



**A REGISTERED CHARITY, Charity Number 1026054**  
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## **Areas of Learning**

The curriculum for all children aged 0-5 is called The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). This is made up of 3 Prime Areas, which are fundamental to children's development, and 4 Specific Areas, which include essential skills and knowledge.

The 3 Prime Areas (PAs) are:

1. Personal, Social and Emotional Development
2. Communication and Language
3. Physical Development

The 4 Specific Areas (SAs) are:

1. Literacy
2. Mathematics
3. Understanding the World
4. Expressive Arts and Design

Each of these is described in more detail below to give you a clearer picture of how these are implemented in the pre-school and an understanding of how you can support your child at home.

### **PA 1: Personal, Social and Emotional Development**

One of the prime areas of learning in the Early Years Foundations Stage (EYFS) is: Personal, Social and Emotional Development, which is crucial to children's positive identity, as well as their capacity to learn. There are 3 main aspects to this area: the first is Making relationships, the second is Self-confidence and self-awareness, and the third is Managing feelings and behaviour.

#### **Making relationships**

From the moment a child starts at the pre-school, children are encouraged to make relationships with adults and other children. The key person system helps ensure that one particular member of staff is getting to know your child and the small group times, which they lead each day, are a good place for a child to begin to get to know a small number of their peers. Initially, children tend to play alongside their peers, rather than with them, but staff support children in beginning to develop friendships, for example, by encouraging joint play in the home corner. We also make use of turn-taking games and activities to help support this aspect of children's development, as well as collaborative activities, such as ring games and use of the parachute.

#### **Self-confidence and self-awareness**

It always brings us such a sense of satisfaction, seeing the oftentimes quiet, nervous children, who are initially reluctant to leave their main carer, blossom into the self-confident, assured reception school children when they leave. Whilst being very aware that every child is unique, we also believe that all children need to know that they are valued for who they are. We celebrate not only children's achievements but their efforts. Children are encouraged to express their ideas and feelings and are

provided with lots of opportunities for making choices at pre-school, such as whether to play inside or outside, what to play with, what to eat at snack time, or even whether to have a snack at all! We also encourage children to become independent, step by step, and give them responsibility for tasks such as tidying up and completing the outside risk assessment.

## **Managing feelings and behaviour**

One of the first steps for children in managing their feelings, is learning to recognise and name them. We provide a range of activities for exploring feelings, such as reading stories, playing with the feelings puppets (6 puppets with different facial expressions) and simply talking with children about how they feel. We also have a feelings wall display where children can attach a photo of themselves to show how they are feeling. Positive behaviour is frequently affirmed at the pre-school by praise, the use of stickers and the use of our 'Rights Respecting Board', where acts of kindness, helpfulness etc are celebrated. Where negative behaviour occurs, children are not forced to say sorry, as this is usually somewhat meaningless at this age, and can become an automatic response, with no real awareness of its meaning. Rather, we encourage children to make amends (for example, by helping a child make the construction they have just broken) and where another child has been hurt, we help children to think about the feelings of the other child and how they could make them feel better. We make use of sand timers to help children understand about waiting for their turn for playthings, and, in time, children can learn to use these independently amongst themselves.

## **PA 2: Communication and Language**

Another of the prime areas of learning in the Early Years Foundations Stage (EYFS) is: Communication and Language, which is crucial for children's ability to express their needs, wants and feelings, as well as understand the communication of others. There are 3 main aspects to this area: the first is Listening and attention, the second is Understanding and the third is Speaking.

### **Listening and attention**

These are important because children need to pay attention to how people are communicating in order to learn to do it themselves, and they need to listen carefully to all the sounds and rhythms that make up words and sentences. There are lots of activities we provide which help children develop listening and attention skills. Stories, songs and rhymes, particularly those with actions and repeated refrains, all encourage development in this area, as do games such as 'Simon says' and 'Animal sounds lotto' (identifying animals from their noises on a CD). Encouraging children to play percussion instruments in time to music and songs helps children's ability to hear and differentiate sounds. It is also good to take opportunities to listen to sounds in the environment. Small group activities such as 'Show and Tell' are used to help children learn to listen to others, which can be a real challenge for young children, but is clearly crucial to communication.

### **Understanding**

This aspect is about helping children to follow instructions, which involve a sequence of events, and knowing how to answer questions, which involve 'how' and 'why' things happen. At the pre-school, all staff aim to use 'open-ended' questions with the children. This means avoiding questions with a one word answer, particularly 'yes' or 'no' responses, but asking questions which require children to explain effects and predict outcomes.

