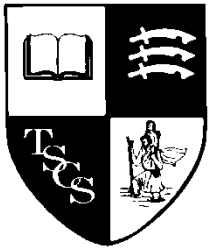


THE ST. CHRISTOPHER SCHOOL

SEN Trust Southend



Academy Trust - Special School

Mountdale Gardens, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 4AW

Headteacher: Mr D Woodman

Deputy Headteacher: Mrs E Kirk

Telephone: (01702) 524193

E.Mail: office@tscs.southend.sch.uk

Web: www.thestchristopherschool.co.uk



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Introduction

At The St Christopher School, there are three curriculum routes: Pathway, Blended and Subject Core.

Our curriculum is designed as a flexible developmental model, reflecting the different ways pupils learn, rather than a fixed or linear pathway, and is delivered through three routes (Pathway, Blended and Subject Core). These stages reflect how pupils learn and develop, and teaching approaches may overlap to remain responsive to individual needs.

Pupils may move flexibly between routes as their needs and learning profiles develop, typically at key transition points.

Purpose and Vision

Purpose: The purpose of the curriculum policy is to outline the principles and framework that guide the delivery of a comprehensive and balanced curriculum. This policy ensures that all students receive a high-quality education that promotes their academic, personal, and social development.

Vision: Our vision is to provide an inclusive, stimulating, and engaging curriculum that prepares students for the wider world. We ensure that every learning experience has a clear purpose linked to life beyond school, supporting pupils to develop independence, communication, and the ability to apply their learning in real-life contexts.

We aim to foster a love of learning, critical thinking, and creativity whilst developing essential life skills. Teachers design learning that is tailored to pupils' needs, integrating individual targets alongside the National Curriculum where appropriate.



Learning Outside the Classroom



Southend-on-Sea



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Values: Our defined three key values are:

- **Nurture:** to create a safe, supportive environment where every pupil is understood, valued and able to develop confidence, resilience and emotional well-being.
- **Empower:** to develop independence, self-belief and critical thinking, enabling pupils to make informed choices and actively participate in their learning and the wider world.
- **Inspire:** to foster curiosity and ambition, encouraging pupils to explore, achieve and respond positively to new opportunities and challenges.

Aims

The curriculum at The St Christopher School aims to:

- Provide a broad and balanced education that meets the needs of all students.
- Promote high standards of achievement and progress for all learners.
- Foster a love of learning and encourage lifelong learning habits.
- Develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and creative skills.
- Ensure students acquire the knowledge, skills, and understanding necessary for future success.
- Promote the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of students.
- To make a positive contribution to the school and the community and to achieve economic well-being to the best of their capabilities along with celebrating British values.
- Encourage healthy lifestyles and physical well-being.
- Develop independence, communication and self-regulation skills that enable pupils to function confidently beyond school.
- Ensure learning is meaningful, applied and connected to real-life experiences

Curriculum Organisation and Structure

The curriculum is supported by a continuum of learning (Stages 1–9, see Appendix 1), which reflects how pupils develop and progress over time):

Pathway: Stages 1–3

Blended: Stages 4–6

Subject Core (Subject-Based): Stages 7–9

Teaching approaches are flexible and may overlap between stages to respond to individual pupil needs.

All curriculum routes are structured around five key areas of learning (see Appendix 2 for our ‘Five Pillars’):

My Communication and Literacy

My Thinking

My Creativity

My Body

My Community

Across the school, the curriculum is designed to provide both consistency and flexibility through the use of shared themes.

In the Early Years, learning is structured around developmentally appropriate and engaging topics, such as familiar experiences, environments and seasonal events. These provide a foundation for learning and introduce key concepts that support later engagement with whole-school themes.

From Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 3, classes follow a whole-school overarching theme, which is adapted into age- and stage-appropriate topics that develop progressively over time. This ensures a coherent and connected learning experience while allowing content to be tailored to pupils’ needs, interests and developmental stages.

In the primary department, this is delivered through class-based topics that reflect the overarching theme where appropriate, while meeting the needs of individual learners.

In Key Stage 3, classes follow the 'Quest' curriculum, which builds on this model. The overarching theme is explored through structured, class-based topics, with learning adapted to reflect pupils' needs and curriculum route. Where appropriate, some classes may follow a more discrete, subject-based approach to support pupils accessing more formal learning.

In Key Stage 4, the curriculum is shaped by pupils' individual qualifications and achievement pathways. Learning is structured to support pupils in working towards appropriate accreditation outcomes, while continuing to develop independence, communication and life skills. The curriculum remains personalised, ensuring that curriculum routes reflect each pupil's strengths, needs and aspirations for adulthood.

This structure allows for alignment across the school while ensuring the curriculum remains responsive, personalised and meaningful for all learners.

How do we know which route is right?

Within the Early Years (Reception), pupils are monitored using a range of approaches. We consider their communication, academic, personal and social needs, alongside their engagement and response to learning.

