

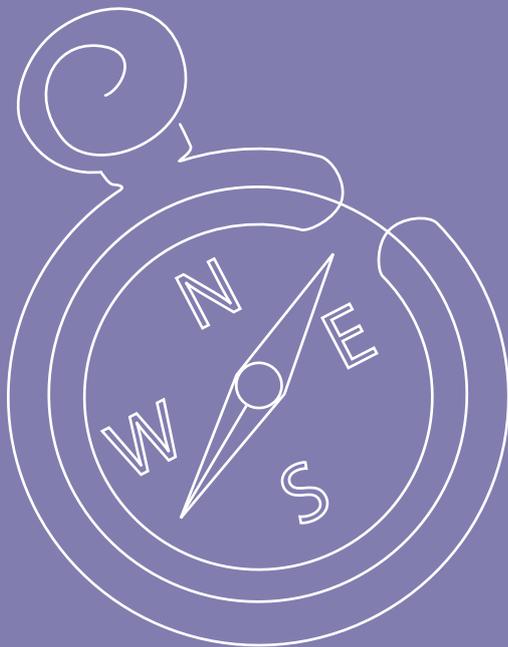
PRIMARY

Social, Environmental and Scientific Education: Geography

Guidelines for Teachers of Students with

SEVERE and PROFOUND

General Learning Disabilities



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SESE: Introduction

This aspect of education has always been regarded as an extremely important part of the curriculum in schools catering for students with general learning disabilities.

SESE offers opportunities for the introduction of a broad range of experiences that will greatly enrich and enhance the student's understanding of their familiar and wider surroundings.

This area of the curriculum involves understanding and relating to the environment in a way that is real and meaningful for each student. It encompasses history, geography and science and enables students to explore and investigate actively the natural, human, social, and cultural environment in which they live. It helps students to develop a sense of what part these aspects of life play in the wider scheme of things.

History

History is concerned with knowledge of the lives of people in the past and how this is interpreted. For students with severe and profound general learning disabilities, personal experiences and elements of family history will be to the forefront. The history curriculum also seeks to enable the student to make sense of the passing of time. It aims to familiarise him/her with the ability to gather evidence about things that happened in his/her own environment, to examine that evidence, and to draw simple conclusions from it. This can provide the student with an insight into the way in which historians go about their work.

Geography

Geography encompasses the study of the Earth, its inhabitants, and the relationships between them. It is particularly concerned with themes of place, space and the environment. For students with severe and profound general learning disabilities, this begins with gaining an awareness of one's own place and the place of familiar people in the immediate environment. Mobility around the school and the local environment is a critical need for many students. The Geography curriculum has much to offer in this respect. The curriculum also places an emphasis on observing and exploring the richness of the immediate environs of the school and home, and seeks to foster a sense of individual and community responsibility for environmental care.

Science

Science is concerned with enabling the student to gain knowledge and understanding of the physical and biological aspects of his/her environment. The curriculum emphasises the importance of starting with what is familiar to the student in the everyday environment. As his/her skills of observation and investigation are developed work can be broadened to include the wider environment.

I am a student learning to understand and relate to the environment, whose teacher is using these SESE guidelines

What can I learn through history?	What can I learn through geography?	What can I learn through science?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ I can engage activities to help me to understand the passing of time throughout the day/ week/year. ■ I can learn to associate special events with particular times of the day/week/year. ■ I can develop ways of remembering meaningful events and be helped to understand that they happened in the past. ■ I can work on strategies to help me to use the pattern of routine events in the past in order to anticipate future patterns of events. ■ I can learn to use skills of investigation to find out about past events. ■ I can work on projects to help me develop a sense of my own personal history. ■ I can participate in outings to enable me to experience the ambience of buildings and places associated with the past. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ I can gain an insight into my role as a member of different groups. ■ I can develop an awareness of the variety of homes in which people live. ■ I can work on projects that help me to understand the roles of people who are familiar to me in my environment. ■ I can improve my understanding of my own position in my immediate environment. ■ I can participate in activities to help me find my way around my familiar daily environment. ■ I can participate in activities to help me to take an interest in and make sense of unfamiliar environments. ■ I can work on projects to help me become aware of weather and seasonal changes. ■ I can learn how to take care of the immediate and the wider environment. ■ I can become aware of all the different ways in which I can use my environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ I can explore and experiment with a wide range of materials. ■ I can increase my awareness and understanding of plants in my environment. ■ I can find out about animals in my environment. ■ I can participate in activities to help me make sense of sources of energy around me. ■ I can participate in experiments to alert me to the changes that occur in materials and food when energy is applied to them. ■ I can increase my awareness and understanding of changes in my environment.

