PMLD SENSORY EXPLORATION



OUR APPROACH

At Columbus, we are dedicated to providing a meaningful, person-centred curriculum for pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD). Our approach is holistic, responsive, and rooted in the belief that every learner deserves opportunities to grow, connect, and thrive in their own unique way.

Introduction to the aims of the curriculum

A Curriculum Built Around the Learner
We understand that students with PMLD have highly individual needs that require a bespoke, sensory-rich curriculum. Our PMLD pathway focuses on:

- Communication and Interaction – Using a total communication approach, including intensive interaction, objects of reference, AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication), and other personalized strategies.
- Sensory Exploration – Providing multi-sensory experiences that engage learners and help them develop awareness, anticipation, and preferences.
- Cognition and Learning – Supporting pupils to make connections, respond to stimuli, and develop early problem-solving and decision-making skills through structured routines and exploration.
- Physical and Motor Skills – Offering physiotherapy programs, hydrotherapy, and rebound therapy to promote movement, comfort, and wellbeing.
- Emotional and Social Development – Building trusting relationships, promoting emotional regulation, and creating a sense of belonging and security.
- Preparation for Adulthood – Developing life skills, independence (where possible), and access to the community in meaningful and supported ways.

A Collaborative and Nurturing Environment
Our multidisciplinary team—including teachers, therapists, healthcare professionals, and families—works closely to create tailored learning journeys. Progress is measured through Engagement step intentions, using small-step tracking systems and qualitative evidence such as photos, observations, and videos.

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CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

Subject Specific Skill	Intent	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Resources
Literacy texts allow students an interactive approach that will best support students to acquire, practise and establish the early skills of communication and will actively involve them in everyday experiences.	Students will have opportunities to learn about different types of text through fiction and nonfiction books. They will have opportunities to explore rhythms and sounds through poems, rhymes and songs. They will have opportunities to make their book and stories using pictures, symbols and the arts. Students will identify key characters using the core communication board and/or making a choice between visual aids. Students will use gestures and/or pointing in order to demonstrate an understanding of question words, where, who and what. Pupils will develop gross and fine motor skills in order to make marks in sensory materials and/or with a writing tool.		• What do I Look Like? Delivered as a sensory story • A Witch sensory story • Seren's Seasons • Three little Pigs • Summer • Treasures in the garden • Pirate songs delivered in sensory formats:	• We are all different sensory story • We're going on a leaf hunt (This project then slowly links into the Harvest Festival RE) • Leaf Hunt resources • Winter Sensory story • Christmas sensory story • Are you an ELF • The Hungry Caterpillar • Jasper and The Beanstalk • Props • Town and Country Sensory Story • One, Two, Three Off to the Sea	• The Autumn Forest • Pumpkin Soup by Helen Cooper	• Sensory stories • Props, • Puppets • Sensory lights • Sound effects • Smells to go with stories • Use of pre recorded switches to join in with repeated phrases, key words , music or sound effects • Musical instruments. • Sensory cookery • Use of Book creator to support student to make there own books

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Well Being This part of the curriculum gives students opportunities to develop their Self help skills, social interaction and mobility, relaxation and resilience	Students Will have opportunities to develop their understanding of body awareness and where their bodies are within a space. Students will still and respond to different body parts being touched. Students will follow verbal and visual prompts, moving their bodies in order to explore and manipulate different objects. Students will be able to follow daily routines and simple instructions with decreasing support.		• To respond to a range of sensory stimuli by moving the appropriate body parts. • To continue developing independence during eating and toileting.	• To engage and respond during a range of group and individual activities including Movement to Music, the Be Active Box and Musical Communication. • To still and respond to different body parts being touched. • To begin to demonstrate some knowledge of body parts e.g. putting hands up to clap in response to adult modelling. To follow simple instructions, can you find the...		• Well Being - Medium term plan PMLD Lower • Tacpac • Massage using creams and oils. • Aromatherapy oils (smell) • Story Massage • Learning outside • Use of vibrating massage mats • Sensory lights and projectors • Be Active Box

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Creative Creative activities provide students with opportunities to explore visual, tactile and sensory experiences. It allows them a unique way to understand and respond to the world around them. It gives students opportunities to communicate with others. It helps students to learn about the place and role of the creative arts in life today, as well as in different times and cultures.	To explore, anticipate and initiate interactions during Music, Drama, Art and Design	• To respond to a single sound e.g. by stilling, turning head, facial expression or body movement. • To vocalise to make a sound. • To reach out, grasp, manipulate or react to different sensory materials. • To touch, reach out and explore sensory play and art materials using their hands.	• To choose a sound or song through eye gaze, facial reactions and/or pointing. • To anticipate and respond to a range of instrumental sounds. • To use fine and gross motor skills in response to music, stories and sensory stimuli. • To explore and manipulate a range of objects and materials during sensory play, pretend play and creative learning.	• To move a body part in response to a rhythm e.g. resonance board. • To be able to explore and manipulate props related to a song, poem or story. • To grasp and demonstrate control over a tool e.g. grasp a brush and make spreading action.		• Creative - Medium term plan PMLD • Electric Umbrella • Drama Games • Drama activities during sensory stories • Role play in the immersive room. • Painting, collage, 3D models, sensory play art activities

