Kenilworth Nursery

&

Whitnash Nursery Schools

Curriculum Policy

26/27

"Celebrating the uniqueness of every child"

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Committee Responsible: Governing Board, Chair Alison Paveley

Lead Responsibility: Executive Headteacher, Rachel Barber

ABOUT US

Whitnash Nursery School and Kenilworth Nursery School are happy, warm, secure, caring schools that aim to provide the highest quality education and care. Each school values the uniqueness of each child and aims to work co-responsibly with families to ensure every child achieves their potential.

The enthusiastic, committed staff teams provide education and care that makes a difference and provides a positive contribution to children's learning and early development, working beside the child.

Our approach to learning through first hand experiences and purposeful play in a child centred environment, is based firmly upon years of research into how young children learn and continue to develop into lifelong learners. We actively seek to support children to develop effective learning characteristics and to explore learning with increasing independence. Our ethos recognises and values the uniqueness of every child and we aim to support children to become 'communicators' who convey their ideas, thoughts and feelings and are able to interact and learn socially effectively. We ensure children are 'noticed', listened to and valued as we observe their interests to follow lines of enquiry that motivate and enthuse.

The Curriculum

At Whitnash and Kenilworth Nursery Schools we develop bespoke curriculums in response to fulfilling the educational programs for each of the seven areas of learning identified within the Early Years Foundation Stage 2026 alongside the needs and interests of each child. We regularly review and update our curriculum document and you can find out more about the specific activities that are planned via the Learning Journal App and families can take part in our curriculum sharing and consolidating learning at home that is also taking place in school through our weekly home/school activities also shared via our App.

To support the EYFS 2026 requirements, assessment guidance documents have also been produced by Early Education specialists in the form of Birth to 5 Matters (2026) and Development Matters (2026). These documents outline what children may be expected to be able to do in relation to developmental progression and from these supportive materials we have developed milestones. This helps us understand what sequential learning and skills progression look like within our setting and what we want for each child. In the EYFS statutory requirements, we are reminded that assessment must include *how* children learn, as well as *what* and that these ***characteristics of learning*** are also of key importance within the Early Years Foundation Stage and beyond as they recognise learning styles and preferences.

At Whitnash and Kenilworth Nursery Schools **what children learn** is very carefully planned in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance, to include experiences and opportunities that address all seven aspects of learning:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Expressive Arts and Design
- Understanding the World.

We plan the environment with 'opportunities for learning' and then carefully observe each child's interaction and response, noticing the way they encounter the resources, environment and each other. This then leads to a series of professional questions about how we may extend the interests of the children and develop their skills as 'communicators'. Our careful observations of each child support us to gain an understanding of their skills, intentions and interests. This knowledge of each child can then be linked back to the EYFS guidance materials and our work on milestones so that we may make a professional judgement about each child's skills, capabilities and progression. Observations, encounters and learning stories are regularly shared with parents who often contribute feedback via an online system "Learning Journals." We also offer a home/school activity link on a weekly basis. Throughout all services that run in our School and the Nurture Nursery we regularly audit our environments and curriculum offers to ensure they are absolutely tailored to the ages and interests of the children accessing them.

Whitnash and Kenilworth Nursery Schools provide a rich and broad range of learning opportunities that are developed and carefully planned based upon children's interests and provocations introduced by the adults. Areas for 'enquiry' are planned with an interesting mix of found resources and more familiar resources. Children are given time and space to 'think' and work can take place over extended periods of time.

We are very clear about how children learn and support parents and children in recognising the characteristics of effective learning. We also ensure learning covers all of the aspects identified in the EYFS. dietician

How Children Learn:

Key Characteristics of Effective Learning

***Playing and Exploring**:
We observe ways in which children demonstrate curiosity about objects, events and people. Noticing whether they engage in open ended play and how they may use their senses to explore the world around them. We look to see whether children can use what they know within their play, taking on roles or representing experiences. We observe the extent to which children will initiate activities or seek challenge, do they have a 'can do' attitude and are they willing to take a risk in their play, learning with trial and error.