Geography: Introduction

A central aspect is building on experiences that are already familiar to the student and then gradually broadening those experiences.

A rich variety of natural materials, flora and fauna is there to be explored and students with severe and profound general learning disabilities often need very structured activities to help them appreciate these sources of interest.

The *Primary School Curriculum, Geography*, is divided into two strands:

- Human environments
- Natural environments.

Human environments

In developing an awareness of the human environment the student can develop an awareness of being part of a group, and recognise the role familiar people play in his/her life. This can extend to observing the roles of people in society and developing an appreciation of the way in which people use the environment. Fostering a sense of personal, class, school, and local identity enables students with severe and profound general learning disabilities to understand their role and the role of others in the human environment. Understanding how people use their environment begins with an awareness that parts of the classroom, home, and amenities in the locality have particular uses. A central aspect is building on experiences that are already familiar to the student and then gradually broadening those experiences.

Natural environments

Initial understanding of the physical environment centres around the student's immediate and local environment, and this is gradually extended to include examples of wider environments. Activities in this area range from exploring and becoming familiar with the environment of the classroom to becoming familiar with the grounds around the school and the local environment. They are aimed at familiarising the student with frequently used routes so that his/her awareness of and interest in routine journeys are increased. Family holidays and trips outside the school environment also serve to stimulate the student's interest in the wider world. These wider environments may also be experienced indirectly through television, books, films, computer programs, the internet, and other media.

Becoming aware of the natural environment is an important part of the *Primary School Curriculum, Geography*. A rich variety of natural materials, flora and fauna can be explored, but students with severe and profound general learning disabilities often need very structured activities to help them appreciate these sources of interest. The *Primary School Curriculum, Geography*, also seeks to alert the student to natural phenomena that surround him/her and have an impact on his/her daily life.

Geography: School planning

Much of the planning advice in the *Primary School Curriculum: Geography, Teacher Guidelines*, will be applicable when planning for students with severe and profound general learning disabilities. The following section outlines some additional aspects of planning that may need to be considered when planning for these students.

Curriculum and organisational planning

The following additional issues may need to be considered as part of the school's planning for geography.

The purpose and nature of geography in the school

Exploring and discussing the nature of geography can help to clarify for all of the school staff the role that geography may play in the overall education of the student. The general needs of the students in this area should be identified, and a broad plan drawn up to meet them. Individual students' needs (such as particular mobility needs) may warrant whole-school consideration. This will help to concentrate attention on the teaching resources and approaches that will be needed to teach this area of the curriculum.

The exploration of the school environment

The school environment offers many possibilities in facilitating the teaching of the *Primary School Curriculum, Geography*. Schools for students with severe and profound general learning disabilities generally have large and varied staffs, and this should be fully exploited when teaching students about people's roles in society.

The *Primary School Curriculum, Geography* involves students becoming familiar with the school and all the people, rooms and resources in it, and being able to find their way around the school and its grounds. Wheelchair access is extremely important, and general ease of mobility around the school should be facilitated.

The planning process could lead to the placing of clear trails and signs around the school that students could learn to interpret and use. Other ideas could include the following:

- a tactile strip at waist height along the corridors of the school and leading to important areas such as the front door, PE hall, or dining room
- coloured strips secured on the floor of corridors to lead students to important areas
- written signs and pictorial symbols in important areas could be used by students to relate to different areas
- the principal's name and teachers' names on doors along with a clear photograph of each person
- broad agreement on safety issues relating to students' mobility around the school and its grounds.

The exploration of the local environment

The planning process should involve teachers in becoming familiar with the locality of the school, the people and communities in the area, and the human and natural geographical features to be found there. Parents/guardians can play a central role in identifying people and places that could be used in the geography programme. There may be a number of people in the locality who would be very willing to talk about their jobs or help to organise visits to places of interest.

