Understanding The World



An Early Years Curriculum Document

The Lilycroft and St Edmund's Nursery Schools' Federation, Bradford

Understanding The World

Understanding the World provides a powerful, meaningful context for learningacross the curriculum. It supports childrento make sense of their expanding world and their place within it through nurturingtheir wonder, curiosity, agency and exploratory drive.

This development requires regular and direct contact with the natural, built and virtual environmentsaround the child and engaging children in collaborative activities which promote inquiry, problem-solving, shared decision making and scientific approaches to understanding the world.

Active involvement in local community life helps children to develop a sense of civic responsibility, a duty to care, a respect for diversity and the need to work for peaceful co-existence.

In addition, firsthand involvement in caring for wildlife andthe natural world provides children with an appreciation of ecological balance, environmental care and the need to live sustainable lives.

Rich play, virtual and real world experiences support learning about our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world and how to stay safe within it.

They also cultivate shared meanings and lay thefoundation for equitable understandings of our interconnectedness and interdependence.

Birth to 5 Matters

Through a wide range of planned and spontaneous experiences, our Understanding the World curriculum enables Early Years Educators, children and families to embrace every opportunity to learn from nature, the built environment and from the people and communities who inhabit our world alongside us.

Children arrive at school already armed with some knowledge and experience, which starts with their immediate family who they know well and spend time with. We know the importance of including families in all aspects of school life and strive to build with them, the relationships that are integral to caring for and educating our children in genuine partnership. We aim to effectively share experiences with every family.

As well as lots of verbal feedback and conversations we provide all children with a special book or file that documents their play, learning and progress at both nursery and home. This information is also uploaded onto an electronic platform which enables sharing in different formats to meet the needs of all children and their families.



Children are able to reflect on their nursery day through an app at home, share their experiences with relatives in another country and can also sit in the classroom with a friend and look through their paper book or file to remember and talk about what they have done.

We believe that all elements are important and make for a very special opportunity to share learning and make connections between home and nursery.

Families are also encouraged to provide photographs of themselves and /or experiences outside nursery, that we make into information books (alongside those made by staff), for our Book Areas.

Our schools are an important part of our local communities and we strive to develop relationships with a range of people from those communities, such as shopkeepers, wardens and police officers.

For example, through the community group ‘Girlington Growers’ St Edmund's children, families and staff come together with church goers and local residents and take pride in maintaining the area surrounding the school; litter picking, weeding and planting.

Lilycroft children worked with a local artist on an amazing community project 'The Mills are Alive' culminating in a show of work documenting life in Mannigham throughout the ages, which was enjoyed by hundreds of Bradford people. 'Forest School' (St Edmund's) and Outdoor Learning (Lilycroft) enable children and families to experience nature in their local environment and provide real life learning experiences beyond the nursery gates.

We want children to be invested in their family, school, community and the world they inhabit and we aim to provide as many 'real life' learning experiences as possible to support everyone's 'understanding of the world' as a vital part of our wider curriculum.

We will ensure that we adapt our curriculum in order to meet the diverse needs of all our children and are proactive in planning and implementing inclusive ways to learn and teach that enable and encourage everyone.







People & Communities
0-2 Years

From birth, babies begin building relationships with special people. Beginning with their immediate family, a child's community grows alongside their experiences. Loving, stable and responsive relationships are fundamental to every child's growth and progress and these early relationships shape the way a child sees the world, affecting all areas of their development.



On entry to nursery, every child and their family is allocated a 'key person', someone with whom a special bond and attachment is made. The role of the key person is vital in supporting the development of these early relationships.

Relationships are initiated through settling in and home visits which will help to develop an initial strong bond and allow children to begin to feel a sense of belonging to their new community. The nursery environment and the people within it are new to children and families at first, but nursery soon becomes a safe and familiar place.



Staff are fully aware and sensitive to the fact that this is likely to be the first time these very young children have been away from their family. We gather as much information as possible from family members to ensure the transition is as smooth as possible for everyone.



