

Curriculum

Children with autism or other communication difficulties need to have aspects of the curriculum presented to them in a way that takes account of their unique learning styles. This means, especially in the early years, that methods and approaches which may be appropriate for typically developing children will not necessarily help children with autism to access learning opportunities in the same way.

Curriculum plans at the Circle Centre nursery reflect a balance between the unique needs of each individual child and the broad and balanced requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum. Topics and activities planned for each term are detailed in our nursery newsletter with core vocabulary which is issued each half term.

Our setting provides a specialist environment with educational/therapeutic approaches which are 'autism specific'. Circle Centre incorporates:

- The SCERTS Model
- The TEACCH approach
- The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
- The National Autistic SPELL approach
- The Hanen Approach
- Intensive Interaction
- Attention Autism

Our nursery particularly incorporates the [SCERTS model](#) which is a research-based educational approach and multi-disciplinary framework that addresses the core challenges faced by children with autism and related disabilities, and their families. It focuses on the areas of Social Communication, Emotional Regulation and Transactional Support as the highest priorities.

The environment at Circle Centre is organised to promote learning for young children who have complex communication difficulties by controlling the overall level of stimulation, adopting a communication-based curriculum, pacing activities to teach attention and group learning skills and using each children's particular interests to extend and develop their learning.

Well established practice in the field of autism, communication and learning difficulties, special education and early childhood education is used to help each child to develop.

The National Autism Plan (2003) states that educational programmes that have tended to be most effective for young children with autism are those that:

- Build on a child's interest
- Offer a predictable schedule
- Develop joint attention, communication and social understanding
- Teach tasks as a series of simple steps
- Reinforce appropriate behaviours
- Make use of visual strategies to help understanding
- Involve parents

The National Autism Plan also states that targeted interventions should begin as early as possible. We are committed to providing the earliest possible specialist intervention for children with social and communication difficulties.

At the same time, we enable children with autism spectrum disorders and other communication difficulties to access all aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is the unique interplay between enabling children to access experiences and learning that all children should have whilst, alongside this, catering for their different and particular needs and learning styles, by using specialist methods and approaches, that distinguishes the curriculum and teaching approaches used at our setting from most other Early Years settings.

The guiding themes of the EYFS are incorporated into our planning to ensure we address all the child's needs. These are:

- A unique child
- Positive relationships
- An enabling environment
- Learning and Development

The full range of learning and development areas are offered as well as practitioners reflecting on the different ways children learn, incorporating the characteristics of effective learning in planning and guidance. The characteristics of effective learning include: playing and exploring: active learning: and creative and thinking critically. All of which, can be particularly challenging for children with autism and need supporting.

The seven areas of learning and development are:

Prime areas:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED)
- Communication and Language (C&L)
- Physical Development (PD)

Specific areas:

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

Much is being researched and learnt about the best ways to optimise learning for children with autism and communication difficulties. Autism Early Support is committed to keeping abreast with the latest developments and training in this field.