



Hedgehog Class Curriculum

Lakenheath Community Primary School – Specialist Provision Unit

Our Vision

The Hedgehog Class curriculum is designed to support pupils with communication and interaction needs, including autistic learners, who benefit from a nurturing, structured and highly personalised learning environment.

Our curriculum is built upon four key principles:

Regulation • Relationships • Communication • Life Skills

These principles underpin every aspect of teaching and learning and guide how we support pupils to feel safe, understood and ready to learn.

We recognise that many pupils joining Hedgehog Class may not yet be ready to access a traditional subject-based curriculum. Instead, our approach focuses on developing the foundational skills that enable learning to take place.

Through exploration, meaningful experiences and strong adult relationships, pupils gradually develop the confidence, communication and engagement needed to interact with the world around them.

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Our Curriculum Model

The Hedgehog Curriculum supports pupils through a developmental journey:

Regulation → Connection → Communication → Independence

Regulation

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Learning begins when pupils feel calm, safe and emotionally regulated. Supporting sensory and emotional regulation is therefore the starting point for learning.

Connection

Strong relationships with trusted adults enable pupils to feel secure and begin engaging with their environment.

Communication

Developing functional communication allows pupils to express needs, make choices and share experiences.

Independence

As pupils develop confidence and skills, they begin to participate more actively and develop independence in daily life. Independence is developed progressively through daily routines, personal care, decision-making, self-help skills and participation in the wider school community.

Curriculum Intent

The Hedgehog Curriculum aims to:

- support pupils to develop emotional and sensory regulation
- build secure relationships with adults and peers
- develop functional communication
- foster curiosity and engagement with learning
- develop early thinking and problem-solving skills
- promote independence and life skills
- prepare pupils for future learning and life beyond school

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Through the development of communication, independence, self-regulation and life skills, pupils are supported to build the foundations needed for future education, employment, community participation and independent living.

Learning is personalised and linked to pupils' EHCP outcomes and individual needs.

Curriculum Implementation

Learning within Hedgehog Class is delivered through (see Appendix 1):

Multi-Sensory Learning

Pupils access learning through sensory-rich experiences that engage sight, sound, touch and movement.

Play and Exploration

Learning opportunities encourage curiosity, discovery and experimentation.

Thematic Learning

Learning is organised through half-termly themes, allowing pupils to make meaningful connections with the world around them.

Communication-Rich Environment

Communication is embedded across the day through visual supports, signing and responsive adult interaction.

Personalised Learning

Each pupil has personalised learning goals linked to their EHCP outcomes. These are reviewed regularly throughout the year through ongoing assessment using the Lakenheath Engagement Levels and, where appropriate, the Early Learning Goals (ELGs).

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Learning is carefully adapted to meet individual needs, interests and developmental stages, ensuring that all pupils experience success and make meaningful progress.

Curriculum Impact

The impact of the Hedgehog Curriculum can be seen in pupils who:

- feel safe and settled in school
- show increased engagement with learning
- develop communication skills
- build positive relationships
- demonstrate growing confidence, resilience and independence
- develop skills that support future learning and life experiences

Progress is monitored through observation, assessment frameworks and personalised targets.

Curriculum Areas

Learning is organised into four key areas that reflect the core developmental needs of our pupils.

[Please see Appendix 1 -Planning document for further details.](#)

Communication and Interaction

Communication is at the heart of learning in Hedgehog Class.

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Pupils develop communication through:

- spoken language
- gestures and body language
- symbols and visual supports
- signs and augmentative communication

Opportunities for communication are embedded throughout the school day including play, routines, stories, music and shared experiences.

Early reading experiences include:

- sensory storytelling
- songs and rhymes
- symbol-supported texts
- whole word recognition

These experiences support pupils to develop a love of stories, language and communication.

Exploration and Early Thinking

Pupils develop early thinking skills through hands-on exploration.

Learning opportunities encourage pupils to:

- explore cause and effect
- investigate materials and textures
- recognise patterns and differences
- develop early number awareness

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Early mathematical concepts are introduced through practical experiences such as counting, sorting, comparing and exploring shape and space.

Personal Development and Wellbeing

Supporting pupils' emotional wellbeing is central to the curriculum.

Learning focuses on helping pupils to:

- recognise and express emotions
- build relationships
- understand routines
- develop independence

Pupils are supported to access meaningful inclusion opportunities within the wider school community, enabling them to develop social relationships, confidence and a sense of belonging.

Creative experiences such as music, art and role play support pupils to express themselves and build confidence.

Physical Development and Sensory Regulation

Many pupils benefit from opportunities to develop both physical skills and sensory regulation.

Physical development includes:

Gross Motor Skills

Running, climbing, balancing, jumping and obstacle courses.



