

Teaching & Learning Policy



The Governing Body of Oliver Thomas Nursery School adopted this Policy March 2023

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Aims of the Policy: This policy outlines our philosophy regarding young children's learning and the main approaches to teaching across all learning areas of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, effective from September 2021.

Fredrich Froebel – his pedagogy at Oliver Thomas Nursery School & Children's Centre

At Oliver Thomas we offer a child-led, play-based approach with individualised education programmes for children, planned by our expert staff team. Children lead their own learning and adults facilitate this through modelling, scaffolding and challenging based on the needs of each unique child. Through play, there is opportunity to explore, make choices and develop independence, confidence and imagination at their own level. These experiences provide the foundations for learning and develop vital skills and attitudes to learning later in life. Much of this approach underpins the pedagogy of Early Years expert and teacher Fredrich Froebel upon which much of our practice is based.



Four guiding principles shape our practice These are: every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured; Children learn to be confident and independent through positive relationships; Children learn and develop well in enabling environments with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time; Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers; Children develop and learn at different rates including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

The EYFS Curriculum

There are seven areas of learning and development that shape our educational programmes. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. Three areas are particularly important for building a foundation for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, forming relationships and thriving. These are the prime areas:

- communication and language
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development

We also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are:

- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design

Implementation: Planning through children's interests

We consider the individual needs, interests, and development of each child, and use this information to plan challenging and enjoyable experiences for each child in all areas of learning and development. When working with the youngest children we ensure a strong foundation for children's development in the three prime areas. The specific areas of learning provide children with a broad curriculum and with opportunities to strengthen and apply the prime areas of learning. This is particularly important in developing language and extending vocabulary.



Working in partnership with agencies to support children and families

Throughout a child's time with us, if a child's progress in any prime area gives cause for concern, we discuss this with the child's parents and/or carers and agree how to support the child. We consider whether a child may have a special educational need or disability which requires specialist support. We link with, and help families to access, relevant services from other agencies as appropriate.

Children whose home language is not English

For children whose home language is not English, we provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in play and learning, supporting their language development at home. We ensure that children have sufficient opportunities to learn and reach a good standard in English language during their time at nursery, ensuring children are ready to benefit from the opportunities available to them when they begin primary school.

The importance of play

Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals and solve problems. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults. We decide what we want children to learn and what their next steps might be, and the most effective ways to teach it, using children's interests as a starting point. We stimulate children's interests, responding to each child's emerging needs and guiding their development through warm, positive interactions coupled with secure routines for play and learning.

In planning and guiding what children learn, we reflect on the different rates at which children are developing and adjust our practice appropriately.

Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning 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

Keyperson Approach

Each child is assigned a key person. We inform parents and/or carers of the name of the key person, and explain their role, when a child starts attending the nursery. The key person and the team ensure that every child's learning and care is tailored to meet their individual needs. The key person and the team engages and supports parents and/or carers in guiding their child's development at home. They help families engage with more specialist support if appropriate.

A quality learning experience for children requires a quality workforce. At Oliver Thomas we have a well qualified, skilled staff team which we know strongly increases the potential of our nursery to deliver the best possible outcomes for our children.

How we use assessment

Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers, teachers and early years educators to recognise children's progress, understand their needs, and to plan experiences, activities and support. Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process here at Oliver Thomas. It involves practitioners knowing children's level of achievement and interests, and then shaping teaching and learning experiences for each child reflecting that knowledge. In their interactions with children, practitioners respond to their own day-to-day observations about children's progress and observations that parents and carers share.

How we support communication and language at Oliver Thomas

To support our children with language delay, English as an additional language and other language barriers, we observe, wait, listen; we comment rather than question; adapt language to suit each level; expand language as appropriate. All staff are trained by the expert speech and language therapy team we buy in from the NHS.

- Communication shelves

We understand there is a broad spectrum of communication that is not language based. Because of this we have developed our 'communication shelves' or 'sabotage jars' – here children are motivated by what they see – but they cannot reach. In order to get what they want they must communicate, hence the word 'sabotage.' Children use a pictorial exchange system to interact and communicate and begin to understand simple sentences such as 'I want..' We use a 'coreboard' throughout the nursery to support non-linguistic simple sentence construction and communication through symbols.

