



Our vision for learning in the Foundation Stage

Writing of pretend play Vygotsky emphasised: 'In play a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behaviour; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself. As in the focus of a magnifying glass, play contains all the developmental tendencies in a condensed form and is itself a major source of development. (1978)

We believe that children need to be given space and open-ended resources to make choices in their play which is supported by adults and the environment. Children must be able to follow their own interests, but this is balanced with engaging them in stories and skills-based activities to develop all aspects of their learning.

Rationale

Children join the Foundation Unit below Typical at 3 years and 4 years of age especially in Communication and language and Literacy. Our curriculum supports their development in these areas through play and book based or enhanced projects.

Project centred learning

We have developed our vision by using aspects of project centred learning developed by Leeds City Council based on the Reggio Emilia approach. Practitioners plan learning opportunities from the children's interests or provide children with a provocation and then the children lead their own learning which the practitioners then supports.



In our Unit the Foundation 2 children follow this project-based approach together with Talk for Writing. Foundation 1 children have Literacy based projects which focus on simple repetitive text and traditional tales.

Play based learning



The Foundation leader has completed a Maths Masters module on early maths at Redcliffe Children's Centre in Bristol with Elizabeth Carruthers and Maulfry Worthington the authors of, 'Children' Mathematics making marks, making meaning, and Understanding children's mathematical graphics beginnings in play.' This module looked at how play with open ended resources supported children's mathematical development and mathematical graphics. Children bring mathematical knowledge from home as well as school. When children play together, they can talk through their thinking with each other. An adult can co-construct with a child's play supporting and extending their thinking.

'The richest pretend and imaginary play is likely to arise from the children's spontaneous and free play – without adult-planned areas, themes or resources and without adult-set goals or expectations.' (Worthington 2015)

Practitioners attended Nottingham City Council Early Years Conference in February 2015. One of the speakers was Alistair Bryce-Clegg an Early Years consultant who talked about Continuous Provision. He defines it as, Bryce-Clegg (2013) **'to continue the provision for learning in the absence of an adult.'** He talks about providing basic provision to support skills at different levels with enhancements which might come from the children's interest or adult input. He supports more open-ended resources and states that for children, Continuous Provision, Bryce-Clegg (2013) **'has to be structured around their developmental needs and dressed to reflect their interests.'** Carruthers and Worthington (2011) state, **'A lack of child initiated play severely limits possibilities for children to explore and communicate their own interests and mathematical ideas.'**



Continuous Provision

- Home corner with real objects e.g. metal cutlery and china cups
- Block area with a choice of resources which reflect the children's interests and any project work the classes are doing.
- Deconstructed Role Play Area. The resources are open ended like pieces of materials, masks and hats. The children have to create an outfit rather than putting on a princess dress. This may be enhanced e.g. Goldilocks role play
- Small World Area with a choice of resources which reflect the children's interests and any project work the classes are doing.
- Construction area where the children can select different kits or resources independently.
- Reading Area with sofa, comfy chairs and bookcase to access books easily.
- Paper and writing media are always available in all areas. There is a writing table with writing frames, types of paper, writing media and enhancements linked to projects and children's interests. We have two smaller writing tables dressed to the children's interests e.g. Elsa and Superheroes.
- We believe that Mathematical development takes place in all areas of learning. Maths stations supports maths skills taught in maths sessions.
- Making area with a choice of reclaimed materials
- Sand and Water with self-selected resources
- Creative area with a skill-based progression and some selection of resources.
- Manipulative table with a skill-based progression
- Jigsaw area with differentiated jigsaws reflecting research that this supports the development of reading
- Outdoor area with a large sand pit, digging area, gravel area, messy kitchen, water, writing and block area together with open ended resources e.g. crates, boxes, bricks, tarpaulins and fabric





Impact on the children:

- With open ended resources the children have to think for themselves.
- Children talk more to each other about what they are doing.
- Play is more sustained.
- Children are independent and can access their own resources and make choices.
- Children write and draw in different areas.
- Boys write and draw more often in play.
- Children share books or curl up on their own.
- Children are more creative and imaginative in their thinking when using the resources

Research into the environmental changes we have made in EYFS

We **have introduced elements of the Curiosity Approach** – “This is more than just a beautiful play space it’s a modern-day approach to Early Years taking parts from Reggio, Steiner, Te Whāriki and Montessori. The Curiosity Approach fits perfectly into current changing technological times. Bringing curiosity, awe and wonder into early childhood and creating thinkers and doers of the future.

By getting the learning environment right you are embedding and protecting the innate skills of the child, curiosity, awe, and wonder.