At the end of the Reception year, this information is used to make an informed judgement about which curriculum route may be most appropriate, based on the pupil's identified areas of need:

- If a pupil is anticipated to achieve Pre-Key Stage Standard 1 by the end of Year 2, a Subject Core curriculum route would be considered.
- If a pupil is anticipated to achieve Pre-Key Stage Standard 1 by the end of Year 6, they are likely to follow a Blended curriculum route.
- If a pupil is anticipated to be working below Pre-Key Stage Standard 1 by the end of Year 6, they are likely to follow a Pathway curriculum.

However, it is recognised that pupils' needs and learning profiles may not be fully evident at this early stage. As pupils develop and become more familiar with the school environment, particularly into Key Stage 2, their strengths and needs often become clearer. As a result, placement within curriculum routes is flexible and may be reviewed and adapted over time.

Placement decisions are informed not only by attainment, but also by engagement, independence, communication and the ability to sustain attention. These factors align with the developmental stages within the curriculum continuum.

It is important to note, that as of September 2026 we no longer have any Subject Core curriculum classes in Key Stage 1 and only 1 Subject Core Class in Key Stage 2

Pathway Curriculum

The Pathway curriculum aligns with Stages 1–3 of the curriculum continuum (see Appendix 1) and is designed for pupils who are primarily engagement-based learners.

Pathway pupils are generally characterised by:

- Limited or non-speaking communicators
- Working below Pre-Key Stage Standard 1 and therefore learning through exploration
- Have complex SEND needs which significantly impact all aspects of their learning and ability to access the curriculum.
- Strong emphasis on regulation, readiness to learn and co-active participation

- Activities typically short and highly personalised, with frequent repetition and sensory input

The overarching aim of the Pathway curriculum is to provide an engaging, functional and adaptive curriculum tailored to pupils' individual needs, while ensuring appropriate challenge and progression. It enables teachers to identify and address gaps in learning, revisit key concepts and support pupils to consolidate and generalise skills across contexts.

Pupils with complex needs do not always learn effectively through discrete subject-based lessons. The Pathway curriculum therefore uses a thematic approach, within the school's broader curriculum structure, to provide meaningful contexts for learning.

Learning is designed to develop secure mental models through concrete, real-life experiences wherever possible, enabling pupils to build understanding over time and know more, remember more. Teaching is flexible and integrated, allowing different areas of learning to be developed naturally within a single lesson. For example, a theme such as the seaside may support the development of communication, independence and physical skills alongside understanding safety and exploring materials through sensory experiences.

The Pathway curriculum encourages pupils to develop flexible thinking by practising and applying skills across different contexts and environments. This supports deeper understanding and helps pupils to transfer and generalise their learning (Barnett & Ceci, 2002).

This integrated approach allows skills to be developed naturally within meaningful contexts, rather than through isolated, subject-specific teaching. Learning is carefully planned to prioritise pupils' Personal Learning Goals while ensuring a broad range of experiences and opportunities across the curriculum. This reflects the development of 'critical content'—the essential knowledge and skills pupils need to retain in order to build secure understanding (Counsell, 2018; Sweller et al., 1998).

Timetables are structured around the school's five key areas of learning (My Communication and Literacy, My Thinking, My Creativity, My Body and My Community). These provide a consistent framework for planning, while ensuring that learning remains integrated and meaningful. Planning is informed by pupils' EHCps, with communication, cognition, physical and social and emotional needs addressed through personalised opportunities across the curriculum.

Within this framework, pupils access a range of learning experiences, including communication and interaction, early literacy and numeracy, creative and expressive activities, physical development, and community-based learning. These areas are interwoven to ensure that pupils develop functional skills and understanding in meaningful contexts.

The Subject Core Curriculum

The Subject Core curriculum aligns with Stages 7–9 and is designed for pupils who can access subject-based learning with appropriate support.

The Subject Core curriculum operates within the school's wider curriculum structure, ensuring subject learning remains connected, purposeful and relevant. It has been designed to consider the needs of our pupils who are formal learners.

Subject Core curriculum pupils are generally characterised as:

- Able to communicate either verbally or through preferred communication systems and will respond to questioning or contribute to class discussions
- Have achieved Pre-Key Stage Standard 1 or is confidently working towards this in year 1 and in year 2
- Are able to sit and attend whole group/individual learning for a sustained period of time
- May be able to access statutory assessments such as SATS or the year four multiplication test

- Will be able to access more formal qualifications by the end of Key Stage 4, such as Entry Level.
- Learning is delivered through subject-specific lessons adapted to meet SEND needs
- Pupils develop independence, inquiry skills and the ability to apply knowledge across contexts

The overarching aim of the Subject Core curriculum is to provide a broad, balanced and ambitious subject-based education, drawing on the National Curriculum and adapted to meet pupils' individual needs.

While some pupils may not be working at age-related expectations, high expectations remain for all. The curriculum is adapted, rather than reduced, to ensure pupils can access a wide range of subjects and meaningful learning experiences.

Learning includes subject-specific lessons, delivered within the school's five key areas of learning. This ensures that subject knowledge is taught in a structured way while remaining connected and meaningful within the wider curriculum framework.

Subjects include English, Maths, Science, Humanities, RE, PE, Art, Design and Technology, PSHE, ICT and, where appropriate, Modern Foreign Languages. Links between subjects are planned to support the application of knowledge and skills across the curriculum.