***Active Learning**
This focuses upon children being able to become involved in play, sustaining and maintaining activities for appropriate periods of time. They may demonstrate a particular interest or bounce back after experiencing difficulties.

We also notice when children are proud of accomplishing their goals and when they look for praise or enjoy meeting challenge for its own sake.

***Creating and Thinking Critically**

We observe ways in which children may approach problems, finding new ways to do things and thinking of ideas to try. Often this begins with making a link or noticing a pattern from their own experiences. They may test their ideas and talk about cause and effect. We notice if children are planning, evaluating, changing strategy and reviewing their approach to more challenging tasks.

All of these characteristic behaviours help us to identify each child's particular learning style and strengths. It also supports the adults to encourage the development of a particular learning behaviour that may not yet be embedded for the child.

What is our Intent for young children:

Our Curriculum Goals

	Intent: what do we want?	**What does that look like?**
PSED	A sense of our feelings and links with others	Play and interact successfully forming good relationships, developing an understanding of how they and other people feel.
Communication & Language	Listening to and communicating with others	Communicate, increasingly using language to share ideas.
Physical development	Physical and neurological ability to follow our intentions.	Move confidently and safely so they become physically able to achieve what they set out to do (including use of tools and self-care).
Literacy **Reading & Writing**	Understanding and being understood	Interpret, create and communicate meaning through sharing language, writing and reading in different media.
Mathematics	A spatial and numerical way to make sense of the world around us	Develop mathematical concepts in relation to everyday experiences and physical participation.
The World	A sense of self and the world around us	Develop a sense of self and the world around them and how they link to it.

Expressive art & design	A response to what we see, hear and feel	Explore different media and materials and respond personally with ideas and feelings.

What Children Learn in relation to aspects of learning.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Who we are (personal), how we get along with others (social) and how we feel (emotional) are foundations that form the bedrock of our lives. As we move through life, we are continually developing our sense of self as we weave a web of relationships with self, others and with the world.

PSED is fundamental to all other aspects of life-long development and learning, and is key to children's well-being and resilience. For babies and young children to flourish, we need to pay attention to how they understand and feel about themselves, and how secure they feel in close relationships: in so doing they develop their capacities to make sense of how they and other people experience the world. Children's self-image, their emotional understanding and the quality of their relationships affect their self-confidence, their potential to experience joy, to be curious, to wonder, and to face problems, and their ability to think and learn.

A holistic, relational approach creates an environment that enables trusting relationships, so that children can do things independently and with others, forming friendships. Early years practitioners meet the emotional needs of children by drawing on their own emotional insight, and by working in partnership with families to form mutually respectful, warm, accepting relationships with each of their key children. (Birth to 5 matters)

At the Nursery School we give priority to personal, social and emotional development, which is critical for very young children and gives them the best opportunity for success in all other areas of learning. This permeates the whole school atmosphere and environment and leads to children feeling good about themselves, respecting others, social competence and having a positive disposition to learn. We develop emotional literacy skills so that children may express their thoughts and feelings particularly with regard to learning. We support children in valuing social learning opportunities working in small groups so that they may also learn from each other. Social communication is promoted and modelled by staff through out play and activities are planned that actively build social confidence and in which children can express their own thoughts and feelings.

Physical Development

Physicality, the foundation of human development, underpins all other areas of a child's development and learning. It establishes the neurological, sensory and motor foundations necessary for healthy, happy and successful lives. It is intricately interwoven with emotional, social, cognitive and language development.

The connection between the brain, body, and movement must be understood. When they are viewed as one system the impact of active, physical play, health and self-care are observed and the effect of adverse childhood experience including malnutrition, illness or neglect on a child's early brain development and mental health is recognised. Health, wellbeing and self-care are integral to physical development, providing the foundations for self-regulation and self- management.

