

Willow Park Roadmap – Rationale

The "Willow Park Roadmap" is an innovative assessment system designed to cater to the unique needs of children with speech and language difficulties and autism at Willow Park School. This comprehensive system provides a structured framework for assessing and tracking the developmental progress of our pupils from when they start to the end of Year 6, ensuring that each child's individual learning journey is supported and celebrated.

Overview of the Willow Park Roadmap

The Willow Park Roadmap is divided into 12 checkpoints, each representing a developmental stage. Checkpoints 1 to 4 are roughly equivalent to Birth to 5 Years in non-SEN children, Checkpoints 5 to 7 align with Year 1 expectations in non-SEN children, and Checkpoints 8 to 12 correspond to the expectations at the ends of Years 2 to 6 in non-SEN children. This system covers a wide range of subjects and areas, including Communication, Language and Literacy, Creativity, Mathematical Development, Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Physical Development, and Understanding the World.

When a child first starts at Willow Park, a baseline assessment should be carried out, which could take up to 6 weeks. Staff should then use the statements as descriptors for observations uploaded to Tapestry on a regular basis. Staff are encouraged to assign multiple areas of development to each observation so that we can gather as much evidence as possible. Staff should indicate whether children are 'developing' or 'secure' in the relevant descriptor.

For children at Willow Park, we assess and move the children through their developmental journal on the basis of 'stage' not 'age'. Whilst it's important for us to recognise where gaps in development exist, Willow Park Roadmap is about what the children 'can' do, not what they can't do.

It is not essential for pupils to gain evidence of every descriptor in every checkpoint in order to 'move on'. However, we would expect that the majority of descriptors in any one checkpoint are 'secure' in order to ensure that significant 'gaps' do not exist.

Key Aspects of the Willow Park Roadmap

Communication, Language and Literacy

- **Communication:** Focuses on attention and understanding, and visual and spoken language. This aspect ensures that children develop the ability to understand and respond to verbal and non-verbal communication, which is crucial for their overall development and social interactions.
- **Reading:** Includes comprehension, exploring print and books, phonological awareness, and word reading. These elements help children develop a love for reading and the foundational skills needed for literacy.
- **Writing:** Covers composition, transcription, and spelling. This aspect supports children in expressing their thoughts and ideas through writing, which is essential for their academic progress.

Creativity

- **Creative Performance:** Encompasses dance, music, and role-play and imagination. These activities encourage children to express themselves creatively and develop their artistic talents.
- **Media and Materials:** Includes art and design technology. This aspect allows children to explore different materials and techniques, fostering their creativity and problem-solving skills.

Mathematical Development

- **Data Handling and Statistics:** Interpreting and representing statistics. This aspect helps children understand and use data to make informed decisions.
- **Geometry and Measures:** Measures, shape, and space. These elements support children in developing spatial awareness and understanding geometric concepts.
- **Interacting with My Environment:** Cause and effect, spatial awareness. This aspect helps children understand the relationships between objects and their environment.
- **Number:** Counting and numbers, number bonds, number operations, and times tables. These foundational skills are essential for mathematical proficiency.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development (up to Year 1)

- **Feelings, Behaviours and Morals:** Behaviour and regulation, feelings and emotions. This aspect supports children in understanding and managing their emotions and behaviour.
- **Living in the Wider World:** British values. This aspect helps children understand the values that underpin British society and develop a sense of citizenship.
- **Relationships and Others:** Adult interactions, peer interactions, self-awareness. This aspect supports children in developing positive relationships and understanding themselves.
- **Self-care and Independence:** Dressing, eating and drinking, toileting, hygiene, and safety. These skills are essential for children's independence and self-care.
- **SMSC:** Cultural understanding, morals and rules, social awareness, spirituality. This aspect helps children develop a well-rounded understanding of the world and their place in it.

Personal, Social, Health and Economic Development (Years 2-6)

- **Health and Wellbeing:** Growing and changing, healthy lifestyles, keeping safe, mental health. This aspect supports children's physical and mental health.
- **Living in the Wider World:** British values, communities and responsibility, economic wellbeing (aspirations and money), media and digital resilience. This aspect helps children understand their role in society and develop the skills needed for the future.
- **Relationships:** Families and close positive relationships, friendships, managing hurtful behaviour, respecting self and others, safe relationships. This aspect supports children in developing positive and respectful relationships.
- **SMSC:** Cultural understanding, morals and rules, social awareness, spirituality. This aspect helps children develop a well-rounded understanding of the world and their place in it.

Physical Development

- **Motor Skills:** Fine motor skills, gross motor skills. These skills are essential for children's physical development and coordination.
- **Sports:** Athletics, games, gymnastics, outdoor and adventurous activities, swimming. These activities support children's physical fitness and teamwork skills.