Teachers are ambitious for all pupils, designing and adapting the curriculum so that it is coherently sequenced and builds on prior learning. Opportunities to revisit key concepts are built in to ensure learning is embedded and supports the development of secure understanding over time.

Planning is informed by pupils' starting points, needs and aspirations for the future, with links to EHCp outcomes and Personal Learning Goals where appropriate. These are addressed both through dedicated learning opportunities and within subject teaching, ensuring that skills are developed across a range of contexts.

This approach supports pupils to develop the knowledge, skills and independence required for the next stage of their education and life beyond school.

Blended Curriculum

The Blended curriculum aligns with Stages 4–6 of the curriculum continuum and supports pupils who are developing independence and early subject understanding.

It builds on the approaches used within the Pathway curriculum, while introducing increasing structure and opportunities for subject-specific learning when learners may be ready.

Learning is typically delivered through a combination of teacher-led, group and independent tasks, often structured through a carousel model. Approaches such as TEACCH and Attention Autism are used, similar to Pathway (if appropriate for the learners), to support the development of attention, independence and engagement.

Pupils develop the ability to follow routines, sustain attention and complete tasks with increasing independence. There is a growing emphasis on functional communication, early problem-solving and the application of skills across different contexts.

Where appropriate, pupils begin to access more subject-specific learning, particularly towards Stage 6, while still benefiting from a flexible and integrated approach. Learning continues to be personalised, with planning informed by individual needs and Personal Learning Goals (PLGs).

Planning for all Curriculum Routes

In order to meet the diverse needs of our pupils, planning across the school follows a consistent set of principles, while allowing flexibility in how this is delivered within each curriculum route.

All planning is expected to include:

- A clear learning focus (the 'what')
- A defined purpose (learning objective) and intended outcome (the 'why')
- Personalisation aligned with the curriculum route and pupils' Personal Learning Goals (PLGs)

Planning approaches vary depending on the curriculum route and stage of learning.

Subject Core classes typically use medium-term planning (MTP) for each subject. Weekly planning is not required where the medium-term plan provides sufficient detail.

Pathway and most Blended classes use medium-term planning structured around the school's five key areas of learning. This is supported by weekly planning, which provides more detailed and responsive teaching based on pupils' needs, engagement and progress over time.

In some Blended classes, particularly where a higher proportion of pupils are working within Stage 6, planning may become more subject-specific, with medium-term planning providing sufficient detail.

Where weekly planning is used, it should be uploaded to SharePoint by the Friday prior to delivery.

Topic maps are completed half-termly for all primary and Key Stage 3 classes and are shared with parents to provide an overview of the curriculum and support engagement with pupils' learning.

Assessment

Assessment across the school is consistent across all curriculum routes and is designed to support pupil progress, inform teaching and ensure learning is closely matched to individual need.

The school uses Evidence for Learning (EfL) as the primary platform for recording, tracking and assessing progress.

Personal Learning Goals (PLGs), which are closely linked to EHCp outcomes, are central to assessment and curriculum planning. These provide a personalised focus for each pupil and are reviewed regularly, with termly reports for parents.

A range of assessment approaches are used, including:

- The Engagement Model, particularly within Pathway and earlier stages of the Blended curriculum, to understand how pupils learn and engage
- Subject-specific approaches are used to identify and monitor pupils' knowledge and skills, drawing on a range of appropriate strategies such as observation, practical outcomes and subject-based tools where relevant.
- Assessment books (in EfL) in key areas such as Maths, English and PSHE

Assessment is used to identify what pupils know and remember, and to inform teaching. Teachers adapt learning to address misconceptions, reinforce key concepts and ensure knowledge is retained over time.

Assessment information is reviewed at pupil, class and whole-school level to monitor progress and inform curriculum development.

For more information on assessment, please refer to the Assessment, Marking and Feedback policy.

Learning Powers

As a school we also recognise that there are also generalised curriculum principles that are evident throughout, these are our Learning Powers. Learning Powers help to build resilience and encourage the recognition of the ability to use the skills and knowledge in different situations. Learning Powers are explicitly linked to independence, resilience and the ability to transfer skills across contexts, supporting preparation for adulthood.

The 'Learning Powers' that all staff encourage the pupils to think about and recognise are:

- Trying something new and being curious
- Making good choices and following instructions
- Working with friends and having a go
- Enjoying learning and not giving up
- Making links and knowing my next steps

Within some groups, particularly in the younger classes, they may focus on a specific selection of Learning Powers to help build upon understanding before more complex ones are introduced later on in the school.

Off-Site Opportunities within the Curriculum

Offsite visits are a valuable component of the curriculum because they provide experiential learning opportunities that can enhance understanding and retention of concepts. These visits allow students to engage with the real world in a way that is often more impactful than classroom-based learning. By stepping outside the traditional classroom environment, pupils can explore new settings and contexts, enriching their overall educational experience.

