

Date Reviewed	June 2024
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Agreed by: Learning and Achievement Committee Date: January 2025

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Signature: Signed electronically on Gov Hub

Highfield Nursery School

Curriculum Overview – June 2024

We believe that children learn best by actively pursuing their interests and ideas through exploratory play, supported by teaching staff who extend their learning, facilitating the child's process of creating and developing theories about the world.

Children's personal, social and emotional development is central to their learning and we support this through the development of positive and caring relationships. Each child has a Key Person who completes their Learning Journey.

We encourage the development of self-confidence and self-awareness and children become independent learners by choosing resources and accessing all areas of the nursery environment. We support children in managing feelings and behaviour through giving them the vocabulary to name a range of emotions and use a conflict resolution approach, where we help children learn how to find solutions to their conflicts and help support how they manage the conflict next time.

Respect for children's rights runs through our curriculum. We are a UNICEF Rights Respecting School, teaching children about their rights and their responsibilities to themselves, to others and to the world around them and this threads through our work. It helps develop children's acceptance of difference and diversity and supports the development of a strong moral compass. It is evident in interactions between staff and children, where staff listen to children and children show respect for each other and for adults. We believe in child centred learning and plan for a balance of child initiated and adult led learning.

Aims

The aims of our curriculum are to enable all of our children to become:

- Enthusiastic, successful and independent learners who make good progress, achieve their full potential and develop a positive growth mind-set
- Confident individuals who know how to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives and who are aware of their rights and those of others
- Responsible citizens who are able to make a positive contribution to society, not just locally but globally too
- Individuals who understand the value of learning and who continue the process throughout their lives

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- Resilient individuals who are able to deal effectively with the challenge's life may hold
- Emotionally able fulfilled individuals

Purpose

The curriculum will:

- Provide a balance between structure and responsiveness
- Promote high standards of personal, social and emotional development
- Provide a range of broad, balanced and varied learning experiences, both indoors and outdoors
- Promote a positive engagement with, and a commitment to learning both now and in the future
- Be relevant to the children now as well as preparing them for the next phase in their education and into the future
- Develop a love for lifelong learning
- Develop a wide range of skills and broaden children's life experiences through a range of exciting first-hand experiences
- Create a sense of positive wellbeing and mental health focussed on fulfilment
- Promote the development of essential skills, knowledge and understanding including co-operation and collaboration
- Acknowledge and take into consideration the impact of Covid-19 on the lives of our young children including their emotional wellbeing, personal and social skills, limited range of experiences and social interactions

Intent

At Highfield Nursery School we have designed our curriculum with 'children at the heart of the learning'. The curriculum at Highfield Nursery School is ambitious and inclusive and encompasses everything the children experience and all the opportunities they have while they attend our school. It has been developed with the child central to all aspects of learning. We provide inspiring, language-rich learning environments indoors and outside. High quality resources, alongside highly experienced practitioners, ensure we are able to provide the very best curriculum that enables all children to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding they need – for now and into the future.

The spaces in our environments have been well planned and created, to best support children's learning and development, offering them open ended materials and resources to enhance and support their holistic development. We also plan a broad and balanced curriculum appropriate for the age and stage of all children, based on the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance, which takes account of children's interests and gaps in skills. This is delivered through a balance of adult-led teaching alongside opportunities for children to lead their own learning and explore new experiences, supported by skilled staff.

The learning environment is carefully planned to ensure coverage of the seven Areas of Learning and is developed based on observations and assessment data to provide a range of real-life, and meaningful first-hand experiences to broaden the children's opportunities. This is accompanied with visits out and inviting visitors into school.

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Children with SEND are fully included whilst being supported by highly trained and experienced staff. This includes specific work (1:1 and in small groups) to support their identified needs (See our Parents Guide to SEND). Remembering that every child is unique, the intent of our curriculum is to ensure that all children, as individuals, reach their full potential. All practitioners at Highfield Nursery School believe that every child has the right to the very best learning opportunities regardless of their starting points. Every child has something to offer and this is recognised and truly supported and embedded in all that we do.

