



Step by Step

# Developing Skills for Independent Living



# Priority Learning Areas

At Step by Step School, our curriculum places particular emphasis on 5 key areas of learning:

- Communication
- Behaviour
- Social Skills
- Community Participation
- **Independent/Daily Living Skills**



# Why do we teach Independent Living Skills? Our Intent

- The more you can increase a person's independence the more you can ultimately enhance their quality of life and their autonomy.
- By teaching daily living skills, we help to prepare pupils for life beyond Step by Step, including independent living, and vocational opportunities.
- By building skills we aim to maximise each pupil's potential.
- We recognise the importance of independence for all our pupils, at a level that is appropriate for their age and ability.
- It can be confidence building and dignifying for pupils to be able to complete simple self-care and daily living tasks without support.
- Pupils with Autism Spectrum diagnoses experience particular challenges with functional independence (Hume et al, 2014). We know that pupils on the spectrum are less likely to pick up skills for independent living skills incidentally. We also know that by applying evidence based intervention, we can address these challenges with our pupils and help them to grow.



# Vision and Values

Our Shared Values (LEARNS)	Our Approach to Independent Living Skills...
<b>Laughter</b> – fun, motivating learning that builds confidence.	By promoting independence, we build our pupils' confidence in their ability to do things for themselves.
<b>Evidence</b> – evidence-based practice for effective learning and progress	Evidence based practise, including chaining approaches and prompt fading, are used across the school to teach independent living skills.
<b>Aspire</b> – for all stakeholders to achieve their full potential, through realistic ambitious targets tailored to the individual.	The independent living skills we teach are determined on an individual basis, bespoke to specific needs
<b>Respect</b> – for every person to be treated with dignity.	Increased independence and autonomy, in particular regarding personal care, respects the privacy and dignity of each pupil.
<b>Nurture</b> – every success is recognised, praised and celebrated	Reinforcement approaches, social praise, and achievement boards ensure pupils feel encouraged and celebrated as they progress.
<b>Safe</b> – an environment where the pupils and staff feel safe and supported.	Intimate care plans, safeguarding training and a comprehensive in-house training programme are some of the measures put in place to ensure staff are confident in delivering all areas of the curriculum. Pupils are supported to voice their opinions in a way that is accessible to them and given input into their teaching to ensure they feel valued and listened to.



# How We Teach Independent Living Skills – Implementation

- We tend to think of many common daily living skills, like brushing our teeth, as a single task.

Brushing your teeth



- Often, these tasks aren't a single action, but longer routines, or chains of behaviours that link together.

Brushing your teeth



# How We Teach Independent Living Skills

- By viewing longer tasks as a chain of smaller steps, we can teach those small steps one by one, building them into a routine.
- This approach requires a high level of consistency, so a task breakdown, called a Task Analysis is devised.
- By using a Task Analysis all members of staff working with a pupil will follow the same steps, in the same order, which leads to quicker progress.
- When devising a Task Analysis, we consult with parents and pupils, where appropriate to make sure the routine is being taught in a way that can be practiced and maintained at home. We make use of platforms such as Earwig, to share progress with home, and to demonstrate the way a skill has been taught to promote consistency.
- Task Analyses are individualised for each pupil, based on their specific needs.

<b>Picks up toothpaste</b>
<b>Opens cap</b>
<b>Picks up toothbrush</b>
<b>Squeezes paste onto brush</b>
<b>Closes cap</b>
<b>Puts toothpaste down</b>
<b>Turns tap on</b>
<b>Wets toothbrush</b>
<b>Turns tap off</b>

# How We Teach Independent Living Skills

- Data is recorded on a Task Analysis data sheet, which allows us to identify what level of support a pupil currently needs to complete each step of the routine.
- The prompts that are given can be determined for each pupil, so support is being offered and faded in a way that is consistent.
- We can teach specific parts of the routine errorlessly - which means assistance is provided straight away to help the pupil complete the step. We can fade that assistance systematically from either end of the routine.
- The approach we choose, and the type of assistance (prompt) we give, is always based on the pupil and their individual needs. We always aim to use the least intrusive prompt possible, to encourage independence.

Task	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
	Tutor:	Tutor:	Tutor:	Tutor:	Tutor:
Picks up toothpaste	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent
Opens cap	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent
Picks up toothbrush	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent
Squeezes paste onto brush	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent
Closes cap	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent
Puts toothpaste down	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent
Turns tap on	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent
Wets toothbrush	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent	Full prompt Partial prompt Independent

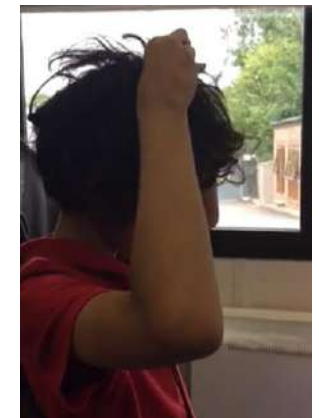
**Full prompt**  
– the pupil was fully supported with that step

