

Explore Pathway at West SILC

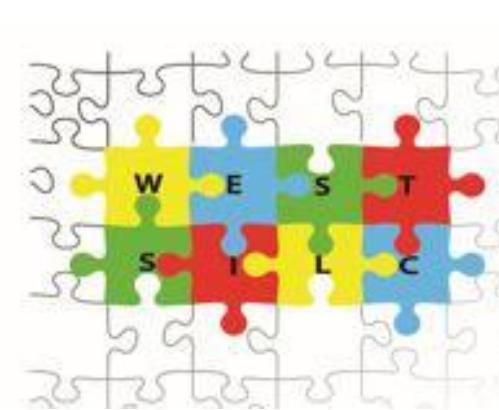
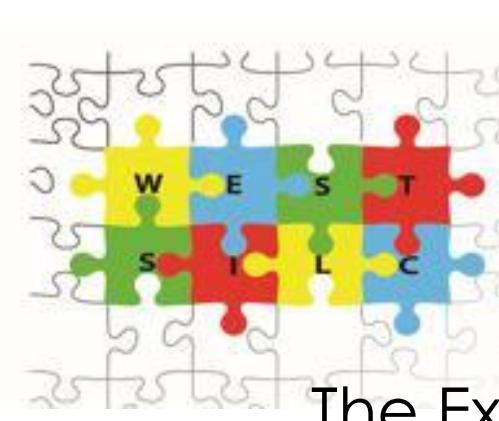


Table of contents

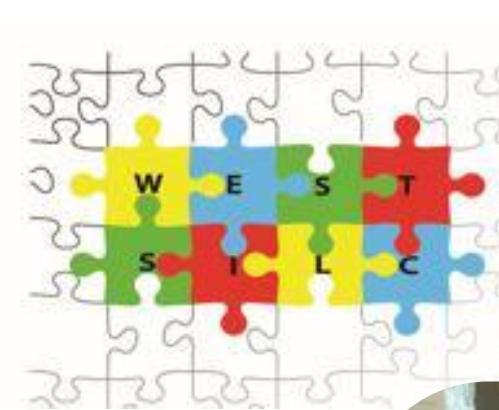
- 01 Pathway overview
- 02 Curriculum Rationale
- 03 Curriculum Structure and delivery
- 04 Teaching and Learning approaches
- 05 Assessment and progress
- 06 Preparation for the future



Pathway overview

The Explore Pathway caters to learners in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Key Stage 1, with a range of moderate to profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). Many learners have a formal diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), or complex medical needs. All learners require high levels of support across multiple domains and benefit from a curriculum that is play-based, sensory-rich, and designed to promote early engagement, regulation, and communication.



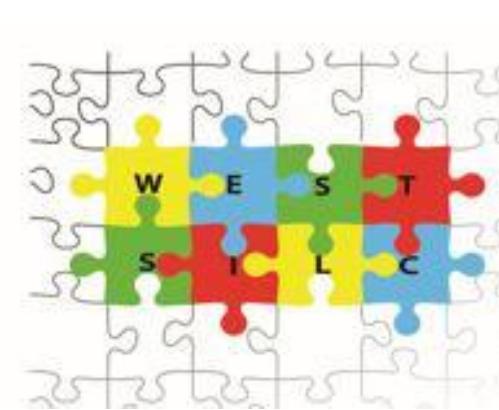


Curriculum Rationale

The Explore curriculum is built on a bespoke, child-centred approach which prioritises engagement, exploration and readiness to learn. Drawing inspiration from the EYFS framework and principles of specialist SEND pedagogy, the curriculum focuses on developing the foundational skills needed to access lifelong learning. The pathway places emphasis on well-being, independence, and communication, delivered through play-based learning and continuous provision. The curriculum is structured around the four SEND areas of need:

- Cognition and Learning
- Communication and Interaction
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health
- Physical and Sensory Development

All planning is carefully aligned with learners' Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) outcomes and delivered through a personalised, flexible model.



