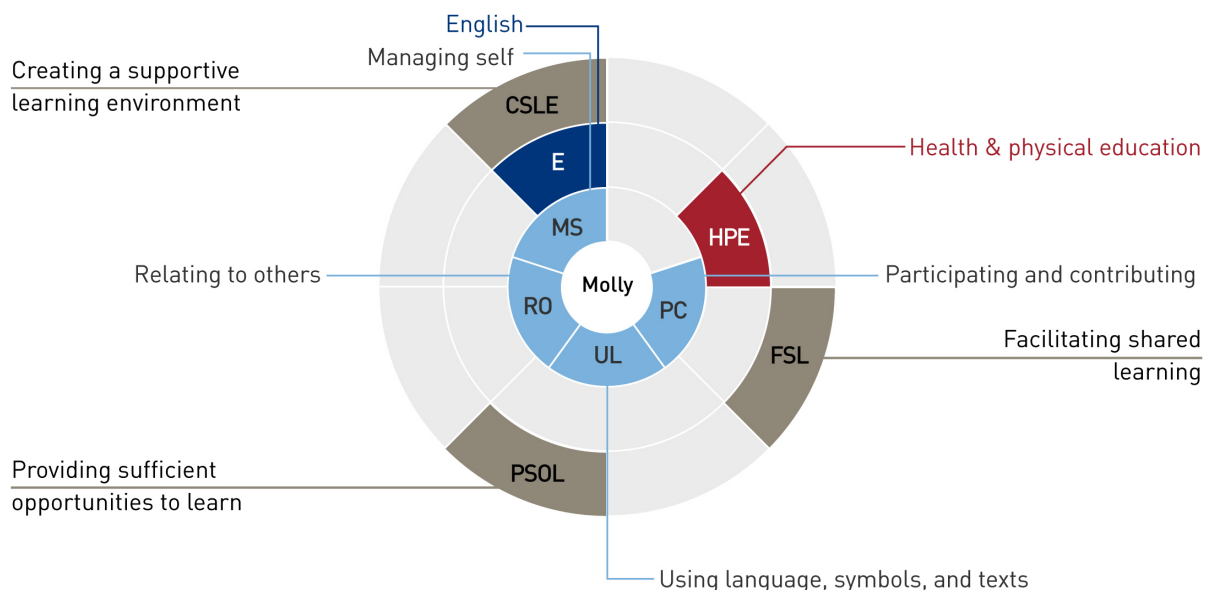


# Molly makes her way

## Links to the curriculum



## Student background

|               |         |   |
|---------------|---------|---|
| <b>Name</b>   | Molly   | Molly is lots of fun. She prefers one-to-one attention from an adult at activities and will often leave an activity if other children come near or try to join. Molly loves music and movement and enjoys using the computer. |
| <b>Age</b>    | 6       |   |
| <b>Year</b>   | 1       |   |
| <b>School</b> | Primary |   |

Molly started school this year and attends her local primary school. She is in a classroom of 16. Molly’s strengths are her fascination with numbers and letters and her strong interest in books. Her school receives ongoing and reviewable resourcing schemes (ORRS) funding for Molly. She has global developmental delay and autism. Molly has motor planning difficulty, which means she needs support to work through a series of steps to complete a task. Molly has hyperlexia (a precocious ability to read words) but difficulty in understanding verbal language.

Molly began to talk when she was four years old. She has a speech-language therapist working with her at school to develop her vocabulary and clarity of speech. Molly communicates by gestures (pointing), sign, vocalisations, and some words, and one- to two-word utterances. Molly’s use of sign to aid her communication has reduced as her speech has developed. Molly uses a BIGmack communicator (a single message voice output communication aid). She has made some astounding progress with her speech and language development in the past 18 months. There is a dyspraxia element to her speech, which means it is hard for her to produce some words and she sometimes squeals or mimics others. Molly’s speech is not always clear and her sentence structure is disordered.

