

Learning programme one - Using the guidelines in a post-primary school

Paul is a first year student in a large urban community school with a student population of 1100. He has a sunny disposition, and is a very sociable 14 years old with many friends. He has a wide range of interests including rock music, swimming, drums and soccer. He is the youngest of three children and an only boy. Paul has Williams Syndrome (Williams Syndrome is a rare genetic condition that causes medical and developmental problems) and is functioning within the moderate range of general learning disabilities. Paul is involved with the Special Olympics and goes to music camp with the Williams Syndrome society. Paul attended a mainstream primary school and his parents are very eager that he attends a mainstream post-primary school.

Each day Paul's learning takes place in a variety of settings, the majority with his mainstream peers, and an average of two class periods per day in small group or one-to-one tuition settings.

The school atmosphere is pastoral and its structures and underlying philosophy are nurturing and supportive. It is characterised by its emphasis on partnership, collaboration and cooperation. Collaboration stretches beyond the school as Paul is involved in an outreach programme with a local special school and this comprises of a multi-disciplinary team of an educational psychologist, speech and language therapist, physiotherapist and occupational therapist.

The junior cycle curriculum is offered in a mixed-ability setting. Students select from a range of 14 subjects - Irish, English, Mathematics, Geography, History, a European language, Science, Business Studies, Social Personal Health Education (SPHE), Civic Social Political Education (CSPE), Physical Education (PE), Religious Education, Art, Craft, Design, Metalwork, Materials Technology Wood, Music, Technical Graphics and Home Economics. In first year students have an opportunity to sample some subjects, from which they choose their preferences to study in 2nd and 3rd year.

Paul's timetable has been designed to maximise his inclusion, while being mindful that he is easily tired. In this way Paul attends for 38 of the 45 class periods each week. He follows a reduced curriculum, taking Art, Craft, Design, Metalwork, Geography, Music, SPHE, PE, CSPE, and Computers with his peers, in mixed-ability classes. He works with a resource teacher and a small group (3-4 students) for his Mathematics and English classes for six periods per week each, and has four additional one-to-one withdrawal classes with his PE, Geography and English teachers. Each day Paul's learning takes place in a variety of settings, the majority with his mainstream peers, and an average of two class periods per day in small group or one-to-one tuition settings.

Personalised learning

Paul's IEP focuses on his learning strengths and needs and the table 3 below outlines a summary of his main IEP targets.

Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">to identify basic letters and develop reading skills beyond 3-letter words using a phonics based approachto work on appropriate social sight vocabulary and introduce story writing	Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">to expand vocabularyto speak for himself when responding to questions
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none">to greet adults and peers appropriately in school and classroom contextsto develop an awareness of people and places that are safe and unsafeto navigate the school building unaidedplan to develop strategies for starting conversations in specific settingsto take steps towards managing anxiety	Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">to sort his materials for various classesto plan and execute a sequence of activities in school and out of school
Motor Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">to develop hand eye co-ordination (practise with the keyboard)to develop a comfortable grip for writing	Social maths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">to develop an awareness of time and the clockto further work on the understanding of moneyto develop basic computation

With the IEP as a starting point, and using the curriculum guidelines, the resource teacher generates Paul's learning programme. In doing so he consults with Paul, his parents, his SNA, and other school staff working with him. Based on his current needs and strengths the most appropriate elements are selected from within each PLUs and these are outlined in Table 4. Frequent and on-going discussions of Paul's progress and future plans take place both informally during the school week, and formally at his IEP meetings at the start of the school year, and at review meetings during the year.

Priority Learning Unit	Element	Junior cycle subject / school activity
Communicating and literacy	Reading to obtain basic information Using a range of writing forms to express opinions	English and all subjects
Numeracy	Money management Developing an awareness of time	Mathematics, Business Studies and all subjects
Preparing for work	Developing an awareness of health and safety using equipment	Metalwork and all subjects
Living in a community	Developing good relationships Using local facilities	SPHE, CSPE, Geography, all subjects, Meitheal buddy system
Personal care	Knowing how to stay safe	SPHE and subjects

Collaborating

The resource teacher links in with Paul's subject teachers to see how they might contribute to covering some of PLUs in their subject classes. They also collaborate on ways to compile evidence of his achievements in his PLUs and this is mainly through portfolio building and his reading diary. A shared portfolio allows for communication between teachers as Paul moves from subject to subject on a daily basis. Paul's teachers also comment on the current topics and/or skills they are working on using Paul's portfolio.

The school learning support/resource team uses a referral box system in the staffroom where teachers can bring relevant issues to the learning support team. The team undertake to respond appropriately, whether through their own interventions, or through the sharing and discussion of strategies and resources. For Paul, this box system is useful in facilitating collaboration and teamwork in a large and busy school.

Differentiating

Paul's learning takes place through differentiated approaches, so that his learning is appropriately challenging for him, concrete and organised in clear stages. Basing his work on Paul's reality makes his learning tasks relevant and increases the possibility of the transfer of skills to his experiences outside of his school life. Planned, specific links between subjects further assists the transfer of learning skills.

A number of cross-curricular projects have emerged for Paul through teacher-team collaboration. They provide Paul with opportunities for deeper learning and insight into topics already covered in the mixed-ability classes. They are a source of opportunities for Paul, covering multiple elements within the PLUs. When co-teaching in Geography and Science, two teachers plan and review regularly, discussing strategies, materials and approaches to Paul's learning. Strategies such as key words, group tasks, role playing and many others are favoured. The following paragraphs described two cross-curricular projects that Paul is involved in.

English and music



As music is a passion for Paul a project on music types is included in his English programme. Collaboration between the music department and the resource department assists this project. This project explores three different types of Music: Heavy Metal 'Slipknot', Irish Traditional and a Classical piece. The music is listened to and evaluated as to its impact on the listener. Paul's is a fan of Mundy's "Galway Girl". He looked at the lyrics and listened to the music a number of times. The music department helped to put together an evaluation sheet for Paul to complete for each piece. This evaluation included: the title, the composer, tempo, instruments, the meaning of the lyrics, and how the piece makes him feel.

Paul's Geography teacher also works with him on a one-to-one basis and during this time they are constructing a volcano. It involves vocabulary development, craft work developing hand and eye co-ordination, planning and sequencing a series of activities, measurement, and writing up the project. The craft work (using paper and glue, and a funnel) takes place in the Art room assisted by his Art teacher. This provides an opportunity to discuss a range of issues besides the Volcano. The work on the Volcano involved Geography, Art, Craft, Design, Materials Technology Woodwork and Science departments. During Science, the teacher demonstrates how the action of bread soda and vinegar with food dye can recreate the activity of a volcano. The base for the volcano is produced with the help of his Woodwork teacher. The final piece is Paul's excitement about presenting this to his Geography class. The range of language and the opportunities for repetition of vocabulary in a very relaxed setting over a six-week period (one period per week) is very valuable to him. He looks forward each week to this class.



Volcano project

(Geography, Art, Craft, Design, Materials Technology Wood and Science)

Paul's Priority Learning Units (PLUs)

PLU

Communicating and literacy

Paul's parents feel that this PLUs is the area of greatest challenge for him but would be delighted if he could write his name, address and fill in basic forms. They acknowledge that he would love to read and have noticed him picking up the newspaper attempting to follow a sports story. In conversation with Paul he identifies 'learning the letters and how to read' as important to him.

1

Element: Reading to obtain basic information

Learning outcomes: Paul will be able to

- read familiar words that are commonly used and personally relevant
- use simple rules and text conventions that support meaning
- interpret different forms of writing and text, including social sight signs and symbols
- find key information from different forms of writing
- use a range of reading strategies.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

Language experience approach

A language experience approach has been adopted to advance Paul's reading and writing ability. In this approach a topic of interest to Paul such as a sporting event or a family event is used in conversation and then recorded in sentences. By cutting up these sentences and getting Paul to re-order them he is learning new words that are relevant to him and that can then be read by him, and further adapted for development of reading experiences.

Reading programme

Paul follows a systematic phonological programme. His parents assist this work by practising the sounds and words at home. Pictorial prompts and visualisation work well for Paul. Paul is familiar with a reading programme from primary school and has enjoyed reading the stories about characters he knew well in the first term in second level. Activity books are used to consolidate his reading progress. The CD Rom of the series adds an extra dimension for Paul who is very keen on computers.