Curriculum Structure and Delivery

The Explore pathway follows a 5-year topic cycle, designed to provide a rich variety of themes and stimuli that encourage curiosity and experiential learning.

Teaching is organised through continuous provision, enriched by a balance of child-led, adult-supported, and adult-directed activities.

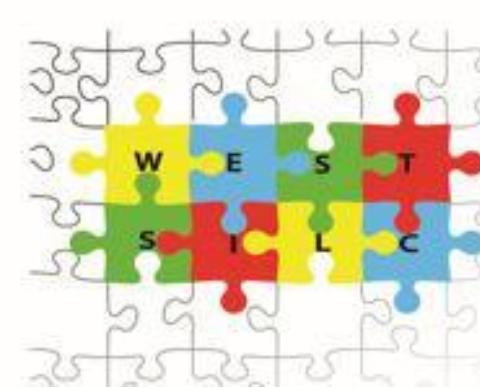
Sessions are flexible and responsive, allowing staff to adapt in real time to learners' engagement levels, sensory regulation, and communication readiness.

Learning is shaped around the prime areas of development:

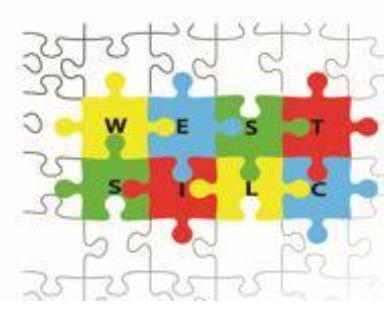
- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Personal, Social, and Emotional Development

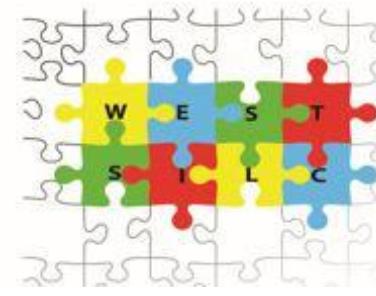
These are strengthened through the four specific EYFS areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design



Cycle year		Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
1	Topic	All about me (School) - Learning and Playing Together!		Once Upon a Time - Make Believe and Magic!		Under the Sea – Splish, Splash, Under the Sea!	
	RE link	Belonging; Special People		Celebrations & special times- Christmas, Diwali		Being Thankful – Learn about water as a symbol in religion	
2	Topic	All about me (Families and homes) - Families Come in All Shapes and Sizes!		Weather Watchers - Rain or Shine, We Explore!		Pets & Vets - Looking After Our Animal Friends!	
	RE link	Belonging – Explore different kinds of families in faiths.		Special Times – Holi – spring, Sukkot – harvest		Being Thankful/Caring – Explore how different religions show care for animals	
3	Topic	All about me (Local Community) - Exploring Where I Live!		Space & Stars - Blast Off to the moon!		People Who Help Us – Heroes in our Community -Everyday Superheroes!	
	RE link	Special Places – Visit or learn about local places of worship		Being Thankful – Wonder and awe in creation		Special People – Explore religious leaders as helpers and guides	
4	Topic	All about me (feelings and health) - Happy, Healthy Me!		Transport & Journeys - On the Move!		Farmyard Fun - Down on the Farm!	
	RE link	Belonging – Feeling safe and valued in a community		Special Times – Journeys in religious stories		Being Thankful – Harvest and food blessings in faiths	
5	Topic	All About Me (My Voice) – “I Have Something to Say!”		Around the World – A Journey of Cultures!		In the Garden – Growing, Crawling, Flying Fun!	
	RE link	Belonging – Valuing each person's voice, exploring naming rituals		Special Places – Learn about sacred spaces globally		Being Thankful – Care for creation in religion	





Curriculum Structure and Delivery



The curriculum throughout the Explore Pathway is structured around the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework, which offers a developmentally appropriate and flexible foundation for all learners. For children on the Explore Pathway, the curriculum is highly personalised and focuses on the development of early communication, engagement, independence, and interaction. These essential areas form the building blocks for all future learning.