A key learning goal for Molly has been to develop spontaneous and functional communication with others. Molly has difficulty interacting in social situations as she does not always understand the body language and facial expressions of others. She requires support to interpret these and to respond to others in the classroom.

Sensory profile assessment shows that Molly finds some sensory experiences (such as loud noise or large numbers of people) very difficult to cope with. When Molly is overwhelmed by too much unexpected activity or noise she becomes stressed. She will squeal, engage in repetitive activities, or cover her ears to block out the noise. Molly has difficulty processing multi-sensory information and having a busy environment will make it more challenging for her to filter unnecessary stimuli and be open to learning.

## Four learning stories

- 1. Molly getting to know her class** 27 February 2008
- 2. Sharing news** 12 March 2008
- 3. BIGmack time** 16 April 2008
- 4. Duck, duck, goose** 21 May 2008

This string of learning stories shows Molly learning to be comfortable in her new school. The teacher looked for natural opportunities for Molly to interact and talk with other children in the classroom. She supported Molly to initiate interactions with others and to respond to other children when they approached her. Molly is managing noise and large numbers of people better with the support of her learning community.

## Molly getting to know her class

|                |   |                 |                           |
|----------------|---|-----------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Student</b> | Molly   | <b>Date</b>     | 27 February 2008          |
| <b>Topic</b>   | Shared reading – a book being read to the class | <b>Observer</b> | Jane (specialist teacher) |

### Intended learning

- Molly will sit independently with her peers.
- Molly will become familiar with her new surroundings and routines.

After morning tea, the teacher asks the class to sit on the mat for shared reading. The teacher has a book she is reading to the class. The teacher aide shows Molly her shared reading visual symbol and gives the verbal instruction, “Molly shared reading time, sit on the mat”. Molly stands beside the teacher aide looking at her peers sitting on the mat. The teacher aide holds Molly’s hand and walks to the mat. The teacher aide points and tells Molly to sit on the mat for shared reading. Molly sits at the back of the group with her peers on the mat. The teacher aide sits at the desk behind Molly. Molly looks carefully between the teacher and the teacher aide as the teacher starts to read the story. Molly sits and listens to the entire story. At times, Molly turns to look at the teacher aide. She seems to be seeking her assurance (that she is doing the right thing).

After lunch, the teacher asks the class to choose a book and sit on the mat and read. Molly responds with, “No” and begins squealing. The teacher aide shows Molly the symbol for “reading” and points to the mat. Molly is given time (about 30 seconds) to process this information. The teacher aide shows Molly two books and asks her, “Molly, which book do you want?” Molly selects one of the books and sits at the back of the group. She independently looks through the book. The class is asked to put their books away. Molly sits flapping her book, the teacher aide approaches and points and verbally supports Molly to go to the library corner.

Molly is asked to come to the mat for group reading. Visual prompts and gestures (pointing) are used to encourage her. She gets anxious and begins to flap her arms and loudly verbalises, "No Molly", she then begins to squeal and hit her legs. This lasts only for about five seconds. She then looks at the teacher and observes what the children are doing. Molly slowly calms down and sits for seven minutes observing her peers in the reading group. Molly begins to rock. The teacher says, "Molly reading is finished, go and choose a puzzle" accompanied with the finish sign.

Fantastic, Molly was able to emotionally regulate herself and be open to learning during a reading group activity for seven minutes!



## Analysis – what learning is happening here?

### Key competencies

#### Participating and contributing

Molly has just started school this term. She is unsure of her new classroom environment, people, and routines. She shows her anxiety by flapping her arms, verbalising, "No Molly", hitting her hands against her legs, and lying on the floor. It is fantastic to see that although Molly can be uncomfortable with the new activities and experiences she is being exposed to, she still participates by sitting on the mat and observing her peers.

#### Using language, symbols, and texts

Molly spontaneously follows the teacher aide's gestures that guide her through the activities of shared reading. She responds to strategies that are used to convey information to her – visual symbols, and nonverbal and verbal support. She also responds to support when she is required to participate in unfamiliar activities, such as reading activities.

