

# Early Years Graduated Approach – Cognition and Learning

## Universal Provision – Quality First Teaching

### Description of need

The child is not making the expected progress with minor difficulties becoming apparent in relation to some aspects of the prime areas of learning in some of the areas listed below. The child is able to participate in most or all setting activities with some reasonable adjustments.

- Repetitive play
- Limited imaginative play, following others rather than own initiative.
- Drifting from one activity to another without spending any time on one thing.
- Some problems acquiring new concepts.
- Some difficulties with the acquisition of language / literacy / numeracy despite regular attendance, quality teaching and appropriate intervention.
- Difficulty with the pace of the curriculum delivery.
- Self-esteem and motivation may be affected.

### Assess and Plan

- The key person to liaise with the setting SENCO who can support in identifying strategies and differentiated activities to support the child.
- Record structured observations of the child around specific areas of focus over a period of time and in a variety of contexts.
- Consider how the child plays and explores, is motivated to learn, thinks critically etc. Find out what gains the child's interests and attention and use this information to plan next steps for learning.
- Base assessments around the belief that parent/carers know their children best and that their observations and views are key.
- Work in partnership with parents/carers to establish Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR) cycles of intervention with the child. Each cycle should last around 6 weeks and at least 2 APDR cycles should be completed prior to referring to an external agency. This will ensure you can provide sufficient evidence of the strategies/interventions you have tried.
- If a child appears to have very significant needs, contact the [Trafford Area SENCO](#) for advice at the earliest opportunity without waiting for 2 APDR cycles.
- Continue to monitor and record the child's progress using Development Matters in the EYFS and Early Years Outcomes.
- Liaise with your [Link Health Visitor](#) to discuss your concerns and whether an [ASQ-3](#) assessment has or should be carried out.
- Refer to [Safeguarding Children in Education Information](#) and [Early Help and Multiagency Working](#) published by Trafford Strategic Safeguarding Partnership (TSSP) to consider any immediate care needs or safeguarding concerns that need to be addressed.
- Consider [early years training opportunities](#) for staff members.
- Support children and their families to access any relevant universal and targeted services in the community. Information on local services can be found online in the [Trafford Directory](#) and further advice is available from [Trafford Family Information Service](#).
- Refer where necessary to the [SEN and Disability in the Early Years Toolkit \(Section 4\)](#) This document provides further information on the Early Years Graduated Approach.
- Agree one or two targets with all involved and phrase these as positive SMART outcomes

# Early Years Graduated Approach – Cognition and Learning

## Universal Provision – Quality First Teaching

for the child. SMART outcomes should be based on severity, frequency and how realistic it is for the child to be successful. All adults supporting the child within the setting and at home should be aware of planned outcomes and be involved in setting these ('co-production').

- Refer to [NASEN Early Years SEND resources](#) for more information on the co-production of SMART outcomes.

