

St Margaret's School

St Margaret's School is a non-maintained residential special school providing education, therapy and care for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties and complex health needs. A significant number of our students have Rett syndrome.

In order to ensure that learning experiences are meaningful for all our students they need a multi-sensory curriculum and one to one support to ensure they are engaged in and understand the activities presented to them.

St Margaret's offers a curriculum which focuses on developing the learner's understanding of the world around them and of social interactions and relationships, through a wide range of multi-sensory activities and experiences.



Characteristics of those with Rett syndrome

Rett syndrome is a complex neurological disorder that occurs mainly in females. Those affected are severely physically disabled and have profound learning difficulties.

Those with Rett syndrome are usually dependent on others throughout their lives. Research has identified a mutation (change) in one of their genes and as yet there is no cure.

Rett syndrome has several main recognisable features:

- a period of regression at about one year of age when skills are lost;
- the development of repetitive hand movements and the loss of purposeful hand skills;
- delayed responses and apraxia (apparent loss of memory of how to perform some movements);
- difficulty standing and walking, sometimes requiring the use of a wheelchair;
- hyperventilation, air swallowing and breath holding;
- epilepsy;
- increasing spasticity;
- scoliosis or curvature of the spine;
- loss of speech or communication difficulties;
- eating and drinking difficulties.

Specialised education

The St Margaret's Developmental Curriculum provides specific teaching strategies. The curriculum covers the development and integration of all the senses of taste, smell, touch, vision, hearing and bodily experiences. By the stimulation and awakening of these senses, those with Rett syndrome are enabled to make sense of the outside world and learning can take place.

Each student has their own specialised Individual Education Plan and associated tasks are completed in class groups, with school activities or 1:1 sessions. Activities are based on a multi-

professional approach, timetabled to give structure and promote anticipation through repetition.

Each class has an on-site named physiotherapist, occupational therapist and speech & language therapist. Students have individual therapy programmes designed to maximise their physical potential, independence, communication and purposeful hand use.

Music therapy can help children with Rett syndrome to develop their social interaction skills and is provided by our on-site music therapist on a one-to-one basis or in small groups.

Aromatherapy is provided on an individual basis by our qualified on-site aromatherapist.

How we support pupils with Rett Syndrome

Hand skills

- educational, therapy & care programmes are developed to encourage purposeful hand function;
- intervention programmes are developed where necessary to support students who may self-harm.

Balance, standing & walking skills

Students are supported to maintain these skills by taking part in the following:

- independent walking programmes;
- splinting programmes;
- individual physiotherapy programmes;
- horse-riding, cycling and hydrotherapy;
- independent sitting programmes.

A wide range of aids are used as appropriate to individual needs (e.g. handling belts, walking frames, Bambach chair, balance boards).

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Breathing issues

- staff training ensures awareness of the patterns of breathing behaviour and strategies which will support students' individualised, interdisciplinary programmes.

Epilepsy

- this is monitored and controlled individually by our on-site medical team and specialist consultant clinic.

Increasing spasticity

This is addressed by using:

- individual physiotherapy programmes;
- occupational therapy programmes;
- medical interventions.

Communication

- assessment of communication skills;
- individual and group programmes designed to develop understanding and expression.

Eating and drinking

- detailed assessment of oral skills;
- individual eating and drinking programmes.

Scoliosis

- this is monitored regularly by physiotherapists, doctors and consultants at the on-site clinics.

Regular consultant clinics

- orthopaedic specialists visit every three months;
- a special seating clinic is held monthly;
- there are also regular visits from a neurologist and a consultant child and adolescent psychiatrist.

More information

If you would like more information about education at St Margaret's School and our Developmental Curriculum please contact:

- Head teacher, **Jan Cunningham**
- Deputy Head, **Val Hobbs**
- Teachers **Alison Woolcott** or **Susan Drake**

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St Margaret's School

Education for students
with Rett syndrome

Charity Registration No 288018

**The Children's Trust is committed to safeguarding
children and young people**