### Learning areas

#### Level 1 English: Listening, Reading and Viewing: processes and strategies

Molly is engaging with text by listening to the teacher read the shared book and by choosing a book and looking through it independently.

### Where to next?

We will continue to use a visual timetable to enable Molly time to process information, to support transitions between activities, to support her communication both verbal and nonverbal, to clarify verbal information, to teach new skills, and to teach routines.

We will divert Molly from challenging behaviours by redirecting and keeping her focused on what we are doing, and use positive encouragement and rewards for expected behaviour.

We will keep activities short and positive for Molly.

We will encourage peer modelling when Molly becomes more relaxed with the class routines and we will fade out one-on-one adult support.

## Sharing news

|                |  |                 |                           |
|----------------|--|-----------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Student</b> | Molly                                    | <b>Date</b>     | 12 March 2008             |
| <b>Topic</b>   | News group and sharing back to the class | <b>Observer</b> | Jane (specialist teacher) |

### Intended learning

- Molly will listen to peers sharing their personal news during the daily classroom news programme – oral presenting of personal news in a small group of four children – and then share her news using a BIGmack communicator (a single message voice output communication aid).
- Molly will verbally communicate her ideas about her personal experiences. We are currently supporting Molly to sit independently in a group.

When Molly arrives at school, she is greeted by her teacher and teacher aide and shown her morning visual timetable. Once the bell rings to start school, the teacher aide points to the visual timetable and says, "Molly it's now mat time". Molly remains standing beside the teacher aide and observes her peers going to sit on the mat. The teacher aide chats to Molly as she moves towards the mat. The teacher aide sits on a chair and whispers to Molly "Sit beside..." and points to the peer. Molly pauses and takes time to process this information then sits on the floor, beside the teacher aide.

The teacher calls out the children's names and puts them into groups. Molly's group moves off to their designated place. The teacher aide prompts Molly by saying, "It's news time now Molly we are sitting on the Banana in Pyjama's mat". Molly is anxious (crying, rubbing eyes) but still follows the teacher aide and sits down with her in the group.

All the children have been given question cards to help them to ask questions in the group. Molly has "What?". Molly is reassured by the teacher aide and encouraged to sit in the group and listen to the peer who is telling their news. When the peer has finished talking, Molly has her question modelled for her by the teacher aide. Molly looks and listens for a short time and then she starts chanting the names of children up on the wall. The teacher aide refocuses Molly by pointing and encouraging a peer next to her to share her question. Molly is happy to observe this. Her attention is then turned to the daily timetable and Molly begins to recite it. The teacher asks the children to return to the mat.



## Analysis – what learning is happening here?

### Key competencies

#### Participating and contributing

Molly is being supported to make transitions from activity to activity within the class environment. At present, the class routines and timetable are unfamiliar and she is observing her teacher and peers to learn about these new experiences. Molly is developing a sense of belonging in the classroom environment. She is watching her peers and copying them.

#### Managing self

Molly is learning to calm herself when she becomes anxious by focusing on identifying all the new people in her environment.

#### Relating to others

Molly was able to be positively encouraged to observe the news group protocol.  
Molly was able to sit in the group with her peers.

### Learning areas

#### Level 1 English: Listening, Reading and Viewing: processes and strategies

#### Level 1 English: Speaking, Writing, and Presenting: processes and strategies

Molly has an awareness of the connections between oral, written, and visual language. Molly is following both the verbal and visual prompts of the teacher aide during the news group activity. Molly is interpreting visuals and words in the classroom and vocalising them.

### Where to next?

We will support and encourage Molly to set up her own visual timetable.

We will fade out the teacher aide presence and look at strategies for encouraging Molly to initiate in her news group.