### Do

- Extend and adapt activities as children's interests and thinking change.
- **Consider the environment and help the child to focus** by keeping distractions to a minimum. For example, create a quiet comfortable area, block out external sounds using large furniture and prevent disruptions.
- **Provide developmentally appropriate activities** and make sure the child is able to access them at their own pace enabling the child to achieve success. For example, break down activities into smaller steps and give the child extra thinking time to process what they are being asked to do. Repeat instructions.
- **Provide activities which are stimulating and encourage children to use all their senses**, such as activities to explore touch, taste, textures, smells and sounds, For example, you could incorporate specific learning outcomes into an outdoor sensory walk.
- **Keep children's curiosity by providing new activities** and changing existing activities.
- **Ensure that activities are of high interest to maintain attention.** For example, incorporate the child's special interests into the activities being presented
- **Present the same learning outcome in many different ways** to consolidate learning. For example, if you wanted to teach the child about how objects or items relate to each other, you may sort, hold and discuss real items, cut out and stick themed pictures from magazines, complete themed jigsaws or find matching pairs.
- **Visual discrimination** is the ability to match exact characteristics of two shapes when one of the shapes is among similar shapes and noticing similarities and differences between shapes, objects and symbols. Develop this skill by providing lots of opportunities for sorting activities, classifying by colour, shape, size, texture, etc, Matching pictures from the outline or matching socks. Hide objects or shapes of varying textures / size in a bag without looking –ask the child to describe a shape or object by feeling it without looking, then describe it again when they can see it.
- **Visual perception** is needed for nearly every task we carry out. This includes recognition and identification of shape, colour, etc. and to be able to use the information to make judgements of size, shape, relationship of one object to another. Provide activities to develop these skills such as: post a shape to a matching object, guess what? - ask the child to guess the object when only part is visible. A picture of an object could be cut into four pieces and only one part given at a time until the child has guessed what it is. Navigate through an obstacle course and have the child explain what he is doing, for example, crawling under the table, walking around the chair, climbing on the box, etc
- **Use simple language and support language with visual props** where appropriate. For example, break down verbal instructions into smaller chunks. Say 'Coat on' whilst holding up the child's coat as a visual prompt. Hold up a picture of a listening ear whilst reminding children about good listening.
- **Ask the child to repeat what you have asked** to check if they understand what you have

# Early Years Graduated Approach – Cognition and Learning

## Universal Provision – Quality First Teaching

said.

- **Auditory memory** is being able to hold the things you hear in your memory, in the right order, for long enough to be able to process the information. Children who find it difficult to learn new concepts, follow instructions and remember information sometimes have auditory memory difficulties. Play word games like 'I went to the shop and I bought...', Give the child a message to take to another adult – 'Please tell Rose it is snack time, Play musical statues – dance to music, stand still when it stops. Use outside space to create a short 'treasure hunt'. Give two step instructions – 'go to the sandpit and find a ball'.

## Review

- Continue to monitor and record the child's progress using the Unique Child sections in Development Matters in the EYFS and Early Years Outcomes.
- Meet with parent/carers to discuss plans and progress and address any learning and development needs, with interpreters where necessary.
- Parent/carers should be encouraged to provide information about anything happening at home which may impact their child's development and share ideas with practitioners on how to support their child.
- For children whose home language is not English, discussion should take place with parent/carers in their home language so strengths and areas for development can be explored.
- Parents/carers should be asked if they require interpreters as appropriate. Interpreters should be from reputable agencies and family members or multilingual staff should only be used to interpret as a last resort, or in emergency situations; families may be concerned about confidentiality in using wider family members, or setting staff, for interpreting at private meetings. It also may be inappropriate to use siblings to discuss very sensitive issues, particularly if they are quite young. Interpreting is a highly skilled role and requires training and qualifications to be carried out effectively: if poorly done, incorrect views and information can be gathered, and upsetting messages may mistakenly be put across to families.
- Consider whether there is a need to move up to the next stage of the process, building on what has worked but introducing more intensive approaches based on a greater understanding of needs (SEN Support).

## SEN Support

### Description of need

In addition to description of need outlined in the previous Universal Provision section, the following applies -

- The child has mild to moderate, persistent difficulties and is not making expected progress in identified areas for development despite a range of interventions, quality first teaching and differentiated provision over time. Difficulties are becoming evident across the curriculum

# Early Years Graduated Approach – Cognition and Learning

## SEN Support

rather than in one specific area.

- Progress could be two bands behind age related expectations.
- Difficulties are becoming increasingly apparent and there is evidence the child continues to work at levels below age related expectations in some or all aspects of the prime areas of learning.
- Repeated Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR) cycles have not resulted in a marked increase in progress and assessments over time indicate a more individualised or differentiated cycle is required.
- Professional judgement – practitioners and parent/carers agree the child has achieved limited progress and requires an enhanced level of intervention with an individually targeted approach.
- Evidence that the child has difficulties in retaining concepts over time and significant difficulties with attention requiring support to maintain focus.
- Evidence of frequent repetitive play and limited play interests.