Quite a lot of organisation is necessary to facilitate trips for students with severe and profound general learning disabilities. Many students with such levels of disability will need transport that can safely accommodate wheelchairs. If school transport is available, access should be organised to make it available to each teacher at an agreed time each week. Alternatively, regular access to suitable transport from an outside agency can be organised, and it might even be possible to encourage a local business or social group to sponsor this. Local amenities will need to be checked for wheelchair access, and extra help may need to be recruited in order to provide an individual helper for each student. It may be possible to organise willing helpers from within the student's family or community, and parents/guardians can be a valuable source of information in this regard.

Contact with the community should be a two-way process. Local people could be invited to tour the school and grounds with help from the students, or to view geography projects on the locality that were produced by the students.

A broad and balanced Primary School Curriculum, Geography

Each school will have particular opportunities to offer students, and each school will also have its own challenges to overcome. Students in a rural school may have rich natural resources on their doorstep, but opportunities to experience and gain an insight into an urban environment should not be overlooked. The *Primary School Curriculum, Geography* can also be used to enable students in an urban school to experience a rural environment.

The amount of time spent on geography will vary according to the strengths and needs of each individual student, but careful school planning will ensure that precious time spent at geographical activities will reap maximum benefits. The student learns about his/her environment through active participation and exploration. Consequently, the broadest possible range of experiences should be offered, engaging each student at his/her own level of ability and with his/her particular needs in mind.

Many students with severe and profound general learning disabilities do not play an active role in their own communities. There may be many facilities and amenities in the locality that have been overlooked by parents/guardians and teachers alike. The *Primary School Curriculum, Geography* could provide the impetus for teachers and parents/guardians to go out and assess these resources and to enable the students to make the greatest possible use of them. Getting out and about in the locality will also consolidate the students' sense of belonging and will enable community members to see these children and young adults as full and active members of the community.

Geography: Classroom planning

Many excellent ideas are to be found in the planning sections of the *Primary School Curriculum: Geography, Teacher Guidelines*. Possible additional issues are referred to on the following pages.

Planning and organisational issues for the teacher

Additional planning issues might include

- organising the classroom into areas of discrete purpose, for example a clearly identifiable play area, a clearly identifiable work area, a clearly identifiable self-care area
- labelling areas in and around the classroom in such a way that each student can understand their purpose, and encouraging parents/guardians to do the same in the home
- creating opportunities for students who are always protected from the weather to experience a range of weather conditions safely
- organising the transport and staff needed to help carry out activities, especially those outside the classroom (See suggestions in *School planning*.)
- alerting all staff members to use routine movements around the school and the local environment in order to stimulate interest, understanding and independence.

Listening and responding

Social, environmental and scientific education: Geography

Understanding and relating to the environment through geography

Attending	Responding	Initiating
<p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ become aware of being part of a family, class, school, and local community (See self-awareness and group-awareness activities in SPHE.) ■ become aware of the roles of people in the family, class and local community (See relevant activities in SPHE.) ■ become aware of the fact that people live in homes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>listen to and talk about his/her own home with an object of reference/pictorial representation used as a clue</i> – <i>look at homes in the vicinity of the school, look at a doll's house</i> ■ attend to the main external features of a house <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>look at the roof/windows/doors of a house in a picture/on video/in an inset board.</i> 	<p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ respond to group awareness games <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>look at or point to a named student, pick out an object of reference/photograph of a named student</i> – <i>use photographs to identify 'who is missing today at roll-call'</i> ■ show interest in group photographs of family and class members ■ respond differently to various family members/classroom staff/the school principal ■ link people with their roles in society <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>indicate by pointing or words that a postman brings letters, a fire fighter puts out fires</i> ■ indicate, on request, recognition of his/her own home in real life/in a photograph/on video ■ indicate a real house/a picture of house/a doll's house on request. 	<p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ show recognition of family members and seek their out company when in unfamiliar surroundings ■ point out family members/class members in group photographs ■ show curiosity about/ understanding of the role of various people in society <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>ask about/play at being a fire fighter/a garda</i> ■ identify and seek to communicate about his/her own home in reality/in photographs/on video ■ identify and communicate about the homes of familiar people/classmates ■ play at making houses with construction materials/make pretend houses for dolls.