Each child's journey relies on whole-body physical experiences. While biologically programmed, the unfolding of this complex, interconnected system requires repeated movement experiences that are self-initiated and wide-ranging. Fine and gross motor control must develop together in an integrated way, so that the child can achieve what they set out to do. We must ensure that children have movement-rich lives, indoors and outdoors, from birth. This includes the role of the adult's body as an enabling environment itself, embedding movement into everything, and encouraging each child's own motivations for being active and interactive with others. (Birth to 5 Matters)

As well as improving skills of co-ordination, control, manipulation and movement, physical development helps children gain confidence, and feel the positive benefits of being healthy and active. The school has excellent outdoor areas with sufficient space for children to enjoy the freedom of running and large-scale movements, whilst taking opportunities to develop balancing, climbing and jumping skills. In addition, each Nursery school has a studio space indoors where large-scale movement can be explored and this is often used for the music and dance sessions that run weekly to support this aspect of learning and the wider curriculum. We follow national guidance that each child needs ot access at least 180 minutes of physical exercise each day and also promote this aspect through our home/school activities.

We also provide a range of opportunities for practicing fine motor skills and to develop effective grips for using tools and mark making equipment. Progression in this area of learning is supported through the provision of challenge baskets with a range of resources to develop fine motor control and coordination. We support children to develop self-care skills and encourage independence.

Communication and Language

Children are born ready and willing to communicate. They depend on interactions with others to become confident and effective communicators and language users. Within the first three years of life children have laid the foundations of communication and language proficiency. Language also begins to guide and support their thinking and emotional development and underpins their emerging literacy.

From birth to five their skills develop through a series of identifiable stages which can be looked at in three strands – Listening and Attention, Understanding and Speaking. Not all children will follow the exact same sequence or progress at the same rate, but it is important to identify children at risk of language delay or disorder as these can have an ongoing impact on wellbeing and learning across the curriculum. (Birth to 5 Matters description)

Communication is the foundation of learning, through the opportunities for carefully considered and responsive interactions verbal and non-verbal, speaking and listening and increasing our vocabulary we develop effective communication skills. We support development of these through:

- Time to talk and the valuing of back-and-forth conversations
- Noticing and listening to children.
- Supporting children to develop shared focus and attention.
- Offering children experiences and provocations to engage and enthuse
- Valuing what children say and always responding
- Adults modelling spoken thoughts and naming feelings
- Working beside the child and enriching language during enquiry and play

Literacy

Literacy is about understanding and being understood. Early literacy skills are rooted in children's enjoyable experiences from birth of gesturing, talking, singing, playing, reading and writing. Learning about literacy means developing the ability to interpret, create and communicate meaning through writing and reading in different media, such as picture books, logos, environmental print and digital technologies. It involves observing and joining in the diverse ways that different people and communities use literacy for different purposes. Most importantly, literacy is fun and creative.

Developing literacy competence and skills is a demanding and time-consuming journey that requires high-quality pedagogical activities to enhance learning. Young children need playful opportunities to enjoy:

* Being included and involved in the literacy practices of their home, early years setting, and community environments

* Creating and sharing a range of texts in a variety of ways, with different media and materials, with adults and peers, both indoors and outdoors

* Being listened to by attentive adults who recognise and value children's choices

* Learning about using different signs and symbols, exploring sound and developing alphabetic and phonetic skills. (Birth to 5 Matters)

We ensure the environment is print rich and always provide a range of texts to inspire children to share books and have developed a core book offer that supports a range of stages in early reading with focus ranging from picture books and interest boxes, lift the flap interactive books to rhyming pattern books and eventually longer stories with multiple characters and events. Books are shared with children daily at group time and throughout sessions and reading is dialogical so much discussion takes place about the book, narrative, characters, sequencing etc.

We have worked to support our team to understand the foundations of early reading and writing and begin with work on shared focus and attention, noticing, listening and responding and the development of the application of young children's natural curiosity.