Implementation

Our curriculum is implemented through the following:

- A Story Curriculum
- Enhanced planning - linked to children's interests and identification of skills
- In the moment responsiveness and planning for children's interests
- Curriculum overview document
- Skills progression for key skills - used by staff to identify next steps, plan learning experiences and ensure progression
- Subject specific policies including reading, writing and maths policies
- Adult led group times – including planning for phonics (Paddling with Phonics), maths, stories and key skills
- Small group work for identified children
- SEND nurture plans and 1:1 work (teaching is high quality—additional support above this where it is deemed necessary)
- Working with parents – informative and engaging induction programme, planned and focussed stay and play sessions (Highfield Hands Day), training sessions, leaflets as well as information on the school website [Highfield Nursery School - Home Learning](#)
- Staff training linked to School Development Plan and performance management targets, monthly staff meetings and whole school INSET days

Nurturing Attachment and Relationships

John Bowlby, British psychologist, was the first attachment theorist, describing attachment as a *'lasting psychological connectedness between human beings.'*

Attachment refers to a relationship bond between a child or young person and their primary caregiver, which is formed in the early years and has a long-term impact on a child's sense of self, development, growth and future relationships with others.

Taking this theory and others into account we pride ourselves on a warm, welcoming environment that meets both the physical and emotional needs of children in our care and their families. To support this, we adopt the keyworker system and ensure our induction and transition processes support the unique and individual child.

It is of vital importance that we never lose sight of the child's emotional well-being and the idea that we want our children to become independent, confident learners. We promote an ethos to support these early

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attachments recognising children as individuals, acknowledging them for who they are and helping them to understand their emotions, offering emotional refuelling when needed.

This as an area of vital importance. Staff will model empathy and recognise children's emotions, giving them the support that is needed for developing resilience, a strong sense of self, and a sense of belonging. This allows children to embrace the world around them by trying new and different things, having a go and challenging themselves both physically and mentally.

We have a member of staff who is Theraplay trained and offers individualised nurture support to children who are identified through our observation and assessment.

Self-Regulation and Executive Function

When children have opportunities to develop executive function and self-regulation skills, individuals and society experience lifelong benefits. These skills are crucial for learning and development. They promote and enable positive behaviour and allow us to make healthy choices for ourselves and our families.

Executive function includes a child's ability to:

- Hold information in mind
- Focus their attention
- Regulate their behaviour
- Plan what to do next

These abilities contribute to the child's growing ability to:

- Self-regulate
- Focus their thinking
- Monitor what they are doing and adapt
- Regulate strong feelings
- Be patient for what they want
- Bounce back when things get difficult

It is our responsibility as educators in the early years to enable children to self-regulate their emotions. This is called emotional re-fuelling.

Behaviour – Connect Not Correct

Behaviour as a term is often thought of as negative, however this is in most cases is not in fact true. Humans exhibit behaviour all of the time and learn to be able to control certain behaviours as they grow and are able to better manage their feelings.

Practitioners promote positive behaviour and are there to support the children in different ways when exhibiting varying behaviours. We understand that children cannot behave in a positive way all of the time, therefore, challenging, unsociable behaviours are best addressed when it happens with simple explanations as to why it is unwanted.

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This then in turn allows the child to move on and continue with their learning. We acknowledge both positive and challenging behaviours by modelling, demonstrating and communicating to the child exactly why, such as 'That was really kind to help Anna with her coat', 'some cars for Kyle, some for Mark', 'I like the way you are sitting'.

Remember a behaviour is everything we do, and to change a pattern of behaviour can take up to 30 days for very young children.

Independence

The term is often understood to mean a range of skills, from helping children to be apart from their families to developing skills in dressing and encouraging them to think for themselves. Independence is an essential life skill and one that needs to be nurtured from an early age enabling each child to flourish and become their own person. Children thrive in a healthy environment when they have the opportunity to do more and more for themselves.

Practitioners are aware that children who are already self-sufficient are likely to adapt more easily to life in a group setting. They feel more in control of their lives, and this gives them self-respect. To become independent children first need to be dependent. Children who are more dependent need time and encouragement to do things for themselves.

It is clear that when even very young children are supported and encouraged to think for themselves, they show themselves to be very capable. However, this does not just happen. Adults encourage children to try first whilst gauging when it is appropriate to step in, offering praise for effort.

Some of the most important attributes of independent learning include children being able to use the environment for themselves, to make choices and decisions and to start to develop their own thoughts and views. We introduce children to these attributes and encourage them to practise them. This then continues to be built on even after each child has left our setting and continues on their own journey.

Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning

'What children learn is important, but how children learn is even more important if they are to become learners in today's society.' Helen Moylett

Play acts as a catalyst for active learning, creating and thinking critically and it is often through play that children will choose to engage at the edge of their ability, thus challenging themselves and further developing their learning. With this in mind our aim is to provide a curriculum and environments that promote the values of the Characteristics of Effective Learning at its heart, in conjunction with highly skilled practitioners who observe and interact, to support and scaffold learning, aimed at the individual child's interest and stage of development.