Additionally, offsite visits offer social and emotional benefits that are crucial for the holistic development of pupils. These outings provide opportunities for social interaction in new settings, helping to build confidence, independence, and social skills. They can also be incredibly motivating, sparking curiosity and enthusiasm for learning. For many pupils, the change in environment can be stimulating and engaging, breaking the routine and offering a sense of adventure. Furthermore, offsite visits can help to develop life skills such as navigating public spaces, understanding social cues in different contexts, and practising appropriate behaviour in various situations.

We have a number of school buses and cars and actively encourage groups to go out to access our local community and beyond. We also have two school caravans on Mersea Island which classes can access for day trips and overnight residential.

Teaching and Learning Strategies

The Curriculum routes will be delivered through a variety of teaching and learning methods (including whole class teaching, group and individual work). Approaches include:

- **Adaptation:** Teachers are skilled at tailoring teaching methods and materials to meet the individual needs of pupils.
- **A Multi-Sensory Approach:** Using a variety of sensory inputs to enhance learning and engagement.
- **Through Play:** this fosters social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development naturally and engagingly, helping pupils to build essential skills in a supportive environment.
- **Explicit learning, including instructions (visual and orally):** clear, direct instruction that is systematic and structured which helps to provide clarity and support needed to grasp new concepts and skills
- **Assistive Technology:** Employing technology to support communication, learning, and independence.

- **Speech and Language Therapy Strategies:** Activities that help to support communication but can be carried out within the curriculum, for example: Attention Autism, Colourful Semantics, Box Clever, etc.
- **Therapeutic Thinking:** Creating a positive learning environment through a consistent therapeutic approach to behaviour management strategies.
- **Collaborative Learning:** Encouraging group work and peer support to foster social skills and teamwork.
- **TEACCH** approaches to structure, independence and task organisation are embedded across the curriculum
- A strong focus on regulation and sensory needs underpins all teaching approaches

Intervention and Additional Support

Intervention and additional support are an integral part of the school's approach to ensuring all pupils can successfully access the curriculum. These are used to support pupils in overcoming barriers to learning, while complementing and enhancing classroom teaching.

A range of targeted and specialist support is available, including:

- Speech and Language Therapy support, embedded within classroom practice to promote communication across the curriculum
- Occupational Therapy input, supporting sensory processing, regulation and access to learning
- Pastoral support, including ELSA provision, to support pupils' emotional wellbeing and readiness to learn
- Specialist support from our Autism Specialist Teacher, providing guidance and strategies to support pupils with autism
- Targeted literacy interventions led by the Literacy Lead.

These interventions are designed to be flexible and responsive, ensuring that support is closely aligned with pupils' individual needs and fully integrated within the wider curriculum. The aim is to support pupils to develop the skills, confidence and independence required to engage successfully in learning and everyday life.

Interventions are regularly reviewed to ensure they remain effective and responsive to pupils' needs and supports progress within the curriculum.

Roles & responsibilities

Senior Leadership Team

The overall responsibility for the curriculum rests with the Senior Leadership Team and Governors of the school. The Head, in consultation with staff:

- decides the provision and allocation of resources
- decides ways in which developments can be assessed, and records maintained
- ensures that each subject is used in a way to achieve the aims and objectives of the school
- ensures that key subject policies are in place where required, and that all subjects are supported by clear Subject Overview documents. These provide a one-stop reference for staff, outlining intent, implementation, progression and links to schemes of work and assessment expectations

Curriculum Implementation Leads

Our Curriculum Implementation Leads are responsible for overseeing the effective delivery and execution of the school's curriculum. They ensure that teaching practices align with curriculum goals and standards,

facilitating high-quality learning experiences for students. This role involves supporting and training teachers, and monitoring progress in order to improve pupil outcomes. They collaborate with other school leaders (teachers and subject coordinators) to integrate best practices and innovative approaches into the curriculum. They ensure that the curriculum is implemented consistently and effectively across all classrooms.

Subject Coordinators

There is a designated subject coordinator who oversees the planning and delivery of each subject within the school. They are responsible for:-

- monitoring and/or raising standards in the subject
- facilitating the use of the subject across the curriculum in collaboration with all other subject coordinators
- providing or organising training to keep staff skills and knowledge up to date
- advising colleagues about effective teaching strategies, managing equipment and purchasing resources
- monitoring the delivery of the subject curriculum and reporting to the SLT or the Curriculum Implementation lead on the current status of the subject

All teachers are part of a subject coordination team and are involved in the development of this subject. Delegation by the subject coordinator is advocated to ensure the workload is fairly shared. Teachers from across the three curriculum routes have been distributed within maths, English and PSHE to ensure breadth of expertise.

Monitoring will enable the subject coordinator to gain an overview of teaching and learning throughout the school. This will assist the school in the self-evaluation process, identifying areas of strength as well as those for development

In monitoring the quality of teaching and learning the subject coordinator may:

- Scrutinise plans to ensure full coverage of the subject
- Analyse children's work
- Observe teaching and learning in the classroom through formal observation and 'drop-ins'
- Hold discussions with teachers and governors
- Analyse assessment data
- Lead moderation meetings with other special schools

Inclusion and Accessibility

Equality is a fundamental right that must be allowed to all children regardless of race, culture, gender, sexual orientation or special educational needs.