Social sight vocabulary

Photographs of the school's signage were given to the primary school when Paul was in sixth class to allow him to be a little more familiar with the building. He also visited the school a number of times with his 6th class peers and with his parents prior to entry. Laminated flashcards of words and corresponding pictures from the school environment are used to teach sight vocabulary. The school collaborates with Paul's parents to work on his social sight vocabulary focusing on his home as well as the school environment.

Reading diary

A reading diary was created for Paul to track his progress in reading on a daily basis and at home his parents help Paul practice his reading.

2 Element: Using a range of writing forms to express opinions

Learning outcomes: Paul will be able to

- write/type notes and messages needed for simple tasks
- write/type at least five sentences so that they convey meaning or information,
- use the main rules of writing appropriately
- use a range of spelling patterns
- use a range of different forms of writing to suit purpose and audience.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

Personal storybook

The personal storybook is a major piece of writing kept in a scrapbook format which tracks Paul's family, friends, his pets, likes and dislikes, hobbies and interests' neighbourhood and his future aspirations. This piece of work is enjoyable for him and reinforces his sense of his environment. It gives him an opportunity to produce a unique piece of work that enhances his feelings of fulfillment. It is a reflective piece also as it tracks Paul's early life and looks to the future. Paul uses commercially produced assistive writing software to create his story. Print outs are updated weekly in Paul's portfolio. Paul frequently completes worksheets in phonic approaches to word reading, and to assist comprehension through Cloze tasks.

1

Element: Managing money

Learning outcomes: Paul will be able to

- recognise Euro notes and coins, €5, €10 and €20, and 50c, 20c, 10c and 5c coins,
- estimate the cost of two common items, and calculate how much they will cost in total
- pay for an item correctly and count the change in a mock-up or real life shopping transaction
- explain a shopping receipt, in relation to what was bought, money tendered and correct change given
- pay the correct fare for a bus journey
- recognise the difference of between using money to buy essentials items and luxuries items
- save a small amount of money each week to buy an item.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

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Concrete materials such as coins and notes are used to role-play shopping. This involves recognising currency, counting correct amounts to pay and checking the change. Paul created a wall display of coins and notes in sequence and refers to it each day. This work is further reinforced during the frequent trips to the local shopping centre, which Paul takes with his resource class. Paul's confidence about paying for something he purchased and for ordering something for example, in a local fast food outlet, has increased with each passing week. His ability to count out the amount needed and to check his change is improving. Paul's parents support the transfer of Paul's learning in this area when they bring him shopping and give him increasing responsibility on these trips.

2 Element: Developing an awareness of the concept of time

Learning outcomes: Paul will be able to

- tell the time from an analogue clock face for the hour , half hour and quarter hour
- tell the time from a digital clock faces for the hour, half hour and quarter hour
- adjust a clock to a particular time
- identify key times during the day, on the hour, half hour and quarter hour
- select appropriate times from timetables or schedules
- solve problems to work out the passage of time
- find a specified day or date on a calendar or timetable
- associate months or activities with their seasons.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

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Developing awareness of time is vitally important to Paul. His poor concept of time leads to increasing anxiety for him as he is unable to tell how long a lesson might last or when break time might come. Using a model clock the hours and portions of hours are taught. The idea of designing a Visual Scheduler was created specifically for Paul by his resource teacher. There is one per day and comprises a page for each period with a photo of the teacher and a symbol for the subject on the page. It is also colour coded according to the location of the classroom in the building and the colour of the doors to those classrooms. A small digital clock is placed on his desk for desk based classes so he can anticipate changes in activity and also that he is aware of when the class will end. For example Paul is asked to set 10 minutes for a reading activity.

Preparing for work

1

Element: Developing an awareness of health and safety using equipment

Learning outcomes: Paul will be able to

- give examples of safe practices in three distinct workplaces
- use all tools and equipment correctly and safely in a range of practical classes
- describe and use electrical equipment correctly and safely in a range of practical classes
- store all tools, materials and equipment safely
- list the different procedures for self-protection at work
- identify the fire exits in a school
- follow the instructions for a fire drill.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

List of key safety risks in the workplace

Paul's Metalwork class provides a realistic context for learning what is safe in a workplace. Safety is specifically taught at the start of first year, and is integral to all and every day activities in the workshop. The teacher makes basic rules clear, for example, no running is allowed in the workshop, no loose clothing should be worn, all pathways should be kept clear. In Metalwork Paul learns rules and safety procedures when making his key ring, mobile phone holder, and game. He learns safety rules and procedures with his peers, and his attention is frequently drawn to the wall chart, where he can point to relevant illustrations and directions. Paul is now able to tidy away tools in their appropriate places, and follows direction with regard to the safe use of tools and equipment. Paul's list includes words and pictures of what is safe and unsafe.

Living in a community

1

Element: Developing good relationships

Learning outcomes: Paul will be able to

- identify situations where people speak differently to different people
- talk about ways in which you yourself would like to be treated
- talk about/suggest ways of making and keeping friends

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

Links with the wider community through Meitheal, a buddy system

A Meitheal system operates in the school. This is a buddy system where senior students apply and are trained to be a mentor. Each senior student befriends and mentors a small group of first year students. One of the areas of great value to Paul is the games club at lunchtime run through the Meitheal buddy system. The opportunities it affords him to mix with his peers and to improve his communication skills have been invaluable. He looks forward every day to his lunch break time with the other students. When asked what he likes most in school he will without hesitation say 'friends'. Contact with the other students is the most satisfying part of his school experience.

2 Element: Using local facilities

Learning outcomes: Paul will be able to

- list ways of spending our leisure time
- identify familiar places and organisations in the local community
- distinguish between what is free and what has to be paid for in the local community
- make a list of familiar community personalities, their organisations, and their roles
- participate in a school-based community project and record their participation.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

Identifying familiar places

Navigating the building is covered for all students in SPHE classes at the start of the school year. Extra support is provided for Paul by his resource teachers who practice this with him and as he tours the building achieving different tasks each time, his confidence increases. To assist him, a sheet of laminated coloured paper, corresponding to the colour of the doors on the four corridors, is attached to each classroom door that Paul uses and also at strategic locations on the corridors where Paul has to make a decision to turn. At break time he is very proud to head off to the canteen unaccompanied. His parents are delighted with this new sense of independence and he is more relaxed about school. Paul himself clearly identifies 'finding my way around the school' as an important in his learning this year.

Participating in a school based community project

Paul is involved in a cross-curricular project on Community in a local area and this involves the following subjects - SPHE, CSPE and Geography. In Geography, Paul maps out the local area locating his school community and his neighbourhood. His project work on community looks at the local area and organisations that are helpful to people in the area. A visit to the local library and to the Youth Initiative (club) is part of his work in this project. The visit involves meeting with a key worker in the organisation and photographing the buildings for his portfolio.

Personal care

Advice was sought from the psychologist at the special school in relation to the element relationships and sexuality. Paul's parents expressed a wish to deal with this element.

1 Element: Knowing how to stay safe

Learning outcomes: Paul will be able to

- ▣ identify key safety risks in the workplace/home/community
- ▣ recognise when his/her own safety is threatened
- ▣ name daily practices that promote personal safety
- ▣ name the appropriate response when a risk is identified.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

Personal safety

In SPHE classes, discussion takes place on the right to personal safety. Using a range of different scenarios, Paul draws stick figures to describe what should happen next. Situation cards are used in the class also, as well as role plays of how a person might deal with a particular situation.

Main assessment tasks/activities for evidence of learning

Paul enjoys a challenge and loves to succeed. Therefore opportunities are created to respond to his progress, and to recognise his learning achievements. Any difficulties he encounters are seen positively, and as opportunities to learn something new. Here are some examples from Paul's school life.

Teacher and peer observation are used in a range of the PLUs for example Paul's participation in SPHE discussion and his participation in the Meitheal programme.

In Mathematics, the teacher designed differentiated worksheets that enable Paul to move from one question to the next, getting feedback from his teacher, as he needs it.

His work on the computer assisted reading programmes gives instant responses to completed work, and enables him to re-do, or adjust his responses appropriately.

The use of the reading diary records Paul's work in reading on a daily basis and facilitates his parents' direct involvement in his reading programme.