Fine Motor Skills

Mark making, building, threading and manipulating objects.

Sensory Regulation

Daily opportunities support pupils to regulate their sensory needs through:

- sensory circuits
 - movement breaks
 - access to sensory equipment
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Reading, Writing and Maths

Reading, Writing and Maths

Children will be exposed to and encouraged to use a range of core communication, literacy and mathematical vocabulary throughout the year. Theme-specific vocabulary will be explicitly modelled through adult interactions, sensory experiences, stories, play opportunities and visual supports.

Early literacy skills are developed through listening activities, environmental sounds, songs, rhymes, rhythm, movement and sensory storytelling. Pupils are supported to develop attention, listening and language skills alongside an enjoyment of books and stories. Reading is taught through meaningful and motivating experiences, with a focus on whole-word recognition, symbol recognition and functional vocabulary relevant to each child's daily life and interests.

Writing development is supported through opportunities to develop fine motor control, hand strength and coordination, alongside sensory exploration, mark making, name recognition, tracing, copying and purposeful early writing experiences where appropriate.

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Mathematical concepts are introduced through practical exploration, play and real-life experiences, including counting, sorting, matching, comparing, shape, space, measure and pattern activities. Learning is personalised to each pupil's developmental stage and linked to meaningful everyday experiences.

Communication Approaches

A range of specialist approaches are used to support communication development. Vocabulary is taught through **Total Communication approaches**, including Makaton, symbols, visual supports, modelling and repetition, as this strengthens the communication focus of the curriculum.

Makaton

Makaton uses signs, symbols and speech to support understanding and expression. Staff model key signs alongside spoken language during daily routines, songs, storytelling and play.

Intensive Interaction

This approach supports early communication development through responsive interaction between the adult and child. It develops skills such as shared attention, turn-taking and social engagement.

Attention Autism

Attention Autism sessions support pupils to develop attention, engagement and shared focus through motivating and visually engaging activities.

TacPac

TacPac combines touch and music to support sensory awareness, emotional development and early communication responses.

Key vocabulary

Key vocabulary is introduced through play, exploration, communication activities, stories, songs, sensory experiences and real-life contexts.

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Vocabulary is revisited throughout the curriculum to support understanding, communication and generalisation of learning.

Together these approaches help create a communication-rich environment where every pupil has a voice.

Outdoor Learning

Outdoor learning is an important part of the Hedgehog Curriculum.

The outdoor environment allows pupils to:

- explore nature
- develop physical confidence
- investigate materials
- apply learning in real-life contexts

Outdoor learning supports curiosity, wellbeing and independence.

Developing Life Skills

Preparing pupils for everyday life is an important part of the curriculum.

Pupils develop independence through activities such as:

- cooking and food exploration
- personal care routines
- making choices
- following visual schedules

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- using everyday tools safely

These experiences help pupils develop confidence and practical life skills.

Preparation for Adulthood

Although pupils in Hedgehog Class are at the early stages of their educational journey, preparation for adulthood begins from the moment they join our provision.

Through the development of communication, independence, self-regulation, social interaction and life skills, pupils are supported to build the foundations needed for future education, employment, community participation and independent living.

Opportunities to make choices, solve problems, develop self-help skills, build relationships and participate in the wider school community are embedded throughout the curriculum to support long-term outcomes for every pupil.

Assessment

Assessment is carried out using the **Lakenheath Engagement Levels**, a developmental assessment framework based on the Cherry Garden Framework, which enables staff to monitor and celebrate progress across all areas of learning.

This allows staff to:

- monitor pupil development
- identify next steps
- celebrate progress
- share learning with families

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Where appropriate, pupils are also assessed against the **Early Learning Goals (ELGs)** to support progression into more formal learning and to recognise achievement against national expectations.

Assessment is recorded on Tapestry and is informed by:

- Lakenheath Engagement Levels
- Early Learning Goals (where appropriate)
- EHCP outcomes
- personalised learning goals
- observations of engagement, communication, regulation and independence

Assessment is used to inform planning, identify next steps and ensure that learning remains appropriately challenging, meaningful and personalised for every pupil.

Partnership with Families

We recognise that parents and carers know their child best and play a vital role in their child's development and learning.

We work in partnership with families through:

- Tapestry learning journals
- regular communication
- collaborative target setting
- sharing strategies to support regulation, communication and independence
- annual reviews and person-centred planning meetings
- opportunities to celebrate achievements and progress

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By working together, we aim to create a consistent approach between home and school that enables every pupil to feel safe, communicate effectively and thrive.



Links to Other Policies

This curriculum should be read alongside the following school policies:

- Tapestry Policy
- Nurturing Touch Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- Safer Handling Policy
- SEND Policy
- Behaviour and Relationships Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