Playing and exploring - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'

- Demonstrating curiosity about objects, events and people.
- Using senses to be in 'ore' and explore the world around them. Engaging in open-ended activity.
- Showing particular interests.
- Playing with what they know.

Active learning - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements.

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- Pretending objects are things from their experience.
- Representing their experiences in play.
- Taking on a role in their play.
- Acting out experiences with other people.
- High involvement levels.

Creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

- Initiating activities.
- Seeking challenge.
- Showing a 'can do' attitude.
- Choosing ways to do things.

Cultural Capital

We know that by the age of 3 children from wealthier families have typically heard 30 million more words than children from disadvantaged backgrounds

Our provision aims to address this gap. We plan rich, meaningful, hands on learning experiences, and visits, to support children's positive dispositions and attitudes to lifelong learning. Nursery aged children experience a backstage tour of the local theatre, have been on train rides, visited local forest and beach, attended puppet shows and taken part in Bollywood dancing workshops. The children get to see chicks and ducklings hatching and learn the differing characteristics of both.

We utilise children's interests as a vehicle to impact learning and to support narrowing the gap of attainment. Play is the best time to address language and social skill gaps as it is in context and of meaning to the child. We continually observe, reflect and plan activities and enhancements that offer opportunities for new language to create a language rich environment. Every opportunity is a learning opportunity, chance encounters offer fantastic teaching opportunities.

British Values

British Values is about actively promoting human values:

Promoting these values is embedded in everything we do at Highfield Nursery School. Through offering a wide range of learning experiences, we support the children's personal, social and emotional needs, modelling empathy towards others, helping them to understand their own feelings and the feelings of others.

- Building positive relationships with the children and their families supports their understanding of mutual respect.
- Listening and responding to the children's needs, wants and ideas offers them a sense of belonging, and values them as individuals. This emphasises the importance that everyone has a voice.
- Home visits will give us a deeper understanding of each child and their families backgrounds, we can then ensure that what is highlighted as important to them is celebrated at nursery.
- Through play the children will naturally have disagreements, this is an opportunity to model behaviours and introduce language that supports positive social interactions.

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Teaching and modelling children British Values provides strengthened guidance on improving spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children to support lifelong skills and positive community contribution for a life in modern Britain.

Long Term Planning - Continuous provision

We plan for and provide a learning environment that offers a wide range of rich learning opportunities that enable children to flourish. (Continuous provision). These key learning experiences are at the heart of learning and are freely available to all children every day.

We always start with what the children know and build upon this. Areas are enhanced to meet the needs and interests of the children, covering all areas of learning and development. We believe that children are learning all of the time, from each other, the adults around them and from the learning environment, through the medium of play.

Our learning spaces are created to support children's learning and development, this is the bedrock of our continuous provision: blocks, small world spaces, sand, water, rich sensory experiences, malleable materials, role play, mark making, play with open ended objects and loose parts and the outdoor space.

Medium Term Planning – Story Curriculum and rhythms of the year

We believe that combined with daily access to key experiences in the continuous provision, the opportunities for children to follow their own interests and become involved in child led learning experiences, these 'rhythms of the year' provide a balanced, all round, appropriate curriculum for our young children. The rhythms of the year are the things that we believe are important for children to simply know about, understand and experience focussed around seasons, celebrations and the natural world. Our Story Curriculum is linked to this and designed to highlight the rhythm of the year.

	Seasonal	Celebration
Autumn	Autumn Winter Planting hyacinth bulbs Exploring pumpkins and gourds Dark and light Space Weather – cold, ice and snow	Harvest Bonfire night Diwali Christmas
Spring	Spring Flowers Planting seeds New life – hatching chicks and ducklings Birds Minibeasts	New Year Lunar New Year Valentines Day Shrove Tuesday Mothers Day Easter
Summer	Summer Trees in blossom, planting seeds Lifecycles: frog spawn, caterpillars & butterflies Holidays Transitions	Fathers Day

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Exposure to high quality texts and the opportunity to revisit texts during the child's time at Highfield ensures deep understanding and connection with the texts.

