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Understanding the World – May 2023



Understanding the World involves guiding children to make sense of the physical world and their community. The frequency and range of children’s personal experiences increase their knowledge and sense of the world around them – from visiting parks, libraries and museums to meeting important members of society, such as fire fighters, nurses and police officers. In addition, listening to a broad range of stories, non-fiction texts, rhymes and poems will foster their understanding of our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world.

At Highfield Nursery School we have a strong focus on the natural world. Our team includes fully trained Forest School and Beach School leaders. The outdoor area fosters the opportunity to explore the natural world, plant bulbs, seeds and trees throughout the year and harvest the crops. Our mature apple trees enable children to pick fruit and use at snack, but also to take home and share with their family.

The growing colony of fire bugs as well as regular sightings of stag beetles in the nursery garden enable children to look at mini beasts closely, but also to care for the environment to enable them to flourish.

The Meadow provides opportunities for children to explore woodland, hunt for mini beasts, build dens and rope swings and engage in carefully risk assessed risky play. We teach the children to visually risk assess as they play, supporting language development and understanding, by saying

‘Have you looked if it is safe to jump?, Is the space clear where you want to land?’

The trip to the beach enables children to explore beach combing, looking for shells, seaweed and stones to carefully look at, categorise into collections and analyse. Drawing in sand gives opportunities for large scale mark making and paddling in the sea helps to foster an understanding of forces and the push and pull of the tide.

Below is the planned for foundation vocabulary needed to prepare children for their next stage of education.

	Butterflies class (2 year olds)	Dragonflies and Bumblebees class (3 and 4 year olds)
Attitudes and Dispositions	Enjoy exploring the world, through open ended resources both indoors and with plenty of time outdoors.	In addition: Plan and think ahead about playing and exploration.

	This requires an organised indoor environment where children can access materials freely, together with sensitive adult support and enthusiasm.	Reflect on choices eg: adults might say 'I'm interested that you chose the fine brushes to paint your daffodil' Keep trying when things are difficult eg: using equipment that requires greater dexterity such as using pipettes to suck up water and squirt in the water tray.
Concepts and skills	Holding, tipping, filling, emptying, mixing	In addition: Close observation, sometimes with magnifying equipment Caring for plants and animals Fitting three or more cogs together so that when you turn one, they all turn

Strong foundations to support later learning in History

Children are curious about aspects of the past that they can relate to.

For our Butterflies children, we do not need to plan learning for this. Spontaneous conversation and the time we spend talking with them about anything that is important to them, such as the birth of a new baby in the family. This is a natural time to have a conversation about how they, too, were once a small baby.

For our older children, we introduce the concept of past and present in ways which will make sense to them. We aim to stimulate their curiosity and also enable future learning.

We use visual timetables in the classrooms to introduce simple timelines, demonstrating the order of the day. These will be illustrated and have the corresponding word to enable children to understand the passing of time throughout the day – marked with important milestones, such as lunch, teeth brushing and home time.

Stories and poems, such as those by Shirley Hughes, open conversations about similarities and differences within the illustrations of the book and our own homes. The language in nursery rhymes also enable children to feel history through words that are no longer part of our everyday language. The word candlestick in 'Jack be Nimble' used to be an everyday word, pre-electricity, but now is explored with the children, to understand how we used to light our homes in the past compared to now. We no longer need to fetch water from the well, as Jack and Jill did, but can turn on a tap and have a continuous supply of water.

Helping children relate to the past

Visits to old buildings and castles help children to observe the differences between new buildings and building in the past. At Highfield, we link this to stories, through Jack and the Beanstalk and a visit to Orford Castle. Books also help children to explore themes such as kings and queens and palaces. Linking this to the story of Rama and Sita enables children to understand about different cultures, dress and buildings.

Strong foundations to support later learning in Geography

Children's earliest learning in geography is practical and linked to our children's everyday lives. Young children are often fascinated by almost everything they see. They may want to stop and linger, look in shop windows, touch tree trunks and talk about the cats and dogs they pass whilst they walk. Local walks to the local shops to buy fruit or bread gives children the opportunity to explore outside the school and links to stories within our story curriculum, such as Little Red Hen or Oliver's Vegetables. These trips help the children develop a sense of place.

Learning about diversity

Research suggests that babies from 3 months start to notice the physical differences that define ethnic groups. At Highfield we support and encourage children's curiosity as they notice and talk about differences. Our library has a wide range of books to support children to discover and engage with texts that celebrate the diversity within Highfield and our local area. We also invite guests into nursery, such as Aspire Black Suffolk and Tina, who teaches the children Bollywood dancing, to talk and share experiences and resources with our children in an age appropriate way.

Understanding the World - vocabulary

	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Scientific vocabulary	Seasonal Changes Autumn, Wet, dry, stamp, splash, puddle	day, dark, light, Winter, night, season, Moon, Sun, lighter, darker, shadow, fill, empty, float, sink, bark, mouldy, push, attract, repel,	polar animals (Penguin, Artic fox, Orca, Elephant seal, Polar Bear, Snowy Owl), frozen, camouflaged, survival, melt, frosty, ice, icy.	Seasonal changes - as Autumn 1 + Spring Hygiene, healthy, non- healthy, grow, change, germs, 5 senses, teeth brushing, dentist, face, hair, leg, human, knee, arm, elbow, back, head, toes, ear, hands, eye, fingers, mouth, nose, seed, magnify, investigate	tulip, daffodil, bluebells, crocuses, snowdrops, dandelions, buttercups, daisy Plant, stem, leaf, roots, bulb, shoot, seed, growth flower, trunk, branches. life cycle, egg, caterpillar, chrysalis, cocoon butterfly	pond, garden, woodland, seaside, habitat, wild, wildlife, native, woodland, birds, (owl, duck), insects/bugs/ minibeasts (lacewing, ladybird, woodlouse, bee, wasp, spider, tarantula, earthworm, snail, millipede, butterfly, caterpillar, microhabitats,
Geographical vocabulary	Location and place - Environment, map, place, quiet, busy, calm, noisy, similar, same, different, old, new, left, right, under, besides, on top of, forwards, backwards, community Human and Physical - Similar, different, same, police officer, firefighter, postal worker, doctor, dentist, shop owner, vicar Fieldwork - Home, house, bungalow, street, church, zebra crossing under, traffic lights, tunnel, bridge roundabout, map					
Historical vocabulary	A long time ago, same, different, change, history artefact, past, now, modern, old, new, order, yesterday, today, tomorrow					