

THE LODDON SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

“Our purpose is to provide value in the education and care of children with autism, severe learning disabilities and associated complex restrictive behaviours. We achieve this by giving each child an enhanced quality of life in partnership with parents and through creative design, development and delivery of positive working methods.”

Students attending The Loddon School need a curriculum designed to provide a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum which includes learning experiences in school, in the residential environment, and in the community. The Waking Day curriculum provides every student with opportunities to learn and develop independence, self-help skills, personal health and social education, coping skills development, spiritual and moral education. Communication skills are a major focus throughout all areas of the curriculum and underpin all learning.

The overall aim of our Waking Day curriculum is to use all opportunities throughout every day of the year to teach the child to develop skills, which the child/young person requires to improve their overall quality of life and wellbeing. We provide a learning environment which provides challenge and calm, plenty of time to practice and reinforce life skills, and exploration of their world as they move towards adulthood.

Every Child Matters (2003) - The Government's aim is for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the support they need to:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

These five principles underpin the work of The Loddon School and have influenced developments in the curriculum including PLLUSS® (Personalised Learning for Life Using Supportive Strategies) and PROACT-SCIPr-UK® which provides the foundations for the work of the school.

Children/young people who attend the school will be working at early developmental levels and require a curriculum which reflects learning at pre-National Curriculum levels.

1. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CURRICULUM OF THE LODDON SCHOOL

1.1 The Loddon School was established in 1988 by Marion and Tim Cornick to provide care and education only for children with the most severe problems associated with autism, severe and profound learning difficulties and seriously challenging behaviour. Most children also engage in a number of unusual and ritualistic behaviours, a lack of awareness of danger and consequence, which restrict opportunities. The learners need twenty-four hour care and consistency of management in a structured and safe setting with a high staff ratio and staff

committed to a positive approaches. The curriculum aims to provide children with skills for adult life which encourage as much independence as possible.

1.2 Challenging behaviour or restrictive behaviour displayed by children/young people admitted, includes violence to others, self - injurious behaviour, destructiveness and damage to the environment, extreme and persistent disruption, severe stereotyped behaviours, social unawareness, communication problems and probably non-verbal and pre-verbal communication, complex learning problems, depression, epilepsy, anxiety and other mental health problems.

(See Challenging Behaviour Policy)

1.3 The School admits children who need fifty-two week a year care and education in a setting where they can learn in a low stress environment. The focus is on relationship building and the development of functional alternatives to severe challenging behaviour, in preparation for adult life.

1.4 The children will generally have already been to several schools including schools for children with severe learning difficulties, autism and specialised behaviour units, as well as treatment centres in hospitals and their experience of school life has often been negative with accompanying rejections and exclusion.

1.5 Every child, whatever their needs, is entitled to develop in an environment which is conducive to learning. This environment should be one that is safe, caring and enjoyable and where children may grow towards independence. Some children may need help to be with other people and may spend a considerable length of time learning that being with other people can be enjoyable and even fun. It is essential that there is a concentration in this area so that the associated problems can be reduced and then children can grow to trust and then to learn.

1.6 The work of The Loddon School places emphasis on the sensitive development of early relationship building and interaction. Communication programmes, sensory development, PECs, jigs and work schedules, massage, time table construction and a programme of physical activities enhances the core curriculum in the school which is supported by PLLUSS® and PROACT-SCIPr-UK®.

2. THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM and THE PLLUSS CURRICULUM

2.1 The Loddon School aims to provide appropriate education for each child and their individual requirements. Therefore, The Loddon School has developed its own bespoke curriculum called PLLUSS (Personalised Learning for Life Using Supportive Strategies).

The PLLUSS approach is designed to enable learners to learn functional skills and experience a range of activities where they are most comfortable and relaxed. Specialist learning rooms are used for art, music and PE but the majority of learning takes place outside of the traditional classroom setting. Extensive use is made of real-life settings for learning essential skills, the grounds, and the community. Resources in the school include specialist equipment for music, art, drama, physical activity, sensory development, ICT, swimming, communication and therapy.

Children are learning key early skills and foundation skills based upon their preferred activities.

Our developmental functional curriculum is activity based so that learners can see the purpose and relevance of the task. It is important to identify barriers to learning in terms of access skills, communication and restrictive or challenging behaviours.

