



The Meadows School Curriculum Pathways

Engagement for Life Pathways (Pre-formal; PMLD)	Foundations for Life Pathway (Informal; Complex ASC; Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (CLDD)).	Learning for Life (Semi-Formal; SLD)	Options for Life (MLD)	Transition to Adulthood; Life beyond the Meadows (Post-16)
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*Our curriculum pathways provide a flexible, inclusive and adaptable structure that ensures every pupil access learning and support appropriate to their individual needs, and stage of development. Each pathway represents a broad approach to learning — from pre-formal engagement to semi-formal and formal progression — while allowing for overlap and fluid movement between pathways as pupils grow, develop, and change. **Our pathways adapt and evolve with each learner's journey and needs.***

Foundations for Life Pathway Overview

Intent

The intent of the Foundations for Life Pathway is to provide a flexible, structured, and individualised curriculum that supports pupils with Complex Autism and/or Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (CLDD) to develop communication, regulation, independence, and engagement with the world around them.

The curriculum is designed to reduce barriers to learning, promote emotional wellbeing, and enable pupils to make progress from their individual starting points through functional, meaningful, and motivating learning experiences.

Our intent is to:

- Develop functional communication and emotional regulation as the foundation for all learning.
- Provide a structured yet adaptable curriculum that promotes predictability, security, and independence.
- Prioritise social interaction, flexibility of thought, and engagement through motivating, real-life contexts.
- Support pupils holistically through integrated education, therapy, and care within bespoke timetables aligned to EHCP outcomes.
- Create calm, low-arousal environments that support sensory regulation, reduce anxiety, and promote readiness to learn.
- Encourage independence and participation, enabling pupils to make choices, express preferences, and contribute actively to daily routines.
- Celebrate every step of progress, recognising that changes in engagement, participation, or regulation represent meaningful achievement.

Cohort- Who is it for?	The Foundations for Life Pathway is designed for pupils with Complex Autism or Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (CLDD) who have highly individual profiles of learning, communication, and sensory needs. • Pupils who experience significant differences in communication, interaction, cognition, and sensory processing that impact their access to learning. • Pupils who may have co-existing needs such as ADHD, sensory impairments, medical conditions, or mental health needs requiring structured support and adaptation. • Pupils who need highly structured and predictable routines to support regulation, engagement, and participation. • Pupils who benefit from reduced sensory input, clear boundaries, and consistent adult support to manage transitions and emotional states. • Pupils who require individualised, functional learning opportunities that are relevant to daily life, independence, and communication. • Pupils who learn best through practical, hands-on activities supported by familiar adults who understand their communication and sensory profiles.
Principles	• Personalised and holistic: Education, therapy, care, and wellbeing are integrated to support each pupil's unique profile of strengths and needs. • Structured and predictable: Routines and environments are designed to reduce anxiety, support regulation, and build confidence. • Functional and meaningful: Learning experiences are practical, purposeful, and connected to real life. • Collaborative practice: Staff, therapists, and families work together to ensure a consistent and informed approach. • Reflective and flexible: Staff continually assess and adapt provision based on observation, engagement, and pupil feedback.

	The Foundations for Life Curriculum is implemented through a structured, autism-informed, and holistic approach that recognises the complex and individual needs of learners with Complex Autism and/or Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (CLDD). Implementation ensures that education, therapy, and care are fully integrated, enabling each pupil to access meaningful, consistent, and motivating learning experiences that reflect their EHCP outcomes and individual profiles. The curriculum is underpinned by evidence-based and autism-specific approaches, including TEACCH, Attention Autism, Intensive Interaction, SCERTS, and Positive Behaviour Support. These frameworks guide teaching, interaction, and classroom organisation, ensuring that every learning opportunity promotes communication, regulation, flexibility, and engagement. A Total Communication Approach is embedded throughout, enabling pupils to express themselves through speech, sign, symbol, gesture, and AAC systems, according to their individual strengths and preferences. Therapeutic input is integrated within the curriculum. Speech and Language Therapy (SALT), Occupational Therapy (OT), and Physiotherapy are delivered collaboratively with teachers and support staff, ensuring that physical, sensory, and communication targets are consistently reinforced across all settings — from structured lessons to daily care routines. This collaborative practice creates continuity, security, and coherence in pupils' learning experiences, supporting both progress and wellbeing. Please see below for information on curriculum strands, learning approaches, etc.
Curriculum Strands	The Foundations for Life curriculum is built around six interconnected strands that underpin all learning and development for pupils with Complex ASC and CLDD. These strands ensure that learning is holistic, functional, and relevant to pupils' daily lives. • Communication & Interaction – Developing functional communication, interaction, and social understanding through structured and supported contexts. • Cognition & Learning – Promoting attention, engagement, problem-solving, and generalisation through practical, real-world learning experiences. • Social & Emotional Development – Supporting emotional regulation, self-awareness, and relationship-building through consistent routines and trusted relationships. • Sensory & Physical Development – Developing sensory regulation, body awareness, coordination, and wellbeing through individualised sensory diets and therapeutic input. • Independence & Life Skills – Building confidence and independence through daily routines, community learning, and functional life skills such as cooking, shopping, and self-care.

