

The Early years curriculum September 2021

Learning through play

In our Early Years setting at Lowca School, we use themes such as “Dinosaurs”, “Beaches”, “All around us”, “Myself and other people” etc to inspire the children and as a starting point to engage them. We value the importance of learning through play which is child led. Taking the theme, as a starting point, we use the children’s interests, questions comments to engage pupils in learning activities that are interesting, challenging and engaging. For example, in our “**Houses and homes**” topic, the pupils brought in photos and pictures of their favourite buildings. We showed the children lots of photographs of towers too, from UK and around the world. The children began to build these in the construction area. The teacher, observing a pupil struggling to make his tower stand up, made an in the moment assessment and seeing a learning opportunity, began playing alongside. Looking at the photo of the Eiffel tower she said, “I wonder what these “feet” sticking out at the bottom do?” She built a tower with stabilisers and the pupil began a conversation about how they helped it balance. He adapted this feature into his own tower and was thrilled that it stayed standing. He went on to talk to tell his class-mates and became “the teacher “to show them what he’d learnt. This example illustrates how our curriculum and teaching approach begins with a theme and planned skills and knowledge, and then goes in the direction of the child to nurture development.

We plan and present a rich curriculum that is responsive to children’s interests and needs .Combined with high level interactions with adults, children develop and make progress. We give the children high quality, fun-filled, experiences that prepare them to be ‘school ready’ and embed a positive attitude towards learning.

We offer experiences that allow children to learn through a balance of child led and adult led learning. This approach practises the characteristics of learning, which are:-

- **Playing and Exploring**- children investigate and experience things and ‘have a go’;
- **Active Learning**- children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements;
- **Creating and thinking critically**- children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

The Early Years curriculum consists of seven areas of learning. They are split into prime and specific areas.

The Prime Areas

- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development

The Specific Areas

- Literacy
- Maths
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

These seven areas of learning are embedded through our provision, planning and assessment. The classroom is organised to reflect the above 7 areas or “zones”. These zones are resourced with equipment to foster learning in a particular area but children can also make links using equipment from one zone, such as weighing scales from the maths area, to investigate if wet sand is heavier than dry sand, in the physical development, “sand” area. Staff observe and then use interactions to encourage thinking by asking open ended questions such as I wonder if.... Staff model language extending talk and vocabulary. We join in with role play, we use language to demonstrate how to do a new skill, explain a concept or facilitate a process. Staff comment as children play having quality, respectful interactions and giving children time to think and respond.

Staff are aware of the non-statutory document, that describes how a typical child might progress through the age bands of each area. The skills and concepts pupils will have if they make good levels of progress by the end of reception, are described as the Early Learning Goals.

As we are involved with the children we **observe** and make in the moment assessments. We use our knowledge of the child and professional experience to **assess** ways to promote development. Then we **implement** a challenge, an “I wonder if “, a question, a “How can we find out more?”, or “Let’s research...” or “Let’s practise this”. In this way staff help the child move

forward in their development and extend their knowledge, emotional, physical, social and intellectual growth

The changes in the EYFS framework in Sept2021 reduce the demands for recording each progress step. There is a baseline assessment, an assessment at the end of the Autumn term to predict if development is on track and to evaluate if pupils are making progress. There is then a third assessment made in June, to evaluate if pupils have met their Early learning goals and reached a good level of development. This has freed up more time to engage the children in broad, rich, experiences. We record what is useful, in order to monitor if the child is on track and progressing. Reflecting on our knowledge of the children, we discuss with colleagues, to identify and meet the needs of those pupils who need extra support or who may have special educational needs.

Communication and Language

This area involves the spoken word which underpins **all** of the other areas. Staff comment, echo back, explain, describe, pretend, question, tell stories and nursery rhymes, listen and extend vocabulary, to help build communication skills and rich language structures.



Physical development

Crucial for all round development and for happy healthy lives, gross and fine motor skills, are fostered through sensory explorations, games, art projects, mark making, small world play, using tools, crawling, running, skipping, lifting, rolling, jumping, gardening and while using apparatus and in P.E. lessons.



This physical development will be developed both indoors and outdoors. Children will develop motor skills on the continuous provision area and in the garden, as well as on trips for example into the village to post letters.

Also by going to the local church and to the nearby beach.





