropriate and individualised curriculum for each learner. It informs teaching, drives the recording of progress and is key to the successful education of our learners. We use Routes for Learning (RfL) to help set learning outcomes for our pupils, which was written by a number of Welsh (PMLD) teachers and academics under the guidance of Jean Ware and published in 2006 by the Welsh Qualification and Curriculum Group. RfL notes 43 possible milestones which learners may or may not pass through in their educational and developmental journey through life. These milestones are broadly divided into cognitive and communicative, though a number (naturally) meet in the middle. Of the 43, there are seven which are key, these being 1) Notices stimuli; 9) Responds consistently to one stimulus; 23) Contingency responding; 26) Contingency awareness; 34) Object permanence; 36) Selects from two or more items; 43) Initiates actions to achieve desired result (exercising autonomy in variety of contexts). The numbers allocated indicate where they appear in the whole map.

Progress is assessed in three main ways.

1. Assessing and recording P Scale progress through the use of Classroom Monitor will fulfill the statutory requirements of the school and will be recorded each term. The problems of demonstrating linear development and the fractured learning styles of those with PMLD outlined above means however that we cannot expect P Scales to accurately or indeed sufficiently express the progress that those with PMLD are capable of making. P Scales were not designed to do this (QCA, 2001; Martin, 2006), but have been used for this purpose in the absence of anything better. We believe that all of our PMLD pupils are capable of demonstrating progress in a wide variety of areas of learning and it is essential that we record and report that progress. We do not believe that P Scales – or any other variation of P Scales which relies on linear development – is able to show that progress.
2. We have adapted the Routes for Learning pathways so that it can demonstrate progress. We are aiming to show each learner's progress by indicating how many of the 43 milestones have been achieved in a table form. RfL does not rely on the idea of linear development, and the milestones achieved may be scattered. Nonetheless, indicating that a learner has achieved 2 milestones this year, for example, 16 in total rather than the 14 achieved up to the end of the previous year, is a legitimate indicator of progress. The progress may be scattered but it is progress nonetheless, and if we further sub-divide the milestones into those achieved (i) Occasionally (ii) Frequently and (iii) Consistently (Martin, 2006), we effectively have a potential 129 indicators of progress.
3. EHCP/Annual Review learning outcomes. These should be achievable within a specific time period relevant to each individual pupil and continuously assessed and recorded. We analyse the results as a whole school, key stages and phase groups.

Adapted from The Bridge School Short PMLD Curriculum with the kind permission of Peter Imray
A Fidderman (April 2012)
Updated October 2016 AF

Sex and Relationships (SCOPE)

Sex and Relationships is a statutory curriculum subject from KS3. We have adapted the following general targets for SRE topics for pupils with PMLD from SCOPE. From these general targets more specific targets can be developed for each individual pupil.

Phase	Body Parts	Life Cycle	Gender	Feelings	Public & Private	Relationships
Phase 1 P1(i) – P2(i) 0-6 months	To experience touch or movement of body parts	To experience and encounter different stages in human life cycle	To encounter people of different gender	To be able to show pleasure	To be aware of personal care taking place in a specific area	To experience and react to familiar people through vision and/or sound
Phase 1 P2(ii) – P3(ii) 6 - 12 months	To be able to demonstrate awareness of some particular body parts	To indicate some awareness of different stages of human life cycle	To recognise/to be able to distinguish between a variety of different people	Able to communicate likes/dislikes	To respond to or anticipate the routine of getting dressed/undressed in private	To initiate attention from familiar people

References

- Aird R (2009) **A commentary on the National Strategies DCSF Special Education Needs/Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (SEN/LDD) Progression Guidance Project 2008-09**. The SLD Experience. Issue 53.
- Barnes C (2010) **Proposal to introduce and develop AfL using Routes for Learning and video evidence for students working at P Levels 1-3 in KS1 at Willow Dene School**. Unpublished Paper.
- Bluestone J. (2002) **The Churkendoose Anthology**. Seattle. Handle Institute.
- Brown E (1996) **Religious Education for All**. London. David Fulton.
- DfES (2004) **Every Child Matters: Change for Children**. London. HMSO.
- Carpenter B (1997) **The interface between the curriculum and the Code**. British Journal of Special Education, 24 (1) 18-20.
- Carpenter B. (2010) **Curriculum Reconciliation and Children with Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities**. London: Specialist Schools and Academies Trust.
- Collis M. and Lacey P. (1996) **Interactive Approaches to Teaching**. London. David Fulton.
- Corke M (2002) **Approaches to Communication Through Music**. London. David Fulton.
- Grove N (2005). **Ways into Literature. Stories, plays and poems for pupils with SEN**. London David Fulton.
- Grove N (2010) **The Big Book of Storysharing**. London. Senjit.
- Grove N and Park K. (1996) **Odyssey Now**. London David Fulton.
- Hewett D (2006) **The most important and complicated learning: that's what play is for!** ICAN. Talking Point, March 2006 www.talkingpoint.org.uk
- Hewett D. and Nind M. (1998) **Interaction in Action**. London. David Fulton.
- Imray P (2005) **Moving Towards Simple, Understandable and Workable Definitions of SLD and PMLD**. The SLD Experience. Issue 42.
- Imray P (2008) **Turning the Tables on Challenging Behaviour**. London Routledge.
- Knill C (1992) **Touch and Communication**. Cambridge. LDA.
- Lacey P (2009) **Teaching Thinking Skills and Problem Solving**. The SLD Experience. Issue 55.
- Lacey P (2010) **Smart and Scruffy Targets**. The SLD Experience. Issue 57.
- Longhorn F. (2000) **Numeracy for Very Special People**. Bedfordshire. Catalyst Education.
- Martin A. (2006) **Assessment using the P scales: best fit - fit for the purpose?** British Journal of Special Education, 33 (2), 68-75.

- Marvin C (1998) **Teaching and Learning for Children with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties**. in Lacey P and Ouvry C (1998) **People with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties**. London. David Fulton.
- Nind M. and Hewett D. (2001) **A Practical Guide to Intensive Interaction**. Kidderminster. BILD
- Preveezer W (2000) **Musical Interaction and children with autism** in Powell S (ed) **Helping Children with Autism To Learn**. London. David Fulton.
- Ockelford A. (2002) **Objects of Reference. Promoting early symbolic communication**. London. RNIB.
- Park K (2004). **Interactive storytelling: developing inclusive stories for children and adults**. London. Speechmark.
- QCA (2001) **Planning, teaching and assessing the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties. Developing skills**. QCA/01/737.
- Qualifications and Curriculum Group (2006) **Routes for Learning**. Cardiff. Welsh D of E.
- Rinaldi W. (2004) **Social Use of Language Programme: Infant and Primary School Book 1** Books for Professionals in Special Education.
- Routes for Learning** (2006). Qualifications and Curriculum Group. DfE. Cardiff.
- Salt Tony (2010) The Salt Review
- Sherborne V (2001) **Developmental Movement for Children**. London. Worth
- Sherrat D and Peter M (2002) **Developing Play and Drama in Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders**. London. David Fulton.
- Ware J. (2003) **Creating a Responsive Environment for People with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties**. London. David Fulton.