Every effort will be made to ensure that all children will play a full and active part and that no child will be excluded from accessing the curriculum on the grounds of race, culture, gender or special educational needs or disability.

The nature of our pupils and the difficulties that they experience will, from time to time, require teaching approaches that can be seen as being different from other pupils in the group, based on level of executive functioning, understanding or for reasons of safety.

Professional Development

Regular training and professional development for staff is embedded within the school's approach to curriculum development and is supported by the Senior Leadership Team.

Staff engage in half-termly curriculum review meetings, which provide opportunities to reflect on learning, evaluate curriculum delivery and identify next steps. These sessions support collaborative working, including reviewing pupil progress, identifying gaps in learning, planning future curriculum content, and sharing effective practice. These meetings also facilitate professional dialogue around curriculum development, alongside opportunities for moderation, learning walks, and peer support to ensure consistency and quality of teaching across the school.

Opportunities for staff to collaborate and share best practice within and beyond the school are actively encouraged through a range of networks, including FLSE (Federation of Leaders in Special Education) and SEN Trust Southend.

This policy will be reviewed every two years.

Glossary

Mental Model: A mental model is a collection of concepts, knowledge skills and principles which fit together to provide an overall understanding of an idea (Sweller et al, 1998).

Attention Autism is an intervention program developed by Gina Davies aimed at building attention and communication skills in children with Autism. The program uses engaging and visually stimulating activities to capture the children's interest and encourage spontaneous communication. It is structured in stages, starting with simple activities and gradually increasing in complexity to develop sustained attention. The approach emphasises enjoyment and fun to motivate children to participate and interact.

Colourful Semantics is a therapeutic approach designed to help children develop sentence construction and language skills. It involves breaking down sentences into the component parts and using colour-coding to help children understand and construct sentences.

TEACCH is a structured teaching approach designed to support individuals with autism. It focuses on creating clear, organised learning environments with visual supports, structured routines, and clearly defined tasks. TEACCH helps pupils to develop independence, understand expectations, and engage in learning by using predictable systems, such as visual timetables and workstations, which support organisation, attention and task completion.

References:

Barnett, S.& Ceci, S. (2002). When and where do we apply what we learn? A taxonomy for far transfer. *Psychological Bulletin*, 128(4), 612-637.

Counsell, C. (2018). The indirect manifestation of knowledge. The dignity of the thing [blog]. bit.ly/ecf-cou

Sweller, J., van Merriënboer, J. J. G., & Paas, F. G. W. C. (1998). Cognitive Architecture and Instructional Design. *Educational Psychology Review*, 10(3), 251–296.

Appendix 1

TSCS Curriculum Continuum

Pathway Route (Stages 1–3)

Pupil Development:

- Pre-intentional → intentional responses
- Sensory exploration
- Emerging communication
- Early cause & effect

Teaching Approach (Purpose: regulation, co-active participation):

- High adult facilitation; co-active learning
- TEACCH: 1-step sensory tasks; adult-led transitions
- Attention Autism: Stages 1–2 focus; building shared attention
- Objects of reference/photo cards for transitions
- Fleeting engagement (<10 min)
- Focus on regulation, readiness and early communication

Blended Route (Stages 4–6)

Pupil Development:

- Emerging intentional choices
- Functional communication
- Early problem-solving
- Following routines

Teaching Approach (Purpose: increasing independence, early subject foundations):

- Carousel lessons (3 × 10 min): 5 pillars + topic
- TEACCH: multi-step tasks; increasing independence
- Attention Autism: Stages 3–4; developing sustained attention
- Symbol schedules
- Engagement Model + early subject exposure
- AQA unit awards for KS4

Subject Core Route (Stages 7–9)

Pupil Development:

- Plans & executes tasks
- Multi-step instructions
- Evidence-based reasoning
- Demonstrates inquiry skills (asking questions, exploring ideas)
- Uses self-regulation strategies independently
- Manages equipment, resources and transitions with minimal support

Teaching Approach:

- National Curriculum subjects taught in adapted form
- Traditional whole-class teaching within a traditional layout.
- Greater independent with work
- Up to 55 min lessons

Flexible teaching. Teaching approaches can overlap stages. Teachers respond to the individual need, in order to remain responsive to learners needs.

For further information on Cooper et al, 1997 [T-S-972-Stages-Of-Attention-Development.pdf](https://www.stonewall-school.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/T-S-972-Stages-Of-Attention-Development.pdf)



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Pathway Route

Stages 1-3

Stage 1

Learners with profound or very complex needs who engage mainly through sensory experiences.

