

# Our Approach



## Norfolk County Council's aims for Social and Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) Bases:

- To enable children to return to mainstream education, better able to emotionally self-regulate and with improved emotional wellbeing.
- To work in partnership with home schools and families, supporting them to better understand the needs of children with complex Social, Emotional, Mental Health (SEMH) needs; to enable them to flourish.
- To provide families of children with SEMH needs with access to appropriate support and increased knowledge how best to support their children.

### Term 4 - Extension, Reintegration, Next Steps

In **Term 4**, if our children have not already reintegrated fully into their home schools, we continue to support them in this transition. Motional assessments evidences continued growth of **pro-social skills** (shown by the green areas on this page) and **learning skills or executive functions** (shown by the blue area). Children are now better able to focus, problem solve and use specific strategies both in The Place and in their home school.

Knowledge gained during placement, together with professional's reports mean we have a greater understanding of the emotional, social and cognitive issues, which may influence our children's ability to self-regulate. We work with the home schools to ensure a consistency of approach.

We plan for every child to be fully reintegrated into their home school for the last two weeks of the placement, ensuring we can continue supporting them during this final transition time, if needed

Alternatively, we arrange for children's placements at The Place to be extended, if required, or prepare children for their specialist school transition, or the next steps of their educational journey.

### Term 1 - Stabilise, Assess, Plan, Engage

Children, aged 5-7 years are referred to The Place because they find elements of their mainstream environment and expectations overwhelming. They are often on the point of exclusion and/or may not be attending school full time.

Many of our children have a history of adverse childhood experiences, and have not always experienced warm and positive relationships with their parents or carers. Some of our children are neurodivergent - they feel, think and learn in different ways.

All of our children need support to understand and manage big emotions resulting from overactive rage, fear panic/grief stress responses. **These are the 'blocks' to self-regulation and learning skills, represented by the pink area on this page.**

In **Term 1**, the **'blocks'** are always significant. We use the evidenced based emotional wellbeing assessment tool **Motional**, to give a whole brain picture of each child's emotional and mental wellbeing. Motional provides a programme of strategies and interventions, which we incorporate in our weekly planning to stabilise and reduce blocks, by building psychological safety, connections and trust. This happens alongside an adult supported, play-based curriculum, incorporating 'sneaky' learning opportunities too.

We build connections with our children's home-schools and very importantly, strive to build mutual trust with our children's families who very often, feel marginalised and disengaged with the education system.

### Unblocking Blocks

### Building Prosocial Skills

### Building Learning Skills



### Term 3 - Do, Review, Reintegrate, Further Support

In **Term 3**, children's 'blocks' to learning typically continue to reduce steadily. Updated Motional assessments evidence progress of growing levels of **pro-social skills** (shown by the green areas on this page) and **learning skills or executive functions** (shown by the blue area).

Our children are better able to understand and regulate their emotions, able to experience joy, have more confidence to get along with others and accept being corrected. Our curriculum is planned to reengage our children in academic learning, supporting specific gaps, changing fixed mind-sets, whilst boosting damaged self-esteem.

In **Term 3**, children begin their 3<sup>rd</sup> transition day back to their home-schools, we review the placement and start planning for eventual reintegration.

Where children are unable to transfer strategies to their home-schools on transition days, or where their progress is impacted by present life events, we ask for further assessments and advice from our SRB Advisor or dedicated Educational Psychologist, who are able to advise home-schools and families of possible next steps.

We support our families in professional meetings and guide them through processes if a diagnostic assessment or EHCP is required.

### Term 2 - Do, Review, Support

As children begin to feel safer, the 'blocks' reduce resulting in higher levels of the brain (the Neo-cortex and Prefrontal Cortex) coming on line. Our children are more tolerant to the uncomfortable feelings that often accompany any learning – *courage, making mistakes, persevering, praise* etc. Adults are therefore able to lead them and gently challenge to ensure small steps of success.

In **Term 2**, we begin to make more detailed observations and assessments to establish children's strengths, also gaps, delays or difficulties causing barriers and fear around cognitive learning tasks.

