Richmond Hill Rainbow Base Position Paper (May, 2015)

Introduction

Richmond Hill Primary school is resourced with a city-wide provision for complex communication needs including autism. This provision is called the Richmond Hill Rainbow Base. The purpose of this paper is to give a current and clear insight into the principles, working practices and guiding philosophy of the Rainbow Base.

There is an interrelationship between the principles, working practices and culture in action; to support understanding of such the contributors to this paper have devised the Ripple System (see Image 1). The intention is that the reflections of this visual concept, alongside the written descriptors specific to the Rainbow Base within this paper, be understood as an interrelated, dynamic whole.

Image 1  The Ripple System

This is a position paper, not a consultation document; nevertheless comments from others are both welcomed and valued. This paper has been co-written during on-going multidisciplinary collaboration between the Rainbow Base lead teacher, the Educational Psychology Team, and the Children’s Speech and Language Therapy Service who currently support the Rainbow Base.

The paper has been influenced by the Rainbow Base staff team, other professionals, parents, families and the evolving experiences and interactions within the Rainbow Base and the wider mainstream school. The paper has been reflected upon across the time of its formation and modified.

The Rainbow Base refer to their principles, working practices and culture within the Ripple System as the *Rainbow Ripple System*. This system is so named the *Rainbow Ripple System* to depict the belief that any change within any aspect of the system ripples out and impacts upon the other aspects for variable or indefinite intensities and periods of time.
The Rainbow Base embraces change and evolution and continues to move forward, seeking to draw upon past and current evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence. The whole system is represented visually (Image 2). The ensuing four sections of this paper will describe each aspect of the Rainbow Ripple System.

**Image 2 The Rainbow Ripple System**
Section One

The Guiding Principles

This red aspect of the Rainbow Ripple System represents the beliefs and aspirations which guide the Rainbow Base staff team, and are outlined below. As a means of ensuring that they guide practice they are constantly revisited through reflection and staff supervision. As such, these principles continuously influence daily interactions, interventions and individual planning.

i. A happy child can learn

ii. A child who can communicate in a positive way can be understood, feel accepted and their potential can be realised

iii. A child who can purposefully use their learning can be independent in their actions on the world.

iv. A child who has a reflective and responsive team around them can be enabled to have their holistic needs identified and met.

Section Two

The Practice Around and With the Child

The yellow aspect of the Rainbow Ripple System refers to “the doing” that goes on within the Rainbow Base every day, and this is outlined below. Of course, this does not tell you in full how this is done, as capturing fully this on paper through the written word is not possible. Instead, spending time within the Base and reflecting with the staff team on what you experience and see is welcomed.

Dependent on the needs of the child on any given day the staff seek to responsively provide each child with the following curriculum:

- sensitivity and positive acceptance - enabling attuned interactions with the children to be initiated, exchanged, and maintained
- play - supporting learning, communication, interaction, problem solving, emotional connection, enjoyment, and the development of play skills which are then generalisable to the social networks of the child
• visual support – supporting communication, understanding, voice, learning and, feelings of security and safety

• a learning curriculum which includes at present the B Squared curriculum\(^1\) covering all curriculum areas and a social communication and emotional regulation curriculum which at present is the SCERTS® curriculum\(^2\) (the selection of these curricula has been informed by the Pilot study\(^3\))

• positive behavioural strategies – supporting structure, regulation, feelings of security, and understanding, understanding of predictability and order

• structured approaches – used to support teaching of specific skills for developing understanding and generalisability

• a free flow learning environment - all space is viewed as a potential learning space, enabling the child to be best supported to learn wherever they need to on any given day. Schedules for the day are the guidelines rather than the rule, allowing for responsiveness to ever changing needs. Staff have Walkie Talkies to ensure updates are easily communicated within the team and resources can be deployed for best impact, outcomes and support for all.

• inclusion - providing planned and unplanned opportunities for enjoyment, for relationships to develop, for interactions to be initiated, and to benefit from peer modelling of play, social interaction and communication, and for learning.

• reverse inclusion - allowing for the possibilities of anticipation and pleasure when peers join within the child’s known environment, providing opportunities for relationships to develop, and for the peers themselves allowing for opportunities where self-esteem, communication skills and behaviour can be enhanced.

• community experiences that will enhance their school day experiences, develop life and social skills, and develop skills which are then generalisable inside and outside of school.

• continual striving to reflect and learn from others ideas and approaches

---


Section Three

The Practice Around and With the Child’s Immediate and Extended Environment

The blue aspect of the Rainbow Ripple System represents the practice that goes on within the systems surrounding the child. This practice is outlined below.

The Rainbow Base staff team seek to consistently work in collaboration with:

- the child's family
- the whole school
- other educational settings within Leeds and beyond
- the other agencies and disciplines within Leeds such as the: Speech and Language Therapists; Educational Psychologists; Clinical Psychologists; Occupational Therapists; SEN teachers (SENIT), SENSAP, SENDIAS, school nursing team, disability nursing team, social workers and STARS.

The whole school staff team seek to:

- work as a cohesive group so that they can provide as much consistency to the children as possible, and support each other using each practitioners particular strengths
- work consciously to embed positive and supportive professional working relationships within the team
- attend external training as well as attending internal whole school training
- give staff recruitment much consideration to ensure that the Guiding Principles (red aspect of the System) will be upheld within the team
- continuously contribute to and consider the wider city vision within Leeds (“Making Leeds a great place to learn for all our children and young people: the Leeds SEND Strategy 2014 - 2017”).
Section Four
The Culture

The green aspect of the Rainbow Ripple System represents the culture. The culture is, “...the unconscious of the [Rainbow Base] – less to do with what is done and more to do with how it is viewed, heard and experienced.” Hawkins & Shohet (2012). As such the culture is not an entity of its own; its existence is seen through the richness of the outcomes for the children and young people. The green thread is woven through the red, yellow and blue aspects of the Ripple system to visually depict its integral multi-directional influence on the system. The image below shows all aspects of the system in colour to illustrate the significant impact that the culture has within the system.

The values which shape and influence the culture within the Rainbow Base are as follows:

(i) Fundamental beliefs drive choices. The Rainbow Base principles have captured these as described by the red aspect of the system.

(ii) The ways of interpreting and framing experiences influence the patterns of relating and behaviour. For example, within the school problems and difficulties are seen as important opportunities for learning and development for both the adults and children (as described in red and blue aspects of the system).

(iii) The practices that are chosen in any moment in time are guided by the principles, the range of practice and knowledge of the individuals and the dynamics within the immediate and extended context of the child and school. (as described in the red, blue and yellow aspects of the system)

Conclusion

The school continually strive to reflect and learn with others. “Everyone is searching for their own gold”, and it is the hope of the school team that each child will experience that, “they get me here!” (Louis Schofield, young person with autism).

Contributors

Lead Teacher, Dawn Mara
Educational Psychologist, Dr Sharon McLaughlin
Highly Specialist Speech and Language Therapist, Lynnette Menzies
Image and Visual Conceptualisation by Stuart Neill of Freelance Design Services (e: stuneill@me.com; t: 07545 535 716)
References

These are the main references drawn upon and referred to in this document. Copies of these references are kept on file at the Richmond Hill Rainbow base. There are others that have informed the development, as drawn from the collective professional knowledge and understanding of the contributors to this paper.

B Squared National Curriculum. (http://www.bsquared.co.uk)