We also seek to:

- develop narrative story telling with props and storylines
- share oral stories and 'pass the story' so that children can be part of the narrative.
- offer interactive and dramatic action response to stories. Often linked to music and dance.
- encourage early writing using marks and symbols and celebrate children's early mark making;
- scribe narrative stories for young children modelling the process of story writing.
- provide opportunities to make motivational marks using a range of media on a range of scales.
- make representational marks and drawings in response to provocations and interests.
- extend vocabulary, making collections of words in response to the curiosity cube and wonder wall experiences as provocations.
- developing an awareness of the link between the spoken and written word
- specific focussed literacy sessions to introduce rhyme, sound discrimination, letter recognition and phonics

Mathematics

Mathematics for young children involves developing their own understanding of number, quantity, shape and space. Babies and young children have a natural interest in quantities and spatial relations – they are problem-solvers, pattern-spotters and sense-makers from birth. This curiosity and enjoyment should be nurtured through their interactions with people and the world around them, drawing on their personal and cultural knowledge. Children should freely explore how they represent their mathematical thinking through gesture, talk, manipulation of objects and their graphical signs and representations. Every young child is entitled to a strong mathematical foundation which is built through playful exploration, apprenticeship and meaning-making.

Effective early mathematics education requires practitioners who:

* Observe, listen to, value and build on children's mathematical ideas and experiences (including with families);

* Include mathematics in interactions with children, drawing attention to mathematics in children's everyday lives;

* Help children seek patterns, make connections and recognise relationships;

* Support children of all ages in creating and solving mathematical problems;

* Ensure provision includes a rich blend of practical activities, stories, songs, rhymes,

* Games and imaginative play as well as graphic tools; with plenty of time for children to revisit, develop and make sense for themselves;

* Maintain children's enthusiasm so children develop positive self-esteem as learners of mathematics and feel confident to express their ideas. (Birth to 5 Matters)

Maths skills and concepts of number, shape, space measurement and data handling are experienced and developed in all areas of the school. There are daily opportunities to hear, recite and recognise numerals through play and rhymes. Maths is developed in almost every situation both inside and out including:
- block, sand and water play;
- imaginative play;
- specific maths equipment and maths games;
- rhymes;

Above all we make maths integral to activities and fun. There also are opportunities for the exploration of spatial reasoning and thinking in the planned environment. Staff understand that progressively these skills are needed to support the foundations of number work.

Expressive Arts and Design

Children and adults have the right to participate in arts and culture. Expression conveys both thinking (ideas) and feeling (emotion). Children are multi-modal, using a variety of ways to express and communicate. Creative thinking involves original responses, not just copying or imitating existing artworks. Expressive Arts and Design fosters imagination, curiosity, creativity, cognition, critical thinking and experimentation; provides opportunities to improvise, collaborate, interact and engage in sustained shared thinking; and requires time, space and opportunities to re-visit and reflect on experiences. Multi- sensorial, first-hand experiences help us connect and enquire about the world. Appreciating diversity and multiple perspectives enriches ways of thinking, being, and understanding. Skills are learned in the process of meaning-making, not in isolation. (Birth to 5 matters)

Through the expressive arts, children make sense of the world around them, expressing what they see and feel through:

- the use of a range of media, working with pencil, pen, pastel, paint, collage, etc, to gain experience of colour, texture and form
- music working both indoors and out musical instruments to develop rhythm, beat and pitch with opportunities for different types and styles of music and dance.

Specialist teaching supports the development of music; drama; working from stories and imagination.

- exploration and articulation of materials in the atelier spaces.
- opportunities for unique and personal responses to provocations

Understanding the World

Understanding the World provides a powerful, meaningful context for learning across the curriculum. It supports children to make sense of their expanding world and their place within it through nurturing their wonderment, curiosity, agency and exploratory drive.

This development requires regular and direct contact with the natural, built and virtual environments around the child and engaging children in collaborative activities which promote inquiry, problem-solving and shared decision making. Active involvement in local community life helps children to develop a sense of civic responsibility, a duty to care, a respect for diversity and the need to work for peaceful co-existence.