- Signs and symbols

We have symbols and signs for 'wait' 'stop' 'go' for children to use independently. The team model how to use these words in simple sign language throughout the provision providing children with different ways to communicate which are not necessarily language based.



- Supporting emotional regulation

These not only support communication but also emotional regulation. We use visual symbol emotion cards to support children's understanding of their own emotional state and simple rules and expectations which all support children to begin to emotionally regulate by themselves.

- Song and rhymes and how they support transition

We use a variety of transition songs to support children to feel emotionally comfortable and safe with what is coming next through song and rhyme. Children with limited language can access this because they recognise the tune. We know that music engages children in a deep way connecting with them emotionally – music often transcends language.

- Intensive interaction

Adults through following children's needs and interests, can continue to develop the interaction and connection leading children to deeper learning experiences. With some children, adults will engage in intensive interaction: copying and mirroring sounds and actions and wait for a response – rather like a conversation, primarily following the child.

Early Years Pupil Premium

We support the children who qualify for Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) with small language / nurture groups which are adapted skilfully according to need.

Interventions for children with special educational needs and disabilities

Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are very well supported as highlighted by our recent acquisition of the Inclusive Quality Mark (IQM) They are offered targeted intervention according to need: Magic Bucket (attention autism); Intensive Interaction; See and Learn; Objects of reference; Box Clever (language delay) to use box clever as an example of the pedagogy behind the intervention: children are offered specific play experiences at the same time as language stimulation, enabling them to understand and use the concepts; the children need more intense focus because they are not picking up language in the usual way.

Sustained shared thinking

Children who are more able have opportunities with skilled practitioners to engage in sustained shared thinking, conversations, critical thinking skills, stretching and challenging their ideas leading to deep learning.

We support children with a view to developing their independence skills so they can do things by themselves and become confident learners.

Early Literacy

We encourage the joy of books because we recognise how much value reading has for children as a future life and educational skill. We use books to enrich children's language and to develop their imagination and to offer alternative and different ways to think and be. (See core book approach and Phonics Offer)

Home learning and the remote offer

We work in partnership with parents and have created a series of home learning book packs so that they are able to deliver and access story and books at home. They are directed to the website to support home learning. The website has the book packs and links to stories freely available for parents and families as well as a selection of songs and rhymes so important for early literacy development. www.oliverthomas.org.uk

Maths in nature

We develop maths through a problem-solving and critical thinking approach. Staff often use nature as a starting point as children are outside discovering and experimenting with the outdoor garden.



Intent: Our curriculum offer – The 20 Magical Things

Our curriculum offer: The 20 Things to do Before you are 5, provides our children with exciting opportunities which they may not otherwise experience. These were chosen carefully and thoughtfully by all stakeholders and serve as a motivation for talk and critical thinking and investigation. The special books demonstrate these in action. These further support parental understanding of the learning value within the 20 Things.



Impact

We capture and document children's progress and learning in the special books and through our assessment and child progress review (CPR) process.

We know our approach has impact due to our rigorous assessment process, our data, our parent conferences, parent surveys and with our partnership working with our primary feeder schools. They say:

"All of the children settled very well into school routines and are showing very positive engagement in their learning – their self-regulation and social skills are very good and are beginning to read and write." Justyna Davis, EYFS Lead at Langdon Academy

"The children who have come from Oliver Thomas have settled in well and are making good progress in all areas of learning. All the children are particularly strong in their prime areas of learning and are making good progress in the specific areas too." Rachel Kaye, Assistant Head Teacher EYFS at Nelson Primary School

"The Oliver Thomas children have settled in really well. Children were able to follow instructions and were very confident socially. They are very happy and are making very good progress." Joanna Porritt, Assistant Head Teacher EYFS at Vicarage Primary School

"The vast majority of children that have transitioned to us from Oliver Thomas have settled really well into life here at Brampton. They are already showing signs of progress and are really enjoying life here at our school. We have noticed their personal social and emotional development scores are high and they have formed good relationships with their peers and key adults. Their physical development scores also show signs of promise for their end of year Early Learning Goals. Communication and Language scores are also good, your ex pupils are 'good communicators.'" Mark Woodhouse, Deputy Headteacher and EYFS Lead at Brampton Primary School