## Assess and Plan

- Ongoing assessment is central for all Early Years children. More intense and regular assessment is needed for children with significant emerging concerns and reasonable adjustments must be made to the assessment process.
- Learning can be broken down into small steps to ensure that children achieve desired outcomes [Portage Small Steps Approach](#). Refer to [NASEN Early Years SEND resources](#) for more information on the co-production of SMART outcomes.
- Children who may need SEN Support in Early Years often have difficulties in using and understanding language making it difficult to assess precisely the level of delay in their overall development. Practitioners can contact [Trafford Area SENCO](#) for advice on supporting and monitoring children with SEND.
- The key person should liaise with the school/setting SENCO and parent/carers to share concerns and begin an Individual Support Plan which incorporates the views of parent/carers. Ensure any specialist advice is included in the plan.
- Continue to monitor and review the Individual Support Plan, recording the child's progress and the impact of strategies and interventions used. This should be completed at least every 6 weeks as part of the APDR cycle. The following free online tool can help with assessment and planning -

[Early Years Developmental Journal](#) helps identify areas where extra help may be needed as age ranges are narrower than those within the Early Years Outcomes, for example the 0 to 11 months age band is broken down into 4 steps. It therefore provides a more precise picture of a child's strengths and areas for development and of where support should be targeted.

- Continue to liaise with your Link Health Visitor as appropriate.
- Continue to consider training opportunities available for all staff members, for example [early years learning and development programme](#) and training offered by the Speech and Language Therapy Service such as Attention and Listening.
- An Early Help Assessment may be considered if the family require support to achieve their

# Early Years Graduated Approach – Cognition and Learning

## SEN Support

goals [Trafford Early Help Assessment](#)

### Do

Everything described in the universal section plus:

- **Put strategies in place to extend concentration and listening.** Gradually introduce an activity by building up the time spent on it. For example, during story time the child may join the group for the last 2 minutes, then 5 minutes etc. Use large pictures and props to maintain interest. Use lots of connotation and exaggerated sounds.
- **Provide a descriptive commentary** of what the child is doing or what is happening. The child will hear phrases and sounds that link to what they are doing and for children with a short attention span they will sit at an activity for longer.
- **Try hand over hand support** to guide a child or provide ongoing demonstration. Make sure the child watches what you do and encourage them to imitate you. Gradually reducing the adult support as they gain skill.
- **Continue to simplify language and use visual prompts** such as objects of reference, real photographs, now and next board or visual timetables to help children follow activities.
- **Teach phonics in a way that uses all the senses.** For example, trace around the empty letter shape on a peg board then find one that looks or feels the same. Find letters hidden in jelly.
- **Provide repetitive activities and over learning** to create an automatic response. For example repeat an activity frequently over a period of time.
- **Have a system of negotiated rewards or strategies** to improve motivation e.g. focus on one particular area and start with instant rewards such as stickers, use terms such as 'When you have ...then you can', building to agreed rewards over the course of the day or a week.
- **Provide opportunities for the child to explore** and manipulate play equipment and materials at their own pace once the adult learning has taken place.
- **Create interesting experiences** that develops a child's curiosity and motivation to explore.
- **Portage** is a model of support for children and families which can be adapted and used effectively both in the home and in Early Years settings. The approach breaks learning down into smaller steps or components, teaching one component at a time to ensure the child achieves success. [www.portage.org.uk](http://www.portage.org.uk)
- **Main provision** will be from the teacher or keyworker with support from the school/setting SENCO
- **Provide information to parent/carers** about the information, advice and support available to children, young people and families through [Trafford Parent and Young People Partnership Service \(PYPPS\)](#).

