

TRANSCRIPT: Class teacher, personal care PMLD

Marie Weinand

I work with profoundly, multiply disabled pupils. They've all got quite complex personal needs. They all need help with toileting. They need help with feeding. Half the class are PEG fed, so fed by tubes. The other half eat with assistance. They might need their food liquidised or chopped up, but they need one-to-one support with somebody guiding their hand.

Feeding, toileting, and other personal care, like physiotherapy, takes up a large part of our day. We have, sort of, set times for personal care, but things don't work out like that, so we then incorporate it into our daily programme. So physiotherapy, if they're having to do side-lying on the floor we will try and programme that when we're doing, say, maths, feeling shapes, that they can be on the floor and feel those shapes.

A lot of the children being tube fed won't need to eat at dinnertime. They might eat at different times during the day, so the staff are very good at just knowing when people need feeding and somebody will clip them up and get it ready and they can carry on doing their work while they're having their tube feed.

We have a lot of training on lifting and handling, feeding. A lot of work with the nurse, the physio, the speech therapists and things and, within that, you discuss how you treat a child respectfully and how you take care of their personal needs, but also their feelings and emotions. So through that training, I think everybody is aware of it to a degree. And then, at the beginning of a year you set up an ethos of how you're going to run your class and you discuss what are acceptable things and what aren't.

I think you do need to have a good knowledge of the children and that comes with the experience of working with them. Once you get to know the pupils, it's very clear what they like and what they don't like and a lot of it is being aware of the subtleties in their movement - their eye movement, their arm movement, you know, a little vocalisation, something like that. You have to be quite perceptive and you have to pick up on those clues and make sure you take account of them.