- Typical Attention Level 1 (Cooper et al., 1997): Pre-intentional responses (reflexive, instinctive or high sensory-reactive)
- Engagement is momentary and highly dependent on sensory comfort
- Requires repetition, predictability, and secure relationships
- Engagement is fleeting unless the activity is highly personalised
- Full adult facilitation required for all activities
- Significant sensory processing differences (seeking/avoiding)
- Uses pre-verbal communication
- May show preferences through subtle physiological changes Requires full co-regulation from trusted adults; regulation is physiological and managed through sensory comfort, positioning, and responsive caregiving; maintains regulated state for fleeting moments (under 30 seconds) in optimal conditions
- Typical SCERTS level: Social Partner Stage

Stage 2

Learners beginning to show awareness, early intentional responses and emerging joint attention

- Typical Attention Level 2 (Cooper et al., 1997): Beginning to anticipate familiar routines and people
- Engagement increases when activities are motivating or sensory-meaningful
- Can explore cause-and-effect with support
- Full adult facilitation for all activities
- Shows early intentional communication (reaching, turning, purposeful movement)
- Starts to use eye gaze, gestures, or sounds
- Shows preferences
- Sensitivity to sensory input; support needed with consistent adult support
- Co-active or supported participation
- Begins to take small roles in routines (e.g., pressing a switch, choosing an object)
- Beginning to show early awareness of own states through body signals; requires adult co-regulation to identify and respond to dysregulation with consistent sensory strategies; can remain regulated for 30 seconds to 2 minutes during preferred activities

Stage 3

Learners who can participate more consistently and show early self-directed engagement

- Typical Attention Level 3 (Cooper et al., 1997): Beginning to show consistent awareness of familiar people, places and activities
- Shows consistent interest in certain activities or sensory experiences
- Shows clearer sensory preferences and begins to use familiar sensory strategies with adult support
- Demonstrates emerging problem-solving through exploration
- Expresses likes/dislikes more overtly
- Uses intentional communication more reliably (e.g. gestures, signs, eye pointing)
- Begins to use simple prompts and responses
- Recognises familiar people, objects, and activities
- Can follow very simple structured routines with visual supports (OoR, transition cards, etc.)
- Participates more actively with familiar adult and familiar peers
- Typical Blank Level 1: Understanding labels/names in immediate situation
- Shows emerging ability to communicate discomfort or need for regulation support; beginning to recognise familiar calming strategies when offered by adults; sustains regulation for 2-5 minutes with adult proximity and support

Teaching Approaches: Stages 1-3

What teaching typically looks like at these stages

Environment & Structure

Classroom Layout:

Clearly zoned following TEACCH approach with defined areas for different activities

Sensory Considerations:

High focus on sensory needs and regulation; sensory sessions are timetabled into the day

Predictability:

Highly structured, predictable environments with consistent routines

Visual Supports:

Objects of reference used for transitions between activities

Resources:

Sensory equipment, switch technology, AAC devices readily available and personalised to individual needs

Teaching & Learning

Adult Support:

Ratio of 1 teacher : 4 LSAs for 8 pupils (predominantly 1:1 work)

Curriculum Framework:

Five pillars - My Communication (and Literacy), My Community, My Thinking, My Body, My Creativity

Focus:

Functional skills and individual EHCP targets

Communication:

Communication at the core of all learning; AAC devices used consistently

Activity Type:

Predominantly adult-facilitated, co-active experiences; high levels of repetition

Engagement Duration:

Activities designed for engagement under 5 minutes; frequent changes and sensory breaks

Pedagogical Approach:

TEACCH approaches; Intensive Interaction where appropriate; Attention Autism principles applied to build shared attention

TEACCH Approach:

Object schedules (2-3 activities); adult-facilitated transitions; co-active participation; typically single-step errorless tasks

Timetable & Assessment

Timetable Structure:

Activity blocks vary in length but typically under 5 minutes; highly personalised to individual sensory and regulation needs

Transitions:

Managed using objects of reference; additional time and support given for changes

Sensory Input:

Timetabled sensory sessions plus responsive sensory breaks as needed

Repetition:

Key activities and routines repeated regularly to support learning and reduce anxiety

Assessment:

Engagement Model used to monitor progress, identify preferences and motivations, and capture the quality of engagement rather than academic outcomes. Coupled with tracking of pre-literacy and pre-maths skills assessments

Recording:

Observational assessment; photographs and video evidence; celebration of small steps

Individualisation:

All learning opportunities tailored to individual interests, preferences and sensory profiles

Blended Route

Stages 4-6

Stage 4

Learners who explore their environment with growing curiosity and require regular adult support to stay engaged and make sense of experiences.

- Typical Attention Level 3 (Cooper et al., 1997): Anticipates routines and familiar sequences
- Shows consistent interest in a range of activities
- Follows simple, familiar routines with reassurance
- Beginning to make intentional choices across a range of activities
- Growing use of early functional communication to get wants and needs met
- Can maintain attention for 5-10 minutes in structured activities with adult support
- Requires adult modelling to explore materials purposefully
- Demonstrates emerging problem-solving (trying different actions, seeking adult help)
- Responds to cause and effect opportunities
- Shows preference and dislikes more clearly
- Starting to join in shared activities for short periods
- Begins to seek out preferred regulation strategies with adult prompting; can indicate sensory preferences or need for break with support; maintains regulation for 5-10 minutes in structured, familiar activities

Stage 5

Learners who begin to participate more purposefully, use simple strategies, and communicate needs and ideas more consistently.