### BIGmack time

|                |   |                 |                           |
|----------------|---|-----------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Student</b> | Molly   | <b>Date</b>     | 16 April 2008             |
| <b>Topic</b>   | Using the BIGmack to share her personal news. | <b>Observer</b> | Jane (specialist teacher) |

#### Intended learning

— Molly will express simple ideas drawing on her personal experiences.

A child from another class has brought a skink in for the children to look at. Molly watches the teacher very carefully. She is tearful and rubs her eyes (she is upset because it is not the usual timetable and is a break in routine). The children are in a big circle. Molly's teacher prompts her verbally and points to reassure Molly and focus her on the task. There is a class discussion on skink facts. Molly is quiet and continually looking between the teacher and teacher aide. The teacher reassures Molly by saying, "Now we are looking at the skink, next we will go to news groups". The teacher also points to the timetable on the whiteboard where this change in programme has been written. Molly sits on the mat observing with her peers.

The class now make the transition to news groups. Molly sits with her news group without the teacher aide sitting beside her (she still has plenty of personal space so she is not overwhelmed). Generally, when Molly is asked what her news is she reverts to a familiar enjoyable experience; for example, "Happy meal", or she turns away and recites the daily timetable or days of the week.

Today, we talked about the skink.

All the group members spoke. Molly was asked, "Molly what did you see?" She responded, "Molly saw a skink". I told Molly I was going to record that on her BIGmack (previously she had pushed it away). She watched me record her news. I placed the BIGmack in front of her. She looked at me and then at the BIGmack and then pushed it. FANTASTIC! Molly then went on to push the BIGmack button again and again and again! "Finish now, one, two, three," I said.

The class returns to the mat and are sent off for story writing. Molly takes her BIGmack to her desk. She is asked, "What is your news?" Molly pushes the BIGmack and listens to her news. Molly watches her sentence being modelled in written form. She is supported to cut her news into the separate words. Molly then independently places the words in the correct order to form her sentence. She then is prompted to use her BIGmack. She pushes the BIGmack and points to each word.



## Analysis – what learning is happening here?

### Key competencies

#### Participating and contributing

Molly is becoming more familiar with news time routines and what the expectations and requirements are. She is also learning that she can be involved and has a role to play in news time. She is keen to record her news, with support. Using the BIGmack, Molly is able to share her personal news.

### Learning areas

#### Level 1 English: Speaking, Writing, and Presenting: processes and strategies

#### Level 1 English: Listening, Reading, and Viewing: processes and strategies, language features

Molly is beginning to associate oral language with written text.

Molly was able to respond to a question at news time. Her answer was recorded orally and in written form. Molly was able to correctly sequence the words from her news in a sentence and then point to the words as they were read.

### Where to next?

We will continue to use the augmentative communication aide (BIGmack) to support and enhance Molly's communication and expressive language. We will hold regular discussion

with Molly's parent before school about her personal news so it can be used to encourage Molly's participation at news time. Then we will encourage Molly to record her own news.

Eventually, we want to encourage Molly to play a speaker role in social interactions; for example, initially sharing her personal news by repeating the recorded sequence on her BIGmack.

## Duck, duck, goose

|                |                    |                 |                           |
|----------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Student</b> | Molly              | <b>Date</b>     | 21 May 2008               |
| <b>Topic</b>   | Social interaction | <b>Observer</b> | Jane (specialist teacher) |

### Intended learning

- Molly is developing the ability to spontaneously communicate with her peers in ways that are appropriate to the context.

During lunch time, Molly has a support person to ensure she is safe in the playground. Generally, Molly keeps close to her support person. Some days sensory issues occur that mean modifications need to be put in place; for example, on a windy day Molly will become very anxious (cry and scream) and want to remain in the classroom. A lot of desensitising activities have been worked on with Molly to enable her to be involved in social interaction; for example, social stories, fun games in the wind, ribbons, bubbles, kites.