2.2 Communication skills, early speech, reading and writing are developed throughout the PLLUSS curriculum. Development of the individuals 'voice' through a variety of communication mediums aims to reduce the individuals frustrations to get their needs met, and therefore reducing the need for restrictive behaviours. Mathematical learning is developed primarily through exploring patterns and sequences. Giving children the opportunity to explore the world through patterns, counting, shapes, sorting and sequences provides a system which allows the child to organise information that may appear to be in chaos to them. For neurodiverse minds this provides an opportunity for the mind to access a system of creating order through patterns bringing forth a relief to their anxious world.

3. ORGANISATION OF THE LODDON SCHOOL

3.1 Children are grouped according to age and compatibility. Younger children live in the Main House and older children have the opportunity to experience settings for 4 or 5 young people in houses in the grounds, preparing for their transition to adult life. Each group is supported by a teacher and a children's service manager with a team of teaching assistants/care assistants all trained to work within the PLLUSS curriculum to provide a real 'whole approach' for each child in their care.

4. THE ENVIRONMENT

4.1 The environment should be one in which each child feels secure, enjoys learning and is always being rewarded for effort. This can be realised only when all staff are relating to each child in a positive way and all aspects of the child's needs are being met through the integration of school, home and leisure activities, with community experience.

4.2 The Loddon School makes adaptations to the environment so that the individual child can cope more easily. In addition the pace of the day, the staff members, the size of the group, personalised learning, the rooms used, and the transitions are all carefully planned to reduce stress for the child, and thus minimise the likelihood of anxious behaviour and related aggression, self-injury or destructiveness.

5. ASSESSMENT

5.1 The child's challenging behaviour and education needs are continually assessed and progress reviewed at interdisciplinary review meetings held on a regular five-monthly basis. Behaviour is assessed initially using 'Essential criteria for admission to The Loddon School, IABA and Speech and Language Assessment. On admission most children will have been assessed by their local Educational Psychologist as the new EHC Plan is prepared and a suitable school identified.

See Challenging Behaviour Policy.

6. MANAGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR, SUPPORTING CHILDREN THROUGH CRISIS AND TEACHING COPING STRATEGIES

6.1 The children in The Loddon School all have major difficulties associated with autism, severe learning difficulties and often additional problems such as epilepsy, depression and other mental health disorders and rare syndromes.

6.2 The Loddon School bases its work in a positive approaches philosophy and aims to understand the behaviour and put coping strategies in place for times of difficulty. PROACT-SCIPr-UK[®] is the positive support programme which provides the philosophical basis for the work of the school as a whole person approach to learning and life and which includes proactive support, active support, reactive strategies and post-incident review. The behaviour management policy is based on the work of LaVigna et al and the school uses PROACT-SCIPr-UK[®] 'Strategies for Crisis Intervention and Prevention' to support its work in understanding these difficulties and enabling staff to support children who are distressed with a range of non-aversive, non-confrontational and non-judgmental interventions. Staff receive regular detailed training in these approaches and the individual behaviour guidelines ensure each child receives the care and support needed to help with behaviour difficulties, ensure a safe environment and promote a calm atmosphere. The proactive approach ensures that the school is working towards enabling and supporting the child rather than simply containing the behaviour. The most important work of the school is to consider the needs of the child and ensure the child learns new ways to have demands met rather than by using inappropriate methods.

(See The Loddon School PROACT- SCIPr-UK[®] curriculum, and PLLUSS Curriculum[®]).

7. AUTISM AND ITS CONTINUUM

Autism is now regarded as a serious developmental disorder consisting of 'a triad of impairments' – Wing (1997)

The Loddon School recognises that our children and young people may have many of the following challenges:

7.1 A Communication Impairment - which involves difficulty in making sense of, and using, all aspects of verbal and non-verbal communication. This includes gesture, facial expression, body language, and the timing of communication in addition to difficulties with speech. At The Loddon School most children have not developed speech at all and communication make take the form of the most severe challenges learnt in order to get needs met.

7.2 A Social Impairment - which affects the child's ability to make relationships with other people. This includes a fundamental disability in developing social empathy. (Being able to understand something from another person's perspective or point of view).

Children at The Loddon School often find it difficult to be near other people and may not enjoy their company, to be touched, or to understand when they hurt someone else.

7.3 A Rigidity and Inflexibility - which can extend to every area of the child's thinking, language, and behaviour. Examples of this can include ritualised and obsessive behaviour, literal thought, insistence on sameness and difficulties with creative processes.

7.4 Some children also have Sensory Impairment - Some children will also have additional difficulties with sensory loss, physical disability, and by adolescence, some may also have problems associated with epilepsy.