Alongside **Motional**, our expert knowledge of child development and National Curriculum expectations, we use a range of in-house assessment tools (such as **PIVATS, Hemisphere Developmental Screening Motor Skills Assessment, Draw A Person, BPVS and TALC**) to establish next steps. These assessments will inform a strength-based curriculum, incorporating each child's interests, an individualised Self-regulation and Harm Reduction Plan.

In **Term 2**, children begin their 2<sup>nd</sup> transition day back to their home-schools and this is supported by carefully planned visits from key staff in both settings. We also work 'shoulder to shoulder' with our families supporting them to understand the needs of their child whilst our Family Learning Team support with strategies on positive parenting and any financial worries.

# This is what we do here!

## 5) Self-Actualisation –

*I can be my best! I can:*

*Connect, Calm, Use my Voice and Learn!*

## 4) Esteem –

*I need to feel a sense of success, achievement and pride*

## 3) Belonging –

*I need to feel welcome, wanted and connected*

## 2) Psychological Safety –

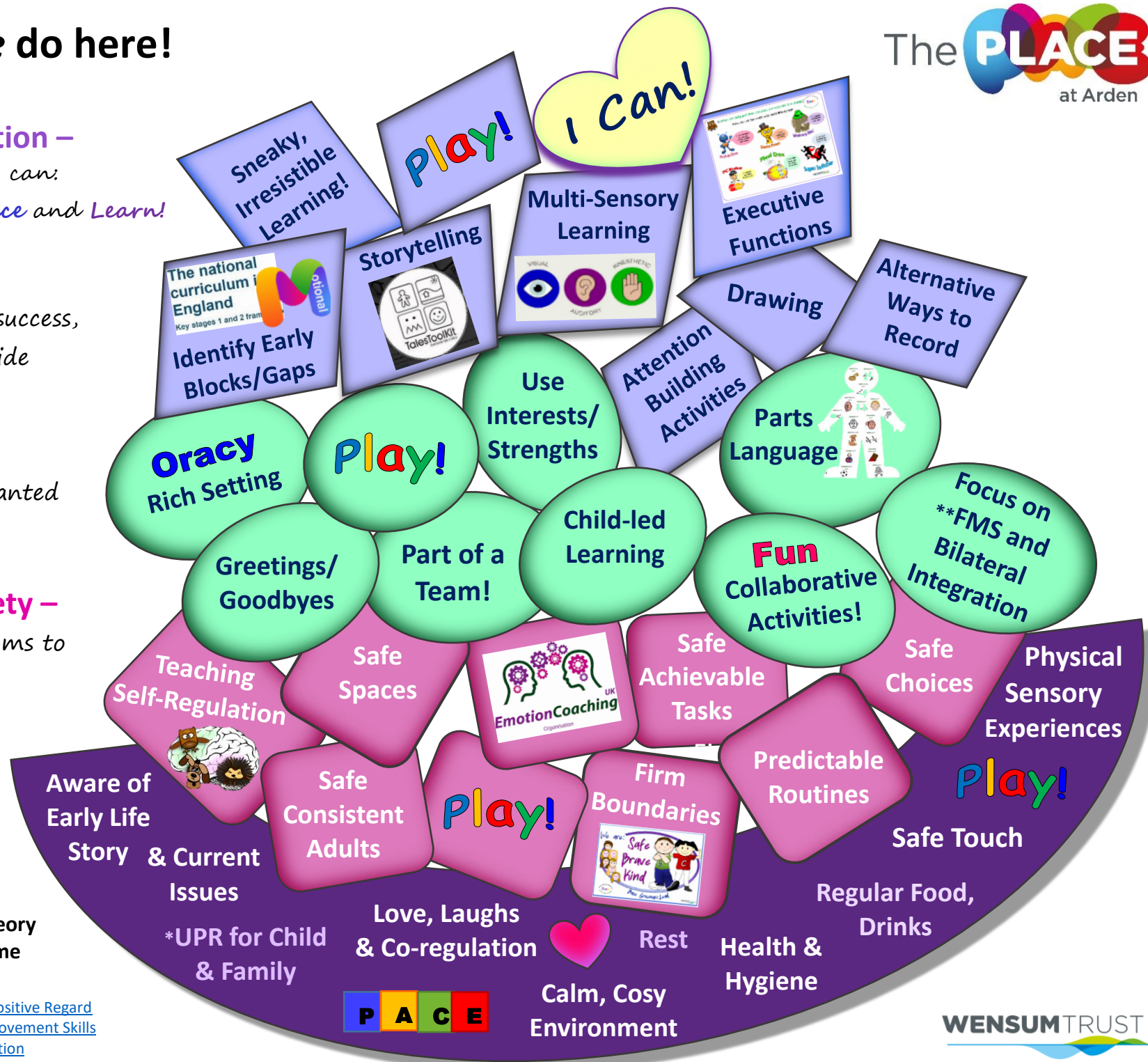
*I need adults and classrooms to feel safe*

