



Charity registration number 1089224

A recreational facility for disabled children, their families, friends and schools



Inclusive computer technology at Thomley Activity Centre

Computers for children of all ages and abilities

Thomley has 4 computers for use by visitors with enhanced accessibility for use by disabled children such as a touch screen, switch controls, adapted mice and keyboards. Each computer is installed with educational games, interactive stories, word processing programmes and internet connection for access to additional resources. The computer room can be booked out for half hour sessions by children attending with their families, schools or respite groups.

This room is particularly valued by younger children and those with profound disabilities or autism who may have a limited attention span. *"My son has really enjoyed using the computers, particularly the interactive reading books. I am delighted to see how verbally expressive he is in the computer room and when asking staff for a programme he wants to use."* – **Parent of a 9 year old boy with Autistic Spectrum Disorder.**

In a fun and interactive way, the benefits of the computers are to assist children's development of:

- Hand to eye coordination
- Visual stimulation and eye tracking skills
- Understanding of cause and effect
- Recognition of shapes, colours and words
- Language skills through stories that encourage discussion
- Imaginative and creative skills using music and drawing programmes
- General computer literacy and skills



Through installation of additional software, Thomley plans to develop more appropriate resources for older children and those with advanced skills.

Supporting parents and carers

Thomley staff demonstrate the use of software and hardware to all visitors and have put together a manual detailing the attributes, controls and benefits of each programme. This kind of support enables parents and carers to support the development of their child's computer skills.

The computer room also provides a valuable resource for parents and carers who, due to the demands at home, may not have half an hour spare to use the internet, either to catch up with emails, or to browse online disability resources, support networks and organisations.

Awareness raising about disability

Thomley believes disabled children should have choice amongst a diverse range of leisure opportunities. Thomley therefore shares its experiences and approaches to inclusion by welcoming visitors from the local community who, with greater understanding and acceptance of disability issues, are more able to include disabled children within community activities. To support this, Thomley signposts visitors to suppliers of inclusive technology so that computers can be made accessible to all.

Cost of providing art and craft activities

The full cost of providing inclusive computer technology is £17,737 per year, equivalent to **£3 per child per visit** and 6% of the centre's overall running costs. This covers the rent and serviceability of the 20m² computer room space, staff support, maintenance of hardware and software and internet access. £6,000 has been pledged towards these costs already, leaving a **shortfall of £11,737.**