

LEARNING AND TEACHING POLICY

RATIONALE

This policy is a statement of our belief in the purpose of preschool education. It affirms the values that we at Ballymena Nursery School hold as a nursery school team and the principles that underpin our day to day practice.

The aim of this policy is to

- Convey our basic philosophy about preschool education
- Clarify current practice and determine future approaches to teaching and learning
- Provide an agreed framework which underpins all areas of the preschool curriculum
- Improve the quality of learning and teaching experiences offered to children

GENERAL STATEMENT

The staff and governors of Ballymena Nursery School believe that nursery education is a very valuable and important experience for all children. We see it as being complementary to the love and care already experienced by the child at home. Therefore we aim to share positively with parents in providing the opportunity for each child to develop his/her potential in every aspect of growth. This will be achieved in school through the provision of a wide range of experiences and activities that are broadly based and appropriate to the developmental needs of the individual child. Our approach includes activities both indoors and outdoors to promote the development of emotional and social development, language, physical ability, creativity, early maths and science concepts, health and hygiene, imaginative play and musical awareness. The staff provide a safe, secure but challenging environment where each child is encouraged to become independent, self-confident and to have fun. Developing and maintaining links with the parents is extremely important in helping us achieve our aim.

AIMS FOR THE PRESCHOOL YEAR

- To promote respect throughout the school community
- To create a relaxed, stimulating environment which encourages spontaneous discovery and enables each child to develop skills and concepts
- To provide opportunities for each child to experiment without risk of failure, to develop self-esteem, self confidence and a positive attitude to learning
- To encourage self confidence, self control and co-operation with others
- To develop a range of social skills – sharing, taking turns, co-operation, working as part of a group
- To develop a positive attitude to learning including motivation, enjoyment and the ability to persevere, concentrate, reflect and enjoy being a learner
- To encourage a problem solving approach to learning
- To encourage creativity and imaginative thought
- To provide opportunities for each child to develop physical skills and co-ordination
- To encourage the development of literacy, numeracy, scientific skills and concepts
- To help each child develop sensitivity and awareness of the feelings, opinions and needs of others
- To help each child increase attention span and the ability to concentrate
- To encourage respect and care for classroom resources
- To help each child recognise the importance of school rules and routines
- To provide developmentally appropriate opportunities for children to take responsibility and make choices and decisions
- To ensure equality of opportunity for all children
- To promote the professional development of all staff working within the nursery school

How?

By providing an overall view of the curriculum through the following mechanisms:

- Curricular Guidance for Pre-school
- Policies
- Planning
- Assessment, Recording and Reporting.

Through

- (a) Policies
- (b) Focus of learning – what our children will be taught
- (c) Systematic Planning
 - i) Long Term – Pre-school Curricular Guidance for Northern Ireland
 - ii) Medium Term – Focus of interest
 - iii) Short Term – weekly/two weekly

Planning is consistent in terms of agreed criteria that include facilities for:-

- i) The learning opportunities provided
- ii) The activities to support them
- iii) The use of additional adults
- iv) Resources
- v) Clear objectives for learning
- vi) Assessment

Planning is necessary to ensure progression and coverage. It is linked to:-

- i) Assessment, Recording and Reporting

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE LEARNING

AND TEACHING

In Ballymena Nursery School we acknowledge the holistic nature of young children's learning. There is value in establishing a strong home/school partnership. Everything the child encounters when entering nursery school is a learning experience; from recognising his/her symbol, hanging up his/her coat, observing plants grow, looking at and contributing to displays.

We recognise that young children do not learn in isolation and that learning takes place naturally across all aspects of the daily routine. We know that as children learn across a range of contexts, they will develop not only intellectually but also physically, socially, emotionally and morally.

We recognise that emotional well-being and the development of dispositions to learning are central to success in all areas of development.

Therefore we ensure that we provide a secure environment and a daily routine within which children feel safe but can also extend their thinking.

We value children's play as meaningful learning and recognise its importance.

We believe that children should learn strategies for active exploration, thinking and reasoning.

We believe that children should be helped to become effective communicators.

We believe that effective learning takes place when children have the opportunity to

- ✓ determine their own actions and make their own choices
- ✓ pay attention, maintain concentration and become involved
- ✓ feel confident and express emotional needs
- ✓ have the attitude that not knowing and being uncertain are part of the process of being a good learner
- ✓ develop self-control and positive strategies for resolving conflicts with others
- ✓ know that trying things out, exploring and being curious are important and valued ways of learning
- ✓ set and solve problems, ask questions and make guesses
- ✓ experiment with materials, play around with ideas and explore actively with all the senses
- ✓ expect that books and words will amuse, delight, comfort inform and excite them

THE ROLE OF THE ADULT

We want the quality of teaching we offer to be of the highest possible standard so that all our children benefit from the expertise that all our teachers and nursery assistants possess. All staff are encouraged to develop their own personal and professional expertise through inset and external training opportunities. Sharing of educational magazines/ resource books and manuals.

As effective practitioners the following principles inform our practice.