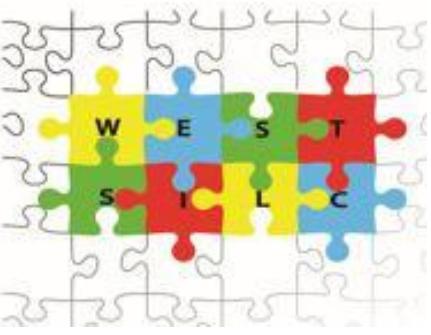
Children on this pathway are typically at the earliest stages of development, and the majority are pre-subject specific learners. The curriculum places a strong emphasis on the Prime Areas of Learning: Communication and Language, Physical Development, and Personal, Social and Emotional Development. These areas underpin all other aspects of learning and are central to the Explore Pathway.

The Specific Areas of Learning: Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World, and Expressive Arts and Design are introduced through carefully planned topics and a rich Continuous Provision, offering meaningful, hands-on, and sensory-rich experiences tailored to each child's developmental needs and interests.

Learning is delivered through a blend of adult-led sessions, child-initiated exploration, and responsive, play-based teaching. Adults use total communication approaches, including visuals, signs, symbols, and objects of reference, to support understanding, expression, and interaction throughout the day.

The learning environment is structured to promote independence, repetition, and deep engagement, with adults modelling and scaffolding learning in ways that meet each child's stage of development. Progress is tracked through ongoing observation and assessment, alongside individual EHCP small-step targets, ensuring that learning remains personalised, purposeful, and aligned with long-term goals.

For children requiring further challenge, we offer 1:1 or small-group interventions aligned with the Specific Areas of the EYFS Framework. These targeted opportunities promote engagement, confidence, and independence, allowing each learner to strengthen and expand their skills in meaningful, personalised ways.



Curriculum Structure and Delivery

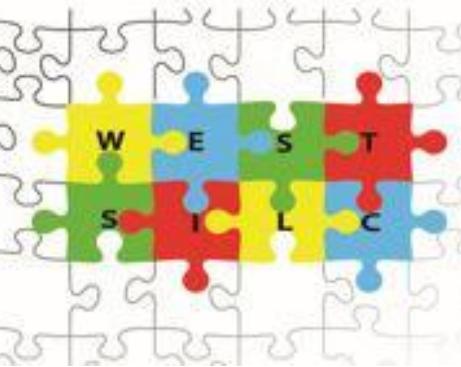
All planning directly addresses EHCP targets and is broken down into small, measurable steps.

learners access specialist interventions, which may include:

- Rebound Therapy
- Hydrotherapy
- Sensory Integration sessions
- Physiotherapy and postural management programmes

Interventions are integrated into the daily timetable and are highly personalised.



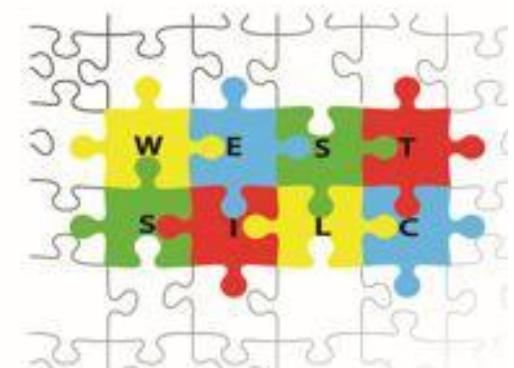


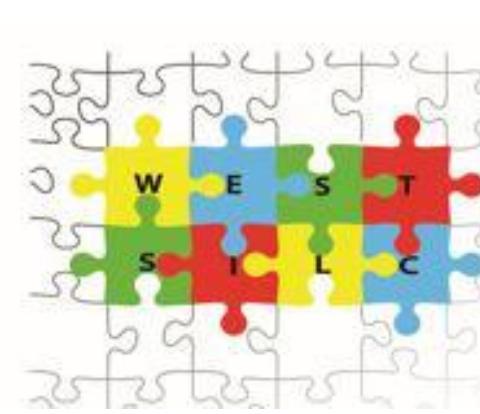
Teaching and Learning Approaches

Inspired by the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) principles, learning is facilitated through continuous provision, where learners are encouraged to explore, experiment, and interact with their environment at their own pace. Adults design inviting, open-ended play opportunities that promote engagement, communication, and skill development across all learning areas. Learners engage in a balance of child-led play, adult-supported play, and focused adult-led activities. Skilled adults model language, scaffold social interactions, and extend learning within play, while adult-led sessions introduce new concepts in an engaging and motivating way.