Personal, Social and Emotional Development

This is crucial to live happy, healthy lives and being and is fundamental to cognitive development. In a nurturing atmosphere, children will form warm and supportive relationships with staff and helped be guided on how to form warm supportive relationships with their friends. They will be taught friendship skills explicitly and encouraged to empathise with others. They will be guided to manage their behaviour and emotions in a positive way focussing on “good choices” and the consequences and reasons behind these choices. We will have confidence in their abilities and encourage them to focus and not “give up”. They will be supported to develop a positive sense of self. They will be encouraged to have patience and manners. Learning how to; be good friends, co-operate and how to resolve conflicts peaceably, will be part of the children’s learning lesson focus. They will learn how to look after their bodies and make healthy choices as well as be increasingly independent in their personal care.



Literacy

A love for word play, rhymes, poems, and songs and the joy for reading come as children engage in exciting and engaging participation with staff and friends to share quality books and interact verbally. One of the most important factors in helping a child to read is that they enjoy reading.

The children will have an adult read, engaging story, read to them at story time each day, as well as time to share books in their class reading area.



Books are placed in all the zones, for example in the home corner, to read a bed time story to the baby dolls, in this way they develop positive reading attitudes. Your child will learn how to decode print by learning phonic sounds for letters as they follow the systematic phonics (Oxford Owl's essential letters

and sounds) scheme. As well as phonics, as a tool for decoding print, your

child's visual memory for whole word shapes will also be developed using jigsaws, flash card matching and other games. In addition to phonics and whole word shape memory, we also teach children to use the flow of a sentence to suggest what "fits". Children, when they come across a "tricky" word (that isn't decodable using phonics) "say it silly" then use pictures and reading on to the end of the line, to predict or guess tricky words. These harder to read and spell words, are also taught explicitly in the daily phonics session. By teaching a range of decoding skills the child's different learning preference is catered for.



Pupils will engage in on line spelling games linked to their phonics scheme. Formation of letters will be guided to follow the correct "journey" across the page and children will be encouraged to tell their own stories and share their experiences. They will also be encouraged to listen to the ideas and needs of others.

Mathematics



Developing a strong grounding in number is essential so that all children develop the necessary building blocks to excel mathematically. Children count groups of objects regularly develop a deep understanding of the numbers to 10, the relationships between them and the patterns within those numbers.

We provide frequent and varied opportunities to build and apply this understanding - such as using manipulatives, including small pebbles and tens frames for organising counting - children develop a secure base of knowledge and vocabulary from which mastery of mathematics is built. Our curriculum includes rich opportunities for children to develop their spatial reasoning skills across all areas of mathematics including shape, space and measures. We foster positive attitudes and interests in mathematics, look for patterns and relationships, spot connections, 'have a go', talk to adults and peers about what they notice and create an atmosphere where children are not afraid to make mistakes.



Understanding the World Children will be helped to make sense of their familiar physical world, their community and the wider world beyond.



They will visit parks, libraries, museums and meet important members of society such as nurses, firefighters, police officers, vicar etc. First hand visits, exploring artefacts, role play, reading stories, careful introduction of new vocabulary and watching film footage, will all help extend pupil's concept of their world and its wonderful diversity.

Expressive Arts and Design



The development of children's artistic and cultural awareness supports their imagination and creativity. Indeed, Einstein said that the true indicator of intelligence was not knowledge but was imagination. It is important that children have

regular opportunities to engage with the arts, enabling them to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. At Lowca a creative area in the classroom gives children these regular opportunities. Pupils own work and their process of creating within music, art and design, is valued. Teachers encourage the development of skills by sharing the work of other artists and explicit teaching of skills, e.g. colour mixing- yellow and blue makes green, but then children are given lots of opportunities to explore this. The quality and variety of what children see, hear and participate in is crucial for developing their understanding, self-expression, vocabulary and ability to communicate through the arts. They listen to a variety of styles of music and play percussion and tuned instruments as a teacher led group and with peers to make up their own "concerts" which they enjoy performing. The frequency, repetition and depth of their experiences are fundamental to their progress in interpreting and appreciating what they hear, respond to and observe.

Children have access to musical instruments on a daily basis. They have lots of “revisiting” experiences to help concepts form.



They are encouraged to think about the arts they see and hear to develop depth. Questions such as “What is the song about?”, “Why do you think the artist used those colours?” and “How does it make you feel?” help children to think, respond and feel more deeply about the arts.

This curriculum document is to be reviewed September 2022