We

- ✓ aim for all children to achieve their academic potential and develop a responsible and independent attitude towards their learning.
- ✓ model a range of positive behaviours High standards of behaviour are expected and maintained by staff, with clearly established classroom routines and systems supporting orderly behavior.

- ✓ promote children's learning through planned experiences and activities that are challenging but achievable and that promote critical thinking, creativity and imagination.
- ✓ extend children's language sensitively, helping them develop speech, using appropriate words and speech patterns
- ✓ use conversation and carefully framed questions to develop children's knowledge
- ✓ are able to judge when children are ready to be taught skills and knowledge
- ✓ encourage children to help and teach each other
- ✓ offer enthusiasm, praise and encouragement
- ✓ interact with and support children in a way that positively affects children's attitudes to learning
- ✓ organise the classrooms in such a way as to allow children direct access to materials and responsibility for their environment
- ✓ allow choice, materials, activity, time, partners etc.
- ✓ remember, that by limiting resources, we are restricting or limiting learning although we acknowledge that in some circumstances, limiting resources provides structure
- ✓ plan the indoor and the outdoor environment carefully to provide a positive context in which children can develop independence, self control and self reliance
- ✓ carry out skilful and well planned observations of children's learning to ensure that each child is regularly assessed and this assessment forms a link with planning and teaching.
- ✓ support children with Special Educational Needs where possible with additional adult/peer support to access all group activities.
- ✓ **take reasonable steps to ensure a child's inclusion is compatible with the efficient education of other children.**
- ✓ provide opportunities for the varied types of learner - visual auditory, kinaesthetic in whole group, small groupings, pairs and individually.
- ✓ evaluate the quality of provision – ensuring that resources are effectively used and of good quality.
- ✓ identify and share your strengths and your own training needs

THE CURRICULUM

includes:

- All the opportunities for learning and development that are made available to children.
- The activities, attitudes and behaviour that are planned, encouraged, tolerated, ignored or forbidden.
- The way the environment - both indoors and outdoors - is arranged and the routines followed by children and adults.
- The part adults take in organising, directing, influencing and joining in what the children do.
- The extent to which parents are involved in each of the above.

Our curriculum is planned to:

- Achieve the aims of the school
- Provide a happy, stable and caring environment that is stimulating and challenging with opportunities for exploration and discovery.
- Encourage recognition and acceptance of different cultures within society. (Media Initiative Project).
- Build on children's past experiences and provide the children with experiences that may not be possible in the home;
- Promote our Community Relations Equality and Diversity Ethos. (CRED)
- Establish patterns of learning for the future.
- Encourage acceptable levels of behaviour.

CHILDREN AND THE CURRICULUM

Children attending our nursery school come from a wide range of backgrounds and present with a wide variety of interests, skills and knowledge. Currently there are Penultimate and Target Age children in our nursery school- and we take this into account when planning for differentiation. We aim to help each child build upon their past experiences and therefore

provide a degree of flexibility in our approach to the curriculum. Those children returning to the nursery school for a second year are given the experience of deepening their interests and skill base through a curriculum that differentiates itself according to the ability of the child.

PLANNING FOR CHILDREN'S LEARNING

Staff in the nursery school spend time planning together so that we can

- Validate what we are doing and why, ensuring that our teaching can promote learning
- Share information and find out where children are in their learning and support them in moving to the next stage
- Allow for children's individual learning styles and/or special needs
- Share ideas and spark off ideas from one another to create a stimulating and challenging learning environment
- Offer richer more exciting activities by gathering together the necessary resources for the children's learning to develop spontaneously
- Help the children become more confident, self-motivated and independent learners

Staff in the nursery school spend time planning together so that children have the opportunity to:

- Join in with a wide variety of experiences that cover many different types of learning
- Move on to the next stage in their development at a pace that suits the individual child
- Participate in a wide variety of activities but also learn through repetition as and when appropriate

Staff in the nursery school spend time planning together so that the provision indoors and outdoors

- Is of a high quality and gives children access to cross curricular learning
- Is regularly reviewed
- Is developed in response to observed needs

When planning for learning, all staff :

- Are aware of the importance of children's previous experiences and learning outside the nursery environment –at home
- Are aware of and take account of children's current interests and spontaneous curiosity
- Make sure that activities are open-ended and meet the differing needs and interests of the children
- Try to promote the inter-related development of the whole child – emotional, social, linguistic, physical, cognitive

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

When planning, staff are constantly aware of the different skills, attitudes, concepts and knowledge that children ought to be given the opportunity to develop. Similar kinds of learning can be developed through a wide variety of activities. Children will have the opportunity to develop fine motor skills for example by

- Doing a puzzle
- Threading
- Making a model with Lego etc
- Using the computer
- Turning the pages of a book
- Joining boxes together to make a construction
- Pouring water or milk into a cup without spilling
- Dressing a doll

Filling the bird feeders.

In all aspects of learning staff are aware of the importance of developing a sense of FUN and ENJOYMENT.