## 1) The Foundations, Physiological Needs -

*I need you to meet my basic needs*

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory reminds us how children become

\*[Unconditional Positive Regard](#)  
\*\*[Fundamental Movement Skills Bilateral Integration](#)



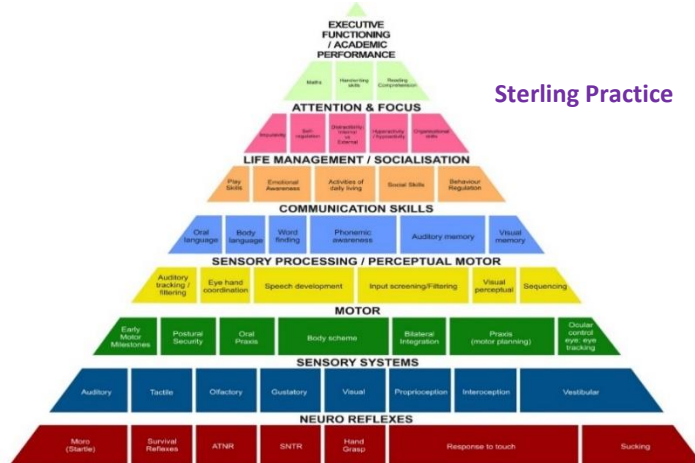


# At The PLACE at Arden we practise: Playful Learning with Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy

## Our Aims

During their time at The PLACE, our primary focus is to support our children’s emotional, social and self-regulation skills. We aim to support children:

- **To connect** – build relationships with The PLACE adults and other children so that they learn they can trust adults and they can develop the skills to make and maintain friendships
- **To be empowered** – know how to help their bodies and brains stay calm so that they can learn to manage their emotions, thoughts and responses
- **To have a voice** – so that they know their opinions, feelings, emotions and needs are important and valued and that everyone may be different in this respect



We know that in order to self-regulate and progress through the stages of life, the earliest foundational reflexes; sensory, physical systems need to develop alongside an attentive, attuned carer. When identifying gaps and delays, we are curious about each of our children and plan to fill or enhance specific early foundational skills.

<https://sterlingpractice.co.uk/foundational-skills/>

*“No brain is the same. No brain is the best. Each brain finds its own special way.”*

- Edward Hallowell

Play

Builds Brains!

Our curriculum is a mixture of child led play and explorations, structured play, and developmentally appropriate adult led playful learning!

*‘Through play, children develop language skills, their emotions and creativity, social and intellectual skills’ (Early Years Matter).*

Research has established that play is beneficial for children’s development and learning on every level.

**Play is a powerful strategy for self-regulation and learning; reducing shame, relieving tension, building attention and working memory skills.** For many of our children playfulness also encourages safe touch, eye contact, singing/rhythm, and mirroring, all essential ingredients to heal attachment wounds.