- Typical Attention Level 4 (Cooper et al., 1997): Follows familiar routines with reduced prompts
- Engages for longer periods in motivating or structured activities (10-15 minutes), giving shared attention for longer periods with increasing demand from the adult
- Demonstrates clearer intentional communication (symbols, key words, signs, AAC, short phrases)
- Can make purposeful choices from a small range of choices
- Uses early problem-solving strategies (e.g., trial & error, persistence)
- Participates in more structured group activities with support
- Begins to show simple organisational skills (e.g., collecting materials, beginning to self-help skills)
- Follows simple instructions (1-2 steps) with support
- Shows growing independence
- Shows simple planning skills during activities
- Predictable responses to routines. Tolerates small, supported changes to routine
- May use early reading, number or symbol skills to support understanding
- Typical Blank Level 2: Understanding simple questions about what's present (what, where, who)
- Uses simple regulation strategies with adult modelling, starting to recognise own early warning signs with prompts; sustains regulation for 10-15 minutes during engaging tasks

Stage 6

Learners who participate with increasing independence, use functional communication, and engage in simple problem-solving and early self-management.

- Typical Attention Level 5 (Cooper et al., 1997): Follows familiar routines with minimal prompts, though still benefits from visual, verbal or gestural cues
- Engages in longer structured, concrete and personalised learning tasks (15-30 minutes)
- Developing foundational reasoning to make choices and understand consequences
- Begins simple problem-solving with adult support, making plans, with modelling, to complete a familiar task
- Works with a higher level of independence within a structured task
- Can follow multi-step instructions but needs heavy scaffolding
- Communicates needs, preferences and ideas more reliably
- Responds to simple questions
- Begins to sustain shared attention with peers
- May use early reading, number or symbol skills to support understanding
- Requires visual cues, repetition, co-regulation and predictable routines to manage changes
- Typical SCERTS level: Language Partner Stage
- Demonstrates simple self-regulation skills in familiar contexts; can select from a small range of taught strategies and ask for support when needed; beginning to use visual supports (emotion scales/regulation toolkits) with scaffolding; maintains regulation for 15-30 minutes across carousel rotations

Teaching Approaches: Stages 4-6

Blended Learning with Increasing Independence

What teaching typically looks like at these stages

Environment & Structure	Teaching & Learning	Timetable & Assessment
• Classroom Layout: Zoned to support carousel lessons with distinct areas for teacher time, workstations, and group activities • Visual Supports: Symbol timetables used consistently; pupils follow schedules in TEACCH approach • Sensory Considerations: Sensory sessions still timetabled; strategies taught to support self-regulation • Workstations: Structured independent work areas; pupils demonstrate extended ability to attend at workstations • Choice: Structured choices embedded throughout the day; pupils selecting from options provided • Resources: AAC devices, symbols, practical materials, topic-linked resources	• Adult Support: Ratio of 1 teacher : 3-4 LSAs for 10 pupils; balance of group work and reduced 1:1 support • Curriculum Framework: Five pillars with more content linked to overarching topic/theme and some subject-specific learning (Stage 6) • Focus: Continued strong focus on individual EHCP targets alongside topic-based learning and life-skills • Lesson Structure: Simple input (Attention Autism, practical demo, or song) followed by a carousel of 3 activities totalling approximately 30 minutes • Carousel Model: Rotation between teacher time, workstations, and group activities • Activity Type: Practical lessons; hands-on exploration; functional skills in context with growing independence • Communication: AAC and symbols used consistently; developing functional communication skills • Attention Autism: Used to build shared attention and attention length, working through Stage 3 and 4 of the Attention Autism principles • TEACCH Approach: Photo/symbol schedules (4-6 activities); beginning to independently check schedule and transition; left-to-right workstations with 2-3 step tasks; ability to complete workstations for extended period	• Timetable Structure: More extended activity blocks; carousel sessions around 30 minutes total with 3 rotations • Engagement Duration: Moving from 5 to 15 minutes and potentially longer for Stage 6 pupils • Visual Schedule: Symbol-based timetables; pupils increasingly able to follow own schedule with reducing prompts • Transitions: Managed using symbols and visual cues; growing independence in moving between activities • Self-Regulation: Explicit teaching of regulation strategies; pupils learning to recognise and respond to own sensory needs • Assessment: Engagement Model continues along with pre-literacy and pre-maths skill assessments; introduction of some subject-specific assessment when pupil meets pre-key stage standard 1 (generally at Stage 6). • Recording: Mix of observational assessment and emerging evidence of skill acquisition tracked using Efl along with progress towards EHCP outcomes. • Repetition: Key routines maintained but with increasing variation and challenge

Core Subject Route

Stages 7-9

Stage 7

Learners who show curiosity, engage with questions, explore ideas, and make sense of new information.

- Typical Attention Level 6 (Cooper et al., 1997): Notices simple patterns or changes when prompted; names one feature
- Responds to What do you notice? with short, supported observations, starting to apply logic and reasoning
- Explores intentionally, following simple inquiry routines
- Shares observations using preferred method of communication (speech/symbols/AAC) linking to subject-specific vocabulary
- Shows early cause-and-effect understanding in guided activities; may predict a logical next step
- Sustains attention for increasing periods (ability to engage with full subject-specific lesson)
- Attempts problem-solving by trying/copying demonstrated approaches with minimal support
- Participates briefly in shared inquiry; begins to ask simple what/where questions
- Starts to build own independent work schedule of steps to undertake and complete a task
- Typical Blank Level 3: Recall and simple reasoning (why, how, when)
- Recognises own emotional and sensory states; uses familiar regulation strategies with minimal prompts; beginning to plan ahead for known challenging situations; sustains regulation across a full lesson (up to 45 minutes) with occasional check-ins

Stage 8

Learners who begin to explore questions and ideas and use early strategies to investigate.