Attending	Responding	Initiating
<p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ become aware of different rooms in a house <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>watch when attention is drawn to various rooms in a doll's house</i> - <i>look at pictures of rooms in his/her own house or other houses</i> ■ become aware of the ways in which adults and students use various areas in the classroom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>an area for table-top work, a toilet area, a relaxation area</i> ■ become aware of areas for play in the classroom/school/locality ■ become aware of different human environments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>visit a church and observe the lighting of candles</i> - <i>visit a shopping centre and observe people buying things</i> - <i>smell chlorine in the swimming pool.</i> 	<p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ assist in making house-like structures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>a Lego house, use box and scrap materials to make a house for a doll/teddy, put 2D parts of a house on the template of house</i> ■ indicate recognition of different areas in the classroom/rooms in a house when asked ■ indicate recognition of ways in which the classroom/house is used <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>a bedroom or relaxation area for lying down, a dining area for eating</i> ■ indicate by actions, gestures or words that certain areas are designated for play in the classroom/school/locality ■ indicate awareness of different human environments by appropriately adjusting behaviour: for example <i>being quiet in a church, making noise in a swimming pool.</i> 	<p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ add some features to a partially prepared representation of a house <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>add parts to an inset board of a house</i> - <i>stick a cut-out door or roof onto a picture</i> ■ know that rooms have different purposes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>use rooms appropriately at home</i> - <i>place furniture appropriately when playing with a doll's house</i> ■ use gesture, sign or vocalisation to tell adults or other students to go to an appropriate classroom or school area for a routine activity ■ ask to go to designated play areas in the classroom/school/locality/unfamiliar places ■ behave appropriately in various human environments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>smell incense/put coins in a box/light candles safely in a church</i> - <i>buy items in shops.</i>

Attending	Responding	Initiating
<p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ become aware of his/her own body position in the environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>engage in body image and movement activities</i> - <i>playing hide and seek games</i> ■ attend to the location of objects and areas in the classroom environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>attend to the location of the computer/play area/ toileting area/sink</i> - <i>be given opportunities to experience the routine of going to particular areas for a familiar activities</i> - <i>become familiar with the visual/aural/textural characteristics of these areas</i> - <i>listen to names associated with these areas</i> ■ become familiar with the wider school environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>the dining hall, the PE hall, the office, the playground (Visual and tactile clues can be used.)</i> ■ become familiar with particular routes in the classroom and school using sensory or pictorial clues. 	<p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ respond to changes in body position or games involving the body ■ indicate the position of objects and areas in the classroom when asked to do so <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>participate in games of finding familiar things</i> - <i>go to familiar areas for certain activities with some prompting</i> ■ recognise familiar routes around the school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>become excited when reaching the dining hall</i> - <i>use objects of reference/ pictures/symbols/words to answer questions on what is around the next corner</i> ■ with assistance, follow pictorial or verbal directions for routes in familiar areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>routes used regularly in school and in the locality</i> - <i>routes used for games such as treasure hunts or nature expeditions.</i> 	<p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ seek actively to experiment with body position watching his/her image and movement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>moving hands, rocking, climbing</i> ■ negotiate the classroom and school environment with little or no help <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>know where to find things in the classroom</i> - <i>deliver messages to another teacher/the Principal's office</i> ■ follow independently pictorial/ verbal directions for reaching different areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>the dining hall/other familiar areas/a designated area</i> - <i>play games such as treasure hunts, go on nature expeditions (See exemplar on Routes in Communication and language.)</i> ■ anticipate and communicate about landmarks on familiar routes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>move faster when a favourite area is close</i> - <i>notice if a landmark is missing</i> - <i>use objects of reference/ pictures/symbols/words to tell what is around the next corner</i> ■ discuss possible routes for a familiar journey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>use objects of reference/ photographs/words to sequence the route taken on a journey or to plan routes that can be taken to get to a familiar place.</i>