Paul's portfolio work is the main evidence of his learning. He reviews his portfolio, with his peers during group resource time. Individual reviews also take place with his resource teacher. Paul's parents have the opportunity to look at his portfolio during IEP and parent teacher meetings. The work that Paul has covered in his learning programme is currently being used as evidence of learning for the New Horizan ASDAN award.

Some reflections on the learning programme

As this was the time the school had a student with Paul's profile, organising a programme of learning for him presented its challenges. Having the Guidelines offered a structure to work from. Paul's priority learning targets from his IEP were addressed in his learning programme. The planning work around Paul's learning programme linked in well with his IEP and offered the opportunity to closely examine his likes and interests. It was also possible to exploit his love of music, sports and his interest in people in preparing work on his PLUs.

Getting Paul's subject teachers to link into the learning programme required a level of collaboration, with some subjects presenting greater opportunities to develop the PLUs than others. In mixed-ability classes teachers included Paul in the teaching and learning to the greatest extent possible. Having more examples available of how to integrate the PLUs with Junior Certificate subject classes would be very helpful. Currently the role of the SNA is pivotal in supporting Paul's involvement and interest. The daily contact between the SNA and subject teachers allows both to receive feedback on Paul's progress.

Parental involvement has been important to the success of the programme. Paul's parents have been supportive of the work and feel that the school has individualised the programme for him. They felt there was anxiety on both sides at the beginning of the school year but were pleased by the lengths the school went to, to consult them. They are pleased with the variety of work available to Paul. They remarked that he loves learning new things and enjoys talking about them at home. In Science he really enjoys the experiments. He can get the equipment and work in partnership with two

other students to do their experiment. The mixing of chemicals which involves a colour change he finds fascinating. In writing up the experiment his task will be to colour in the drawing of the apparatus.

Paul's parents have been supportive of the work and feel that the school has individualised the programme for him.

Paul's parents are very positive about how he has grown in confidence this year. Having a learning programme which can focus the learning in the area of communication has really supported Paul's communication and social skills.

At the same time they feel the learning is challenging enough for him and any further pressure might be counterproductive. This is an area of concern for the resource teacher as well because while the activities within the PLUs lend themselves very nicely to the Junior Certificate subject classes in first year, the teacher is concerned that this may not be the case in second and third years as the work becomes more challenging and the pressure of the examination is felt. For the coming year, the school is exploring the possibility of Paul linking in more formality with the local special school, for example one day a week to work on some specific PLUs .

Learning programme two - Using the guidelines in a special school

Fiona is a thirteen old student who attends the junior cycle section of a special school. Fiona has five older siblings, and is an aunt, who takes great delight in what her nieces and nephews are doing. She has an interest in music, dancing, fashion, movies and movie stars. She is a keen swimmer who represents the school in competitions. Her attendance in school is excellent. Outside of school she enjoys meeting up with her friends, shopping with her family and particularly going to music concerts. She functions within the moderate range of general learning disabilities and has a diagnosis of Down Syndrome. Fiona can communicate quite well verbally. Fiona was recently diagnosed with Diabetes type 1 and is learning how to deal with this illness. When she leaves school, she says 'I would like to get a job and earn my own money'.

In this school Lámh signing (Irish Sign Language) is taught to all students and is used alongside all spoken communications within the school so that every student is included and understands what is going on.

The special school that Fiona attends provides a learning environment for students with moderate to severe and profound general learning disabilities including students with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD). To maintain a sense of progression for students it has three main sections, primary, junior cycle and senior cycle. The junior cycle class has eight students. Fiona's junior cycle class covers seven subjects: English, Mathematics, Social and Personal Health Education (SPHE), Home Economics, Physical Education, Music and Art, Craft, Design along with two double periods per week to engage with topics in History, Geography, and Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE). While all the students in the class have been identified as having moderate general learning disability, their individual abilities vary. For example, three students, including Fiona, can read some text, while the other five have a basic sight vocabulary, but find reading difficult. In this school Lámh signing (Irish Sign Language) is taught to all students and is used alongside all spoken communications within the school so that every student is included and understands what is going on.

Personalised learning

Fiona's IEP identifies her strengths, needs, talents and interests which forms the basis for designing a suitable learning programme for her. Three times a year, Fiona's class teacher, Fiona, her parents, the SNA who works with her class group and the appropriate therapists (speech and language therapist, physiotherapist, and occupational therapists) meet to discuss her IEP. Table 5 summaries the information from her IEP outlining her baseline for learning at the start of the school year.

Fiona's abilities, skills, talents and interests

- Fiona
- is sociable, friendly, caring and kind
 - enjoys music and singing into a microphone
 - is a talented swimmer – has represented Ireland in Special Olympics
 - enjoys boy bands (Boyzone), shopping, make-up, hair and nails, clothes, fashion magazines
 - is interested in boys and having a boyfriend

Communication

- Fiona
- can initiate and develop conversation
 - can always make herself understood
 - can make 4-5 word sentences, using appropriate vocabulary
 - can deliver a message
 - makes good eye contact
 - becomes silent and withdrawn if a question is too complex
 - says yes if she doesn't know the answer to something

Literacy

- Fiona
- can read simple sentences
 - has a vocabulary of 100 words approximately
 - can read most 4-letter words, relying on the initial consonant sound, context and visual prompts
 - writes neatly (won a national handwriting competition)
 - can write her name, struggles with her address
 - can write simple sentences – *My name is Fiona Murphy. I am a girl.*

Numeracy

Fiona

- knows numbers from 1-20
- can add and subtract single numbers using the number line
- can read the hour on an analogue clock
- can recognise all coins €5, €10, €20, but cannot use money accurately when shopping
- has started to use the calculator for simple maths operations

Preparing for working life

Fiona

- would like to get a job and earn her own money
- is not able to travel independently into town

Personal care

Fiona

- may not say when she has a pain
- has had a recent diabetes diagnosis, so needs to learn to self monitor

Living in a community

Fiona

- enjoys family weddings, parties and local discos
- sometimes hugs people inappropriately
- may not express her feelings or needs adequately

A collaborative approach is also taken to plan, develop and evaluate Fiona’s learning programme and this is led by Fiona’s class teacher. Based on her needs and strengths the following elements from the PLUs are selected as the most relevant for Fiona and Table 6 gives an overview these.

Priority Learning Unit	Element	Junior cycle subject / school activity
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Communicating and literacy

Reading to obtain basic information
Using a range of writing forms to express opinions

English and all subjects

Numeracy

Developing an awareness of time

Mathematics, Home Economics, and all subjects

Preparing for work

Finding out about work

Home Economics and Geography

Living in a community

Seeking help and advice

SPHE, all subjects, working with the school nurse

Personal care

Developing a healthy lifestyle

Physical Education, Home Economics, SPHE, all subjects

Differentiating



Most of Fiona's learning experiences in school take place within her base classroom, where students work as a whole class, in small groups, one-to-one, and independently, as is appropriate to their learning at any particular time. Her interests and talents form the basis of much of her planned learning experiences. Fiona's parents, teachers and therapists find that visual structures assist and scaffold her in her learning, so these are incorporated into teaching Fiona. Carefully structured and staged approaches are favoured for her to optimise her learning.

ICT is used to support and provide further applications of learning experiences, and is especially useful for Fiona, being highly visual, and multi-sensory, as well as affording her independence and choice in her learning activities. It also supports collaboration with her class peers.



Using ICT

Transferring learning



While each subject period is allotted 30 minutes, Fiona's class teacher identifies, plans for, and avails of many and frequent opportunities throughout the school day to integrate and apply learning for her and her classmates across the curriculum. Other application of learning is facilitated through in-school and out-of-school activities, such as regular (often weekly) use of the school shop, local supermarkets, swimming pool, library, garden centres, and local café. Fiona's experience and success in the wider community setting of the Special Olympics is an additional learning opportunity, providing variety of contexts for the application of her PLUs.

Fiona's school welcomes contact with its neighbouring community. Open days, celebratory events, visits out, trips, and sport are some of many, ongoing means for outreach. The school is very involved in preparing students for the Special Olympics. In recent years this school has set up a link with a local post-primary school, whereby its transition year students get involved in some of the special school activities, during planned weekly visits. Fiona's class then visits the post-primary school during second term to collaborate in a transition year activity – last year they made an artefact in a Materials Technology Wood class, and this year they are involved in a musical programme, exploring singing and rhythm.