The learning shown here is thought to be of particular importance for the specific activity undertaken.

ART AND CRAFT

1. Expression of feelings.
2. Fine and gross motor skills.
3. Developing imagination, concentration and language.
4. Aesthetic awareness.

CONSTRUCTION AND BLOCK PLAY

1. Designing and making models.
2. Practical application of maths/ problem solving/ more less/ balancing.
3. Ordering and sorting, considering size.
4. Co-operating with others.
5. Respecting each other's work.
6. Releasing energy.

Making Playdough/ Baking

1. Listening to instructions and following through.
2. Hygiene – washing hands before starting.
3. Scientific and mathematical concepts – melting/freezing, Temperature changes; Weighing/comparing/ measuring ingredients.
4. Fine and gross motor skills.

Caring for mini beasts/ nursery goldfish/ plants and flowers

1. Care and Respect.
2. Helping children overcome their fears but respecting these fears.
3. Learning about physical properties of mini beasts/ goldfish/plants – what they eat, how they live, what they need to live and where they live.
4. Appropriate use of magnifiers, binoculars etc.

5. Hygiene – washing hands after touching creatures.
6. Observational changes/ measurement/ height

GAMES

1. Perseverance.
2. Learning the rules but knowing they are flexible.
3. Learning to predict and hypothesize.
4. Care of equipment – matching and counting pieces to ensure that none are lost.
5. Visual discrimination – paying attention to detail.
6. Turn taking.

HOME CORNER/ROLE PLAY

1. Cause/effect.
2. Time and events in the home –breakfast; lunch; teatime; bedtime.
3. Sequencing – make dinner, eat dinner, clear table, wash up, put dishes away.
4. Dressing appropriately - according to role – choosing correct size of clothes for the dolls etc .
5. Developing an awareness of cultural traditions.
6. Coming to terms with situations s/he may not fully understand.

ICT/ Listening Centre

1. Learning how to use equipment – mouse; keyboard; head phones; volume control.
2. Develop hand/eye co-ordination.
3. Develop the confidence to experiment.
4. Knowing how to follow through an activity/ change CD.
5. Knowing how to change/get out of an activity/ CD.

MALLEABLE MATERIALS

1. Encourage manipulative skills – touching, feeling, exploring.

2. Develop mathematical and scientific concepts – conservation of shape/ comparisons/ less/ more/short/long/longer.
3. Understanding the properties of materials.
4. Being creative; using imagination.
5. Fairness/ sharing material

MUSIC

1. Exploring sound and appreciating rhythm.
2. Listening carefully.
3. Aesthetic awareness.
4. Learning simple songs and finger plays.

SAND AND EQUIVALENT SOLIDS

1. Health and safety – not throwing sand, sweeping up spills as necessary.
2. Exploring, investigating and understanding the properties of solids.
3. Developing hand-eye co-ordination.
4. Developing scientific and mathematical concepts and associated language.
5. Developing imagination and creativity.
6. Conservation of shape.

SMALL WORLD MATERIALS

1. Encourage creativity and imagination.
2. Sustain and develop language – predict, hypothesise.
3. Fine motor skills.

SNACK ROUTINE

1. Independence/ Self-confidence/ self-help skills. Fine manipulative skills – pouring
2. Hygiene/health and safety – washing hands, where to put used cups/bowls/utensils, keeping table/ floor clean, sitting down when eating.
3. Developing mathematical concepts and mathematical language – pouring only what you will drink; a little/a whole cup full.
4. Patience when waiting on a vacant chair

5. Fairness/ sharing of food
6. Social skills and conversational skills
7. Table manners/ please and thank you

TABLE ACTIVITIES

1. Awareness of patterns – sequences, visual discrimination.
2. Ability to copy patterns and create own.
3. Fine manipulative skills.
4. Developing mathematical language – shape; direction; size.
5. Number awareness – conservation; recognition of symbols.
6. Turn taking and equality of opportunity and access.

WATER AND EQUIVALENT LIQUIDS

1. Health and safety – being careful with water, mopping up when necessary – Learning through spills.
2. Exploring, investigating and beginning to understand the properties of liquids.
3. Developing hand-eye co-ordination.
4. Developing scientific and mathematical concepts and associated language.
5. Developing imagination and creativity.

Emergent writing and early mark making

1. Understand that print has meaning.
2. Differentiate between DRAWING AND WRITING.
3. Focus on the detail of print – numbers and letters.
4. Fine co-ordination – pencil grip.
5. Attention to detail.
6. Perseverance – time spent on drawing, writing.
7. Appropriate use of resources: (size of page; number of pages used; type of writing implement; hole punch; sellotape).

The curriculum therefore can be summed up as the way children spend their time, what they ought to be learning and what they are likely to gain from the planned or from the

spontaneous experiences provided. They are active learners in a structured yet flexible environment.

While working around a central theme ensures that the children gather a wealth of basic knowledge, skills and a positive attitude to learning it also ensures that individual learning style is valued and promoted. This approach gives meaning and purpose to the children as they learn through their play.