Attending	Responding	Initiating
<p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ attend to unfamiliar environments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - be given opportunities to go on outings - be alerted to the unusual sights, sounds, textures, smells, and tastes (if appropriate) in unfamiliar environments ■ be encouraged to remember environments visited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>look at/touch/smell/taste objects that were brought back from a trip</i> - <i>look at pictures/video footage of trip</i> - <i>listen to recorded sounds and key words about the environment visited</i> ■ become aware of natural materials in the local environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>have opportunities to look at, feel and collect mud, sand, pebbles, stones, rocks, shells</i> ■ participate in recording natural materials found in the local environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>(with assistance) participate in making and displaying collections of materials gathered.</i> 	<p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ respond to unfamiliar environments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>show increased alertness on outings/school tours</i> - <i>show an expression of puzzlement</i> - <i>look at, and point to unusual things</i> - <i>show increased interest in smelling and touching unfamiliar things</i> ■ react to discussion about pictorial records of environments visited in the past or when considering visits planned for the near future ■ show awareness of natural materials in the local environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>show interest in looking at, feeling and collecting mud, sand, pebbles, stones, rocks, shells</i> - <i>go outside and look for particular things using samples or pictures as a reference</i> ■ show interest in displaying and recording materials gathered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>help with displaying and recording, indicate recognition of materials gathered.</i> 	<p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ explore actively and ask questions about unfamiliar places ■ ask questions and communicate about environments visited in the past or visits planned for the future ■ investigate and show curiosity about natural materials in the local environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>mud, sand, pebbles, rocks, shells</i> ■ record natural materials found in the locality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>make a booklet of things found in the playground/school grounds.</i>

Attending	Responding	Initiating
<p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ develop awareness of water in the local environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>observe bodies of water such as lakes/ponds/the sea</i> - <i>feel water in puddles</i> - <i>listen to the sound of rain falling/a waterfall</i> ■ become aware of a variety of weather conditions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>have opportunities for observing/feeling rainy days or sunny day</i> - <i>listen to and feel the wind blowing on windy days</i> ■ become aware of the need for protection from the elements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>experience the comfort offered by shade from a hot sun</i> - <i>have his/her attention drawn to sheltering from the rain</i> - <i>feel the difference a warm scarf makes when it is cold and windy</i> ■ observe and participate in recording the day's weather using objects of reference/ pictures/symbols. 	<p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ react to water in the environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>complain or show enjoyment when caught out in the rain</i> - <i>imitate reaching out to touch/splash in puddles</i> - <i>react to unusual bodies of water such as waterfalls or the seaside</i> ■ observe and respond to weather conditions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>(with decreasing prompting) put on a hat/pull up a hood in the rain</i> - <i>put on a coat when the weather is cold</i> ■ indicate, on request, appropriate objects/pictures/ symbols to record the day's weather ■ develop and show awareness that the weather affects plants and animals in the local environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>develop and show sympathy for a cat or dog who is out in the rain/cold,</i> - <i>observe the effect of frost on plants.</i> 	<p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ record and communicate about experiences in the natural environment using pictures, signs or words <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>collect and show natural materials</i> - <i>make charts of collected items</i> - <i>use photographs or video recordings to show where materials were found</i> ■ interact with water in the local environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>purposely go into puddles, seek to investigate or communicate about ponds/ waterfalls/waves at the seaside</i> ■ observe, discuss and choose appropriate accessories for weather conditions ■ discuss the recording of weather and choose an appropriate representation using objects of reference, pictures or symbols ■ ask questions or draw attention to particular weather conditions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>raw an adult's attention to the window to show hailstones/snow/heavy rain outside</i> - <i>move or pull an adult independently towards shelter if caught out in the rain</i> ■ observe and discuss seasonal changes in the weather ■ observe and discuss the effects of different weather conditions on human, plant and animal life in the local environment.

Attending	Responding	Initiating
<p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ become aware that humans share the environment with plants and animals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>have opportunities to develop awareness of the plants and animals that share the local environment</i> ■ observe and participate in the care of the immediate environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>(with full help) participate in keeping the classroom and rooms at home tidy</i> - <i>put up new art work for display</i> - <i>care for indoor plants in the classroom and at home</i> ■ observe and participate in the care of the local environment, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>the school, the grounds of the school, the garden at home.</i> 	<p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ identify, on request, familiar plants and animals that share the local environment with people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>point to animals/plants when on walks</i> - <i>pick out a dog/cat/etc. from a selection of miniatures/ photographs</i> - <i>show interest in caring for these animals and plants</i> ■ assist in caring for the immediate and local environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>care for toys at home and in the classroom when reminded to do so</i> - <i>dispose of litter on request</i> - <i>water plants.</i> 	<p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ investigate and ask questions about the plants and animals that share the local environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>watch or draw an adult's attention independently to plants and animals on walks</i> - <i>point out familiar/favourite animals in photographs/ books</i> - <i>look at photographs and posters of local habitats</i> - <i>make and show off booklets about local plants and animals</i> ■ take active measures to care for the immediate and local environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>keep places tidy</i> - <i>care for living and non-living things in the locality</i> - <i>dispose of litter correctly</i> - <i>collect items for recycling</i> ■ show appreciation of attractive and interesting features in the local and wider environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>show a desire to visit a local park with swings</i> - <i>look independently at fountains/pieces of outdoor sculpture/vibrant flower beds in a garden.</i>