	• Culture & Creativity – Encouraging self-expression, curiosity, and enjoyment through creative and cultural experiences including art, drama, movement, and music.
Approaches to learning	Learning within the Foundations for Life Pathway is structured, consistent, and responsive. Pupils learn best through clear routines, positive relationships, and meaningful repetition that foster engagement and predictability. Core Approaches • Structured Teaching (TEACCH principles): Clear routines, visual timetables, and task organisation to promote independence and understanding. • SCERTS Framework: A comprehensive approach focusing on Social Communication (SC), Emotional Regulation (ER), and Transactional Support (TS). It prioritises functional communication, emotional wellbeing, and supportive relationships across settings. • Social Stories: Personalised short narratives that help pupils understand social situations, expectations, and perspectives, supporting emotional understanding and behavioural regulation. • Intensive Interaction: A communication approach that builds early social and communication skills through responsive interaction, imitation, and shared enjoyment. It focuses on developing trust, attention, and reciprocal communication for learners at a pre-verbal or early communicative stage. • Attention Autism: A highly structured approach designed to develop joint attention, engagement, and spontaneous communication through visually stimulating, motivating activities. It supports sustained focus, turn-taking, and shared enjoyment. • Total Communication: Using a range of methods including speech, signs, symbols, AAC, and visuals to support understanding and expression. • Sensory Regulation: Incorporating sensory activities, movement breaks, and calming strategies to maintain regulation and readiness to learn. • Positive Behaviour Support: Anticipating triggers, using consistent responses, and promoting self-regulation through predictable strategies. • Practical and Experiential Learning: Activities rooted in daily life that encourage engagement, curiosity, and success. • Collaborative Reflection: Staff use observation, discussion, and pupil response analysis to inform planning and ensure ongoing progress.

Enabling Environment	The learning environment for Foundations for Life pupils is designed to promote calmness, consistency, and independence while reducing sensory overload. Key Features • Low-Arousal Design: Neutral colours, minimal clutter, and controlled sensory input to reduce anxiety and support focus. • Clear Physical Structure: Defined work, leisure, and relaxation areas that help pupils understand expectations and transitions. • Visual and Sensory Supports: Use of visuals, symbols, and sensory resources to support communication and regulation. • Safe and Predictable Routines: Consistent timetables and familiar adults providing security and stability. • Therapeutic Integration: Access to sensory circuits, regulation breaks, and therapy programmes as part of daily learning. • Outdoor and Community Learning: Real-world contexts for communication, independence, and generalisation of skills.
Learning Beyond the Classroom	• Community Learning: Structured visits to shops, parks, and community spaces to practise communication, independence, and social skills. • Outdoor Learning: Access to forest school, outdoor areas, gardening, and physical activity to support wellbeing and regulation. • Visiting Professionals and Experiences: Musicians, artists, and visitors offering interactive and motivating enrichment linked to sensory and cultural learning.
Impact	The impact of the Foundations for Life Pathway is reflected in pupils' increased communication, regulation, independence, and participation. Progress is observed through meaningful improvements in pupils' ability to engage, interact, and manage change. • Communication Development: Pupils use functional communication to express needs, make choices, and interact with others. • Emotional Regulation: Pupils show increased ability to self-regulate, remain calm, and recover from dysregulation with support. • Independence and Life Skills: Pupils participate more actively in daily routines, transitions, and real-life tasks. • Social and Emotional Growth: Pupils develop trust, confidence, and positive relationships with others.

	• Functional Learning: Pupils apply skills across settings, demonstrating generalisation and purposeful engagement. • Holistic Progress: Staff and families observe improvements in wellbeing, participation, and overall quality of life.
Assessment and Progress	Progress is tracked through a range of formative and summative assessment methods, ensuring both academic and personal development are recognised: • The Meadows Assessment Schema (E, E+, D, D+, S, G): Used to reflect progress towards independence and mastery of Personal Learning Goals linked to EHCP outcomes and pre-subject specific curriculum targets. • Engagement Model language: Applied to capture key indicators of learning — attention, persistence, initiation, anticipation, and realisation — highlighting the quality of engagement and interaction. • Ongoing observation and evidence collection: Staff use narrative observation, photographs, and video to document small but significant steps in progress, ensuring that assessment informs future planning and curriculum adaptation.
Destinations beyond school	Pupils on the Foundations for Life Pathway transition into adult provision that continues to promote communication, independence, emotional regulation, and quality of life. Destinations are planned collaboratively to ensure consistency, predictability, and wellbeing throughout transition. Destinations may include: • Specialist further education colleges or post-19 provisions offering structured, autism-informed programmes focused on communication, regulation, and life skills within calm, low-arousal environments. • Day provision or community-based adult services providing meaningful, structured activities that support communication, sensory regulation, and inclusion in the wider community. • Supported living or residential care settings offering personalised routines, therapeutic support, and opportunities to develop independence and confidence in daily life. • Bespoke transition packages developed with families, therapists, and adult social care teams, ensuring continuity of care, familiarity, and consistent use of communication and regulation strategies across all settings.

Transition Planning and Support

Transition planning begins early and is collaborative and person-centred, involving families, Connexions advisors, therapists, and local authority transition teams.

- EHCP outcomes are updated to reflect post-16 goals and preparing for adulthood outcomes.
- Pupils transition to specialist college placements, supported living, or community-based adult provision designed to continue developing communication, independence, and wellbeing.
- Transition is supported through visits, visual resources, and social stories, ensuring familiarity and emotional security.
- Transition documentation and liaison with post 16/post 19 providers ensure continuity of care and understanding.

Success is measured by quality of life — through participation, communication, independence, confidence, and joy.