Two students from another classroom have recently started greeting Molly in the playground. At first Molly would look at her support person and then look at her peers. Her support person would model for Molly, "Hi.....". Molly would smile at her support person. The next step was teaching Molly to respond to a greeting, by practising the greeting in a simulated situation by saying, "Hello ....." to her teacher and support person, people she knew and felt comfortable with. Molly was then encouraged to respond to her peers when they greeted her. The teacher would say, "Your turn Molly" or "Hello...". Molly began to greet her peers in the playground (with verbal support at times).

Today, Molly was approached by two familiar girls. Molly replied independently by saying, "Hello." One of the girls held Molly's hand and said, "Do you want to play 'Duck, duck, goose?'" The support person verbally encouraged Molly and here she is playing a game in the playground with her peers.



### Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Molly finds interacting in social situations challenging as she finds it difficult to interpret body language and other social cues from her peers (such as facial expressions). She requires support to understand these. It has taken two terms for Molly to feel comfortable in the playground because of these challenges.

It is fantastic to see other children taking an interest in Molly and approaching her to join their games. The other children are supporting Molly to interact in a natural social situation without adult involvement.

## Key competencies

### Relating to others

Molly is learning by imitation, observation, instruction, and collaboration – she is observing her peers during class and play time; for example, modelling in reading groups and participating in “Duck, duck, goose”. She is showing that she can participate in recreational social interaction; for example, a game in the playground.

## Learning areas

### Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People: interpersonal skills, identity, sensitivity, and respect

This social interaction in the playground is fantastic because it was a “spontaneous” social interaction with adult support faded out in what can be an extremely challenging environment for Molly.

Molly finds it difficult to be in a place where she needs to make sense of a lot of different sounds and activities. A busy environment will be more challenging for her because she has to concentrate on the task at hand while ignoring other sounds and events.

She shared intentions for social interaction in role play and, with encouragement, Molly was able to greet peers in the playground. She also joined in a game.

## Where to next?

We will:

- provide appropriate interpersonal and environmental learning support for Molly; for example, peer buddy system, senior school buddy system.
- fade out adult support so that Molly begins to initiate social interactions and greetings herself. This can be done by making visual prompts a priority and fading out verbal prompts.
- encourage structured games to be modelled in class situations and encourage generalisation in the playground.

### Parent’s voice

“Molly has blown us away with how well she is going at school. No two ways about it! Full credit to the people working with her. Her reading and speech progress has been amazing. Phenomenal. Rocking on lots better than 18 months ago.”

“Absolutely fabulous, she is coming on in leaps and bounds. Far exceeded our expectations. Her speech has improved so much.”

### Students’ voices

Children are independently seeking Molly’s involvement in their games and verbally encouraging her; for example, “Your turn, Molly”, “Run, Molly, run”, and “Well done, Molly”. These interactions will encourage Molly to become an active participant in the school environment.

### Teacher reflection

The teacher and teacher aide are very attuned to Molly’s emotions and pace; for example, smiling when Molly expresses joy in her involvement in the playground game with peers or slowing the pace of the interaction when Molly gets overloaded with sensory issues (the wind, the number of peers involved).

We will follow Molly’s focus of attention; for example, we will encourage and develop Molly’s interest in her peers when she is approached in the playground.