**Partial prompt** –  
The pupil needed some assistance to complete that step

**Independent**  
– the pupil could complete the step independently

# How We Teach Independent Living Skills - Desensitisation

- We recognise that many of our pupils experience sensory challenges which can make acquiring independent living skills more difficult.
- We can identify parts of daily living routines that pupils might find difficult to tolerate because of specific smells, textures, or sounds, and support them to address these challenges.
- For example, a pupil who struggles to tolerate the taste of toothpaste, could be supported to gradually touch, smell and taste it across their session, away from the toothbrushing routine. By making this a positive experience, associated with lots of social praise and reinforcement, we can support pupils to overcome some sensory barriers.
- We can also incorporate foods, equipment, or sensory experiences a pupil finds challenging into established, motivating play.
- As a desensitisation programme progresses, we can support pupils to access the appropriate environment for these skills (e.g. hairdressers, dentist)





# How We Teach Independent Living Skills - Occupational Therapy

- Our in-house Occupational Therapists, Sian and Jo, provide 1:1 input on independent living skills during sessions with pupils.
- Strategies are provided as part of an individualised OT programme, which are practised regularly in class with 1:1 tutors.
- As well as directly targeting independent living skills, Sian and Jo supports our pupils in developing a range of important pre-requisite skills, such as fine and gross motor skills and functional strength, which will enable them to more independently access multiple activities across the curriculum.



# How We Teach Independent Living Skills - Reinforcement and Pupil Voice

- As with all targets, reinforcement strategies support our pupils in acquiring new independent living skills.
- Pupils can access motivating, fun activities for completing independent living targets. This makes learning new skills a positive, motivating process.
- Where possible, pupils are given appropriate input into their independent living skills. Whether it's choosing the flavour toothpaste they want to use, deciding which recipe to prepare to lunch, or choosing between work experience placements, offering choices can make working on independent skills inherently motivating and more relevant to the individual pupil.
- Preference assessments, a way of comparing items and finding out what a pupil prefers, and other approaches such as Talking Mats, are used throughout the school to help pupils have a say.



# Examples of Independent Living Skills Targets – The Impact

**Personal care:** tooth brushing, washing hands and other basic hygiene routines are often practiced with early learners at Step By Step. As pupils get older, and their needs evolve, these targets can include menstrual care, showering, application of deodorant, and shaving. Pupils learn to complete these tasks as independently as possible, through individualised teaching approaches.



# Examples of Independent Living Skills Targets

**Dressing:** putting clothing on independently, orientating clothing so it is the right way around, fastening clothes using zips, buttons and laces are all examples of dressing targets currently being taught at Step By Step.



# Examples of Independent Living Skills Targets

**Daily living routines:** learning to lay the table, making and unmaking a bed, hoovering, answering a telephone and taking a message, sorting and putting on washing amongst other routines can increase independence at home.



# Examples of Independent Living Skills Targets

**Self Management:** Lots of our pupils have learned a variety of functional skills that they can use to increase their independence. Meal planning, writing a list of instructions to follow, money skills, and making and following a shopping list are all examples of targets currently being taught at Step by Step.



# Examples of Independent Living Skills Targets

**Food preparation:** From learning to cut up food with cutlery, to making a simple sandwich, to following a full recipe, pupils are supported to increase their independence with food preparation at an appropriate level.



# Outcomes for Pupils- Generalisation (Good Impact)

As well as fading the support tutors provide to the pupils in completing everyday tasks, we actively plan for and promote opportunities for our pupils to practise their new skills to different contexts. Travelling on public transport, visiting the shops, the laundrette, crossing the road and trips to restaurants can all facilitate this.





# Outcomes For Pupils – Progress Tracking and Ongoing Assessment

- Each pupils Individualised Education Plan (IEP) has a systematic breakdown of the targets we teach. Progress is recorded on these documents, and continually reviewed throughout the term. Progress reports are completed termly, to share progress with parents, in addition to Earwig timelines and daily home/school communication.
- Standardised assessments, such as The Assessment of Functional Living Skills (AFLS) helps to track progress being made across a range of functional life skills. The assessments can also help to identify important skills that pupils would benefit from working on.



# Outcomes for pupils - Vocational Pathway

- We provide both onsite and offsite opportunities for our pupils to develop their independent skills in vocational contexts.
- Mini-Enterprise groups give Sixth Form pupils opportunities to make and sell a variety of items, including food, craft projects and plants for the garden. Weekly trips to the allotment provides opportunities to develop horticultural skills. The school tuck shop is staffed by pupils over lunch, and has helped pupils across the school to develop their shopping skills, as well as money skills and applied maths. Pupils have also made and sold products for external events, such as the Ardingly October Fair.
- Offsite, some of our pupils are able to access appropriate work placements, such as woodwork and working in the laundrette.



# Vocational outcomes for Past Pupils

- Past Sixth Form pupils have been supported to access a range of work experience placements, appropriate for their interests and abilities, or following on from Unit Award qualifications. These have included:
  - Hoovering and making beds in a local hotel
  - Working in a local café and farm shop
  - Picking and preparing crops at local farm
  - Working at the Llama Park
- Where appropriate, pupils have been supported to access alternative educational provision with 1:1 support, including:
  - Vocational qualifications at Plumpton College
  - A weekly placement at St Piers Sixth form, and later at St Piers College