7.5 Autism can affect children across the whole range of ability. The majority of children with autism will have additional learning difficulties and in the case of children at The Loddon School, these learning difficulties will be most severe and profound in their effect. About 80% of people with autism are boys, and this is significant at The Loddon School.

8. VARIABLE AND IDIOSYNCRATIC DEVELOPMENT

8.1 Special educational needs are defined by the interplay of a child's strengths and weaknesses and the educational context. Because autism seldom appears as a child's only difficulty, and because of the wide range of ability found in autism, each child's needs will be very idiosyncratic even at The Loddon School. The variable and divergent developmental patterns found in autism distinguishes it from other disabilities.

In autism, for example the child may be able to speak, but the ability to communicate or understand others may be very delayed. At The Loddon School most children are non-verbal making communication very problematic. It is therefore difficult to know how much a child really understands or what makes sense to the child.

8.2 Because of this very serious problem with language the children at The Loddon School will need a modified curriculum which takes into account this. Understanding is often more seriously delayed than has been recognised in previous settings.

9. ASSESSMENT IN THE LODDON SCHOOL

9.1 Children are admitted to The Loddon School following assessment, visits to current provision, update of their EHC Plan and discussion with parents, Educational staff, Social worker and often the Health Authority.

The Loddon School recognises the importance of regular review following initial assessment. Progress is reported to parents, LEAs, Social Care and other appropriate agencies regularly every five months.

9.2 Essential Criteria for Admission:

When a placement has been offered to a prospective child there are a number of assessments to complete before and on admission. The Essential Criteria for Admission assists Senior Staff in the selection of children.

9.3 Assessment of Restrictive behaviours.

This is completed with parents and staff both before and on admission. It forms part of the ongoing assessment of behaviour and special management requirements.

9.4 Residential Care Questionnaire:

This is completed with parents/carers and enables programmes for independence to be developed rapidly upon admission.

9.5 Preliminary Education Questionnaire:

This is completed by the teacher at the previous school where possible and ensures that the education programme at The Loddon School meets the educational needs upon admission.

9.6 First Week Assessment of Prerequisite Skills:

This rapid assessment is completed by staff in school and in residential life from initial observations of performance. It enables The Loddon School to review progress from admission onwards with particular reference to skills needed for school and residential care. It also forms part of the review of performance of the School to ensure children make progress over time.

9.7 Personal Care and Independent Living Skills:

This assessment is an ongoing review of performance at independence skills and from this assessment differentiated objectives are written and reviewed for progress three monthly.

9.8 Speech and Language Assessments to include PECs and Makaton Signing:

These assessments are carried out by the Speech and Language Therapist and form the basis on the individual work for the child to develop functional communication skills.

9.9 PLLUSS Teacher/Care Manager/Psychologist Assessment:

Teachers and care staff together assess each child using the PLLUSS spiders to establish strengths, preferences and needs.

10. MEASURING PROGRESS

10.1 Progress for our children is not a simple phenomenon. There are apparent contradictions and although our children make progress, such progress may not be sequential and could have omissions from the recognised norms of development. Any of the following outcomes may signal significant progress:

- Children develop meaningful communication strategies.
- Children develop a range of responses to social interactions.
- The frequency or severity of problem-causing or restrictive behaviours.
- Children begin to generalise their responses.
- Children become able to transfer skills and concepts they have learned from one context to another.
- The level of support needed in carrying out particular tasks is reduced.
- Children begin to move on from a dependence culture of secure and predictable routines maintained by adults towards a maximum degree of personal autonomy.

Following the removal of P Levels and the introduction of 'assessment without levels', The Loddon School follows the recommendations made by the Rochford review and looks at the holistic development of the child/young person across the PLLUSS Curriculum. The areas of study within our curriculum aligns to the four areas of need stated in the SEN Code of Practice which are recommended for assessment:

- Cognition and Learning - linked to Access to Learning (PLLUSS)
- Communication and Interaction - linked to Communication and Relating & Interacting (PLLUSS)

- Social, Emotional and Mental Health - linked to Leisure & Well-being, and Independence (PLLUSS®)
- Sensory and/or physical - linked to Transitions and Leisure & Well-being.

All these areas are assessed using the Five areas for engagement - Anticipation, Realisation, Exploration, Initiation and Persistence. Engagement rose diagrams and bar graphs display the progress of students. Early Reading, Early Writing and Early Mathematics are monitored and skills focused on are related to those outlined in the Rochford review. Literacy and numeracy are mainly delivered through active learning sessions.

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Annual review cycle