

Freshfield Nursery School

# Our Curriculum

September 2022



### **How did we produce this document?**

This document has been compiled through the staff reflecting on why we work in the way we do and what we feel is important for the children at Freshfield Nursery. We have discussed ideas as staff and alongside Governors. We have consulted families by asking them what important attitudes, skills, knowledge or experiences they want their children to get from their time at Nursery.

### **How do we plan for children to learn?**

At Freshfield, the 3 and 4 year old children in our main nursery engage in two objective based group times a day - one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Our group leaders plan these group times to meet the needs of the children in their group. Currently, our group times are linked to the Prime Areas and involve lots of singing, dancing and joining in as part of a group. During playtimes we use 'In The Moment Planning'. This means that we plan in the moment based on what the children are doing at that specific time. Adults observe what the children are doing; challenging them and extending their play through questioning and providing purposeful resources linked to the children's interests and needs. Our 2 year olds engage in full free flow throughout the day.

An example of this may be a child using blocks to build a superhero tower. An adult may ask the child what they are building, how many blocks they have used and how they could make it taller, encouraging the child to count and use mathematical language to talk about their tower. The adult may then extend the child's play further by providing additional blocks in different shapes and sizes to encourage the child to experiment with shapes and use language to talk about their properties, asking questions such as 'I wonder what will happen if you use the sphere-shaped blocks to build your tower...'

### **Why do we work in the way we do?**

At Freshfield, the Prime Areas are our main focus. We create activities through these to develop the specific areas of learning. We believe that building positive relationships with each unique child in a well-planned nursery environment, tailored to meet interests and needs, encourages effective learning, development and progress. We have reflected on the experience of being a child at Freshfield Nursery School. Our children have choices and independence and engage in sustained shared thinking with adults and their peers. We work 'In The Moment' as we believe the majority of children's learning can arise from them following their interests and being supported by tuned in, sensitive adults who model, encourage and demonstrate to support each child's next steps in learning.

### **EYFS Statutory Framework**

Our work is informed by the themes and principles of the EYFS which supports all seven areas of learning.

**A Unique Child:** Every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

**Positive Relationships:** Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person.

**Enabling Environments with teaching and support from adults:** The environment (physical and emotional) plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning. Staff form strong bonds with children in order to respond to their individual interests and needs.

**Learning and Development:** Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of learning and development are equally important. The Prime Areas though are the key to accessing the rest of the curriculum so we prioritise the children becoming secure in these areas.

**We recognise the central importance of the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning and this helps to inform our 'A Happy Child' wheel of intent, implement and impact (see later in doc.)**

### **Reading Curriculum**

Alongside 'In The Moment Planning', we have core books to develop communication, language and reading. This sequenced language curriculum shows progression, from the stories being very short and simple with lots of repeated refrains to slowly developing more complex language and story structure over time. We place importance on ensuring that the learning environment is not themed around these books and is still inspired by and tailored to each child's interests and needs, as opposed to the books becoming part of adult led topics.

## How do we assess children's learning and progress?

The new Statutory Framework for September 2021 emphasises a reduction in workload, critiquing current practice as being very data obsessed and treating Development Matters (a non-statutory document) as a checklist for determining children's level of development, highlighting that this was never its intention.

This has been backed up by OFSTED who have stated that they no longer want to see data but a curriculum focussed around PSED Skills, language and the Characteristics of Effective Learning. Their emphasis is now on observing how the child learns, how staff facilitate that learning and how staff know the children have made progress as opposed to looking at data charts and data analysis which do not tell us a great deal about each child.

Based on this, we decided to change how we document children's learning. We are using an approach called OPAL. This stands for Observation of Play and Learning.

### *OPAL's key beliefs are:*

- Children should be recognised as individuals, not as a percentage in a chart.
- Gathering lots and lots of evidence of children's learning is unnecessary. If we are busy writing down and photographing the moment, then we are not part of the moment. We should be in the moment with the child, interacting and forwarding their learning rather than being an iPad screen trying to get a good photograph.
- As OPAL is centred around the unique child, it works alongside our current 'In The Moment Planning' strategy perfectly. How we plan our provision and support children has not changed at all.

- As the aim is to be in the moment with the child as opposed to capturing the moment, how we use Tapestry has changed. We use it to upload special activities and WOW moments as we feel that it is important for parents to see their child's learning, but being in the moment means that we have less documented observations to upload. This reduces workload as it can take a long time to upload them. We no longer tick statements linked to Development Matters on Tapestry. This matches advice from the DfE stating that we should not be using statements as a checklist. It also saves quite a bit of time for staff when uploading Tapestries.

### *How we use OPAL:*

OPAL assessments give each child a focus 'spotlight' month. All children will be baselined when they arrive which we call their 'starting points' and assessed when they leave, and then the spotlight month will depend on when the child's birthday is. During this month, we...

- Observe the child in depth.
- Fill in Spotlight Observation Sheet.
- Assess children on OPAL milestones and use chart to document whether the child is meeting age related expectations or working towards age related expectations.
- Arrange to discuss the child with parents. This again spreads out workload across the year, as data and parent conversations are done for each child in their spotlight month, rather than all at once. This also gives us more opportunity to discuss each child in more depth with parents.
- After 2 months a short progress meeting is also arranged.

In a typical academic year most children have four spotlights - a baseline, spotlight one, spotlight two and an end of year spotlight. September, July and August born children have three as their Spotlight months coincide with start of year baselines and end of year data.