Additionally, **without** continued opportunities for guided playful learning children cannot: **explore** their world, their feelings, their senses, their fundamental movement and fine motor skills; **communicate** their ideas, beliefs, interests, their fears, their imagination, their creativity; **build** their social skills, their friendships, mutual joy, independence skills, engagement and a love of learning!

*Quite simply, play calms, heals and builds brains!*



Together, our teams face their fears and try to do the right thing, even when it is tricky!

*Safe, Brave, Kind*

## Our Curriculum

Always being mindful of our children's emotional regulation, we engage and gently challenge them in 'sneaky' and irresistible developmentally appropriate learning, primarily planned around the Seasons of the Year, their strengths and current interests, supporting growth mind-set and new talents.

| EYFS   |  | KS1 | What we do  |
|--|--|-----|---|
| Personal, Social, Emotional Development  | Relationships Education and Health Education |     | <p><b>We:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy (<b>PACE</b>) is fundamental in all our interactions and that we continually <b>coach social/emotions skills</b></li> <li>Accept that building strong connections and mutual trust makes children feel psychologically safe. Planning is informed by <b>Motional</b> assessments and recommended activities</li> <li>Cultivate a culture of compassion and kindness towards all children and all adults</li> <li>Recognise emotions drive thoughts and responses and learn to identify our children's very individual stress response and their specific triggers. We know the developmental stage of our children means that they cannot always interpret internal signals allowing them to independently calm.</li> <li>Use developmentally appropriate approaches, (<b>Alert Programme Just Right Engine</b>, <b>Colour Monsters</b>, our own <b>Wise Owl narrative</b>), to teach children about their brain, what happens when their stress response is activated and how to identify and express how they are feeling</li> <li>Know how specific <b>early life experiences</b> and lived experiences may have formed differences in children's attachment styles, their <b>Internal Working Models</b> and how they regulate their emotions</li> <li>Help children calm big emotions and work with them to find specific ways to help them calm themselves</li> <li>Provide consistent boundaries and predictable routines, supporting feelings of safety and self-regulation</li> <li>Teach and celebrate diversity through our <b>Parts Language</b> that everyone is different and that is okay.</li> <li>Build cohesion through play, games and <b>R-Time</b></li> <li>Scaffold opportunities to help children make friends, play and get along with others and help them solve conflicts</li> <li>Explicitly model and teach learning along with leaning behaviours (executive functions) through our <b>Wise Owl Friends</b>, helping children understand when they have specific difficulties they need to focus on. When they are ready, children monitor their progress using their <b>Growth Star</b></li> <li>Identify gaps and difficulties (in independence skills or cognitive learning) which are building fear and barriers in the classroom, exacerbating emotional regulation</li> </ul> |
| <p><i>All of our children need support to understand and manage big emotions resulting from overactive rage, fear panic/grief stress responses. These are the 'blocks' to self-regulation and learning skills. We first have to remove these blocks to find the real child within, before we can identify other delays and difficulties exacerbating learning</i></p> <p><i>Our children are scared of adults and other children too, because they do not have the skills to play. We have discovered not having friends or feeling valued and loved in school, is a major contributory factor in our children's emotional overwhelm in their mainstream classrooms.</i></p> <p><b><u>Our children need to feel they belong.</u></b></p> |  |     |   |
| Physical Development   | Physical Education                           |     | <p><b>We:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand that early experiences may have resulted in gaps to foundational reflexes and sensory systems (vestibular, proprioception and tactile).</li> <li>Provide each child with targeted deep pressure, core and shoulder stability routines to support physical regulation</li> <li>Ensure tasks are planned to engage those children who need multi-sensory learning</li> <li>Plan role play, gross motor and coordination games at break and lunch times, regularly throughout the day</li> </ul>   |
| <p><i>Our children have often missed or have delays in foundational reflexes, sensory systems, gross and fine motor skills, impacting their emotional regulation, balance, listening and attention skills, gross and fine motor skills.</i></p>  |  |     |   |