In addition, first-hand involvement in caring for wildlife and the natural world provides children with an appreciation of ecological balance, environmental care and the need to live sustainable lives. Rich play, virtual and real-world experiences support learning about our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world and how to stay safe within it. They also cultivate shared meanings and lay the foundation for equitable understandings of our interconnectedness and interdependence. (Birth to 5 Matters)

Young children constantly seek explanations about the world in which they live. We encourage and build on this behaviour by actively encouraging questions, experimenting with and observing. Hands on experience and opportunities to explore and make links include:
*growth/change
*our senses
*forces
*the environment
*weather/seasonal changes
*cooking
*growing vegetables

*working with pulleys
*investigating the properties of ice, magnets, materials and light

We also encourage children to think of themselves as members of the school community and the wider community.

Technology
This aspect covers a range of control technologies to enhance learning including use of digital cameras, iPad and computer software.
The school has an extensive range of construction equipment, using a variety of fixings from simple push methods to nuts and bolts.

Children will be encouraged to:

- design and make models from a variety of found materials;
- to fix and attach materials together for a variety of purposes.
- be involved in the planning and design of environments, e.g. turning the home area into a shop

Making Learning Visible

Learning Journals

Learning Journeys are personal records of each child's significant experiences in which they have demonstrated particular interest or learning skills. The observations are generally based upon a child- initiated activity where they can demonstrate their interests and understanding.

They will contain 'spotlights' or learning summaries and next steps for learning. They will also outline what strategies we may use at School and what will change as a result of our better understanding of the child after each focused observation. Their purpose is to make the learning visible and ensure each child's capabilities are recognised and valued and they are shared with parents at least termly.

During the time children are at the nursery they will be observed and assessed working against developmental milestones across all aspects of the EYFS. Throughout the experiences their learning will be 'documented' so that it can be remembered and shared. Children's effective learning skills will also help staff to identify their particular learning style and support them to develop skills for learning. These observations and assessments form an individual record to ensure progress is taking place. Each child's Learning Journal is now online so that Parents can see them and interact with the school in thinking about and working co-responsibly to enhance each child's learning and progress.

Encounters:

Encounters are completed weekly for every area of the Nursery environment. They document significant learning and interests in each of the areas of the planned environment. They evidence groups of children and individuals engaged in particular

learning experiences, usually child initiated. Adults may join the children in their learning and their questions may also be documented in orange. Learning is identified by green text and children's dialogue is also noted in blue to help give a full understanding of the learning taking place.

These are displayed with narrations for parents each week and then become part of each child's individual Learning Journey.

Documentation display:

Significant learning experiences are carefully documented. Each piece of documentation produced by the school is colour coded for visibility and includes green learning text, blue dialogue and orange professional questions or interactions. Narration is always in black text and supports the carefully chosen photographs or samples of work. Documentation is used to display learning around the school so that it can be shared and celebrated.

Observation and Assessment

"Stand aside for a while and leave room for learning, observe carefully what children do, and then if you have understood well, teaching will be different from before" (Loris Malaguzzi).

Our intention is to develop a system which honours children and childhood in which we plan time to observe children without fixed agendas to better understand them. We build in time for quality reflection about children's learning.

The focus on telling the story of the children and observing to understand them links strongly to our ethos in which 'each child's uniqueness is recognised and valued'. Alongside the clear recognition that "if we are recording the moment we cannot be part of it" and our understanding that by being part of the moment and co-constructing beside the child we are making the best possible impact on young children's learning. Our aim is for Practitioners to have the maximum amount of time to be involved with and co-construct learning and experiences with our young children.

We also know and value the importance and benefits of parent partnership in the early years. We understand that parents know their child best and that they are co-responsible for their learning in the early years and beyond. Our system ensures that parents are part of the process throughout, working in close collaboration through conversations about their child's learning, collecting vital information about their knowledge, skills and emotional well-being on entry so that we understand their interests and starting points. This work supports our development of curriculum and enables us to plan responsively to the interests and needs of the children.