Outdoor learning in the Explore Pathway is an extension of the classroom and an integral part of continuous provision, offering learners opportunities to develop their physical, social, and cognitive skills in a vibrant and engaging environment. The outdoor space encourages exploration, investigation, and interaction through play-based, hands-on experiences that support all areas of learning. Activities such as water play, climbing, bikes and trikes, mud kitchen, sand pit, sensory exploration, sensory circuits, construction, and role play help children build confidence, independence, and problem-solving skills. These rich experiences also promote gross and fine motor development, balance, and coordination, while fostering creativity and imaginative play. The natural environment supports emotional well-being and self-regulation, providing space for movement, relaxation, and sensory-rich experiences. We ensure that outdoor learning is seamlessly embedded into their daily experiences.

Teaching and Learning Approaches

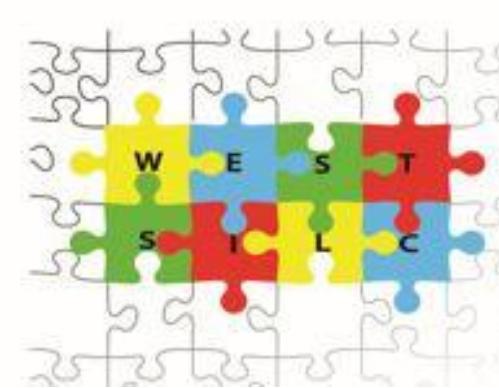




Teaching and Learning Approaches

A Total Communication approach is embedded throughout, incorporating Intensive Interaction, visual supports, objects of reference, and alternative communication methods to support receptive, expressive, and social communication. To ensure learners are well-regulated and ready to engage, the curriculum integrates sensory-based learning opportunities within the classroom, as well as access to specialist interventions such as hydrotherapy, rebound therapy, and sensory integration sessions. Where required, learners follow individualised sensory integration programmes, developed in collaboration with in-house Occupational Therapists, ensuring they receive the appropriate sensory input needed for emotional regulation and engagement in learning. Some of our learners require physiotherapy programmes which are embedded into daily routines such as daily stretches and access to postural management supports such as standing frames and walkers.

While all learners require a high level of skilled adult support, the focus remains on encouraging independence wherever possible. Through structured routines, engaging play experiences, and a supportive environment, learners develop essential skills in communication, social interaction, emotional regulation, and play, laying the foundation for lifelong learning.



Teaching and Learning Approaches

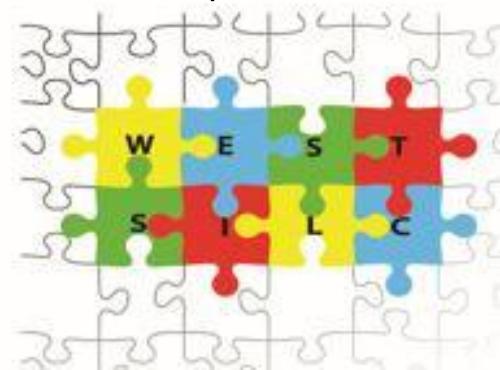
Attention Time is a key adult-led session used in classrooms to help learners gradually increase their ability to focus and engage with tasks or interactions. Adults support learners to attend, these moments are gradually extended to encourage sustained attention. Motivating activities, sensory supports, and personalised communication help maintain the child's interest and promote participation.

The Zones of Regulation framework is embedded daily to help learners recognise, understand, and manage their emotions. By identifying feelings through colour-coded zones, learners learn strategies to self-regulate and prepare for learning and transitions. Alongside this, adults use scaffolding to break tasks into manageable steps, gradually reducing support as learners gain confidence.