### **Speaking**

Most children love to talk, but they need someone to listen to them. We value giving children opportunities to have conversations with the staff, which involves giving them time to think and not asking too many questions. We also encourage children to converse with each other, helping them learn about

taking turns in conversation through turn-taking games. All activities can provide opportunities for talking, but role-play is a particularly rich one, especially when children reach the stage where they are introducing a storyline into their play. Children are encouraged to learn new vocabulary, but where children pronounce or use words incorrectly, we will repeat what they say in the correct way, rather than saying they are wrong or drawing attention to mistakes.

(Tip: when asking a child about a painting they have done, rather than asking them, "What is it?" a good prompt can be, "Tell me about your picture".)

## **PA 3: Physical Development**

The next area of learning in the Early Years Foundations Stage (EYFS) we are looking at is: Physical Development.

There are 2 main aspects to Physical Development: the first is Moving and handling, and the second is Health and self-care.

### **Moving and handling**

Moving involves encouraging children to experiment with different ways of moving and negotiating space successfully. Our Music and Movement sessions take place in the school hall and involve exercising and dancing to music and active nursery rhymes. The Friday children have the opportunity for PE, when they are encouraged to use apparatus in the hall, as well as take part in exercises, races and active games. However, there are numerous opportunities for supporting children's physical development during free-play outside. From ball games, to riding the bikes, cars and scooters, to equipment such as the slide and trampoline, to games up on the grassy area, and even simply negotiating the steps up to the grassy area: all provide valuable opportunities for children to develop their gross motor skills. As far as handling equipment and tools is concerned, we use lots of different resources and activities in the pre-school to support children's fine motor skills. One very important movement to encourage is the pincer grasp, as this forms the basis for holding a pencil later on. Activities such as playing with the pegboards, picking up tiny things like sequins, when creating collages, and even encouraging children to peel oranges and bananas, are all valuable.

### **Health and self-care**

Health and self-care involves teaching children the importance of things like exercise, hand washing and eating a healthy diet and how to stay safe. Rather than removing every possible risk from children, it is important that they learn how to manage risks safely, according to the stage of development they have reached. It is also vital that children are helped to develop the skills needed in order to manage their own toileting and dress themselves independently. If your child is starting school in September, do encourage them to get dressed and undressed on their own and to manage their own lunch without help.

## **SA 1: Literacy**

Parents of our older children often ask questions about their child's readiness for reading and writing, as they think about school in September.

Our priority at pre-school is to lay secure foundations, which include developing speaking and listening skills, and the importance of extending children's vocabulary cannot be over-emphasized. Specific pre-reading skills are encouraged through activities such as stories, books, puppets, sequencing puzzles and games, name and letter recognition and encouraging children's awareness of initial sounds, rhythm and rhyming. Pre-writing skills are encouraged through developing children's fine motor skills. The wide range of tools and equipment provided at the pre-school, during activities such as art and craft, playdough, cookery and construction all help. Children are encouraged in their early attempts at drawing,

and subsequently writing, through a wide variety of mark-making tools, such as pencils, felt pens, paintbrushes and chalks. Role-play provides an excellent opportunity to encourage mark-making, particularly with children who would otherwise be reluctant: children just love to use a clipboard, whether it be to take the register, write a shopping list or take someone's restaurant order.

Research has shown that children who have been read aloud to before they start school do better in national literacy tests, and this is probably the most obvious way parents can support their child's literacy. However, there are many other ways parents can have a positive impact: letting your children see you reading and writing, singing rhymes and songs, spotting letters and logos when you are out and visiting the library together are just some ideas. It is vital, however, that any activities are interesting and fun so that children develop a positive attitude towards literacy.

## **SA 2: Mathematics**

There are 2 main aspects to Mathematics: the first is Numbers and the second is Shape, space and measure.

### **Numbers**

Numbers means so much more than just number recognition and learning to count, although these are important basic skills. We use lots of different activities in the pre-school to develop children's numeracy such as number songs, books and stories involving numbers, board games, computer games and imaginative play resources like play money and the cash register. However, it is important that children see numbers being used in real-life situations, such as counting the number of stairs, sharing out cups at snack time, using mathematical language like 'more', and 'fewer' and solving simple problems, like working out how many is one more or one less. As children begin to grasp the basics, it is good to introduce them to number patterns (eg 10, 20, 30) and estimating.