People & Communities
0-2 Years

From a few weeks old, babies will begin to influence the people in their lives, for example, encouraging others to smile by smiling at them. Early Years Educators are tuned in to all these important skills and encourage individual interactions and communications that support each child.

Children will show an interest in their environment and the people in it, by turning to look when they hear a familiar (or new) sound or voice. They will engage with others socially and show a willingness to play, sing or listen to a story together.

We will encourage children to play together and alongside one-another and introduce an increased sense of community through short group time sessions. We use our own and children's names in songs and rhymes so that everyone feels included.

Learning the names of their peers also supports children in the first stages of building friendships within their nursery community.

Children enjoy looking at a range of books and photographs of themselves, familiar people objects and experiences.

We create photographic books about our children and their families, including their experiences both at home (grandad pushing them on the swing in their garden) and at nursery (eating lunch with their friends).

This supports children to remain connected to their families as well as feeling part of the nursery community. It is important that children 'see themselves' alongside a diverse range of others, within the printed materials we use.

We ensure that we make available positive images of a range of babies and people, including those with diverse physical characteristics and disabilities. Books and photographs also depict different types of families. From a very early age, children are aware of differences between themselves and others and adults ensure they acknowledge and speak positively about these differences.





Alongside real life experiences, the books that we use to celebrate diverse backgrounds, supports our youngest children to begin to understand cultural and religious events. We plan simple, age appropriate celebrations for Eid and Christmas and ensure we also include any other events or celebrations observed by the families of our current cohort of children.



Resources also reflect the cultural diversity of our communities; fabrics, foods (both real and pretend), household items, artefacts, clothing etc. are all included in our provision, for children to play with and experience through their senses.

From a young age, children become aware of roles. Adults will take on a role in play and enhance provision to reflect interests and experiences. For example, if a child is interested in helping with the washing at home, a key person might take on the role of dad (who does the washing) and enhance the home corner with a washing basket, pegs and a clothes dryer.

Children will make links to their prior experiences when exploring available resources. Children will begin to learn about roles within the setting; who brings their lunch or cleans their classroom and also begin to recognise the person in the office who greets them as they arrive each day.



On trips out in our local area, children meet the people who live and work there; checkout operators, police officers, street cleaners and gardeners, all people who play important roles within our community.



People & Communities
2-3 Years

Children continue to respond best to their immediate and wider family and friends and also to their key person. As their confidence and understanding of others grows, some begin to develop friendships with other children. This may begin by playing alongside others and develop into seeking out other children with similar interests to play with.

Play may imitate everyday actions such as making tea in the home corner or an event such as going to a wedding. Early Years Educators will join in and as appropriate, extend play by calling on additional experiences and adding vocabulary and resources. For example, when making food in the home corner they may prompt “Shall we cook for the Eid party?” or when building in the construction area they may offer “I’d like to make a building as big as Morrisons, can you help me?”



Children continue to enjoy photographs and stories about themselves and their families. Books and displays are created to support this and to celebrate similarities and differences between themselves and others. Children are naturally aware of themselves and people around them and as this awareness grows, discussions provide meaningful teaching and learning opportunities.

Early Years Educators make time to find out about important events in children’s lives so that they can maximise learning from this and encourage children to begin to share their experiences with others. This could be anything from a new sibling being born to a sleep over at Granny’s house. Families are encouraged to send in photographs, videos and comments to support understanding, learning and sharing.

Children’s awareness of roles develops rapidly at this age. They run to see the refuse collectors as they hear the truck or offer to pay the cashier at the shop. We invite people from a range of roles into nursery to engage with children and to take this learning further. For example, a dentist came to speak to the children about oral hygiene and what to expect when they visit the dentist. At this time posters, books and resources were provided so that children could revisit this experience over and over again.