Opportunities for choice-making foster independence, while repetition and routine provide predictability. Visual timetables and clear transitions aid understanding, and positive behaviour support combined with emotion coaching helps learners manage feelings and develop self-regulation skills, creating a calm and purposeful learning environment.

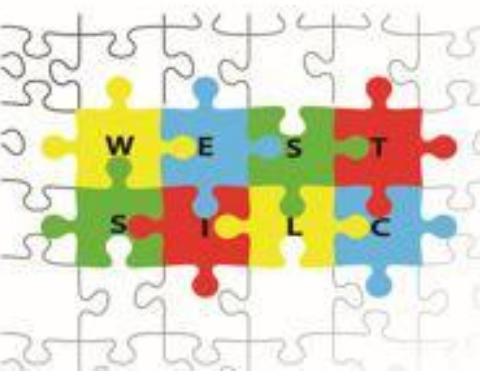
Snack time is an important opportunity for learners to practise making choices in a structured yet flexible setting. Adults encourage learners to select what they want to eat or drink using communication aids such as symbols, objects of reference, or communication boards. This routine supports decision-making, independence, and social interaction in a motivating and practical context.

The Engagement Model assesses and guides learning for learners working below national curriculum levels by focusing on how they engage with their environment and learning. Learners explore their surroundings using their senses, showing curiosity. They begin to understand cause and effect, anticipate events based on routines, and sustain attention despite distractions. Learners also initiate actions or communication independently, seek new experiences, and transition smoothly between activities. Adults use the model to observe and plan personalised targets, breaking learning into achievable steps based on each child's current ways of engaging. This enables adults to scaffold experiences that support meaningful development.





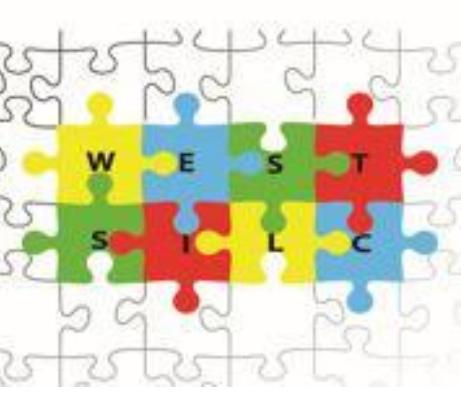
Assessment and progress



Progress is demonstrated and measured through carefully tailored small steps, which are informed by their EHCP outcomes and the five areas of the Engagement Model. This model enables us to closely track how each learner is engaging with the world around them. Our focus is on the five key areas of engagement - Exploration, Realisation, Anticipation, Persistence, Initiation. We celebrate our children when they try to do things by themselves, have their own ideas, and give things a go. The Engagement Model allows us to recognise and celebrate those powerful 'WOW' moments, whether it's an increase in engagement time or a decrease in the level of adult support required. These achievements are truly significant for our learners.

Progress is tracked using:

- EYFS profile assessments (where appropriate)
- EHCP small step tracking
- Teachers use observation, video evidence, and WOW moments to assess and celebrate small steps of progress.



Preparation for the future

The Explore Pathway marks the beginning of each child's school journey, laying the foundation for future learning and development. As learners progress, these foundational skills enable them to access the curriculum more effectively, develop greater independence, and build confidence in social interactions. By fostering a nurturing and structured environment from an early age, we equip children with the skills and resilience needed to navigate the increasing demands of school life and prepare them for ongoing learning.

learners on the Explore Pathway are supported to develop the essential building blocks for their future growth. As shown on the West SILC Tube Map, children from the Explore Pathway may progress to the Aspire, Connect, or Engage Pathways, depending on their individual development and needs. The focus remains on early communication, engagement, independence, and social interaction skills, providing a strong foundation for accessing more complex learning experiences. This pathway prepares learners to move forward successfully along their chosen educational route, enabling them to reach their full potential in later stages of education and life.





***Further information available by
contacting Grace Searle,
Pathway leader***