Linking learning with the wider community

Fiona's Priority Learning Units (PLUs)

1

Element: Developing an awareness of time

Learning outcomes: Fiona will be able to

- tell the time from an analogue clock face for the hour , half hour and quarter hour
- tell the time from a digital clock faces for the hour, half hour and quarter hour
- identify key times during the day, on the hour, half hour and quarter hour
- select appropriate times from timetables or schedules
- solve problems to work out the passage of time
- find a specified day or date on a calendar or timetable
- associate months or activities with their seasons.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

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Teaching and learning time on the quarter past and to and the half hour, is directly dealt with during Mathematic class, and informally during the school day. Learning time is linked to fractions, folding circular and other shapes in two, and in four, and tracing the fold lines. These fold lines are then linked to hand positions on the clock face. Students learn to adjust the hands corresponding to their folds. Each classroom has a working clock, and the teacher uses large and small analogue faces to assist the students in their learning. Assembly starts at 9.30am each day, some classes start on the quarters to the hour and the students' attention is drawn to these times. A large analogue clock is in the dining room, and Fiona's attention is drawn to this daily. This links too with Home Economics – cutting toast in half, and dividing cake or pizza in quarters. Planning trips to the cinema or to the bank involve recognition of start times and opening hours. These also provide opportunity to consider how long the trip will take – start and return times. Fiona's swimming times, and records of these are of great interest to her, noting the differences in performance from one swim to the next, and assist her in developing a concept of differing time intervals. Following a TV schedule for her favourite series also offers practice opportunities for time learning.

1 Element: Developing a healthy lifestyle

Learning outcomes: Fiona will be able to

- ▣ identify three personal benefits of regular exercise
- ▣ outline a personal weekly exercise plan
- ▣ demonstrate the principles of safe exercise practice
- ▣ maintain an exercise routine in a well structured environment
- ▣ explain how the food we eat contributes to our state of health
- ▣ give two examples of lifestyle choices which affect our health
- ▣ identify a range of emotional and physical states.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

Weekly swimming and other team and individual activities with her classmates during PE also support good lifestyle choices. During PE the class keeps an exercise diary, and students are encouraged to include exercise they do outside of PE class. The school is involved in an Inter Schools League and so opportunities to play with other teams and schools are also available. Lunchtime play and exercise offers further opportunities.

Communicating her emotional and physical state

Paul is involved in a cross-curricular project on Community in a local area and this involves the following subjects - SPHE, CSPE and Geography. In Geography, Paul maps out the local area locating his school community and his neighbourhood. His project work on community looks at the local area and organisations that are helpful to people in the area. A visit to the local library and to the Youth Initiative (club) is part of his work in this project. The visit involves meeting with a key worker in the organisation and photographing the buildings for his portfolio.

Fiona's well-being

With the assistance of the school nurse, who uses a pictorial sequence and role playing, Fiona is learning how to test her blood sugar levels. When required she goes to the nurse's room and ask for her diabetes monitoring kit and with support she tests her own glucose levels, learning the significance of the outcome..

Healthy eating

Paul is involved in a cross-curricular project on Community in a local area and this involves the following subjects - SPHE, CSPE and Geography. In Geography, Paul maps out the local area locating his school community and his neighbourhood. His project work on community looks at the local area and organisations that are helpful to people in the area. A visit to the local library and to the Youth Initiative (club) is part of his work in this project. The visit involves meeting with a key worker in the organisation and photographing the buildings for his portfolio.

Living in a community

1

Element: Seeking help and advice

Learning outcomes: Fiona will be able to

- name the relevant agencies that offer support and advice to the public
- identify in your school the procedure to report an incident
- identify rights appropriate to a familiar situation
- compile a short list of people or groups who can provide support, including personal contacts and groups/organisations and describe how to contact them.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

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While the SPHE syllabus explores this area, in many topics including ‘Communication skills’, ‘Friendships relationships and sexuality’, and ‘Emotional health’, all curriculum areas and school experiences offer opportunities for asking for help and support. In SPHE class methods like social stories and role play are frequently used to enable learning in this area. These include a great variety of situations that occur both in and out of school. These activities give rise to rich discussions on options that a person has in situations, consideration of options a person has in these situations, support one might need and how to deal with them. A range of prompt questions are used in the discussions ‘What would you do if...?’ ‘What would you do if you were in G Stores and got lost? Don’t panic, ask a member of staff. How would you recognise a member of staff?’ Fiona’s management of her Diabetes offers a real life situation for her, in asking for help to monitor her glucose levels.

Preparing for work

1

Element: Finding out about work

Learning outcomes: Paul will be able to

- identify up to three work roles in a familiar workplace
- list three employment opportunities locally
- describe one way how people get a job or course of their choice
- make a visit to a local employer and review the visit
- use a variety of ways to check for the advertisement of jobs.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

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During the school year Fiona and her class visit a variety of further education and vocational training centres. From these visits, students may choose further education options for when they leave school. Fiona will most likely need to be able to get a bus into town to get to work. So preparations have begun, through map work, discussion of landmarks in Geography class, followed by supported trips into town. In class Fiona is shown the route to the post office on a map, which she highlights, noting the key landmarks – for example traffic lights or certain shops.

In second term a bus drops the students and teachers to the main bus stop. From there they have to find a specific shop – the post office, for example. Students take digital pictures of the route and the key landmarks from the bus stop to the post office. Once back in school these are printed off, and added to their maps, which can be used on the next outing. Over time in this way Fiona will learn her way to different amenities in town e.g. the local library, the swimming pool.

Communicating and literacy

1

Element: Reading to obtain basic information

Learning outcomes: Fiona will be able to

- read familiar words that are commonly used and personally relevant
- use simple rules and text conventions that support meaning
- interpret different forms of writing and text, including social sight signs and symbols
- find key information from different forms of writing
- use a range of reading strategies.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

Fiona reads a series of short stories which develop her word recognition and comprehension. She can describe how the story has gone using pictures as prompts. Sometimes she draws pictures to convey how a story is going. Fiona's interest in movies and movie stars is used as reading materials for her. Fiona compiles magazine cuttings of relevant pictures in a project on her favourite singers or movie stars. These are also used to look at various advertised products, and their uses.

In school all the symbols for toilets, fire exits etc are international signs and symbols, and are displayed above or on the relevant doors. In class Fiona matches the signs with the corresponding words and explains what they mean using a range of pictures.

2 Element: Using a range of writing forms to express opinions

Learning outcomes: Fiona will be able to

- write notes and messages needed for simple tasks
- write, including drafting, at least five sentences so that they convey meaning or information
- use the rules of writing appropriately and use a range of spelling patterns
- use a range of different forms of writing to suit purpose and audience.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

Fiona reads a series of short stories which develop her word recognition and comprehension. She can describe how the story has gone using pictures as prompts. Sometimes she draws pictures to convey how a story is going. Fiona's interest in movies and movie stars is used as reading materials for her. Fiona compiles magazine cuttings of relevant pictures in a project on her favourite singers or movie stars. These are also used to look at various advertised products, and their uses.

In school all the symbols for toilets, fire exits etc are international signs and symbols, and are displayed above or on the relevant doors. In class Fiona matches the signs with the corresponding words and explains what they mean using a range of pictures.

Main assessment tasks/activities for evidence of learning

Recognising achievement

Fiona and her teacher discuss their ideas on how she might progress, they start by checking what the goal of her learning is and how her work meets that goal. Self assessment is encouraged, mainly through question and answer sessions, such as

How do you think you got on? What could we do next time? Fiona loves to get feedback and encouragement, and an idea of how well she is doing. Her gradually growing portfolio of work is a source of great pride to her, and she enjoys showing her completed work, at review sessions and at other opportunities. Her parents have the opportunity to look at Fiona's portfolio during IEP and parent teacher meetings. Her progress on the computer assisted reading programme is charted for each completed section, which Fiona can access and explain. She can modify and resubmit exercises and assignments, thus seeing for herself the progress she is making, or spotting where the error is and rectifying it. Fiona is learning to interpret the nurse's charts on her monitoring of diabetes, with a growing awareness of the significance of her results.