### Review

- Parent/carer multiagency review meetings should be held every 6 weeks as part of the APDR approach. Ideally this will be chaired by the SENCO with a written record of the meeting circulated afterwards, copied to parent/carers and put on the child's file.
- PAM review meetings should take a [person-centred approach](#) in order to ensure that

# Early Years Graduated Approach – Cognition and Learning

## SEN Support

practitioners are:

- Making sure that they're truly taking into account the experiences of the child, their family and those supporting them when reviewing how well things are going.
  - Creating an environment where people are made to feel comfortable in expressing themselves honestly.
  - Developing actions that are based on experiences and learning, leading to an environment where they are constantly improving their support.
- The views of any involved external agencies who are unable to attend should be sought prior to the meeting if possible – this can be done by the SENCO.
  - Assessments are presented and updated at review meetings. Where specialist advice exists (e.g. Speech Therapy, SENAS) recommendations should be highlighted to staff and implemented within the new Individual Support Plan.
  - There should be increased involvement of parent/carers in the assessment, monitoring and review process. During reviews, the views of parents/carers, and children wherever possible, should be sought, recorded and respected.
  - Parent/carers should be asked if they require interpreters as appropriate. Interpreters should be from reputable agencies, and family members or multilingual staff should only be used to interpret as a last resort, or in emergency situations. This is because families may be concerned about confidentiality in using wider family members, or setting staff, for interpreting at private meetings. It also may be inappropriate to use siblings to discuss very sensitive issues, particularly if they are quite young. Interpreting is a highly skilled role, and requires training and qualifications to be carried out effectively: if poorly done, incorrect views and information can be gathered, and upsetting messages may mistakenly be put across to families.
  - If not already done, signpost parents to [Trafford's Local Offer](#) if they require specific information.
  - Consider whether there is a need to move up to the next stage of the process, building on what has worked but introducing approaches aimed at supporting children with more complex and persistent difficulties (High Level SEN Support).

## High Level SEN Support

### Description of need

In addition to the description of need outlined in previous universal provision and SEN Support sections, the following applies -

- The child will have complex and persistent difficulties and is not making expected progress despite significant levels of focused intervention, implementation of specialist advice and extensive differentiation of the EYFS curriculum. Difficulties are clearly apparent in relation to the 3 prime areas of learning.
- The child will be experiencing ongoing learning difficulties, significantly impeding their

# Early Years Graduated Approach – Cognition and Learning

## High Level SEN Support

development across several areas of the EYFS curriculum.

- The child may have an identified syndrome or physical/medical need which has been diagnosed by a Paediatrician or other health specialists, which may cause learning difficulties e.g. Downs Syndrome, Fragile X Syndrome.

## Assess and Plan

Assessment and planning should be as within the Universal and SEN Support section, plus the following:

### Early Years Provision Maps

- At this stage, where children need high levels of support, schools/settings should complete an [Early Years Provision Map](#). Provision mapping is a way of evaluating the impact on children's progress of provision that is additional to and different from the school/setting's curriculum. Evaluated provision maps can help settings manage this provision to ensure that it is and continues to be effective in helping children to make progress. The provision mapping and evaluation cycle should run in parallel with the school/setting's system for tracking and evaluating children's progress and it should feed into the Parent and Multiagency (PAM) review meetings. The provision map should be constructed in partnership with the parents/carers during the Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR) process and parents should be involved in agreeing the outcomes.
- For children with Downs Syndrome who may have significant cognitive delay, the Early Support [Downs Syndrome Developmental Journal](#) can be used for assessment and planning
- [Portage SEND Best Practice Assessment Checklist](#) links into the EYFS curriculum and aids assessment and planning. The skills are broken down into small steps so that parents and practitioners can assess and celebrate every skill that the child has achieved. It can then act as a guide to the design of teaching activities to further promote development. A checklist may be allocated to children who access the highest levels of Early Years SEND Funding by the EY SEND Panel.
- Ensure that all staff have relevant SEND training to support the child within the school/setting.

