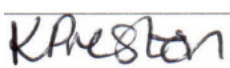




Policy/Procedure Name:	TEACHING & LEARNING POLICY		
Last Update:	July 2025	Next Update Due:	July 2026

Author	Alex Smythe
Signature of Authorised Individual	
Signature of the Director	

1. Vision and Ethos

At Willow Park School, we are committed to providing a **nurturing, inclusive, and communication-rich environment** where every learner is celebrated, supported, and empowered. Our teaching and learning approach is rooted in **play, relationships, and sensory engagement**, ensuring that all pupils—regardless of need—can thrive.

Please see our Teaching & learning Handbook on the school website at <https://www.willowparkschool.warwickshire.sch.uk/curriculum>

Joel Baldwin is the school's Teaching and Learning Lead and is responsible for the strategic development, implementation, and monitoring of teaching and learning across all curriculum pathways

2. Curriculum Design

Our curriculum is:

- **Play-based** and **child-led**
- Grounded in the **EQUALS Curriculum**
- Designed to promote **engagement, independence, and well-being**

We offer three progressive curriculum pathways:

-  **Curious (Pre-Formal)** – for learners at the earliest stages of development
-  **Engaged (Informal)** – for learners developing autonomy and communication
-  **Flourishing (Semi-Formal)** – for learners ready for structured, functional learning



Curious (Pre-Formal) Curriculum

At Willow Park School, our **Curious Curriculum** forms the foundation of learning for pupils with **profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD)** and those at the earliest stages of development. This **Pre-Formal Pathway** is designed to nurture **sensory engagement**, **early communication**, and **emotional connection** through highly personalised, consistent, and responsive routines.

Learning is structured around **seven developmental strands**:

1.  **My Communicative Interactions**
Development of intentional communication through facial expressions, body language, vocalisations, and AAC. This includes early mark making as a form of expressive communication.
2.  **My Sensory Play**
Exploration of materials and environments through touch, sound, sight, smell, and movement.
+ This area includes mark making as a sensory experience and early exposure to number through tactile and visual exploration (e.g., counting scoops, sorting objects, exploring shapes).
3.  **My Physical Play**
Engagement in movement-based activities to develop body awareness, coordination, and motor skills.
+ Opportunities for number concepts are embedded through action songs, movement patterns, and counting games.
4.  **My Musical Interactions**
Use of rhythm, sound, and music to support communication, anticipation, and emotional expression.
+ Music sessions may include counting beats, sequencing sounds, and exploring number through rhythm.
5.  **My Interactions Outside of the Class and School**
Participation in community-based experiences to build confidence, awareness, and inclusion.
+ Real-world number experiences are embedded (e.g., counting steps, noticing numbers in the environment).
6.  **My Movement**
Activities that promote gross motor development, including physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, and dance.
7.  **My Independence**
Development of self-help skills, choice-making, and autonomy in daily routines.
+ Includes early numeracy through routines (e.g., setting the table, counting items, sequencing steps).



Progression Checkpoints

Each strand is broken down into developmental checkpoints in Willow Park Curious Roadmap (pre-formal), ranging from **1b to 5a**, aligned with the **Engagement Model** phases:

- **Exploration:**  (*Curiosity and discovery*)
- **Realisation:**  (*Insight and understanding*)
- **Initiation:**  (*Taking purposeful action*)
- **Persistence:**  (*Effort and sustained engagement*)
- **Anticipation:**  (*Foresight and proactive thinking*)

Key features of the Curious Curriculum include:

- **Sensory-rich, immersive experiences** that promote curiosity and discovery
- **Repetition and routine** to build trust, tolerance, and anticipation
- **Adult modelling and responsive interaction** to support early communication
- **Play-based learning** that respects each child's pace and preferences
- **Real-life contexts** such as snack time, dressing, and community visits to build autonomy

Assessment is continuous and holistic, using the **Willow Park Curious Roadmap, Tapestry observations**, and the **SCERTS Framework** to track progress and inform planning.

This pathway lays the essential groundwork for progression into the **Engaged (Informal)** Curriculum, where curiosity and self-directed learning continue to flourish.