Some reflections on the learning programme

Fiona's learning programme gives a structure and a means to address her needs and strengths which are outline in her IEP. Her learning programme and IEP are reviewed on a monthly cycle through her teacher's monthly reports. While the learning programme addresses Fiona's individual needs it also relates very well to her class group and many of the activities to develop the PLUs are appropriate for her class group as well. At the moment Fiona and her class peers are working towards the FETAC Certificate in General Learning at Level 2. A lot of the work covered in Fiona's PLUs has contributed to this Level 2 FETAC award.

Fiona has gained a lot of independence since she started her learning programme, in particular her ability to find her way around the town has greatly improved. Fiona is also now better at asking for help to manage her blood sugar levels. The learning programme has linked Fiona's learning into her own life in a very real way.

To enhance Fiona's learning programme it would be great to get a teacher to teach Technology Materials Wood and a Physical Education teacher would also be an advantage. Subject specialised teachers would offer a greater range of opportunities for Fiona and her class peers to develop the elements within the PLUs. Having a variety of teachers in Fiona school life reinforces the idea that she is doing the same as her peers attending mainstream post-primary schools.

Having a variety of teachers in Fiona school life reinforces the idea that she is doing the same as her peers attending mainstream post-primary schools.

Learning programme three - using the guidelines in a post-primary school

John is 15 years old, and is functioning within the moderate general learning disability range. He is a member of the Traveller community and lives with his paternal grandmother and two other siblings. John's school is a small DEIS rural co-educational vocational school of just over 200 students. The school offers the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Applied and Post Leaving Certificate courses. The school organises the class groups in mixed-ability settings. John is in second year in a class of 24 students. His class is following a range of Junior Certificate subjects, they are participating in the JCSP. To support John's learning he has a laptop and software.

His class is following a range of Junior Certificate subjects, they are participating in the JCSP. To support John's learning he has a laptop and software.

John's timetable is differentiated

The resource teacher modified the second year timetable in order to integrate the teaching and learning of John's PLUs. The aim is to work within the resources available, to keep withdrawal to a minimum and to maximise John's learning with his year group. As John has an Irish exemption, during Irish classes he meets with his resource teacher and his SNA to discuss his progress, problems that have arisen, possible solutions and to plan the week ahead. This time is also used for one-to-one tuition in his PLUs. Another free time slot is used for visits out of school to town, for shopping or other associated curricular activities. Otherwise John's learning takes place in the main classroom with his classmates. The Irish/cultural studies slot on another afternoon is used for a small group session with three other students who also have Irish exemptions, where the focus is on local and cultural studies.

Personalised learning

Through the IEP process, John's strengths and learning challenges are identified and these inform the selection of PLUs for his learning programme. Table 7 describes John's main strengths and learning challenges as described in his IEP.





A collaborative approach is also taken to plan, develop and evaluate Fiona’s learning programme and this is led by Fiona’s class teacher. Based on her needs and strengths the following elements from the PLUs are selected as the most relevant for Fiona and Table 6 gives an overview these.

Priority Learning Unit	Element	Junior cycle subject / school activity
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Communicating and literacy	<p>Reading to obtain basic information</p> <p>Using a range of writing forms to express opinions</p>	English and all subjects
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Numeracy	Developing an awareness of time	Mathematics, Business Studies
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Preparing for work	Developing an awareness of health and safety using equipment	Materials Technology: Wood, local and cultural studies, Home Economics
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Living in a community	Using local facilities	SPHE, CSPE, Geography, all subjects, Meitheal buddy system
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Personal care	Developing a healthy lifestyle	Physical Education, Home Economics, SPHE, Science, CSPE
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Collaborating

The school is characterised by an emphasis on collaboration, led by the principal and the management team, the special educational needs co-ordinator and subject departments. The resource teacher meets each subject teacher to discuss the implications of John's PLUs for their subject, and how John's learning can best be facilitated. They agree on the building and maintenance of a portfolio of work for him.

Planning and review related to John's learning programme is also informed by visits to his family home by the resource teacher. John's family, the visiting teacher for traveller education and the resource teacher agree and commit to ongoing communication to reinforce and support John's learning in school, by visits to and from school, telephone, texts, and through John's learning journal.

In school, collaboration is exemplified by his English teachers. John's year group is divided into two English classes. Both teachers work very closely together on their subject programme, and combine to organise events for film studies, or when a local storyteller or poet comes to visit. Collaboration extends to the student cohort. John's school runs a peer responsibility programme, such as the Big Brother Big Sister (BBBS) Programme and paired reading. The school also has well developed links with other services provided by the VEC including facilitation of progression to adult basic education programmes, youthreach and VTOS schemes.

Linking learning with the wider community



John's timetable allows for two trips out of school per week. His teacher, SNA and his small group classmates go to learning-relevant places locally, such as the bank and post office. As his school is in an urban setting there are lots of opportunities for learning signs and symbols and for modelling good and appropriate behaviour in various settings. Examples of these would be going shopping for wood for his woodwork project and going to the local graveyard to learn about local history. Other links with the out-of-school community include visits in from Health Service Executive personnel or guests who speak to students on awards night. There is an ongoing focus in school on John's cultural heritage as a member of the Traveller community, and this is also fostered through interventions organised by the visiting teacher for Traveller students locally.

In Business Studies, John uses a calculator when he is working with numbers. John's teacher photocopied simplified real life budgets and bills. With support John reads the budget or bill and then uses the calculator to work with the figures. In Mathematics he uses his calculator almost daily. John and his classmates also play short games on the Internet to reinforce topics that are taught. This also makes learning fun, as John likes working on the computer and it is something he does with greater ease than writing. He also uses computerised mathematical games, both commercially produced and free downloads from the internet.

Subjects where ICT is integral



John uses his laptop while working on his various projects and while using his educational software in different subject classes. He also uses a printer and scanner and the Internet to reinforce learning in Music, English, Mathematics and Business Studies classes.

John attends his timetabled ICT class once a week with the rest of his 24 classmates. Class content includes learning how to type, which reinforces John's literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. John enjoys ICT and he was already familiar with some of the hardware and educational software from his time in primary school. He works on the same class content as his classmates but works at a slower pace. John is learning how to type and is enhancing his literacy with a programme using free online software. John is assigned a place in the class-seating plan, he has to turn on his computer, let the virus programme run, locate his folder, open his folder, follow the lesson, save his work and shut down his computer properly. John learns the appropriate procedure by following the same steps in every class.

He also uses word processing in a range of short projects, for example he designed an advertisement to sell some of his pups. John is good at ICT and likes computer work. He loves using the internet to look up images of dogs and asks the teacher or a peer to read the accompanying text. He locates images of dogs on the net, pastes them into Microsoft Word. The pictures are then combined with common basic vocabulary. John enjoys printing out the pages and bringing them home to show his family.

His engagement with technology also includes using washing machines, microwaves, and ovens, all of which John encounters and uses repeatedly in Home Economics. John also uses this technology at home. On his trips out with his teacher or with his family John has the opportunity to use other technology such as an ATM.

ICT



John's Priority Learning Units (PLUs)

1

Element: Developing an awareness of number

Learning outcomes: John will be able to

- recognize numbers up to 100 in **N**
- recognize place value in relation to units, tens, hundreds
- add two digit whole numbers that total less than 100 in the context of an everyday situation
- subtract two digit whole numbers in the context of an everyday situation
- estimate quantities to the nearest value in broad terms
- use the number line to perform operations of addition, subtraction in **N**.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

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John uses the 100 square to help him recognise numbers up to 100. He reverses his numbers sometimes, so he practices and tries to catch and correct himself by filling in missing numbers in part blank 100 squares. John can add numbers up to ten on paper and uses a calculator for larger numbers. John draws a number line and uses it for subtraction and adding. He practices what he has learned using commercially produced software and his teacher downloads some mathematical games and number bonding worksheets for him and his classmates. Levels are variable, so John can work at an appropriate level while his peers work on theirs. Learning in this area includes money, such as coin and note recognition by number and otherwise, calculating change, researching the cost of pups etc.

Transferring learning

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There are many opportunities across the curriculum for application and transfer of learning in quantity and number, including in the subjects Materials Technology Wood, Science and Business Studies.