Authentic resources – real things, recycled materials and loose parts e.g. china crockery and real knives and forks in the home corner, using recycled boxes and materials for den building outside and natural loose parts of cones, wooden logs and pebbles for small world play. The environment offers a calm and tranquil place to become engaged in deep levels of sustained thinking.

These durable authentic resources offer children the opportunity to experience nature first-hand and become connected to our natural world through play. Just as importantly, by recycling and reusing authentic resources we are doing our bit for the environment.

Using china crockery there are consequences if they are dropped or thrown. The children learn to value their resources and treat them with respect because they are not “pretend.”

Curious minds – a strong desire to know or learn something

It is our job as early childhood educators to inspire and nurture an inquisitive mind in every child. It can easily be achieved from the environment we create to the questions we ask.

“Each one of us needs to have curiosity.” Lori Malaguzzi.

Display

Calm, neutral backgrounds to let learning shine through and make it visible also to create a sense of calmness without over stimulating those who it is intended for – the children!

Researchers at Carnegie Mellon in Pittsburgh studied the impact of brightly decorated early years settings on “distractibility” and discovered that bright visual displays can have a negative impact on learning in young children.

The Curiosity Approach promotes the use of natural tones to bring a sense of calmness. Colour impacts on an individual’s mood, emotional wellbeing, learning and behaviour.

Within a Steiner school there is a deliberate use of soft tones which are incorporated with objects from nature.

Enchanting Environments

Magic and fairy lights, awe and wonder – children around the World have always been enchanted with magical make believe in fairy tales and their own imaginary Worlds. Children feel they are entering a beautiful magical space where they feel relaxed, welcomed and at home rather than being in an institutionalised and over stimulating environment.

Future

Modern day toys tell a child how to play with them: they resemble something so closely that it becomes difficult for the child to use them in any other way e.g. a plastic car is always going to be a car. Add into this technology and we are drastically reducing the innate skills of curiosity within our children. Having open ended resources e.g. loose parts – cones, log pieces, stones, blocks and recycled materials. Outdoor provision of crates, blocks and materials promotes inquisitiveness, deep level thinking, communication and social skills which are declining as children spend longer in front of screens.

Global Inspiration

Steiner Waldorf, Reggio Emilia and Te Whāriki are the three progressive approaches to early childhood education that are the foundations to The Curiosity Approach.

Rudolf Steiner philosophies teach us that spiritual experiences are essential for the development of happy, confident young children. He regularly spoke of the importance of love, and warmth, joy, creativity, gratitude and respect for the environment.

Reggio principles are embraced in The Curiosity Approach but one that stands out is “there are three effective teachers of children - adults, other children and the physical environment which is referred to as the third teacher. The approach requires children to be seen as competent, resourceful, imaginative, inventive and curious – those who possess a desire to interact and communicate with others around them.

Te Whāriki originates in New Zealand. It is the principles and curriculum set out by the Ministry of Education to be used in early childhood. The word “Te Whāriki” are Maori for “woven mat.” The vision is founded upon the following aspirations for children: “to grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society.”

Homely Hygge (hue-gah)

A quality of cosiness and comfortable conviviality that engenders a feeling of contentment or well – being. (Regarded as a defining characteristic of Danish culture.)

This creates an extension of the family home which is a more suitable environment for young children rather than a school room.

We provide this with soft lamp lights, strings lights, seating areas, plants and room dressing you would see in a home.



Next steps for Continuous Provision

- To observe more in depth how the children are playing and thinking using the Leuven scale
- How can adults co - construct with a child in play taking their thinking to the next level?

Holistic approach

- We believe in developing the whole child
- All children have a weekly Forest School session on the school field as we recognise that many children have a lack of understanding of the natural world and do not have the opportunity to play in natural spaces
- We have a daily run in the morning to promote health and wellbeing
- We have embraced the Curiosity Approach pedagogy which promotes the use of natural backgrounds and natural objects in the environment together with the use of real objects

Interventions

- F1 speech and language TALK BOOST program in the Autumn term
- F1 fine motor in Autumn term Squiggle while you Wiggle and Dough Disco
- F2 addressing misconceptions as quickly as possible in Maths and phonics.
- F2 Phonics, handwriting, sentence writing and maths boosters Autumn/Spring term

Ongoing

- Individual reading F2 and N2
- Daily mark making/name writing F1
- Daily writing F2 sentences from January
- Daily Phonics
- Daily Maths

Areas for development

- Oracy opportunities planned for as part of writing development e.g conversations between characters e.g., Red Riding Hood and the Wolf to be planned and filmed.
- Weekly learning objectives shared with parents through PowerPoints developed from remote learning.
- Half termly filming of a maths and phonics session to keep parents informed of how we teach these subjects. This has developed from remote learning provision.
- Small steps reading films to be used by parents at home to support whatever stage their child is at.