Engaged (Informal) Curriculum

The **Informal Curriculum** is designed for learners with **Complex Learning Difficulties (CLD)**, typically working within **P4–P5**. It focuses on developing:

- **Intentional communication**
- **Emotional regulation**
- **Social interaction**
- **Autonomy and independence**

This pathway is **sensory-rich, play-based**, and **relationship-driven**, supporting pupils to explore their environment, build confidence, and engage in meaningful interactions. Learning is highly personalised and rooted in real-life contexts, with an emphasis on **repetition, routine**, and **predictability** to build security and engagement.

Curriculum areas include:

- Communication and Interaction
- Cognition and Learning



- Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Sensory Integration

Assessment is supported by the **Engagement Model**, **SCERTS**, and the **Willow Park Curious Roadmap**.

Flourishing (Semi-Formal) Curriculum

The **Semi-Formal Curriculum** is designed for pupils with **Severe or Moderate Learning Difficulties (SLD/MLD)** who are ready for more structured learning. It blends **functional**, **life**, and **subject-based skills** in a way that remains accessible and meaningful.

Key features include:

- A focus on **communication**, **literacy**, and **numeracy**
- Development of **independence** and **life skills**
- Support for **emotional regulation** and **social development**
- Learning through **real-life contexts**, **community experiences**, and **thematic units**

The curriculum is **developmental**, **non-linear**, and **personalised**, allowing learners to progress at their own pace. It is not constrained by the National Curriculum but instead prioritises what is **relevant**, **functional**, and **meaningful** for each individual.

Assessment is tracked using the **Willow Park Roadmap**, with input from pupils, families, and multi-agency teams.

Phonics is taught using the **Monster Phonics** programme, with a focus on **Phase 1** for most pupils. A small number of learners progress to Phase 2 and beyond. Phonics is multisensory, embedded in daily routines, and tracked through observational assessment.

3. Teaching Principles

Teaching at Willow Park is:

- **Responsive** to individual needs and interests
- **Holistic**, integrating therapeutic and educational strategies
- **Collaborative**, involving families, therapists, and multi-agency teams
- **Inclusive**, ensuring access to communication, sensory, and physical supports



4. Communication and Interaction

At Willow Park School, communication is not just a subject—it is the foundation of all learning and interaction. We adopt a **Total Communication Approach**, recognising that every child communicates in their own way and deserves access to a rich, responsive, and inclusive communication environment.

Our Approach Includes:

- **Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC):**

We use a wide range of AAC systems tailored to individual needs, including:

- **Makaton** – to reinforce spoken language through signs and symbols.
- **Communication boards** – topic-based, routine-based, or core vocabulary-based, created using Widgeit Online.
- **Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCAs)** – where appropriate.

- **Visual Supports:**

These are embedded throughout the school day to support understanding, reduce anxiety, and promote independence:

- **Now and Next boards**
- **Visual timetables** (whole-class and individual)
- **Objects of reference**
- **Social stories** and **transition cues**

- **Intentional Interaction and Responsive Adult Modelling:**

Staff are trained to:

- Model language and communication consistently.
- Use pause, wait time, and responsive interaction styles.
- Celebrate all communicative attempts—verbal or non-verbal.
- Embed communication opportunities into every routine and activity.

- **SCERTS Framework Integration:**

Our practice is underpinned by the SCERTS model, focusing on:

- **Social Communication** – developing functional, meaningful interaction.
- **Emotional Regulation** – supporting pupils to remain calm and engaged.
- **Transactional Support** – adapting environments and adult responses to meet individual needs.

- **Personalisation through Pupil Passports:**

Each child has a Pupil Passport outlining their preferred communication methods, AAC tools, and strategies. These are co-produced with families and reviewed regularly.

- **Therapeutic Collaboration:**

We work closely with **Speech and Language Therapists (SaLT)** and **Occupational Therapists (OT)** through our PETALS partnership.



Therapists provide direct input, model strategies, and support staff training to ensure communication is embedded across all settings.

- **Play-Based Communication Development:**

Communication is nurtured through structured play, sensory experiences, and real-life contexts. From solitary exploration to co-operative play, staff scaffold interaction using the **Play Development Matrix** and **Engagement Model**.

5. Assessment and Progress

We use a **multi-tool, holistic approach** to assessment, including:

- **The Engagement Model**
- **SCERTS Framework**
- **Willow Park Roadmap**
- **Play Development Matrix**
- **Phonics and communication tracking – Monster Phonics** is the school's Synthetic Phonics programme
- **Tapestry** as a platform for sharing daily observations with families

Progress is celebrated in small steps, with a focus on **engagement, emotional regulation, and functional application**.