### **Shape, space and measure**

There are numerous ways in which we help children develop their understanding of shape, space and measure; these include using resources such as sand and water play, construction toys, puzzles and weighing scales. However, it is important for adults to talk to children about simple mathematical concepts, while they are at play, and let them hear us use terms like 'full', 'empty', 'heavy', 'light', 'under', 'inside', 'long', 'longer' and 'longest'. Again, it is really beneficial for children to experience these concepts in everyday life. It is good to encourage children to notice shapes and patterns in the environment, get involved in tasks like shopping and cooking and talk about things like distance and time.

## **SA 3: Understanding the World (UW)**

This is comprised of 3 main aspects: People and communities, The world and Technology.

### **People and communities**

Most children need very little encouragement to talk about their family and home life, and this is a good place for staff to begin to encourage young children's communication skills. The next step is for children to understand how their friends' lives are different from theirs and to learn about other people in the community, such as health and safety professionals. It is also important for children to learn about different cultures and develop respect for people with different beliefs to those of their own family. This aspect links with our Rights Respecting Setting Award with its aim for children to become "global citizens". We try to do this in a meaningful way for the children, not simply celebrating diverse festivals, but engaging in activities such as the Shoebox Appeal and our annual "no running-water day", where the older children have a taster of what it would be like to rely on fetching water from a well. Travel Ted has now flown off to Uganda and will be emailing us news of his experiences in a Ugandan school!

## **The world**

This aspect is all about encouraging children to be inquisitive and learn about the natural and man-made world. We have a wide range of resources to support this, such as magnets, magnifying glasses, small world equipment and our outdoors mud kitchen. Practical activities like cooking and gardening provide great learning contexts for how things change over time. Our annual life cycle project is always a brilliant hands-on experience of the growth of animals. Last year, you may remember, we hatched caterpillars and I am delighted that this year we will again be hatching chicken eggs in the run-up to Easter. Although family visits to places such as museums, libraries, zoos and parks are great for supporting this aspect of UW, what is as important, if not more so, is simply encouraging children to be curious, observe, experience and talk about the world around them.

## **Technology**

Children nowadays are clearly surrounded by technology and most already have a wide experience before they even start at pre-school. However, we do provide children with opportunities to develop their mouse-control at the computer, as this is a useful skill, which can be challenging for children, especially as more and more children are tending to use electronic gadgets such as tablets. We have a good range of computer software, which supports children's development across the areas of learning. We also have a computerized drawing programme and a tablet. Other electronic devices include mini voice recorders, torches, remote controlled cars and trains, a programmable toy called a "Bee-bot" and a CD player and children are encouraged to become independent users of technology.

## **SA 4: Expressive Arts and Design (EAD)**

This is comprised of 2 main aspects: Exploring and using media and materials and Being imaginative.

### **Exploring and using media and materials**

This aspect is largely about encouraging children to explore and experiment with a broad range of equipment and techniques. At the pre-school, we provide all sorts of media and materials, such as: printing materials and tools (eg rollers, stamps), sensory/textured materials (eg shaving foam, cornflour), malleable modelling materials (eg playdough, clay), materials for junk modelling (eg recycled boxes and bottles), decorative materials for collage-work (eg tissue paper, feathers, shells, sequins, sequins), as well as a large range of mark-making equipment (eg pens, pencils, chalks, paintbrushes). We have also been improving our outside provision in this area with larger construction equipment (eg tyres, crates) and the mud-kitchen. It is important that the focus is not so much on the end result, but the process of creativity.

We also introduce children to a wide range of musical-based activities. These include listening to music, playing different musical instruments, learning different songs and rhymes and responding to music and rhythm with body movements and dancing.

### **Being imaginative**

This aspect is about children using what they have learnt about media and materials to express their own ideas, thoughts and feelings. For example, children are encouraged to plan and create their own artwork and constructions, on their own or in collaboration with others. The next step with music is for children to start to make up their own songs and rhythms, while small world play (eg trainset, farm, dolls house) and playing with puppets encourage children to make up stories. Dressing-up clothes and the home corner provide great opportunities for children to develop their imaginative skills further. By regularly changing the home corner (eg café, hospital, shop), children are provided with a range of contexts in which to engage in role-play based on their own experiences. As children mature, they learn to introduce more and more sophisticated storylines into their play, as well as play cooperatively as part of a group.