- Identifies and describes patterns/changes independently in familiar contexts; begins to compare/contrast features
- Explains observations in a simple sentence, using emerging subject vocabulary (with light prompting)
- Follows inquiry routines with minimal prompts; plans a simple, sequenced investigation (adult scaffolding for steps/resources)
- Records basic data (tallies, labelled photos/diagrams) and organises findings using templates or short verbal formats
- Predicts outcomes and revises ideas after observing evidence
- Sustains attention across multi-step tasks; uses self-selected supports (checklist/timer)
- Chooses between approaches/tools and justifies a simple choice
- Collaborates with peers, sharing roles and agreeing on next steps
- Typical SCERTS level: Conversational Partner Stage
- Typical Blank Level 4: Inference and problem-solving from context
- Independently applies a range of regulation strategies; uses self-monitoring tools (checklists, timers, break cards); can explain what helps and seek support proactively; maintains regulation for 45-55 minutes with planned breaks

Stage 9

Learners who are independent in inquiry-based learning and engage with subject-specific investigative skills

- Frames a focused inquiry question or goal with light guidance
- Plans and executes a multi-step investigation logically; selects appropriate tools/methods
- Collects, represents and interprets data (tables, simple graphs, diagrams) to identify trends/patterns
- Uses vocabulary and notation accurately; links evidence to draw conclusions
- Evaluates the method (strengths/limitations) and suggests realistic improvements
- Transfers inquiry methods to new but related contexts with minimal prompting
- Collaborates effectively, contributing evidence-based reasoning
- Maintains attention using familiar strategies during extended inquiry tasks
- Communicates conclusions clearly in structured formats (poster/report/slide) and answers follow-up questions
- Maintains emotional regulation across extended tasks using personalised strategies; evaluates effectiveness of different approaches; adapts regulation plans to new situations; supports peers with their regulation needs; sustains regulation across multiple consecutive lessons using self-selected strategies (across a series of lessons over a sustained period of time)

Teaching Approaches: Stages 7-9

Core Subject-Based Learning with Support

What teaching typically looks like at these stages

Environment & Structure

- **Classroom Layout:**
More traditional classroom setup supporting whole class and independent work
- **Visual Supports:**
Visuals used flexibly to support understanding, organisation and independence; tailored to individual needs
- **Resources:**
Subject-specific resources, textbooks, worksheets, project materials, IT equipment
- **Display:**
Subject vocabulary, key concepts, student work celebrating achievement
- **Independence:**
Pupils are expected to work independently for extended periods; workspaces support focus and task completion
- **Organisation:**
Pupils managing their own equipment and materials with decreasing adult support

Teaching & Learning

- **Adult Support:**
Ratio of 1 teacher : 3 LSAs for 12 pupils; more whole-class teaching with targeted support
- **Curriculum Framework:**
National Curriculum subjects delivered with appropriate differentiation for MLD needs
- **Lesson Structure:**
Formal lesson structures; typically 55 minutes with clear learning objectives and success criteria
- **Teaching Approach:**
Good quality teaching adapted for MLD needs; explicit instruction, modelling, guided practice, and independent application
- **Whole Class Work:**
Increased whole-class teaching; pupils engaging with shared learning experiences
- **Independent Learning:**
Pupils working independently on structured tasks, worksheets, and projects with reduced adult support
- **Group Work:**
Collaborative learning opportunities; peer support and discussion
- **Life and Social Skills:**
Planned discrete lessons focusing on functional and social competencies
- **Communication:**
Communication supported through verbal language, symbols and AAC; pupils use the methods that best support clarity and independence
- **TEACCH Approach:**
Written schedules with symbols/words; manages full-day timetable; independent workstations with multiple tasks; follows written task lists/checklists; uses self-monitoring

Timetable & Assessment

- **Timetable Structure:**
Subject-specific lessons of approximately 55 minutes; clear daily and weekly timetable following familiar patterns
- **Subject Curriculum:**
Discrete subject teaching (e.g., English, Maths, Science, Humanities, Arts) with clear progression
- **Transitions:**
Pupils managing transitions between lessons with minimal support; understanding of timetable structure
- **Task Completion:**
Expectation that pupils complete tasks within lesson time or across multiple sessions for projects
- **Assessment:**
Accreditations including AQA qualifications, Entry Level qualifications, some GCSEs and Duke of Edinburgh Award
- **Progress Tracking:**
Subject-specific assessment; formative and summative assessment; tracking towards qualification outcomes alongside EHCp goals
- **Recording:**
Written evidence, portfolios, practical demonstrations; formal assessment records for accreditation
- **Feedback:**
Regular verbal and written feedback to support progress; pupils increasingly able to self-assess and respond to feedback

Appendix 2