## Do

- Continue with strategies/approaches listed within 'do' sections of Universal Provision-Quality First Teaching and SEN Support.
- Referral should be made to the [Trafford Early Development Service](#) (TEDS), or the [SEN Advisory Service](#) (SENAS), if this is not already in place, and to [Speech and Language Therapy](#).
- If a child has complex needs and/or is showing significant delay in learning, the family should be encouraged to consider a referral to a Paediatrician for further assessment if this has not already been done. Referrals can only be made by Health Professionals, and this is often the Health Visitor, GP or Speech Therapist in the Early Years.
- Continue to use a [Portage](#) approach as appropriate. Portage is a model of support for children and families which can be adapted and used effectively both in the home and Early

# Early Years Graduated Approach – Cognition and Learning

## High Level SEN Support

Years settings. It uses the small steps approach to teaching children new skills through play. In Trafford both TEDS and SENAS are Portage trained and use this approach when offering advice to settings.

- [Backward and Forward Chaining](#) is a particularly useful technique to use when teaching new skills, by breaking them down into small manageable steps. This links in well with the Portage approach.
- You may wish to use the free online [Early Support Developmental Journal for Children with Multiple Needs](#) which has photocopyable “Can Do Cards” which provide ideas for activities that promote development. They are particularly helpful in providing ideas for family based interventions.
- Highly personalised Individual Support Plans should be in place which incorporate specialist advice from external agencies. For example TEDS, SENAS, [Educational Psychology Service](#), [Sensory Impairment Support Service](#).
- Celebrate children’s achievements with families and focus on the positive – a family focused approach such as Portage helps highlight small steps within the curriculum.
- Always encourage independence as a key life skill – avoid children becoming over dependant on adults especially if additional support is in place – give the child responsibilities in line with their abilities e.g. giving out resources.
- ‘Give the child a voice’ by trialling a variety of ways of communication e.g. signing, symbols, visuals and having a [total communication approach](#).
- An ‘[Intensive Interaction](#)’ approach to communication may be recommended by involved professionals e.g. Speech and Language Therapist, TEDS, SENAS, where a child appears to have little motivation to communicate.

## Review

- [Person-centred](#) Parent/carer and Multiagency (PAM) APDR meetings should continue to be held every 6 weeks as part of the APDR approach. The child’s provision map should be reviewed as part of this process.
- Where Early Years practitioners and parent/carers are happy with the progress being made, consideration should be given to returning to the earlier stages of the graduated approach or to universal provision.
- Where there continues to be ongoing concerns about a child’s rate of progress and needs are being seen as potentially significant and long term then schools/settings can consider applying for an [Early Years SEND Grant](#). This resource is for the very small number of children with highly complex needs to support them to access their early education place. Applications are considered monthly by the Early Years SEND Panel and must be supported by a provision map which outlines the projected outcomes for the child and strategies required to meet them. This should be linked to the resources/funding needed to achieve this. The child will need to be involved with TEDS or SENAS for funding to be considered.
- As Early Years children are still very young and still at the early stages of development, funding is allocated on a short term basis initially for either one or two terms. After this period, the school/setting must submit an evaluated provision map and decide whether to return to an earlier stage of the graduated approach or to apply for another Early Years SEND Grant.

# Early Years Graduated Approach – Cognition and Learning

## High Level SEN Support

### Requesting an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Needs Assessment

The following actions should be evident before considering a referral for an [EHC Needs Assessment](#), usually following implementation of support through an Early Years SEND Grant.

- Targets for Individual Support Plans have been informed by external advice from specialists and reviewed every 6 weeks over a significant period of time.
- Advice has been regularly sought from agencies appropriate to child's needs and there is clear evidence of its implementation. This could include from the [SEN Advisory Service](#) (SENAS), [Sensory Impairment Support Service](#), [Trafford Early Development Service](#) (TEDS).
- An [Early Help Assessment](#) will have been carried out if a child with significant needs has several agencies involved, and the family needs help to coordinate support.
- SEN support has been adapted or modified depending on how effective it has been in achieving the agreed outcomes. If the school/setting having taken relevant and purposeful action to identify, assess and meet the SEN of the child but they have not made expected progress, the school/setting or parents should consider requesting an EHC Needs Assessment.