Exemplars

Introduction to geography exemplars

The following pages outline some ideas for developing themes and topics in geography for students with severe and profound general learning disabilities.

No.	Exemplar title	Page
1.	Locating key areas within the classroom environment	18
2.	A windy day	20
3.	Animals that share our local environment	21

Exemplar 1: SESE: Geography

Topic: Locating key areas within the classroom environment

Strand: Human environments

Objectives	Resources
<p>The student will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop an awareness of the location of particular areas within the classroom environment • indicate the position of a particular area in the classroom when asked to do so • negotiate the classroom environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials for highlighting particular classroom areas, objects of reference, pictures, symbols to represent these areas.

Methodology

Preparation of the classroom

→ The layout of the room should be organised and arranged to allow easy access and opportunities for interaction. It should be relatively clutter-free to enable the students to move about in safety and with confidence.

Identifying key areas

→ Identify areas within the classroom environment that are used for specific activities. The number of designated areas will depend both on available space and on the range of activities that take place, for example

- circle/music time
- personal care/toilet
- dinner/snack area
- relaxation/quiet area
- play area
- art and crafts area.

Highlighting key areas

→ Considerations would include

- the use of colour on furniture, for example, shelves, walls, tables
- a variety of floor surfaces, for example linoleum for a dinner area, mats or a carpeted surface for a relaxation area
- the arrangement of furniture, for example low shelves, partitions and draped fabric to distinguish one area from another.

Symbols for each key area

→ Sensory clues, objects of reference, picture-symbols, and/or photographs need to be identified as reference points to locate each key area and/or activity. These should to be chosen carefully to meet the needs of all students in the class.

→ These objects/pictures are displayed in a central area of the classroom, using a simple hook or piece of Velcro so that students can access them. It is also necessary to identify key words, phrases and/or signs to compliment the use of objects/pictures.

Exemplar 1: SESE: Geography

Sample lesson

Circle-time

(The classroom area to be used will have been prepared as outlined above.)

- Ring a small bell to indicate to the students that a new activity is about to begin. Remove the chosen object of reference/picture from a central display (different ones may be needed for different students.) A plastic, elastic or woollen ring might be a suitable object of reference, while a clear drawing of a circular outline on a contrasting background might make a suitable 2D symbol. At first, the adult removes the symbol and then the student is gradually helped to do this.
- Depending on each student's level of ability, show him/her the object or symbol suitable to his/her needs.
- Using key words/phrases/signs, tell students that it is circle-time as they are guided into the designated area.
- Draw students' attention as the object/picture is replaced on a planned (prominent) place in the circle time area.
- To reinforce the concept of circle-time, introduce a large, circular piece of elastic or rope. All students hold on to the elastic or rope, with help as needed, to create a large circle.

Integration

Extending and integrating with other subjects

- At first, the object/picture is presented to the student to indicate movement to a particular area. This can be developed into a more structured and complex process whereby the object/picture forms a tactile/symbolic timetable or schedule. This can be linked with activities in **communication and language** and **history**.
- Students can become involved in making choices about where they would like to spend time by locating a particular area independently, or by using the object of reference or picture for that area.

Exemplar 2: SESE: Geography

Topic: A windy day

Strand: Natural environments

Objectives	Resources
<p>The student will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • experience the feel of the wind blowing • observe and feel the effects of a windy day on himself/herself • observe and feel the effects of a windy day on other people • observe and feel the effects of a windy day on plants and objects in the environment • experience finding shelter from wind • learn what clothes protect people from wind. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The natural environment, clothes to act as windbreakers, objects to act as windbreakers, toys operated by wind such as windmills/streamers, an object or material to act as a screen from wind.

