



PREPARATION FOR ADULTHOOD

how special schools help children
become fantastic young adults.

Preparation for adulthood is happening all the time – we don't have to look far!

- Fundamentally, our special schools weave preparation and planning for adulthood expertly into daily practice .
- Our role is to look for indications that our young people are being nurtured and guided towards being as independent as possible.
- There is no doubt that asking how each school prepares everyone for adulthood will lead to a HUGE array of answers. There isn't a set of correct answers but there are guiding principles that each school will use.
- Under the headings Communication, Roles and Responsibility, Accessibility, Community, Money Matters, Role play / Trialing , Creativity, Healthy Living (including sex and relationships) we can begin to unpick the work that our schools undertake to create an enabling environment, leading to happy, healthy independent young adults.



PREPARATION FOR ADULTHOOD
BEGINS IN THE EARLY YEARS.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY
SCHOOLS WORK TOGETHER TO
ENSURE SMOOTH TRANSITIONS
AND CONTINUE TO BUILD UPON
LIFE SKILLS.

FE SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES FOCUS
ON INDEPENDENCE , MAKING GOOD
DECISIONS AND PREPARING YOUNG
PEOPLE FOR ADULT LIFE.

Preparation for
adulthood within
a special school
setting



The Early Years - preparation for adulthood

1. Communication - this is fundamental . Very young children must be supported to enable them to express their wants and needs. It is vital that they are surrounded by adults who understand them and listen (and interpret behaviours). This encourages small children to talk, sign and vocalise more because they feel safe . This is the first step towards developing their ability to express thoughts and feelings . Q for governors : - How do the adults in the setting respond to the wishes of the children and young people ?
2. Roles and Responsibilities – Q for governors -Are the pupils given jobs within the classroom ? Are there expectations that the pupils help tidy up after play? Do the pupils set out cups and plates for snack time ? Are classroom routines well established and followed by all ?
3. Accessibility –Q for governors Can the children reach all the areas they need in order to develop and pursue their interests? Are the coat pegs at an accessible height? Are wellies available to put on near the outdoors area? What if the child cannot yet walk ?– can they wear outdoor clothing and experience crawling or rolling around outdoors ? Are resources placed within reach of all the children?



- Role Play / Trialing - Play is the best vehicle for learning ! Many of our pupils require lots of initial input to establish play routines or to play new games . Role Play helps young children to prepare for new experiences or to practice 'scary' experiences like going to the café or going to the doctor. This rehearsal technique can be adapted by all school sectors hence the inclusion of the more adult title of 'Trialing' How children deal with unexpected outcomes can help their resilience. Q for governors – How well does your setting promote play? Are adults and children having fun ? Can pupils practice an experience in school before going into the community to have a REAL experience?
- Community – Visits and forays into the community prepare young children for life beyond school. During the last year , this hasn't happened as much as we would like. The world for some children is an unfathomable place and Covid has deepened that mystery. It is to be expected that small children will be very anxious about community visits so the Early Years staff will have to work doubly hard to make sure that children are properly prepared. Some visits will be repeated often, following set routines so that children can practice and refine the skills they need to lead independent lives .

Getting out and about in the Early Years



- Money matters . The idea that money can be exchanged for things we want or need is very important. Working hard all week at school for pennies (or stars or anything!) that can be exchanged for a reward is one way to begin to understand about money. Some schools will have different reward systems but the principle remains the same.
- Creativity – We ALL need hobbies, pastimes and interests that sustain us. The past year has reinforced and highlighted our need to participate and enjoy music, dancing, painting, crafting, teching, gardening, building, acting, singing. When children are exposed to lots of creative activities, we are promoting lifelong interests that will sustain them through adulthood. Q for governors – Does your setting promote external clubs and organisations through their social media pages and newsletters ?Q for governors – Have you noticed particular pupils who shine during school performances? Has this had a positive impact on other aspects of their development?
- Healthy Living – This is such a big area! During lunch and snack time ,are healthy choices available to try ?(Some children have a very limited diet – this is usual for special schools) Fun with Food sessions and cooking lessons promote food tolerance and tasting. Special schools purchase adapted cutlery and plates etc to enable children to learn to feed themselves – again many pupils this year will appear less able to be independent and may take much longer to learn the skills required to feed themselves . Q for governors – how do staff support feeding and drinking ? Do lunchtimes take longer because of the support required ?

Motivation, the arts and healthy eating in EY





Using REAL objects

Q for governors -Which of these would not be used in an Early Years setting?

Communication, feeling good about oneself and having access to the full range of experiences on offer.

1. Communication – Your school will have a school council or a Pupil Voice committee. Do you know how representatives are chosen? What decisions have they made that have positively impacted on the school? Each school will definitely have had training to promote communication- Makaton, eye gaze, PECS, signalong etc . This will have improved staff understanding and had a positive impact. Can you observe children communicating well? Within class settings notice how well the adults know and understand each pupil and notice how well pupils collaborate and cooperate with each other . This is such an important aspect of maturation and managing disagreements. Do the adults step in when support is needed / are pupils allowed time and space to try and handle conflict themselves? How are pupils helped to manage situations that escalate?
2. Roles and Responsibility. Having a purpose is very important to our well being. Feeling good about ourselves and proud of a job well done is very motivational.. When people around us notice us doing a good job and praise us it further elevates our sense of achievement . Jobs like register monitor, answering the phone, giving out equipment, stacking chairs, being a school greeter at events and looking after the class pet are just some examples of how schools weave Roles and Responsibilities into the fabric of the setting. Q for governors – Can you name some positions of responsibility you have observed(and from the perspective of a pupil)can you describe the impact of having an important role?
3. Accessibility – Levelling the playing field for some pupils will mean making architectural adaptations , curricular and financial commitments that go way beyond what we might notice in a mainstream setting. For example: Specialist training for key staff, installing ramps and lifts and redesigning the curriculum to allow greater access will involve advisors, the SLT, curriculum leaders and the school surveyor. It will impact on everyone's time from the site supervisor to the chair of governors and all stakeholders. The aim will be to improve outcomes and to support pupils to realise their potential. It seems blindingly obvious to say that this will prepare the pupils for adulthood. The more we as governors share what schools are doing to promote accessibility, the greater the expectations we should have from our community to do likewise!. Q for Governors – How does your school involve all pupils in school life?