OPAL's assessment points are very minimal and quite broad. This supports us to create an environment tailored to and inspired by the interests and needs of the child as opposed to tailoring it to an optional document. As OPAL is centred around the unique child, it works alongside our current 'In the Moment Planning' strategy perfectly. How we plan our provision and support children has not changed at all.

OPAL does not have assessments for Understanding the World or Expressive Arts and Design. The reason for this is to assess children as minimally as possible, as there is a lot of overlap with other areas of learning. Those areas are still valued and are extremely important. We still plan for these areas, assess our provision, our curriculum and environment, and ensure we evaluate our practice within these areas.

Although we do not formally use Development Matters or Birth2Five Matters or any of the other optional documents, we still refer to them for ideas and support when appropriate.

### **Moderation**

The assessment of our children's development is moderated amongst the group leaders in the school. Regular moderation and review meetings take place throughout the year to ensure consistency in the judgements.

*"If what you are doing does not benefit the children, then don't work on it; don't do it for Ofsted's sake alone." - Gill Jones, HMI, Nursery World 28 May 2019*

## What is 'curriculum'?

- **Intent** - What we want the children to be able to do.
- **Implement** - What we as educators do to support this.
- **Impact** - SO WHAT?! What benefits does all of this have on the child?

We consulted with staff with the following questions:

- What do we do well at Freshfield?
- What would we like to see if we were a visitor?
- What would we like to achieve?

The main points that stood out from answers and the themes that came up the most highlighted, were that here at Freshfield, we really value...

- Outdoor play
- Children's wellbeing and emotional development.



- Learning tailored to children's interests and needs.
- The want for the children to be 'happy'.

Inspired by these thoughts and ideas we created a new Freshfield curriculum document...

## A Happy Child



Our focus is for the children to be happy. The child is the core centre of everything that we do. This is reflected in the document with the happy child being in the core centre with other aspects around it.

The dark green ring is our Intent - What do we believe our children need to be 'happy' learners? What do the children do to show us that they are 'happy' learners? This section has been inspired by the answers given in the questionnaire. There is a huge focus on wellbeing, on each child being valued and celebrated for their unique qualities and on outdoor play. This is blended with the Early Years themes and principles of the Unique Child, Positive Relationships and an Enabling Environment as well as the Characteristics of Effective Learning.

The yellow ring is our Implement. It is everything that we currently do to support the children's learning. As you can see it continues to highlight the focus we have on supporting the unique child, the child's wellbeing and emotional development and outdoor experiences.

### **Impact statement**

From their own starting points, children at Freshfield will develop essential knowledge and skills required to become lifelong learners. As well as our curricular goals, impact is also evident through our successful

transitions into Reception. Children will be nurtured and celebrated so that they leave Freshfield ready for their next step into school, as happy, curious, caring and successful learners.

### **Our curricular goals - Impact**

**What are the key knowledge, skills and experiences we would like the children to have by the time that they leave Freshfield?**

<p>1. Becoming a happy and confident learner.</p>	<p>Step 1 - Children make a strong relationship with their key person and play alongside friends.</p> <p>Step 2 - Children become engaged in their play and learning, expanding on their ideas and responding appropriately to others.</p> <p>Step 3 - Children take part in pretend play.</p> <p>Step 4 - Children play collaboratively, communicating and negotiating with friends.</p> <p>Step 5 - Children persevere with difficulties and respond positively to challenge.</p>
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	<p>Step 6 - Children talk about and reflect on their play learning.</p>
<p>2. To be able to orally tell/retell a story.</p>	<p>Step 1 - Children develop their communication and language skills through a language rich environment with lots of positive interactions with adults.</p> <p>Step 2 - Children are exposed to a wide range of stories.</p> <p>Step 3 - Children enjoy listening to stories and joining in with songs and rhymes.</p> <p>Step 4 - Children engage in role play inspired by stories.</p> <p>Step 5 - Children join in with adults reading stories by finishing of sentences and joining in with repeated refrains.</p> <p>Step 6 - Children are able to use illustrations to talk about the characters, what is happening in a story and what they think might happen next.</p>

	<p>Step 7 - Children are able to use Tales Toolkit to tell familiar stories or make up their own story.</p> <p>Step 8- Children are able to orally tell or retell a story.</p>
<p>3. To be able to climb a tree.</p>	<p>Step 1 - Children develop their core strength through tummy time activities.</p> <p>Step 2 - Children develop hand - eye coordination skills by engaging in activities such as popping bubble, pouring water and sand into containers and playing ball games.</p> <p>Step 3 - Children are given opportunities to develop gross motor skills such as dancing, jumping and making big marks using large scale equipment such as paint rollers and mops.</p> <p>Step 4 - Children use outdoor equipment to balance, pull themselves up, step onto and jump off.</p>

	<p>Step 5 - Through play and adults modelling language, children are able to take risks and learn how to keep safe whilst taking risks.</p> <p>Step 6 - Children use age appropriate climbing equipment.</p> <p>Step 7 - Children climb trees.</p>
<p>4. To be able to safely cook food on a fire.</p>	<p>Step 1 - Children explore Nature School and Learn Nature School Rules.</p> <p>Step 2 - Children eat snack around the fire to learn about the safety of not going into the fire circle.</p> <p>Step 3 - Children observe staff lighting a fire and how to stay safe whilst around a fire e.g. respect position.</p> <p>Step 4- Children to start a fire by adding wood and safely using a fire starter.</p>

	<p>Step 5 - Children help to prepare food to be cooked e.g. kneading/chopping.</p> <p>Step 6 - Children cook food on fire.</p>
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