

POLICY FOR THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF PRE- BRAILLE AND TACTILE SKILLS

INTENT

In order to meet the needs of visually impaired learners who will be learning within an inclusive mainstream setting, the Resourced Provision team will use a structured program to develop the skills required for pupils to refine their tactile learning skills in readiness to begin learning Braille.

Prior to beginning pre-braille work, it is expected that all pupils will have experiential learning gained from working through the *Developmental Journal for babies and children with Visual Impairment* (VI Journal) and *Oregon Project for Visually Impaired and Blind Preschool children: skills inventory* (Oregon). The areas of development taken from within the VI Journal and Oregon will be used as a baseline from which more development and /or pre-braille activities may begin.

We aim:

- To promote the use of multisensory skills including the development of gross and fine motor skills to develop an understanding of the wider world for learners with vision impairment.
- To prepare tactile learners who can use a range of non-sighted methods to understand and learn about their environment in readiness for more formal tactile learning such as Braille.

IMPLEMENTATION

We will:

- Use research-based, nationally recognised programmes of work (DJVI, Oregon) to establish a baseline and record progression of tactile skills.
- Develop pre-braille skills via schemes such as Fantastic Fingers and Feeling Ready to Read. Depending on the needs of the child, these schemes can run parallel to one another or be used sequentially. Activities and ideas from these areas of work can be modified and expanded upon as appropriate to the individual needs of the child and incorporated into class work.
- Promote and celebrate multisensory and/or tactile learning in all forms throughout school.
- Enable pupils to learn alongside their sighted peers using non-sighted methods wherever possible.
- Plan, deliver and promote tactile experiences and fine motor skill development in readiness for tactile discrimination skills.

- Involve pupils, teacher and family in promoting the use of pre-Braille and multisensory learning in all form so that everyone can participate in the pupils' learning.
- Promote 'reading readiness'. This is an essential stage for all children before they can fully partake in braille literacy. Understanding the features of books, stories, songs and rhymes as well as being able to name favourite characters prepares the child for the nature reading.

Developmental Areas of 'Fantastic Fingers' Linked to the VI Journal

Social & Emotional

Babies are born into a visual world where social interaction is learnt through watching others. They need to learn to interact and develop relationships. They learn about who they are, their own feelings and how to behave, as a foundation for learning to communicate and the later use of language.

Children who will communicate through tactile means will need to:

1. Gain as much knowledge and understanding of the world around them, through home, family, wider family, pre-school groups and home visits from the QTVI.
2. Have a willingness to explore and enjoy new experiences using all their senses.
3. Have an understanding about self, parents and others.
4. Be able to participate in social activities with adults and peers.

Communication and Language

The earliest understanding of language is often developed through familiar daily routines. Smells, objects, actions and words help children learn about everyday life.

Children who communicate through tactile means will need to:

1. Recognise that mark making has meaning.
2. Recognise that words are symbols that 'refer' to something.
3. Know what an object is and what it's used for.
4. Communicate feelings or needs for social interaction and play.
5. Learn to listen selectively to everyday sounds.

Play and Learning

Play is one of young children's main ways of learning about the world. It is also the way children show their understanding of the world through interaction with people, toys and everyday objects.

Children who will play and learn effectively through tactile means will need to:

1. Know that different sounds come from different sources.
2. Understand that objects are still there when not touched or seen.
3. Develop problem solving techniques to work out cause and effect sequences.
4. Learn ways of relating objects together, sorting into categories and identify connections.
5. Learn that touch is linked to using all the senses.
6. Experience pretend play involving everyday actions and objects, by themselves and with other people.

Independence/Mobility

A growing interest in and an understanding of things in the environment will help children become more independent. They also need to learn to care for themselves through direct experience and knowing that others are doing the same.

Children who learn through tactile means will need to:

1. Experience movement through touch.
2. Understand orientation and their position in the environment.
3. Extend their experiences of a range of environments.
4. Be able to use the toilet, feed, wash and dress themselves in an age appropriate manner.

Fine Motor

Children need to be able to explore and discriminate tactile objects and materials and move towards finer discrimination of tactile media.

Children who learn through tactile means will need to be able to:

1. Discriminate between a range of textures.
2. Match and sort textures, objects and sounds.
3. Identify what is different and what is the same.
4. Increase finger and hand strength.

5. Track along a line.
6. Begin Braille cell activities.

Main outcome:

At the end of their time in the primary Resourced Provision, in year 6, the children who will use braille as their preferred way of accessing learning will hopefully be a competent contracted brailist.

This may be using the Perkins brailier, braille sense or a combination of both.

If the children are dual users and are using braille and print they may not be competent brailists but will have a secure knowledge of uncontracted braille and will be able to use some contractions within their writing.