Importance of play and going out of school.

- Role play / trialing – Trying things out, succeeding and making mistakes within the emotional safety of your special school is a key factor when promoting resilience and emotional maturity. Practicing social situations will no doubt support every pupil. Adapting a young person's response to going to the hairdresser can be life enhancing not only for the young person but also to their family. **Q for governors can you identify systems within your school that practice everyday experiences? Have you any anecdotal stories that show how this supports our pupils ?**
- Community visits are a VERY IMPORTANT AND VITAL PART of preparation for leaving school or college. Not all families are able to undertake a wide range of visits outside home so it falls to schools to plan and deliver a broad and interesting range of community experiences. Research tells us that pupils who go on residential visits improve their relationships with staff and peers, improve resilience, feel proud of their achievements and improve their self help skills. (the staff on the other hand are sleep deprived and hyper vigilant until the pupils are safely back at school!) Lancashire County Council supports schools to plan and deliver educational visits within a very safe framework of guiding principles. **Q for governors where does my school make regular visits ? What benefits do staff observe from making these visits? Is it possible to come along and help ?**

Working for rewards, the importance of culture and learning to have healthy relationships

- Money matters- Most schools will have mini enterprises of some sort. The idea that money can be raised and the profits spent by the pupils is a strong argument for working hard for a treat/ reward . The process also supports budgeting and value for money conversations. It promotes collaboration, sharing out different aspects of the work, being hygienic (if making food) using equipment safely (back to the knives!) making decisions, shopping, ordering, and being reliably organised . **Q for governors Is there a pupil who has surprised the staff at how well they have taken to involvement in a mini enterprise?**
- Creativity – Exposure to different forms of music will lead pupils to a lifelong appreciation and musical interests. The power of music is well documented, it can evoke memories and deep-rooted feelings . I don't think nursery rhymes are suitable for older pupils and I support the idea that all styles of music are suitable for classroom listening apart from the few songs that support racism, sexism or swearing. Special schools invite theatre and performance companies into school. This is expensive however it provides some pupils with the only opportunity they may have to work alongside professional performers . The high cost reflects just how highly the arts are valued by schools. School leaders know that when young people leave school they need a creative outlet and ongoing interests that can sustain them into older age.
- Healthy eating is promoted daily through school lunches, cooking, taste sessions and snack time. Healthy choices can be very difficult for some pupils who only prefer a certain type of food . Every effort is made to support these pupils to try other tastes and tolerate new smells and textures. Schools recognise that change of this magnitude is a result of the frequency of exposure over time.
- The importance of sport and physical activity is crucial to our health and gives us a life long appreciation of sport. Special schools deliver sport across the phases and have fantastically resourced outdoor areas for recreational and therapeutic movement outside of the curriculum.
- Healthy relationships are key to preparing an individual for adulthood. Work of this nature is carried out 1:1, small group and whole class. The level and complexity of this work is dependent upon an individual's ability to understand the essence of positive relationships, appropriate sexual behaviour and their own body. The scale , frequency and scope of this work is so vast that a whole series of training sessions would be needed. **Q for governors – Focusing on one pupil /cohort – Can you describe how the subject of healthy relationships is taught ?**

Post 16

Everything that pupils have already experienced provides a solid basis to develop through Further Education towards adulthood.

Post 16 Students are given greater personal freedoms and opportunity to make decisions and have an even greater involvement in their education. They attend taster events at colleges and adult services to try out courses and activities. FE staff prepare documents often called passports to describe students likes and dislikes and their methods of communication to improve transition into their next placement.

Outside of the FE department, some students undertake public transport training, work experience, college courses, horticulture, animal care, etc in addition to experiencing a very broad FE curriculum.

There is a seismic shift that occurs when students enter this phase. FE Departments feel like spaces that young adults inhabit, students may wear their own clothes rather than a uniform, they have a greater involvement in councils and meet the senior leadership team to discuss school improvement.

FE Department leaders use the interests and skills that students display to inform planning. In addition, some students take exams to support paid employment opportunities. Students move further into the worlds of continued study, the workplace, and enrichment activities

- Communication continues to be key – students are encouraged to manage disagreement and conflict in a mature way . Behaviour leaders will create behaviour plans (called by different things in different settings) to help staff and families to respond consistently, supporting a student to manage emotions. (Of course this happens throughout all age phases !)
- Skills for living , life skills, Personal development – whatever this is called in your setting, each student will be taught self sufficiency and independence. EHCP targets will reflect the most important and beneficial skills that support personal development. **Q for governors Can I look at anonymised EHCP targets that support preparation for adulthood?**
- Throughout all age phases, safer internet usage will have been taught to groups who can respond or understand the importance of keeping personal information safe . Families are also involved in safe internet usage – through face-to-face meetings, technical support, workshops and information sharing platforms.

Getting on with
each other,
being
independent
and keeping
safe.





Finally

It takes a village to raise a child.

What are the skills and qualities that you would use to describe a successful adult?