



## Teaching, Learning & Assessment Policy

Valid From: September 2025

Next review due: September 2026

### **Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy**

We value the whole child and work in partnership with parents/carers to give each individual the best possible start to their education. Our children learn to be confident, active learners through positive relationships. Our highly skilled and knowledgeable practitioners know the children and their families well. Our expectations are high. We provide a secure and stimulating setting for all our children. Children learn and develop well in an enabling environment in which their experiences reflect their unique needs. We offer a broad curriculum which engages and excites children, allowing ownership of their learning, with increasing independence and resilience.

### **The Curriculum**

Four elements form the foundation of our curriculum intentions and development:

- **A clear pedagogy based on a robust understanding of child development – cognitive, emotional and physical.**

We understand that children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. Each child brings different learning and play experiences with them when they join our Nursery School (Cultural Capital). We work with parents to gather this crucial knowledge which helps us to develop our curriculum intentions. Practitioners are mindful of the large difference in development between the different cohorts of our children; those who are just two years old and those who are in their fifth year. This is reflected in amongst other things, the structure of the day, use of physical space, use of language, behavioural expectations, staffing ratios and curriculum mapping.

- **A shared definition of what teaching looks like in the Early Years.**

We adhere to the Ofsted definition of teaching and this is at the heart of our provision.

*“Teaching should not be taken to imply a ‘top down’ or formal way of working. It is a broad term that covers the many different ways in which adults help young children learn. It includes: their interactions with children during planned and child-initiated play and activities, communicating and modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling, providing a narrative for what they are doing, facilitating and setting challenges. It takes account of the equipment that adults provide and the attention given to the physical environment, as well as the structure and routines of the day that establish expectations. Integral to teaching is how practitioners assess what children know, understand and can do, as well as taking account of their interests and dispositions to learn (characteristics of effective learning), and how practitioners use this information to plan children’s next steps in learning and to monitor their progress.”*

Early Years Inspection Handbook (September 2019) p.33

Observation is an integral part of this teaching.

- **A secure understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum (EYFS), its content, sequencing and progression through the Seven Areas of Learning and the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning.**

The EYFS provides the curriculum framework that leaders and practitioners build upon when deciding what we intend our children to learn. Birth to Five Matters: Non-statutory Guidance supports practitioners in all their statutory responsibilities within the EYFS. We foster the children’s enjoyment of learning, their desire to explore, investigate and persevere and offer a broad, stimulating and balanced curriculum which covers:

**Prime Areas:**

Communication and Language Development  
Physical Development  
Personal, Social and Emotional Development

**Specific Areas:**

Literacy  
Mathematics  
Understanding of the World  
Expressive Arts and Design

Underpinning and interconnected to all these areas of learning are the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning.

**Playing and Exploring - Engagement**

Finding out and exploring  
Playing with what they know  
Being willing to ‘have a go’

**Active Learning – Motivation**

Being involved and concentrating  
Keeping trying  
Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

**Creating and Thinking Critically - Thinking**

Having their own ideas  
Making links  
Choosing ways to do things

- **An excellent knowledge of the children in our care.**

Each child is unique. We use an *assess – plan – do – review* cycle to inform our curriculum. This cycle works on different levels (see How Children Learn below). By observing, listening and playing with the children, focusing on their interests, key people get to know their children extremely well; they are then able to identify and extend learning opportunities. We foster an ethos of partnership, inviting parents to Parent Conversations twice a year and encouraging parents to engage in their child’s learning by contributing to their Tapestry on-line Learning Journal (see Tapestry Guidelines). Practitioners and parents discuss their child’s development and agree on next steps. Parents are urged to share home achievements via our ‘Super Stars’ board which we then go on to share in group times. They are invited to attend workshops to further their understanding of learning in the early years. The Head teacher and teachers meet practitioners each term to discuss children’s progress and the nursery team meet regularly at the end of the day to discuss what has worked well and what can be further developed. Wider needs of the children are identified (amongst other things - children receiving EYPP/FSM; those with EAL; those supported by children’s services or family centres; Summer born children; those who might be regarded as young carers; those with medical care plans and children with more complex additional needs who have a detailed One Page Profile).