People & Communities
3-4 Years

More experienced children will readily identify, recall and talk about special times or events with family and friends. We celebrate a range of festivals at nursery such as Eid, Christmas, Chinese New Year and Diwali and children are encouraged to talk about how their family celebrate at home.

Early Years Educators will highlight similarities and differences between these events and customs by sharing their own experiences and using video clips, role play and non-fiction books.

A range of resources and artefacts will be used within areas of provision to support children's learning through hands on experiences. Many opportunities are taken to celebrate diversity. For example, families may be asked to bring in traditional foods which we will taste at snack time, or to tell a story in their home language.

We hope for children to begin to develop a sense of their own life story and family history and encourage families to preserve and share memories using photos, videos and comments added to their child's online learning journey. We print out any contributions to add to a child's paper file or book and encourage talk with peers and staff to consolidate memories and recall past events. Children recognise and talk about similarities and differences between themselves and others.



For example, we may hear conversations such as “You have long hair but I have short hair” or “You live with mummy and daddy but I have two mummies”. Skilled Early Years Educators utilise the learning opportunities that come from these conversations.

We support children to celebrate the differences between themselves and their families, ensuring negative stereotyping is avoided and that sensitivity is employed where some children may have difficult or disrupted home lives that they may struggle to talk about.

We support children to understand difference and develop empathy using puppets and persona dolls to tell stories about diverse experiences.





People & Communities
3- 4 Years

Children begin to realise that they don't always like the same things as their friends or peers and that this is OK. Adults support children to develop sensitivity when communicating, playing and learning alongside the other members of their nursery community and that we all have different needs. Staff explain carefully why some children and people may need extra support or feel upset about certain things.

As children mature, their key person continues to take on an important role as someone who they can relate to and rely on, forming a secure attachment.

The kind of attachments that children have at this age will form an early picture of relationships, that will impact how they interact with others and how they feel about themselves. This is why it is crucial that we support children to develop a secure attachment with a caring, loving and responsive adult.

A key person who is attentive and knows their children well will be able to effectively support their needs and development.

Children will show an interest in a number of occupations from their own lives and experiences and are supported to develop positive relationships with community members such as artists, the police, the dental team and community ward officers.

These relationships are developed by inviting key people into nursery to play with the children and talk about what they do. Again, learning will be supported by adding relevant resources to different areas of provision, for example a fire station in the small world area or police uniforms in the role-play area.

Children take on roles and use their learning creatively, supported by skilled practitioners who extend play and learning further, consolidating the use of new vocabulary and embedding newly learned facts and information through imaginative play.

When we are out in the local community with children, as well as meeting new people, we build up a picture of our local area through observing, discussing and mapping landmarks and buildings.

We also visit important places such as the local Church and Mosque where children can again share their own knowledge and experiences and gain new ones.



The World
0-2 Years

Babies begin to show an interest in the world around them by moving their eyes, then head, to follow anything that is moving. They will react to any sudden change such as a familiar adult disappearing from their view. During this stage of development, children begin to learn that things are still there even when they can't see them. Early Years Educators will engage in 'Peek a Boo' games and put toys under blankets or in boxes, encouraging children to find them.

Enriching experiences are vital to development and we take our youngest children out into the local area very regularly; to the park, to the shops or to the woods. Our Forest School practitioner takes St Edmund's children to Chellow Dene Wetlands alongside their key person. At this age they travel there in prams, with lots of discussion about sights, smells and sounds on the journey. Once they arrive the aim is for children to explore the environment in a range of ways, supported and challenged by the adults.

Babies might experience 'tummy time' on the grass, crawl across a bridge or toddle through the stream. They feel the leaves on the trees, put their hands in the cool water or blow dandelion clocks. Children show an interest in their environment by scanning for objects of interest. This could be at home, in the garden, at nursery or in the park. Adults support children to experience things from a range of vantage points, up high and down low, which extends their experience further.