## **Future goals**

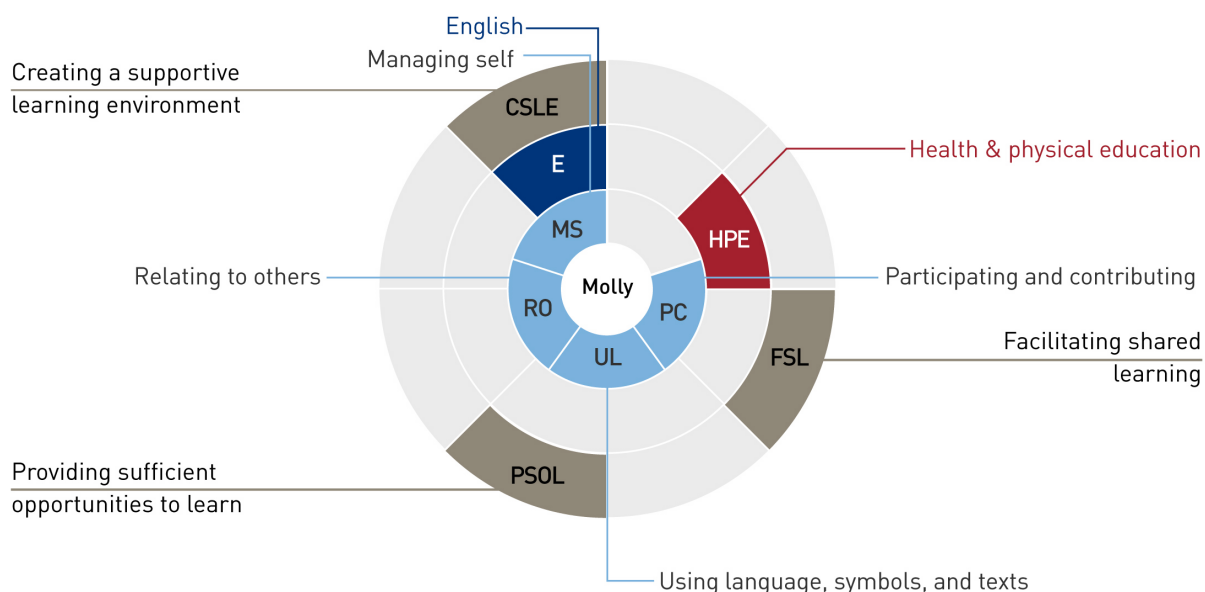
We will:

- recognise when Molly is finding learning difficult because she is stressed, and offer support; for example, when Molly is beginning to show signs that she is not available for learning (flapping arms, squealing), we will model appropriate behaviour, language, and metacognitive strategies.
- provide information or assistance to avoid Molly becoming stressed; for example, before reading group time we will prepare Molly by using visual cues and explaining what is going to happen, and, for news group time, we can talk with her parent before school, with Molly, about what her news could be about.

We can:

- offer breaks from social interaction as needed; for example, when too many children try to support Molly or it is windy and she is feeling stressed.
- offer choices nonverbally or verbally; for example, use the visual timetable and ask, "Would you like Dad or a classmate to use the BIGmack today?"
- wait for and encourage Molly to initiate an activity or interaction.
- fade out the verbal commands, which can overload Molly with information and may cause a reliance for continuing support.
- provide guidance for success in interactions with peers by drawing peers to Molly, helping Molly to respond to interactions from peers, and mediating successful interactions with peers (without excessive prompting or directing).
- model a range of ways for Molly to communicate with the teacher and her peers.
- create turn-taking opportunities and leave spaces for Molly to fill in.
- offer repeated and varied learning opportunities.
- use augmentative communication support to enhance Molly's understanding of language and behaviour (i.e. non-speech communication, such as gestures, signs, and picture symbols).
- use visual (photos, symbols) and organisational support (materials or space) to ease transitions between activities and to focus attention in group activities, and foster active involvement.
- adjust social complexity to support organisation and interaction; for example, ask only one peer to support her with a task.
- modify the sensory properties of Molly's learning environment, by being aware that Molly can become stressed if too much is happening, and consider how the environment can be adjusted so it is not overwhelming for her.
- increase expectations that Molly will initiate and be independent in her social interactions.

## Reflection – what these stories exemplify



### Key competencies

As Molly becomes familiar with the school environment, she is beginning to participate and contribute with confidence and independence in a variety of school settings (participating and contributing).

Molly shows how she is developing by using the communication tools provided; for example, BIGmack and the visual timetable (managing self).

Molly is accessing the visual timetable to anticipate what is coming up and to stay calm while reading (using language, symbols, and texts).

Molly is taking turns in the group is being generalised at news time and at playtime games. She is socially responsive to her peers; for example, smiling after greeting (relating to others).