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Communication and social relationships (Self determination) Students will be given opportunities to discover their likes and dislikes structuring the environment to provide meaningful forms of stimulation to foster purposeful responses Decreasing stereotypical self-simulations using sensory stimuli to encourage the learner to engage in purposeful, rather than non-purposeful, behaviours.	Students will develop their own forms of communication to get their needs and wants met e.g. vocalisations, body language or signing. Students will develop choice making skills by using eye pointing, gesture, vocalisations, making choices from objects or photos. Students will have opportunities to develop their social skills by taking part in interactions with adults and peers.	• To explore different models of communication and identify which works for each individual student e.g vocalisations, signs, objects, photos and symbols. • To develop their own personal communication methods as highlighted in EHCP and ILPS.	• To respond to key phrases during everyday routines. E.g. reaching for a pad after an adult has said 'time for the toilet'. • To continue to develop their own personal communication methods as highlighted in EHCP and ILPS. • Examples - Reaching for or using eye gaze with individual symbols, photos or the core communication board, in order to communicate basic needs. E.g. more and drink. • To make a choice from objects, photos or symbols.	• As part of a familiar routine, to respond to a familiar adult. By Stilling, turning your head, focusing on an adult's face, using facial expressions. • To continue to develop their own personal communication methods as highlighted in EHCP and ILPS.		• Story Massage, • Sensory Stories • Bucket time. • Intensive interaction • Switches with recorded words or phrases.

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Sensory Gives students an opportunity for learners of all ages to explore the sensory make up of all and any objects and materials, both individually and when mixed together.	Students will develop their sensory processing skills to use the seven senses: touch, smell, taste, hearing, sight, vestibular and Proprioception to explore objects, materials and support students to make sense of the world around them.		• To use different hand / finger movements to explore sensory materials e.g. clawing, grasping, squeezing. • To use different body parts in sensory exploration. • To develop an awareness of familiar and favoured objects. • To develop an understanding of their senses and how they can be used through familiar phrases and routines.	• To be able to touch, reach out and explore a variety of different sensory materials. • To develop their gross / fine motor skills in order to explore a range of sensory materials. As linked to physio plans, EHCP and ILP targets.		• Learning outside • Cooking • Tacpac • Massage • Sensory Stories • Use of the immersive room and immersive environments. • Seven senses - touch, smell, taste, hearing, sight, vestibular and Proprioception.
Physical (Independence)Students will explore body awareness through fine and gross motor activities. Students will explore the areas of the body through spatial awareness, relationships and creativity.	Students will have opportunities to explore how their body parts are positioned next to the neighbouring parts of the body. They will have opportunities to develop their strength and coordination skills. They will have opportunities to develop gross and fine motor skills so that they engage in activities.		• To work on individual targets which have been set by physios. • To develop fine and gross motor skills in order to develop independence e.g. feeding and dressing. • To move their bodies to music following some instructions and adult modelling.			• Rebound • Therapy • Hydrotherapy • Physiotherapy • Fine motor skills • Yoga • Tacpac • Story massage

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Cognition and Learning	Students will have opportunities to think about what they are doing and will be given time to respond to instructions and sensory stimuli. They will be given opportunities to participate in activities that stretch and challenge them e.g. physio or fine motor activities.		• To be able to recognise and follow daily routines, developing independent skills wherever possible. • To recognise key words and phrases which enable pupils to keep themselves safe e.g. stop.	• To respond to different sensory stimulation, activities, familiar people and familiar peers. • To develop their skills to complete an activity that they find challenging e.g Link to EHCP and ILP targets		• Physio Fine motor activities e.g. through sensory play. Personal care routines. Social interactions Interacting and communicating with a variety of adults and peers.
RSE	Refer to PMLD RSE See Document. below .					
Assessment	Engagement Steps. Through the engagement steps students will be encouraged to reach their full potential. This assessment method will scaffold the students learning through exploration, realisation, anticipation, persistence and initiation	• EHCP • Yearly targets will be set with parents and with other professionals to support students to reach their full potential.	• ILPS. • Individual students targets from the EHCP will be broken down into small termly targets which will allow students to work on the target in a structured way.	• Half Termly Assessment sheets. • Students IEP targets will be assessed by the staff in class and recorded on their individual assessment sheets.	• Tapestry. • Students will have video and photos posted on students progress with evidence of engagement and IEP assessments.	• End of Year Report. • Students will have a written report at the end of the year to assess their progress for the year.