Children smile to show pleasure in finding recognisable play objects and will repeat certain actions again and again to make sense of them.This could be shaking a rattle or hitting a mobile.



Children will handle toys and objects by using a range of senses and approaches such as touching, mouthing, hitting, looking, tasting, pulling, turning, poking, dropping and combining e.g. banging two objects together or putting objects in a container.

They look for objects that have been dropped and begin to notice that some objects can be used in a range of ways such as a ball for throwing or rolling. Cause and effect is of great interest and we provide a range of opportunities for children to experience this - a doorbell or light switch to press, handles to turn and doors to open.

Children observe closely what vehicles, people and animals do such as watching a bird fly or listening to a bus drive past. As children grow they will become more curious and interested in new and familiar outdoor experiences e.g. grass, mud, puddles, plants, animals.

Adults will plan opportunities for these experiences in the outdoor area at nursery and in the local environment.

Children become more familiar with their environments and remember where objects belong when trying to access resources or tidy them away. They also begin to match parts of objects that fit or belong together such as a lid on a teapot or a shape from a puzzle.

The World
2-3 Years

Children at this age begin to notice detailed features of objects in their environment both inside and outdoors and adults encourage further interest by pointing things out. For example; a tree rustling in the wind, ice melting or a stick floating and a stone sinking.

New vocabulary is introduced to describe what we are seeing and experiencing and further investigation encouraged through comments such as 'I wonder. . . ' or 'what might happen if. . .' Our outdoor areas are open in all weathers so children can experience first-hand the change in the natural and made world, across the seasons. Weather appropriate clothing is always available to ensure this can happen.

Children build snowmen and go sledging in the snow, splash in puddles and transport water when it's wet, and on warm days the water pump provides enriched learning opportunities such as making a stream and then building a dam to stop the water. (filling, pouring, transporting?) Again, we utilise every opportunity to experience our local area. This might be walking to Morrisons to buy food for snack time, going on a bus to City Park or going to a local café. Children are taught about road safety and possible dangers.

Our Forest School practitioner takes St Edmund's children to Chellow Dene Wetlands and Lilycroft children experience walks to Lister Park. Most often children of this age walk there and discuss everything they see, hear and smell on the journey; from a neighbours delicious cooking to the bright red post box.

Children 'trip trap' across the bridge, run down the hill, climb a tree and throw stones and sticks in the water then watch them travel away.



All children are included in this experience and the session will be adapted to suit their individual needs. For example, we know the areas of the wetlands that can support wheelchair users or children with walking frames. Children begin to explore the long reeds, which are taller than they are and go foraging in the deep dark woods!

Tools such as secateurs are introduced through practical 'real life' situations "Oh look, this branch is in our way. I'll use my secateurs to cut it down. They are very sharp so I'll use them safely and carefully". Children are learning about safety and about using tools for a purpose.

Next time a branch is in the way children will know what to do! Children begin to talk about the things they are observing and experiencing; fish swimming in their tank in Reception, minibeasts in the garden and natural objects such as conkers, acorns, pebbles, shells and stones.

Adults encourage children to notice similarities and differences and teach them new words to describe them. We plan lots of opportunities to observe change over time such as freezing and melting, planting and growing. We grow a range of fruit and vegetables and enjoy these seasonally. Children begin to build on their first hand experiences when playing with small world reconstructions such as cars, trains, farm animals or mini beasts. We have a range of books including non-fiction books and photos of visits which also support our play.

The World
3-4 Years

More experienced children comment and ask questions about aspects of their now more familiar world. They are encouraged to talk about similarities, differences, patterns and change and investigate further to find out more.

We learn about the properties of materials and observe and experience changes to these materials in a range of contexts; combining, heating and cooling when baking, for example. Children's curiosities are encouraged and they are given the freedom to see, touch, smell, hear and taste and motivated to talk about their experiences.

