**Oakwood School Curriculum**

The children at Oakwood School have a huge range of physical, sensory, learning and medical needs. Their cognitive abilities cover a broad range, from those who may be learning cause and effect in a very sensory context, to those who are learning to read, tell the time and manage money, through more formal lessons.

Children with learning difficulties can have unique ways of learning. Lacey (2009) wrote that these learners may struggle with inefficient and slow information processing skills as well as difficulties with generalisation and problem solving. Here at Oakwood School, our learners have the added complexities, of physical, sensory and medical difficulties. The multiplicity of these means that each and every pupil has their own individual set of barriers to learning.

It is obvious that a child who is blind will not be able to learn about colours. It is less obvious that a child who cannot manipulate objects will have barriers to learning numbers, or coin values or shapes. For a non-verbal child, learning to read by phonics is much more difficult. For a child with short and or long term memory difficulties skills which require sequencing are extremely challenging. A child who is using a bed for positioning will not be able to access many resources available to wheelchair users. A visually impaired, non-verbal child, restricted to a bed, has a multiplicity of barriers to learning, unique to him, and we must pursue his potential using highly specific skills.

There are no standard or uniform teaching techniques which meet all of these learners’ needs or support them to overcome all of these barriers. There is not a single menu of interventions and approaches, and there is no one curriculum which could possibly fit all our pupils. Each needs a unique curriculum, designed to meet their needs and to lead to a life as independent and fulfilled as possible. Above all, everything we do, and everything each learner experiences, must be meaningful to and for them.

So we see it as our fundamental job, to find the very best interventions and teaching techniques for each child. This is why at Oakwood School we are developing a three tiered approach to curriculum based on the work reported in the Rochford review. Children will be offered a pre-formal, semi-formal or formal curriculum based on need. At times and for some children theses curriculum strands will overlap. This approach allows us to building a learning framework for each learner, directly from a deep and thorough assessment and understanding of how each child makes progress. The full team of professionals involved with the child as well as parents are all involved in the assessing of needs and the devising of the ‘next steps’ fundamental to our individual learning frameworks.

We do recognise the need for a ‘broad and balanced curriculum’ but this will mean different things for different pupils. We do take ideas and methodologies from documents produce by the Department for Education and elsewhere. The Quest programme, Equals schemes of work and the NI curriculum are all integrated into individualised learning plans delivered through the recovery curriculum framework. The planning we use and content we deliver is set as relevant and appropriate to the developmental needs of that pupil, and so provides for meaningful learning.

There is no single curriculum that suits all our pupils, no ‘set’ of subject areas. Every ‘next step’ must be part of a functional and meaningful path for that child, not part of a pre-programmed or linear route but rather a lateral meaningful expansion of learning. We have no pre-conceptions of any learner’s path or progress rather we are guided by the needs of the child and what is relevant and appropriate for them.

**Chapter I of the Education Act of 1996: *every child shall receive education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude, and to any special educational***

***needs he may have.***