Medium Term Planning - Core vocabulary

Highfield Nursery School Story Curriculum 2023-24 Butterflies					
Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Owl Babies	Whatever Next	Goldilocks	All Go Travelling By	Jack & the Beanstalk	Animal Boogie
Monkey Puzzle	Gingerbread Man	Polar Bear Polar Bear		Hungry Caterpillar	Dear Zoo
3 Little Pigs					Rainbow Fish

Highfield Nursery School Story Curriculum 2024/25 Dragonflies and Bumblebees					
Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Monkey Puzzle	The story of Diwali	Goldilocks	10 Ways to look after the world	Jack & the Beanstalk	Hungry Caterpillar
3 Little Pigs	Whatever Next	The Great Race	Drop	9 Ducks 9	Handa's Surprise
Peter Rabbit	The Nativity	Emperors Egg	Going on an egg hunt	Handa's Hen	Somebody Crunched Colin

Our curriculum encompasses everything we do to ensure our children can communicate effectively and develop a broad vocabulary. We have carefully mapped out specific core vocabulary we ensure all children will have been exposed to during the time they spend at our Nursery School. This considers the fact that staff will use their professional judgement and knowledge of individual children's needs to ensure that vocabulary introduced and modelled is appropriate to their stage of development.

Core vocabulary	
Nouns Animals - farm, wild, pets, the woods, mini-beasts, under the sea People Body parts Clothes Food items At home At Nursery In the street Vehicles	Verbs Feelings Adjectives Prepositions Social words Pronouns Seasons/Weather Special times/Celebrations Book vocabulary

*The full content of vocabulary is found in our Vocabulary Bank in the Communication and Language document.

Short term planning – routines of the week

Staff know the children very well - their current interests, passions, fascinations and most importantly, their current stage of development and learning, which they use to plan effectively for progression. This is through: planned adult led group times, observations and interactions, relationships with children and their families, play partners during child-initiated play and intervention work.

Staff review and reflect on children's learning throughout each session. This supports individual interests, thoughts and ideas, enhancing the provision to support future learning.

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Staff teams meet once a week to plan more rigorously for children's learning and the enhanced provision. The weekly planning meetings are a time where the staff talk about the children and how their needs can be met. Staff are continuously supporting children's interests, ideas and further developing their play skills throughout each session.

'Planning is in the moment': as a knowledgeable staff team we use many different teaching techniques to respond and support children's learning in this way.

The child is at the centre of everything we do. Observation, Assessment, and Planning is a process that happens all the time.

Short Term Planning - Routines of the day

Routines also provide learning opportunities that support independent skills and confidence. Daily routines are specifically planned so that we ensure there is maximum uninterrupted time for the children to explore and discover in the learning environment. This supports and enhances the children's opportunities and supports children's involvement in play.

When children are highly involved in their play the teaching and learning is at a deeper level. Simple boundaries are also embedded into the routines.

Having a sense of belonging is of great importance to us at Highfield, this supports and places emphasis on children's personal, social and emotional wellbeing. Many experiences are offered to support this. The children have many opportunities to discover 'who am I?', 'how do I feel?', 'what do I look like?', 'why do I feel like that?', 'am I different?', 'what is the same?'

All children have a Key Person, this supports their emotional well-being offering them a significant other whom they can trust, feel safe with and be encouraged by to achieve the best they possibly can. As children become more independent in their personal and self-help skills, staff support and encourage this further by demonstrating positive health and hygiene routines.

Snack times support children's Personal, Social and Emotional Development, alongside offering them opportunities to develop conversational skills and supporting their Communication and Language development. Staff interactions enhance the children's knowledge and understanding of healthy lifestyles, and making choices, encouraging them to recognise their likes and dislikes.

We have policies for each of the seven areas of learning

- Communication and Language
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Mathematics
- Literacy (including reading and writing)
- Expressive art and design
- Understanding the world

All curriculum policies are available to view on our website. If you would like paper copies, please ask at the office.

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Impact

Practitioners record children's interests and achievements on their Tapestry learning journal. Practitioners use their professional knowledge and evidence from observations to make assessments against the Prime and Specific Areas of Learning. For children who need more detailed assessment records, key person will complete a 7-box grid, documenting their progress in each of the seven areas of learning. This is shared with parents via Tapestry and shared with other professionals, such as medical professionals, when needed.

Children are also assessed against the Highfield Resilience Tracker strands of 'I have', 'I am' and 'I can'.

The Headteacher carries out detailed analysis using the assessments. This includes looking at the progress of protected characteristic groups. This information is shared with governors and staff and is used to plan for specific interventions as well as feeding into the SIP and whole school targets.

The impact of our curriculum is monitored closely by the Headteacher through observations of staff and children, learning walks, staff supervisions, assessments and progress data. Areas of strength and potential development are highlighted. This then informs future planning, training for staff, and supports any changes needed within the learning environment and resources to ensure the curriculum continues to be effective.

This is shared with all staff as part of a continuous collaborative process which includes monthly staff meetings, PD days and team meetings as well as individual feedback where appropriate.

