Responding to pupil’s needs when teaching Design and Technology

The importance of design and technology to pupils with learning difficulties Design and technology (D&T) provides practical learning experiences which make it accessible to all pupils. Pupils use knowledge and understanding from across the curriculum and apply and consolidate them in practical activities. Designing and making real products that can be used can give pupils a sense of achievement and improve their self-esteem. They benefit from seeing their own progress and taking greater responsibility for their own learning as they begin to evaluate the quality of their work. Pupils’ personal involvement with tasks often improves their attention span, patience, persistence and commitment.

In particular, D&T offers pupils with learning difficulties opportunities to:

• make choices and be involved in sensory and communication activities within a practical learning experience

• consider the needs and preferences of others, as well as themselves, so helping to develop their social awareness

• focus on design problems that are meaningful to them

• Work on personally motivated design tasks where they take ownership of their work and of their own learning

• communicate using a range of methods avoiding over-reliance on the written word

• carry out practical tasks in which they all can make a contribution to the development of individual or group projects, rather than working to predetermined goals

• Work within a flexible range of contexts and topics that can be adapted to suit individual interests and motivations

• use information and communication technology (ICT) to realise, develop and enhance their work

• work at their own pace and level, with appropriate staff support and intervention

• negotiate individual targets with staff that can be reviewed as required. Pupils who need to work at a slower pace can do so, and those who work more quickly can be further challenged to develop their work with activities which extend and enrich their experience.

In response to these opportunities, pupils can make progress in D&T by:

• extending the breadth and depth of experience gained

• working on smaller to larger tasks

• studying the familiar to the less familiar, for example, exploring familiar to less familiar products

• developing understanding, for example, from the concrete to the abstract.