**Curriculum Planning**

The curriculum evolves from close observations of children’s play, interests and experiences. Key people use this knowledge to plan their differentiated group activities. These are recorded in Key Group files. Analysis of tracking data informs wider planning and is demonstrated on half termly curriculum maps for both Little Stars and Rockets. Topics reflect seasonal themes, festivals and celebrations. We aim to involve the principles of

Forest School throughout the year. Practitioners ensure the appropriate sequencing and progression in learning by referring to our subject curriculum maps.

### **How Children Learn (Implementation)**

We provide a rich and varied learning environment both indoors and out. Our children are safe and secure, happy, engaged and stimulated. Children are enabled to develop, consolidate and deepen their knowledge, understanding and skills through a range of child initiated and adult led activities. We provide a rich and varied learning space which has been thoughtfully designed and curated to provide the best developmental opportunities for our children. For most of the session children choose from a variety of activities and self-select resources. Good quality resources are always available as part of our continuous provision. They are encouraged to follow their own interests. Practitioners know when to support and scaffold a child's learning and when not to interfere, recognising teachable moments and opportunities to extend and challenge while observing, listening and playing with the children (*In the Moment Planning*). Their professional knowledge of language development allows them to differentiate and enhance their communication with each child. In this way we foster sustained shared thinking and ensure that individuals are appropriately challenged. The daily session includes at least one Family Time where the day's main learning intention are taught, news is shared and achievements celebrated. Story time creates a love of story, rhyme and song, critical in the development of communication and language skills. Snack time, lunch time and personal care times are valued as real learning opportunities. Key Group times allow for targeted, differentiated teaching. Underpinning this is the key person's knowledge of their children's stage of development and the next steps in their learning journey (Little Footsteps). Children with additional needs have an Individual Support Plan (ISP) which incorporates advice from external professionals which outlines learning objectives for targeted support and those to be embedded throughout the session.

### **Curriculum Impact - Review and Development**

Review of the curriculum is ongoing. Staff are reflective practitioners. Our use of In the Moment Planning allows us to make incisive changes within a session. Similarly, SLT curriculum scrutiny and data analysis allows for other changes to the provision. The staff team meet at the end of each session to evaluate the day's activities and discuss their observations of children. Regular learning walks by members of the SLT and Governors monitor curriculum implementation as do targeted, standardised observations formats (e.g. SSTEW, Leuven) and peer observations. The impact of curriculum planning is also reflected in assessment data, children's progress meetings and feedback from outside professionals and colleagues in receiving schools.

### **Assessment**

Assessment, through professional observation, is embedded into our daily practice. By playing with, observing and listening to children in an enjoyable and relaxed way, key people are able to make holistic and focussed judgements on each child's stage of development.

A summary of progress and development is held for each child on their **EYFS Developmental Tracker**. Children's learning is continually monitored and the tracker regularly updated. A baseline observational assessment is made at 10 sessions, attended without parent/carer, a session being a morning or afternoon. The tracker is updated in December, February and June. This allows practitioners to plan appropriate activities for individuals and the wider cohort and forms the basis for discussions in **Children's Progress meetings** with the Head and teachers. Practitioners meet regularly to moderate judgements internally and where possible with similar settings. Information is analysed by the senior leadership team and informs future developments and training needs.

Discussion with parents/carers have an important contribution to this process and **Parent Conversations** take place at regular intervals throughout the year.

An **EYFS Progress Check at age 2 years** takes place for children who are rising 3 year olds. Parents and the child's key person meet to share information.

In this way practitioners and parents can quickly identify whether any child is showing typical development for their age, is below or exceeding age-related expectations.

**Next steps** (Little Footsteps) for individual learning are decided, shared with parents and reviewed at least every four weeks.

Children with identified SEND have individual targets, an Individual Support Plan (ISP), set throughout the year which are regularly reviewed and discussed with parents, practitioners and health professionals.

Where appropriate other forms of assessment are used to help us understand how an individual child is developing. These might include:

- WellComm Speech and Language Toolkit (GL Assessment)
- The Early Language Monitoring Tool (ECAT)
- Ann Locke (Talking Teaching Profile)
- Frequency observation of behaviour
- ABCC observation to document unwanted behaviours/events
- Early Years Behaviour Checklist (nferNelson)

On leaving The Wharf, a report focusing on the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning and the child's voice is written for parents. During the Summer term, key information is shared professionally with staff from receiving schools when they come to visit their new children. The report is passed onto the receiving infant/primary school along with the child's EYFS Developmental Tracker as part of the transition process.