6. Preparation for Adulthood (PFA)

PFA is embedded across all pathways and daily routines. We support pupils to:

- Develop **self-awareness** and **autonomy**
- Build **communication** and **social relationships**
- Engage in **real-life experiences** and **community participation**

7. Inclusive Pedagogy

We use a range of evidence-based strategies, including:

- **SCERTS** for social communication and emotional regulation
- **TEACCH** for structured teaching and visual clarity
- **Therapeutic approaches** such as Attention Autism, Sensology, and Squiggle While You
- **We employ the services of PETALS** (external OT and SaLT support)...supporting how therapies are embedded into daily routines and linked to EHCP outcomes

8. Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) Development

SMSC and British Values are woven throughout our curriculum. We promote:

- **Spirituality** through awe, wonder, and sensory exploration



- **Moral understanding** through social stories and emotional coaching
- **Social skills** through play and group interaction
- **Cultural awareness** through festivals, books, and community links

At Willow Park School, we actively develop pupils' **cultural capital**—defined by Ofsted as “*the essential knowledge that children need to be educated citizens*”—through rich, real-world experiences embedded in our long-term plans. Carefully selected books, hands-on cookery, local visits, and the celebration of diverse festivals expose children to a wide range of cultures, traditions, and community roles. These experiences build cultural awareness, foster empathy, and help pupils make meaningful connections between their learning and the world around them; preparing them for future success in life and society.

9. Learning Environment

Using models from TEEACH, the classroom(s) is/are* structured to support:

- **Predictability and routine**
- **Sensory regulation**
- **Individualised learning**
- **Safe spaces for calm and recovery**

**at the time of writing, the school has 1 classroom with plans for a second in Spring 2026*

Sample Timetables & Layouts

- **Pre-Formal Daily Timetable Example**

Includes:

- Sensory sessions
- Intensive Interaction
- Movement and regulation
- Communication and play

9:00 – 9:15	Entry into school – self registration. Toileting Zone 2 an engaging activity being modelled by an adult.
9:15 – 9:30	Sign of the week Squiggle While you Wiggle
9:30 – 10:15	Curious Interaction Time (All zones) 9.45 – 10.15 Snack
10:15 – 10:20	Zone 2 – music/songs/singing/call and response
10:20 – 10:35	Phonics