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| <u><b>Physical literacy supports general literacy, including play and speech and language</b></u>  |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use a variety of different materials and tools to encourage developmentally appropriate hand dominance, finger strength and <a href="#">bilateral integration</a> (using both sides of body in a coordinated way)</li> <li>Use <a href="#">Squiggle while you Wiggle and Dough Disco</a> - programmes using dance and large movements to help children develop the fine muscle control they need for writing</li> <li>Have a weekly Sports Club where children can practice <a href="#">Fundamental Movement Skills</a> along with social skills</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Communication and Language</b>  | <b>Spoken Language</b>                                    | <p><b>We:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a play-based curriculum where adults model role-play, whilst scaffolding interactions and social skills.</li> <li>Have a <b>communicative and philosophically rich environment</b> where all commentary, wonderings and discussion is welcome. <b>We aim to support our children's oracy skills to become strong and effective communicators.</b></li> <li>Use <a href="#">Bucket Time</a> to engage, build attention, impulse control, listening and working memory skills</li> <li>Help children make choices, share their thoughts and ask questions</li> <li>Help children see both sides of the argument and that other's opinions may be different – See <a href="#">Hand of Options</a></li> <li>Practice activities which support flexible thinking such as: Problem Solving, Would you Rather?, Odd one Out, True or False, Jokes and Riddles</li> <li>Assess children's receptive (heard) vocabulary to identify any delay in vocabulary development using <a href="#">BPVS</a></li> <li>Assess children's understanding of abstract language through verbal reasoning by using the <a href="#">TALC</a>. This helps us identify what types of questions and abstract language our children may not understand</li> </ul>  |
| <i>We want our children to learn that their voice; their opinions, feelings, needs are important and valued and that everyone may be different in this respect. We encourage children to find a way to express emotions rather than communicate these through their actions.</i>   |   |   |
| <b>Expressive Arts and Design</b>  | <b>Art and Design<br/>Design and Technology<br/>Music</b> | <p><b>We:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have a play based curriculum where playful adults join children in <b>role play, small world, sand trays, puppets</b> etc</li> <li>Encourage drawing and mark making opportunities across each day for brain calming. Adults join children at their desks and support them whilst connecting.</li> <li>Have <b>Art Club</b> each week where we explore different artists and practice using their techniques</li> <li>Plan weekly <b>Drawing Club</b> where children may be required to follow a <b>Draw with Rob</b> session. This session has supported our children to reduce anxiety around drawing, built attention, tracking, visual discrimination and fine motor skills, whilst also supporting feelings of disappointment, frustration and pride!</li> <li>Challenge children to plan and create a specific project in <b>Construction Club</b>, working with the group and using social skills to share resources. We also support two children to work together in more structured <a href="#">Brick Club</a></li> <li>Use <b>Hotwire</b> Challenges to help children work safely together in pairs with electrical challenges.</li> <li>Plan a weekly <b>Woodworking Club</b> where children are supported to design and build simple projects</li> <li>Explore different types of music and different musical artists and have daily opportunities to move in time to <b>DJ Raphi, Go Noodle, Sing Up SEN, Squiggle while you Wiggle/Dough Disco</b></li> </ul> |
| <i>We have discovered that helping our children to be creative encourages attitudes of curiosity and builds shared interests with other children. The Arts, Music and Design are regulating and have become central in allowing our children to express their thoughts and feelings whilst also building strengths, self-esteem, developing spoken language, reading and writing skills.</i> |   |   |
| <b>Understanding the World</b>   | <b>Science</b>  | <p><b>We:-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look at the changing seasons, weather and environmental issues in our weekly <b>Outdoor Learning Sessions</b></li> <li>Learn about food chains, life cycles, habitats and how we can care for all types of wildlife</li> <li>Grow plants and flowers and learn how to care for them in our <b>Garden Club</b></li> <li>Learn about different types of animals, insects and dinosaurs; how they can be sorted and classified</li> <li>Teach our children about their brain and what happens when their stress response is activated</li> <li>Learn about our bodies, our different sensory systems and how to keep our bodies regulated and healthy</li> <li>Explore different types of materials and how these change when they are mixed with other substances – this includes exploring and making different daily <b>tactile sensory activities</b>, weekly <a href="#">Bucket Time</a> activities and weekly <b>Cooking Club</b></li> </ul>   |
| <i>We support our children to learn to better understand the world they live in, exploring why things happen and recognising that change is constant and okay</i>  |   |   |