Children may use a tablet to record sound and video and take photographs, zooming in to observe details. Revisiting experiences helps in developing an understanding of growth, decay and changes over time. Adults support and encourage children with careful questioning promoting sustained shared thinking and further discovery.

The natural world provides interest and inspiration and real life experiences with owls, chicks, caterpillars and the Mobile Farm develop an understanding in children of the importance of care and respect for all living things.

Adults take every opportunity to introduce and consolidate the use of new vocabulary and are encouraged to use the widest vocabulary they know i.e. the scientific names for animal features or plant parts.

If we are unsure, we use information books and online searches to find out and learn together. Displays are a way of bringing together everything we have learned and enable children to revisit and remember.

Children are beginning to understand the impact of their actions on the world. This could include feeding the birds, recycling paper and using the bins provided rather than dropping litter on the floor. We use a range of books and short videos to promote knowledge of recycling and climate change.

Early Years Educators plan for children to plant, care for and grow flowers, vegetables and fruit. It is important that children understand the role they play in looking after and protecting their world.

Children recognise similarities and differences between places, objects, materials and living things.

They make comparisons, discuss and investigate why things happen and how things work. Hands on experiences of taking things apart (and putting them back together) enable important discoveries.

Our Forest School and Outdoor learning experiences develop as children mature. They are taught to use tools independently - safely and carefully.

They splash in the stream and observe and comment on how sticks and stones travel through the moving water.

They work together to make a den, utilising skills and knowledge, making plans and solving problems, learning more about the properties of materials and how they behave under different conditions.

We take the children on a wide variety of local visits, utilising different modes of transport to take us to museums, galleries, the library, the park or the river. At the end of the year we take children and their families on an exciting day out to the seaside. This is our favourite day of the year with so much learning and lots of fun!

Understanding The World with Families

As in all areas of the curriculum it is vitally important that we work in genuine partnership with the families of all our children. Trusting relationships built on respect and understanding are the key to engaging our families in their children's learning and the life of our schools and communities.

Our Parent Involvement Team play a key part in supporting and encouraging families to get involved in a range of ways. Play and Learn sessions run weekly; we open our doors to children and families from the community and welcome them into our schools, offering support, play based early education and a safe place for families to come together.

We plan events throughout the year such as Nursery at Night, Science Day and our trip to the Seaside, where ALL families are encouraged and supported to take part; often experiencing new things and learning alongside their children.

Better Together Day is an annual event where our families come into nursery with their children to take part in '50 Things to Do Before You're Five' experiences. We experiment, discover and learn together and hope that families will be encouraged to use the 50 Things App to revisit these activities (and more) at home and when out and about in the local community.





50 things to do before you're five™

#1 Get to Know You
#2 Where am I?
#3 Treasure Time
#9 Minibeasts and Bug Hunting
#12 Brrr...Explore the Cold
#14 See the Stars
#19 Growing
#26 Splish, Splash, Splosh
#27 Park Keeper
#28 Wheels on the Bus
#29 Pitter Patter
#30 Yummy Picnic
#34 Woodland Wandering
#35 Trip Trap, Trip Trap
#38 Posty
#40 Happy History
#43 High Five
#48 Natural Art
#49 Grass Gazing
#50 Sea and Sand

Ofsted Outstanding Provider

Ofsted

Read our report

WEBSITE

REVIEWS ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Absolute fantastic nursery school! Teachers and staff are very supportive, friendly and always their for parents and children. They provide fun activities indoors and outdoors. My son really enjoyed it here and it has build his confidence. Cant wait to put my daughter in nusery next Sept.
Thankyou for everything x

This place is amazing, so inviting from the moment you walk down the street. Staff are lovely and friendly. The children are happy and smiling. The provision and activities are well thought through and educational. The children are learning all the time. Outdoor activity is ongoing in all weathers and staff never complain!
So many opportunities for parents to join in various activities. I love this place. And so does my son! 😊

50 things to do before you're five™

Scan the QR code below to view all activities

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