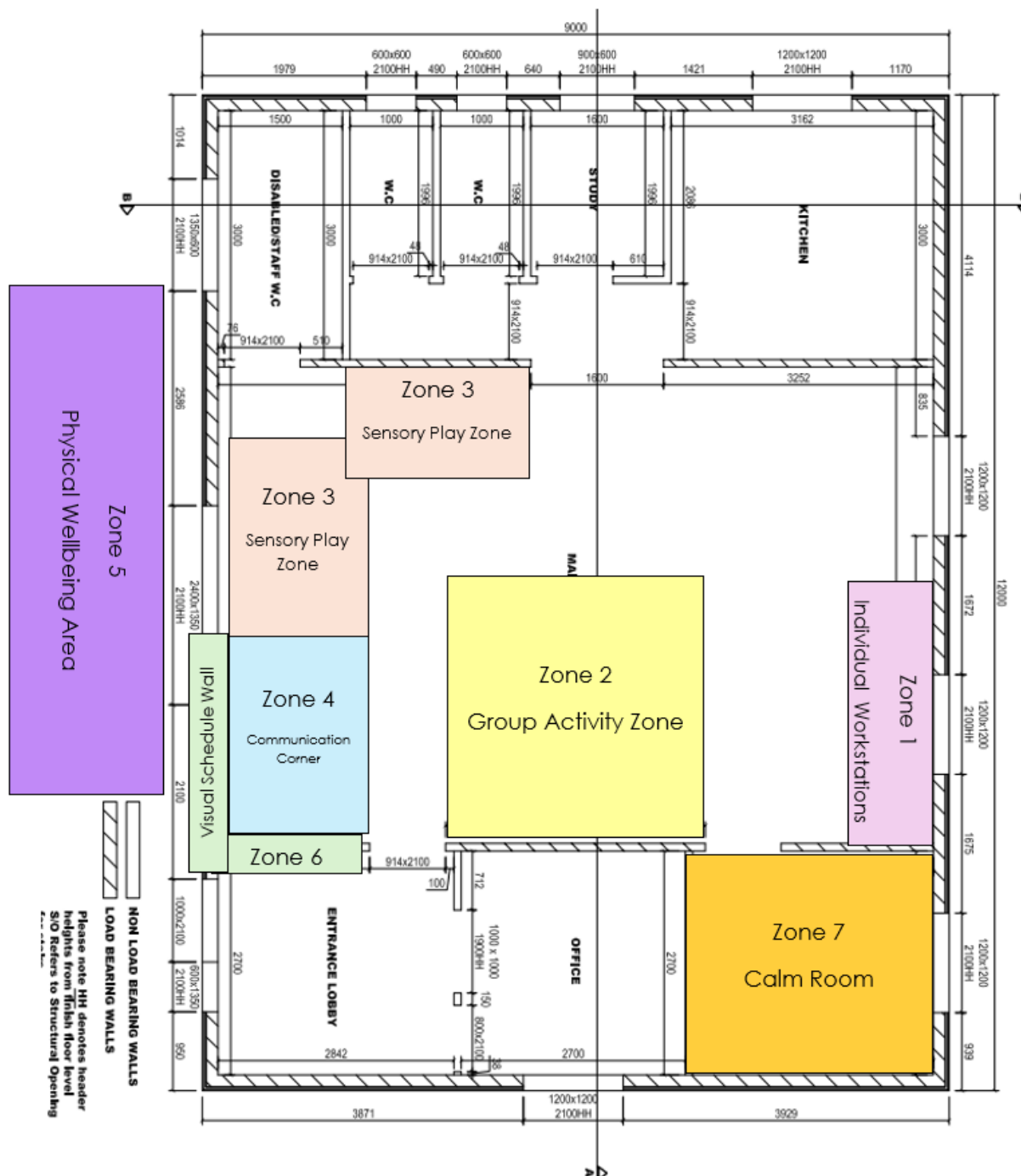
10:35 – 11:00	Curious Interaction Time (All Zones) Toileting
11:00 – 11:15	Zone 2 - Sensology
11:15 – 12:00	Curious Interaction Time (All zones) TAC PAC – DC, AT, SA
12:00 – 12:15	Lunch Prep topic story time / Yoga with Movlee Monkey!
12:15 – 12.45	Lunch
12:45 – 1:00	Toileting Outside Play
1.00 – 1.15	Attention Autism - Bucket
1:15 – 2.00	Curious Interaction Time (All zones) TAC PAC – IP, JA Arts and Craft – with KS PE – with NF Cooking – with CN
2:00 – 2:15	Dough Disco
2:15 – 2:30	Storytime and Biscuit
2:30 – 2:40	Home Prep



Sample Classroom Layout:

Area Descriptions:

1. **Individual Workstations** – For structured tasks with visual instructions
2. **Group Activity Area** – For sensory stories, music, and art
3. **Sensory Play Zone** – Tactile trays, water/sand play
4. **Communication Corner** – AAC tools, mirrors, symbols
5. **Physical Well-being Area** – Movement, physiotherapy, yoga
6. **Visual Schedule Wall** – Daily routines and transitions
7. **Calm/Break Space** – Low-stimulation area for regulation





10. Staff Roles and Professional Development

Staff are:

- **Facilitators of learning**, not deliverers of content
- **Co-learners**, modelling curiosity and responsiveness
- **Trained in AAC, SCERTS, TEACCH**, and therapeutic strategies
- **Reflective practitioners**, using observation and feedback to adapt provision

11. Equality Statement

At Willow Park School, we actively seek to encourage equity and equality through our teaching and our employment practices. As such, we seek to advance the equality of opportunity between people who share any of the following characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or on maternity leave
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

The use of stereotypes under any of the above headings will always be challenged.

12. Inclusion

Our school is an inclusive school. We aim to make all pupils feel included in all our activities. We try to make all our teaching fully inclusive. We recognise the entitlement of all pupils to a balanced, broadly-based curriculum. We have systems in place for early identification of barriers to their learning and participation so that they can engage in school activities with all other pupils. We acknowledge the need for high expectations for and of all children.