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|  | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>History<br/>Geography<br/>Computing<br/>RE</b></p> | <p><b>We:-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look at our own personal histories – our families, friends and communities</li> <li>• Have a child-friendly daily <b>Newsround</b> catching up with events around the world</li> <li>• Cover historic and topical current events such as; the Royal family, Jubilees, Coronations, the history of London, Tower of London, Guy Fawkes, Remembrance Day.</li> <li>• Learn about where we are in the world, where other countries and their capital cities are. We look at maps and co-ordinates</li> <li>• Look at different regions, their properties - mountains, beaches, hot and cold – Polar Regions and notable events</li> <li>• Discuss landmarks and monuments, space, NASA, sun and beach safety</li> <li>• Use iPads; to research in child led learning, in our topics, to record learning moments, for specific learning tasks – <b>Scratch</b>, <a href="#">Clicker 8</a>, <a href="#">Widgit</a></li> <li>• Learn about different types of religious events and how other people celebrate these</li> </ul>   |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Literacy</b></p>   | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>English</b></p>                                    | <p><b>We:-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise that initial <b>Blocks</b> may be preventing children’s engagement and preventing them from showing us what they know. In addition, that literacy skills are dependent on foundational physical development, experiences and communication and language skills.</li> <li>• Use <a href="#">PIVATS 5</a>, <a href="#">Birth to Five Matters</a>, <a href="#">National Curriculum Overview</a> to identify literacy gaps and plan early morning achievable, child specific targets which are supported by an adult</li> <li>• Use <a href="#">Squiggle while you Wiggle</a>, <a href="#">Pegs to Paper for Literacy</a>, <a href="#">Hairy Letters App</a>, to support finger dexterity and <a href="#">Bilateral Integration</a></li> <li>• Use termly <b>Draw a Person</b> assessments</li> <li>• Are rigorous but playful in teaching children their sounds, <b>Common Exception Words and other words by sight</b></li> <li>• Have selected <a href="#">Twinkl’s Rhino Readers Phonic Scheme</a>, which is DfE approved and compatible with all our home-schools different phonics schemes. We ask the home school to provide scheme reading books but our children enjoy reading Rhino Readers on our iPads too.</li> <li>• Use <b>Precision Teach</b> to help children learn phonic sounds and Common Exception Words</li> <li>• Have a <b>communicative and philosophically rich environment</b> where commentary and discussion is welcomed</li> <li>• Have irresistible whole group topics hooked by stories.</li> <li>• Use multisensory, inclusive approaches - <a href="#">Tales Toolkit</a>, <a href="#">Drawing Club</a>, <a href="#">Message Centres</a>, to engage all children in group sessions at their own developmental stage.</li> <li>• Have daily story time, recap nursery rhymes and revisit phonological awareness games, where needed</li> <li>• Provide choice of multi-sensory approaches to engage imaginative but fearful learners - <b>Sticky Sentence</b>, <b>Writing for Meaning</b>, <b>Cloze</b>, <b>Quizzes</b>, <a href="#">Speech to type Widget</a>, <a href="#">Clicker 8</a>. We liaise with home-schools to pre-learn topics for return days and share strategies which reduce fears around reading and writing</li> <li>• Have monthly visits from <b>Nutmeg</b>, a <a href="#">Pets As Therapy</a> reading dog who the children love to show their latest literacy skills to!</li> </ul> |
| <p><i>Without exception, all of our children arrive at the Place disengaged and fearful around reading and/or writing activities. Many of them are just at younger developmental stages of writing or because they have working memory difficulties, have not yet experienced success in reading using systematic synthetic phonics teaching programmes (SSP). We identify each child’s specific barrier to reading and writing (which can be both within transcription and written expression) and find multi-sensory creative ways to fill gaps build skill deficits and engage fearful learners.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Being fearful around writing is not a barrier to literacy</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><a href="#">See our Approach to Writing here</a></p> |  |  |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Mathematics</b></p>  | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Maths</b></p>                                      | <p><b>We:-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise that initial <b>Blocks</b> may be preventing children’s engagement and preventing them from showing us what they know. In addition, that mathematical skills are dependent on foundational experiences and communication and language skills.</li> <li>• Use <a href="#">PIVATS 5</a>, <a href="#">Birth to Five Matters</a>, <a href="#">White Rose Maths</a> and <a href="#">National Curriculum Overview</a> to identify mathematical gaps and plan early morning achievable child specific targets which are supported by an adult</li> </ul>  |
| <p><i>Many of our children arrive at the Place disengaged and fearful around mathematical activities. Often this is because they are working at younger developmental stages or because working memory difficulties mean they</i></p>  |  |  |