Communicating and literacy

1

Element: Reading to obtain basic information

Learning outcomes: John will be able to

- read familiar words that are commonly used and personally relevant
- use simple rules and text conventions that support meaning
- interpret different forms of writing and text, including social sight signs and symbols
- find key information from different forms of writing
- use a range of reading strategies.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

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John benefits from staged, repetitive, consistent and structured teaching methods embedded in real life contexts that interest him. John has an opportunity to select a book on reading day in English class. The teacher first reads the title and John is then asked what he thinks the book is about. Pictures on the cover prompt conversation. While reading, the teacher and John look at the pictures first and then read the text. Words that John needs in everyday life are sometimes emphasised, but the main aim is reading for pleasure. The books in the English room are high interest-low reading age books. The same process is followed for John in a paired-reading programme, with a senior student volunteer. His aunt and sister read some basic books that he borrows from school. Many of John's teachers use a keyword approach, pre-teaching important words. John uses a bookmark of key words, and teacher places them on a wall poster.

2 Element: Using a range of writing forms to express opinions

Learning outcomes: John will be able to

- write/type notes and messages needed for simple tasks
- write/type at least five sentences so that they convey meaning or information,
- use the main rules of writing appropriately
- use a range of spelling patterns
- use a range of different forms of writing to suit purpose and audience.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

John is focusing on everyday basic vocabulary from the Dolch list of basic sight vocabulary, along with familiar functional words. Application forms for the driving test, tax and bank forms are useful resources for John to learn how to write his name, address, date of birth, and to help his familiarity with real life documents. Repeating activities like addressing envelopes, writing postcards and greeting cards reinforce his learning. John uses his laptop on a daily basis. Commercially produced writing assisting software that speaks text as he writes enables him to write and respond to tasks of his own choosing, and as directed by his teachers. John uses his laptop throughout the school day.

Living in a community

1

Element: Using local facilities

Learning outcomes: John will be able to

- name the relevant agencies that offer support and advice to the public
- identify in your school the procedure to report an incident
- identify rights appropriate to a familiar situation
- compile a short list of people or groups who can provide support, including personal contacts and groups/organisations and describe how to contact them.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

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John belongs to many communities, including family, local, school and Traveller communities. He participates in a school-run student mentoring programme – the Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) where a senior student mentor is matched with a first or second year mentee. The aims of the mentoring programme are discussed at interview – these included some of John’s social and communication objectives. Once the mentors are selected the mentors and mentees meet once a week for lunch, while supervised by the BBBS facilitator and a teacher. John and his mentor make lunch, sit, eat, and chat. They then play games e.g. cards or a board game, listen to music with other mentors and mentees. John’s mentor models appropriate behaviour in the group. Through his unique friendship with John, his mentor is able to advise him on how to behave and to discretely advise him on inappropriate behaviour.

John’s grandfather used to make traditional caravans. After detailed discussion in class John and his classmates looked up traditional Traveller caravans on the internet, copied pictures, and created a drawing using the pictures as models. John likes drawing as a hobby as well as part of his Art, Craft, Design class. In this way his community membership is combined with a pleasurable creative leisure activity. His art work is routinely displayed, alongside his peers’ work in the art room. His artefacts in Materials Technology Wood are also displayed and acknowledged.

As part of Irish/cultural studies John and his classmates go to visit the local graveyard. There they read names from tombstones, and tell stories based on people buried there. John loves to recount stories and these trips provide an opportunity for this. Sometimes John or one of the others will role play, e.g. a tourist, asking questions about families and places, and listening to the responses.

1 Element: Developing a healthy lifestyle

Learning outcomes: Fiona will be able to

- ▣ identify three personal benefits of regular exercise
- ▣ outline a personal weekly exercise plan
- ▣ demonstrate the principles of safe exercise practice
- ▣ maintain an exercise routine in a well structured environment
- ▣ explain how the food we eat contributes to our state of health
- ▣ give two examples of lifestyle choices which affect our health
- ▣ identify a range of emotional and physical states.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

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Healthy eating is emphasised in Home Economics in particular. John cooks and prepares simple meals with his working partner. The teacher uses simple menus that John reads with her help. John is encouraged to cook at home also. In Physical Education (PE) John learns how to put a healthy lifestyle into practice. Most PE classes are outdoors. John participates in the class with his peers, but he sometimes forgets his gear. Phoned reminders home usually sort this out. During wet days his teacher incorporates personal care practice, healthy diet and fitness into class work. This includes each student developing an exercise plan. John and his classmates take turns washing, ironing, and folding school football jerseys. John learns how to care for clothes and the importance of personal hygiene after exercise.

The BBBS mentors and mentees shop for healthy food for their lunch meeting. This provides an opportunity for John to practice using money and to select healthy snacks while shopping. The BBBS also provides an opportunity to practice preparing lunch with the group. The school is planning work experience for him in a local café in his third year.

Preparing for work

1

Element: Developing an awareness of health and safety using equipment

Learning outcomes: John will be able to

- give examples of safe practices in three distinct workplaces
- use all tools and equipment correctly and safely in a range of practical classes
- describe and use electrical equipment correctly and safely in a range of practical classes
- store all tools, materials and equipment safely
- list the different procedures for self-protection at work
- identify the fire exits in a school
- follow the instructions for a fire drill.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

The guidance counsellor gives John individual vocational guidance e.g. about the availability of further education and/or working in the community. A small group of students including John visit local adult education centres, youthreach and training centres to explore further education opportunities with the guidance counsellor.

Transferring learning

Preparing for, planning and participating in visits out to e.g. the Fire Station, Garda Station and workplaces gives John an understanding that health and safety and personal safety are important. 'What if...' scenarios are used to prepare for trips out or John is asked what advice he would give his younger brother in certain potentially dangerous situations. John went on a trip with his Geography class, teacher and SNA to a local quarry, and had to follow strict health and safety rules while on site. In Home economics John learns hazard labels on products. He likes to copy and draw the symbols and learns them in this way. The Science laboratory, Technology Materials Wood and IT rooms all have particular rules on health and safety. John and his peers regularly participate in a fire drill, which practices safe behaviour during a potentially dangerous situation.

Main assessment tasks/activities for evidence of learning

Recognising achievement

John's efforts and persistence at learning are acknowledged as much and as often as possible in school and at home. Teachers are consistent and as a policy feedback is always communicated individually to John so that he knows what his next step in learning is. In class the date, homework and the purpose of the lesson is written on the whiteboard. John's BBBS mentor is particularly gifted and helpful in his feedback to John. Teacher observation and differentiated task sheets are used to assess a range of his PLUs. All of his work is collected in his portfolio, which is reviewed throughout the year.

Student of the year and special recognition awards are distributed during awards night, and John has received one for his improved attendance and project achievements. This is an annual event attended by families, the CEO of the VEC, members of the board of management and other guests. John's guardian has his awards for attendance and special recognition framed and displayed at home. John's and his peers' artwork is routinely displayed in the art room. His and his classmates' project artefacts in Materials Technology: Wood are also displayed for comment (John has made a tool box recently). His best work was put on display during open night, and he and some of his friends helped the teachers in their various rooms on the night to represent the school and what it offers.

Some reflections on the learning programme

Before John enrolled in the school, the school did not have experience in working with a student with moderate learning disabilities. It would have been great to have the learning programme for him in first year, because before the programme his behaviour and attendance was beginning to deteriorate. Although John's class are participating in the JCSP and they find it very beneficial as it shows progress through the completed statements, none of the statements other than the those in the basic skills section are suitable for John. The learning programme offers a way of putting a structure on John's learning and a way of showing his achievements. This is very important as John will not be sitting any subjects in the Junior Certificate examination. John and his guardian are hoping that John will get certification for his time in school.

The visiting teacher (having spoken with John and his guardian) reported that John was very happy in school. She commented on how he had become more assertive. The visiting teacher felt that the learning programme incorporated learning embedded in real life scenarios and was cognisant of John's interests and strengths. It is also clear that John has improved in all the PLUs – the most noticeable progress is in John's improvement in the use of money, time, ICT and social skills.

The learning programme needed to be communicated more clearly to all of John's teachers. All teachers should have been committed to delivering the learning programme. One way of doing this might be to further break down the learning outcomes into more manageable steps for the student in each subject class. This might also entail greater communication with all the parties involved in John's education. The programme should be reviewed twice yearly, in line with the school policy on reporting back to parents/guardians on students' progress. Further planning is needed in the Preparing for work PLU – some type of work experience would enhance John's learning and further consultation with the guidance counselor needs to be considered.