### How might these stories strengthen Molly's identity as a learner?

Molly is becoming familiar with her new school environment. She is responding to assistance offered by adults and peers. Molly is able to join her peers in class and playground activities; for example, sharing personal news, participating in games (agency).

Molly had transferred her knowledge of turn taking from the classroom in news group, to participating in a game at play time. She was able to transfer her personal news from home, to news group, to written language. Molly was an observer during news and reading time, but she has become an active participant in the news group, reading, and in the playground (breadth).

As Molly experiences her school programme and observes as it follows the same daily routine, she is able to focus and become involved (continuity).

Molly is preparing at home with her parents for her personal news. With help, she uses her BIGmack to record her personal news. Now she is beginning to verbally contribute her news when prompted. Adult support is being faded out to ensure Molly learns how to respond independently to peer social interactions, such as greetings (depth).

For more information on the four dimensions of agency, breadth, continuity, and depth (ABCDs), refer to *Narrative assessment: a guide for teachers*.

## Learning areas

### Level 1 English

This learning is situated in both the strands of Listening, Reading, and Viewing and Speaking, Writing and Presenting: language features, and processes and strategies.

Molly is learning that speech conveys a message and this message can be shared with her peers using BIGmack at news times and in greeting her peers in the playground. Molly is developing an awareness of the connections between oral and written language as she points to each word of the story while listening to the previously recorded sentence being replayed.

### Level 1 health and physical education

Molly is learning to develop relationships with other people. She is beginning to participate with support from her peers and to co-operate in groups.

## Effective pedagogy

### What does this tell us about teaching and learning in this setting?

Molly's peers are interested in her. They initiate interactions with her and seek her company in games. The teacher supports all children's learning in this classroom by encouraging children to work and learn together in co-operative and socially supportive groups. This provides a positive environment for Molly to be included in the group and to learn. The teacher can observe children's interactions and teach Molly's peers how to include her in their activities in ways that keep her calm. Adults in the classroom support Molly's learning by showing her peers how to talk with her and keep her comfortable (creating a supportive learning environment).

The teacher can deliberately set up contexts in the classroom to support Molly's learning. We have observed Molly learning from and with her peers, so we know these contexts do not always have to include adults. These learning stories show how peers can learn how to include Molly in their games, and how to engage her in their conversations and activities. Teachers can build on these natural interactions and ensure there are opportunities throughout the day for children to learn together. These situations can be deliberately planned, or teachers can be alert to and encourage spontaneous learning situations. They can observe these interactions to support all children to learn about each other.

Molly feels happy and ready to participate when she has reasonable personal space around her. The physical environment can be set up to ensure this is possible and peers can be supported to understand that this is Molly's preference and that some space around her will help her to feel calm and able to learn. Molly has begun to reduce this space herself, as illustrated in the photographs. The teacher can observe and respond to Molly's progress by encouraging and rewarding her for sitting closer to her peers and staying in the group (facilitating shared learning).

Adults provide direct support by reassuring Molly and keeping her calm to ensure she is able to remain as a member of the group.

Adults reinforce class routines and schedules using pictures and photographs so Molly knows what is happening and what is ahead. This keeps her calm and she remains part of the group.

Showing Molly how to do something first gives her important information about what is expected and how to be successful. The teacher can provide opportunities for both adults and children to show Molly what to do, then give Molly time to do what is required by herself (providing sufficient opportunities to learn).

**Reflective questions for the reader**

"How can the specialist teacher be used to support a student's learning as a fully participating member of the class?"

"How can I help shift the support of a student's learning (like Molly's) from adults in class (most of the time) to include peers more?"

**Useful resources**

Prizant, B.M., Wetherby, A.M., Rubin, E., Laurent, A.C., & Rydell P. J.(2006). *The SCERTS model, a comprehensive educational approach for children with autism spectrum disorders. Volume 1: assessment.* Baltimore, Md.: Paul H. Brookes Pub. Co.