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| <p><i>have gaps in their understanding of mathematical language and very early concepts. We identify each child's specific barrier to maths and build success through creative small-individualised steps.</i></p> <p><b><u>Being fearful around writing is not a barrier to Mathematics</u></b></p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use creative approaches such as games and cooking activities to help children subitise- matching counters/dice and numbers, count forwards and backwards, identify 2D and 3D shapes, weights and measures</li> <li>• Use daily <b>Newsround</b> time to discuss days, weeks, months and years and other concepts relating to time</li> <li>• Use <b>Precision Teach</b> to help children recognise numbers and simple mathematical statements</li> <li>• Provide choice of multi-sensory approaches to engage fearful learners with a variety of manipulatives and recording methods</li> <li>• We liaise with home-schools to pre-learn Maths tasks for return days and share technology programmes they currently use</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Families and Home-Schools</b></p> <p><i>An essential part of our provision are our families and home-schools. We aim to work together in partnership to first, and foremost celebrate success, alongside providing empathetic encouragement and consistency of approach, preventing children behaving differently in different settings and with different adults. Unconditional Positive Regard is key to breaking down barriers, gaining trust and rebuilding positive relationships.</i></p> | <p><b>We:-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a <b>Google Drive Log</b> where our home schools can regularly contact us for advice and updates</li> <li>• Visit our children at their home school weekly to support and advise and to let our children know how proud we are of them!</li> <li>• Attend termly placement meetings, EHCP review meetings, EHAPs, TACs, FSPs, CIN, CPs</li> <li>• Use home-school curriculums to inform planning for children helping them to pre-learn activities or topics for their return days</li> <li>• Use <b>Tapestry</b> to share wonderful moments of learning. Access to Tapestry is shared with our families and our home schools, who also share learning with us</li> <li>• Make weekly (or more frequent) phone calls to our families to build relationships and identify support needed</li> <li>• Provide daily <b>Communication Diaries</b> for our families detailing what sort of day their child has had in the Place</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Extra-Curricular</b></p> <p><i>We want our children to be encouraged to try new experiences and to be supported to change existing mind-sets; to discover new interests and talents - inspiring future careers and life skills.</i></p>   | <p><b>We:-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have regular visits from <b>Rock Steady Charitable Foundation</b> who introduce our children to the fun of rock music!</li> <li>• See <b>PC Matt Hill</b> as one of the team! He visits the PLACE regularly, joining in with literacy sessions, construction club and teaching the children about safety</li> <li>• Have monthly visits from <b>Nutmeg</b>, a <b>Pets As Therapy</b> reading dog</li> <li>• Have visits from <b>Cuddly Cavies</b> to help our children empathetically learn about the needs of little animals</li> <li>• Have visits from <b>Norfolk Owls</b> during our project about owls. The project is led by the children's interest in owls relating to our Wise Owl Brain narrative</li> <li>• Have visits from <b>Mini Monsters</b>, where our children learn about their favourite critters!</li> <li>• Have an <b>Art Therapist</b> who works with individual children where this is appropriate</li> </ul>     |