John's class are participating in the JCSP and they find it very beneficial as it shows progress through the completed statements, none of the statements other than the those in the basic skills section are suitable for John.

Learning programme four - using the guidelines in a special school

Mary is a 16 year old sociable, sensitive, popular and happy student. She has a considerable interest in music, which she shares with her sister who is two years older than her. She loves listening to music, singing, dancing and skipping and has excellent rhythmic sense. She can be quite shy and often needs prompting and encouragement to interact with others. Mary is on the autistic spectrum and has a moderate learning disability. Her auditory skills are enhanced; she can hear and distinguish sounds from a distance. In school, noise is very distracting for her. A quiet learning environment suits her well. Mary has weak muscle tone and poor manual dexterity, and her organisational and sequencing skills are poor. Mary accesses speech and language, reflexology and music therapies during her school week. She also has an exercise programme for manual dexterity.

The school's culture is one of nurture, praise and encouragement, and challenge for its students, leading towards the building and enhancement of self-esteem...

Mary is in her third year at junior cycle, and in a class of 8 students of varying abilities and needs, including students with behavioural problems. The class atmosphere is good humoured and class morale is generally positive. Mary attends a special school of 73 students, with 11 teachers and 12 SNAs. The school is co-educational, divided into primary, junior and senior cycles, offering programmes at Level 2 of the NFQ, Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied. The school's culture is one of nurture, praise and encouragement, and challenge for its students, leading towards the building and enhancement of self-esteem and an appreciation of each student's personal value and contribution to the school community.

Personalised learning

Mary's IEP is drawn up by her class teacher, in collaboration with other professionals involved, her SNA, her parents and herself. It is reviewed and updated by this team at least three times during the school year, together with regular weekly review and planning by the class teacher. The priority learning targets identified for Mary in her IEP are

1 The promotion of independence for her in the area of personal care.

2 The building of appropriate and meaningful relationships with others.

3 The enhancement of her self-esteem.

Using her IEP as a starting point, Mary’s learning programme is planned by the class teacher and by Mary and her parents, in collaboration with the other professionals involved, including her speech and language therapist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, and SNA. It is reviewed at the end of the first term and again in the third term. There is a commitment among this team to regular formal and informal contact regarding Mary’s teaching and learning. Table 8 presents an overview of her learning programme.

Priority Learning Unit	Element	Junior cycle subject / school activity
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Communicating and literacy	Speaking appropriately for a variety of purposes and audiences and demonstrating attentiveness as a listener	English and all subjects
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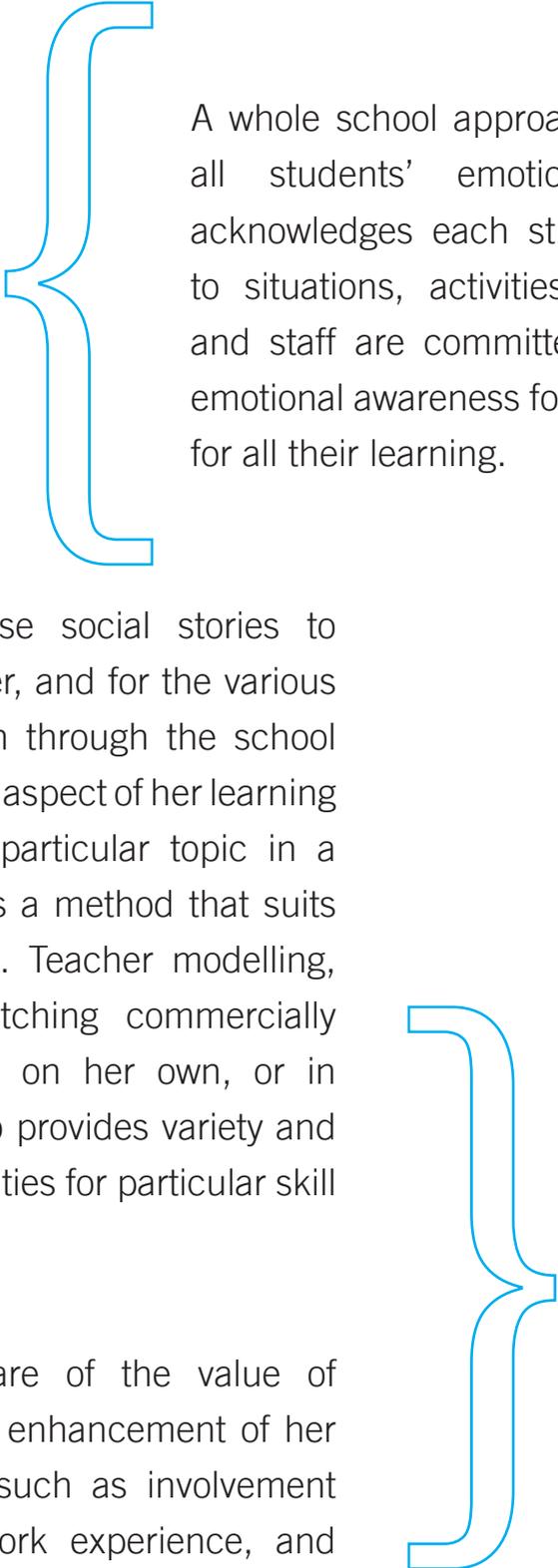
Numeracy	Managing money Developing an awareness of time	Mathematics
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Preparing for work	Taking part in a work related activity	Guidance counseling
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Living in a community	Developing good relationships Resolving conflict	SPHE, PE, Materials Technology: Wood
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Personal care	Developing a good daily personal care	Physical Education, Home Economics, SPHE, Science, CSPE
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Whole school approach



A whole school approach is adopted to promote all students' emotional development. This acknowledges each student's unique responses to situations, activities and learning. Teachers and staff are committed to the development of emotional awareness for each student as the basis for all their learning.

Mary's teachers often use social stories to personalise learning for her, and for the various groups she participates in through the school day. These target a specific aspect of her learning which is important in a particular topic in a learning area. Modelling is a method that suits Mary and her classmates. Teacher modelling, peer modelling, and watching commercially produced DVDs, whether on her own, or in small or class groups, also provides variety and focused learning opportunities for particular skill enhancement.

Mary's teachers are aware of the value of multi-sensory prompts for enhancement of her learning. Real situations such as involvement in the breakfast club, work experience, and shopping are invaluable. In the classroom pictures are often used, as well as the spoken word, to develop skills and learning, e.g. sorting pictures into appropriate categories (What's ok and What's not ok), using conversation cue cards to scaffold Mary's conversational skills,

Differentiating

watching DVDs, using assistive technology such as laptops for reading programmes and writing tasks, internet browsing, and emailing.

Teaching and learning approaches include the use of music in learning, as music is a passion for Mary. For example, Mary's teacher uses musical prompts to signal changing from one task to the next, and to signal break and lunch times (thus supporting time learning). Music is also used in SPHE exploration of moods and emotions - students are encouraged to draw the emotion – say of boredom – after selecting an appropriate piece of music to correspond to boredom from a selection offered by the teacher. This leads to great fun among the group as they respond to different pieces. Mary enjoys these approaches.

Throughout the day there are many opportunities provided for pair work, where roles are assigned to each student. Mary often finds this very challenging and she is supported throughout, by prompting, modelling, and lots of encouragement.

Mary's teachers often use social stories to personalise learning for her, and for the various groups she participates in through the school day.

Mary's Priority Learning Units (PLUs)

1

Element: Managing money

Learning outcomes: Mary will be able to

- recognise Euro notes and coins, €5, €10 and €20, and 50c, 20c, 10c and 5c coins
- estimate the cost of two common items and calculate how much they will cost in total
- pay for an item correctly and count the change in a mock-up or real life shopping transaction
- explain a shopping receipt, in relation to what was bought, money tendered and correct change given
- pay the correct fare for a bus journey
- recognise the difference between using money to buy essential items and luxury items
- save a small amount of money each week to buy an item.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

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This PLU is taught and learned through games, role playing, real life shopping experiences, as well as desk and classroom work. Recognition of money is through plastic coins and notes, then moving on to real money. Matching, pairing exercises assist recognition, for example Find me the same coin as this one. The coins are then laid side by side until they are matched together. This is then developed into equivalence matching games, and finding the coin and note combinations to meet required amounts. In class make-believe shopping situations are arranged by the teacher with the group.