Understanding the World

- **Digital Technology:** Computer science, digital citizenship, information technology. This aspect helps children develop the skills needed for the digital age.
- **People and Communities:** Geography, history, people in our lives, understanding religion. This aspect helps children understand the world around them and their place in it.
- **Science:** Scientific exploration, scientific knowledge. This aspect supports children's curiosity and understanding of the natural world.

Research and Validity

The Willow Park Roadmap is grounded in research on assessment in special education in the UK. According to the British Journal of Special Education, effective assessment systems for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) should be comprehensive, individualised, and flexible. The Roadmap aligns with these principles by providing detailed assessment statements that cater to the diverse needs of our pupils.

Research by Leeds Trinity University highlights the importance of collaborative and consistent assessment practices in supporting children with SEND. The Willow Park Roadmap incorporates these findings by ensuring that assessments are conducted in a supportive and responsive manner, involving input from teachers, parents, and, ultimately, the children themselves.

Implementation and Impact

The Willow Park Roadmap is designed to be a dynamic tool that evolves with the needs of our pupils. Teachers use the Roadmap to set individualised learning goals, track progress, and identify areas for additional support. This system not only helps in monitoring academic achievements but also supports the development of social, emotional, and physical skills. It is especially focused on supporting our pupils' Communication, Language and Literacy skills.

By providing a clear and structured framework for assessment, the Willow Park Roadmap empowers teachers to deliver personalised and effective instruction. It also fosters a collaborative environment where parents and caregivers are actively involved in their child's learning journey.

Integration with Tapestry

Assessments are recorded on Tapestry, a secure online Learning Journal used to record photos, observations, and comments, in line with the Willow Park Roadmap. This helps to build up a record of children's experiences and development during their time with us. Tapestry is an easy-to-use platform that allows staff to document and share children's progress in real-time, providing a comprehensive view of each child's learning journey and sharing these in a timely manner with parents. They have instant access to observations approved on Tapestry.

Daily Use by Staff

Staff use Tapestry on a daily basis to capture observations, upload photos and videos, and add comments about children's activities and achievements. This continuous documentation helps teachers to monitor progress, identify areas for improvement, and plan future learning activities. The ability to quickly and easily record observations ensures that no significant moment is missed, and all aspects of a child's development are considered. For each observation, staff reference pupils against Willow Park Roadmap checkpoint descriptors across the range of areas of development.

Benefits for Home-School Communication

Tapestry is highly beneficial for fostering strong relationships and information sharing between home and school. Parents and caregivers can access their child's Learning Journal at any time, providing them with insights into their child's experiences and progress at school. They can also contribute their own observations and comments, creating a collaborative approach to their child's education. This ongoing communication helps to build a strong partnership between home and school, ensuring that everyone is working together to support the child's development.

Data Analysis for School Leaders

School leaders can use data from Tapestry to analyse pupils' development and plan for their future learning. The platform provides detailed reports and analytics, allowing leaders to track progress across different areas of the curriculum and identify trends or areas of concern. This personalised approach enables school leaders to make informed decisions about curriculum planning, resource allocation, and targeted interventions. By using Tapestry, school leaders can ensure that every child receives the support they need to achieve their full potential.

Stage Not Age Approach

At Willow Park School, we assess pupils and move them through their learning journey based on their developmental stage rather than their chronological age. This approach recognises that children with SEND may progress at different rates and ensures that each child receives instruction and support tailored to their current level of development. The "Stages not Ages" assessment tool, developed by the Special Educational Needs and Inclusion Team (SENIT), supports this approach by providing finely graded assessment stages that reflect the National Curriculum. Willow Park Roadmap builds on this by providing a breadth of descriptors within and beyond the National Curriculum.

Research has shown that assessing pupils based on their developmental stage rather than age is particularly effective for children with SEND. According to the Rochford Review, this approach allows for a more accurate representation of a child's abilities and progress, as it takes into account their individual learning needs and avoids the limitations of age-based assessments. The review emphasises the importance of small-step assessments that can capture the incremental progress made by pupils with SEND, ensuring that their achievements are recognised and celebrated.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Willow Park Roadmap is a comprehensive and research-based assessment system that supports the holistic development of children with speech and language difficulties and autism. By focusing on individualised learning and fostering a supportive community, the Roadmap ensures that every child at Willow Park School can achieve their full potential. The integration of Tapestry enhances this system by providing a secure and efficient platform for recording, sharing, and analysing children's progress, fostering strong home-school partnerships, and enabling personalised decision-making. The stage-not-age approach further ensures that each child's unique developmental journey is respected and supported, aligning with best practices in special education.

References:

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