Lesson

- The health of individual students will need consideration when deciding how to enable them to experience a windy day. Some students may be able to tolerate and enjoy a windy day while others may need a gentle introduction to wind. This may be done on a warm day when there is a light breeze, or students can be introduced to wind initially using a blow heater, fan or hairdryer. Where possible, however, students should have the opportunity to develop their understanding of wind in the natural outdoor environment.
- Ideas for a rich learning experience about windy days for the student could include
- preparatory work involving listening to key words about wind and experiencing the feel of wind being blown across his/her hand/face/hair
 - listening to the sound of the wind outside/recorded wind, and participating in trying to recreate it vocally by blowing through hands or through a suitable object
 - going outdoors on a windy day and feeling wind on his/her body
 - experiencing finding shelter from the wind and then going back out into the wind again
 - having opportunities to try out different kinds of clothing that shield him/her from the wind (a scarf, a hat, a windbreaker jacket), taking them off and put them on again
 - looking at the wind blowing someone else's hair/clothes (An adult might wear a bright, loose item of clothing.)
 - participating in playing with toys that operate with wind (watching and helping to hold up a windmill/streamers)
 - watching what happens when a screen is held in front of the wind toy and then taken away again
 - looking at trees and other plants in the local environment and watching the effect of the wind on them
 - participating in recreating a windy day indoors through drama.

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Development

- This experience of weather can be modified as appropriate and extended to other elements such as rain and snow.

Exemplar 3: SESE: Geography

Topic: Animals that share our local environment

Strand: Environmental awareness and care

Objectives	Resources
<p>The student will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • come into contact with animals in his/her local environment • develop awareness/recognition/appreciation of animals in his/her local environment • help to create a record of animals found in his/her local environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objects of reference to represent local animals (for example, furry material, a feather, cooked spaghetti to represent worms), a camera to take photographs of local animals, commercial pictures or drawings to represent animals found, a container for insects, a box or envelope to contain records of findings, a tape recorder to tape sounds, a selection of recorded sounds.

Methodology

Preparation

→ Consideration will need to be given to issues such as staffing levels required for outdoor trips, the health of the children involved, their ability to be outdoors in certain weather conditions, and safety rules and procedures for touching animals. A local person might have a friendly dog or cat that he/she may be willing to bring into the school or allow students to visit in his/her home. Staff should be alert for signs that some students might be nervous in the presence of animals and this should be fully respected.

Exemplar 3: SESE: Geography

Ideas for lessons

- A lesson or series of lessons might be planned in advance of an exploratory trip in order to familiarise the students with what animals they might look out for. A selection of objects of reference could be looked at and touched. If appropriate, pictures of common animals might be looked at in association with corresponding objects of reference. Instruction on stroking and the careful handling of the objects of reference might be used to prepare students for appropriate handling of real animals that they might find.
- Birds and insects will be found commonly in the local environment, but these may be difficult for some students to see because of their small size or fast movement. However, placing a bird table at an accessible visual level outside a big window can provide good opportunities for observing. Other indoor strategies include sitting quietly inside a glass door or big window and seeing what passes.
- On a suitable day, an outdoors animal-finding mission can be carried out. Photographs (as close and clear as possible) can be taken and sounds may be recorded. A video camera may be very useful if available. If objects of reference, drawings, or commercial pictures are used, these could be brought and placed in a special box or envelope as each creature is seen. Otherwise, an adult can be given the job of writing the names of animals as they are seen and a student could place them in the envelope. What is in the box or envelope is then used to create a record of what was found. Students can be encouraged to look under stones for insects and place some carefully in the container. Students who cannot reach down to the ground can look at them outdoors in the container, or they can be brought into the classroom for a short period for further observation and recording.
- Back in the classroom, a review of what was seen, heard and touched is carried out using all the visual, auditory and tactile clues available. A further lesson is planned to record all the animals and other creatures found on a chart or in a booklet. This can also be accompanied by visual and auditory records.
- This project can also be carried out with plants that share our local environment.

Integration

- **Science**—looking in detail at animals in the environment.
- **Mathematics**—creating a data record, counting the numbers of animals found, counting sightings of a particular animal.
- **Communication and language**—objects of reference, pictures, names of animals, different sounds made by animals.
- **Social, personal and health education**—being kind to animals, being aware of their needs.