Mary is guided by an adult through real shopping experiences, finding an item she can afford, finding the right coins to pay for it, and anticipating the right change.

2 Element: Developing an awareness of time

Learning outcomes: Mary will be able to

- ▣ tell the time from an analogue clock face for the hour or half hour or quarter hour
- ▣ tell the time from a digital clock faces for the hour or half hour and quarter hour
- ▣ adjust a clock to a particular time
- ▣ identify key times during the day, on the hour, half hour and quarter hour
- ▣ select appropriate times from timetables or schedules
- ▣ solve problems to work out the passage of time
- ▣ find a specified day or date on a calendar or timetable
- ▣ associate months or activities with their seasons.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

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Mary learns to follow her own timetable using a Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) style picture timetable. Pictures of Mary's daily routine are laid out in sequence daily. Mary works on this with support. Thus Mary knows what activity is coming next. The timetable is drawn up with Mary and she colours and glues them in place. This enables Mary's ownership of her daily schedule. Mary's comprehension and use of her timetable develops over time. She learns to recognise key times in the day, such as break times. Appropriate clock faces are associated with each pictured activity, so clock reading is combined with following the time schedule.

Communicating and literacy

1 Element: Speaking appropriately for a variety of purposes and audiences and demonstrating attentiveness as a listener

Learning outcomes: Mary will be able to

- listen to obtain information relating to more than one option
- ask questions to obtain information
- follow a series of spoken instructions under supervision
- express personal opinions, facts and feelings appropriately
- participate in practical formal and informal communications.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

This PLU extends across all of Mary's school experiences. Conversation about her musical interests, whether she enjoyed an outing, or her opinion of a new release by her favourite singer are all opportunities that are used to develop her talking and listening throughout the school day. Mary's receptive language ability is strong relative to her expressive language. Role play, DVD examples and other modeling along with games assist Mary to distinguish language appropriate to different settings. Conversation skills are prompted and modelled through a morning news style lesson. The teacher and Mary take turns telling their news. Questioning forms a vital part of this for Mary.

'What did you do last night?'

Mary may answer 'Television'.

Another question from the teacher 'Did you watch Fair City on television?'

'Yes'

'Do you want to know what I did?'

Mary answers 'Yes'.

Teacher says 'Ok, Ask me!'.....

Another example of learning in this area would be in Materials Technology Wood. The teacher demonstrates to Mary how to do a task and gives a running commentary, e.g.

'Now, Mary, I'm going to cut this piece of wood here and then we'll cut it together with this piece. Can you hold this block for me?'

Mary's response is that she smiles and repeats some of the vocabulary of the lesson. She enjoys the activity. At the end of the project Mary has a finished piece of work for herself, which she has achieved with some support, e.g. a shelf and a CD rack. With support and question prompts, she can describe in basic terms what it is and how she made it.

Living in a community

1

Element: Developing good relationships and Resolving conflict

Learning outcomes: Mary will be able to

- recognise that people speak differently to different people
- list ways in which name-calling and teasing can be hurtful to oneself and others
- list ways in which you yourself would like to be treated
- suggest ways of making and keeping friends
- describe what peer pressure is, give examples of peer pressure and suggest ways of handling it
- participate co-operatively in a group situation
- demonstrate an ability to negotiate with her peers.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

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For this PLU, talk and discussion of topics during SPHE class is useful. Mary is involved in attending, responding and initiating conversation, and partaking in discussion. Particularly relevant are the SPHE topics of communication skills, friendships, relationships and sexuality.

Links with the wider community

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Mary's participates each morning in the breakfast club. This provides for learning in an atmosphere of calm and wellbeing, and gives students opportunities to interact with each other in a sociable way. The smell of toast and hot tea in the morning before 'class' starts is encouraging to the students and gives them a positive start to the day. Mary thoroughly enjoys this social setting each morning. Her role on a day might be setting the table with an SNA's assistance and drying up utensils afterwards. Her peers take turns in doing this with her.

Mary is an enthusiastic member of the school's rings team. This fosters turn taking, competing, resolving difficulties that naturally arise in team activities – who does what, goes first etc? Inter-school competition also enhances negotiation and co operation in groups. This learning is further supported in PE through dance and other activities, through group and pair work in Home Economics, in drama class and many other collaborative learning opportunities across the curriculum.

Personal care

1

Element: Developing good daily practice

Learning outcomes: Mary will be able to

- ▣ list essential daily personal care practices
- ▣ describe the most important ways of keeping the body clean
- ▣ identify some benefits and consequences of good personal care
- ▣ explain the benefits of a range of daily personal care products
- ▣ maintain an agreed personal care plan
- ▣ list reasons to care for personal belongings
- ▣ identify appropriate clothing for a range of routine activities at home, at work and in the community.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

All Mary's activities in this area of learning are practical and based in real life. Washing one's face, brushing teeth, hair, and dressing oneself are taught by modelling. Mary has her own wash bag with face cloth, soaps, toothbrush and toothpaste which she uses for these lessons. She is encouraged to be as independent as possible and can complete these tasks with a minimum of prompting and support. Using zips and fasteners is taught in a realistic way also. Mary is shown which side of the zip to hold and which side to pull up with her right hand to close the fastener.

Preparing for work

1

Element: Taking part in a work related activity

Learning outcomes: Mary will be able to

- identify and list personal strengths
- create a curriculum vitae including personal profile, education and work experience details
- participate in a short interview
- carry out specific tasks in a range of roles in school
- keep a record of tasks completed in a journal.

Snapshot of some sample teaching and learning activities that cover this element

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The guidance counsellor meets Mary once a week to review and plan this PLU. Mary is involved in the school's in-house work experience programme. She takes responsibility for different areas of the classroom and school, with support. A rota of tasks includes ringing the school bell at appropriate times (linking with learning of time above), staffroom shopping and organisation, caring for the grounds, working in the school garden, assisting with recycling, e.g. colour coding and labelling of bins. The rota in which Mary participates also includes maintaining soaps and towels in the toilet. With SNA help, Mary gathers towels and soaps and travels around the school wheeling a push trolley, distributing clean towels to the classrooms, and taking used towels to the laundry. Mary is prompted, when necessary, to ask for the towels and uses social vocabulary of 'please' and 'thank you' in her interactions with school personnel. This is preparation for the out-of-school work experience offered to students in senior cycle, in a local hotel. Mary will be able to partake in this next year.

Main assessment tasks/activities for evidence of learning

Recognising achievement

The school fosters honest acknowledgement and recognition of progress and achievement in both positive behaviour and learning. Whole school assemblies on Fridays provide opportunities for celebrating sporting, academic, social and other achievements. Within their class each week students are awarded green and gold cards for specific achievements each week. Students of the month are proposed from each class. The overall winner receives a plaque and a framed photograph. Phone calls home and notes in journals also communicate achievements and learning, and recognise the positive progress of students.

Mary's class teacher acknowledges Mary's learning strengths, and her achievements, on an ongoing basis throughout the school day, combining this with suggestions and support as to how she can meet some of her challenges. Mary likes charting her progress and this is in itself a continuous motivator towards further learning. Setting her new learning targets is also integral to her learning and its ongoing assessment for her. Sharing her learning successes and challenges with her family helps sustain and encourage Mary's interest in her learning. Mary's learning is assessed by teacher observation of skills acquired and targets reached. Her portfolio is assessed weekly, with her, in terms of task completion. Class tests are differentiated. These are also stored in her portfolio.

Some reflections on the learning programme

The learning programme is a great way to review Mary's progress and achievements throughout the year. It has been very useful for the school to link the review of Mary's learning programme to her IEP review meetings. Going forward the school will need to pay more attention to different ways of gathering evidence of Mary's learning, for example maybe taking a video clip of her demonstrating a task. It is also vital to establish links with the outside agencies involved in Mary's care and to include them into the planning and implementing of her programme. Mary's foster sister has noted that she has become more social and she interacts more with her peers. She has become interested in doing things for herself, making her own lunch and looking after her appearance. Her foster sister is very concerned that Mary independent and life skills are the main focus of her learning programme next year.

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