



Teaching and Learning Policy

REDCLIFFE Nursery School

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Curriculum Statement

"Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances." (EYFS. 2021)

We keep the Development Matters and Birth to 5 Matters in mind, but go beyond the limitations of curriculum subjects and place a strong emphasis on the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning.

The non-statutory guidance outlines three prime areas and four specific areas of learning:

Prime areas:

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

Specific areas: Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design.

Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning: Playing and exploring, Active learning and Creating and thinking critically.

These are weaved throughout the child's day at Redcliffe Nursery School. All areas are linked and learning and teaching are planned and observed in a holistic way.

Enquiry-Based Learning

Humans are born inquisitive and it is this curiosity and drive to learn that we aim to promote within our curriculum. By following children's interests and individual lines of enquiry, practitioners can build on children's previous knowledge and extend learning in meaningful ways. Listening to and observing children is vital in nurturing this.

At Redcliffe we provide the children with open-ended resources, provocations, real-life experiences and plentiful opportunities for discussions, encouraging children to think creatively and critically when investigating the world around them. The role of the adult is vital in scaffolding this learning and facilitating children's lines of enquiry, providing them with the tools and resources they need to find the answers to their questions. This allows children to take ownership of their own learning.

We encourage children to take responsibility for their own learning so that they are empowered to think for themselves and become active learners. We do this by:

- Having a dynamic and evolving play environment inside and outside where children can choose and access resources easily. This is a process of co-construction where children and adults expand ideas and create new opportunities for learning.
- Offering open ended resources that provide opportunities to push the limits, stimulate and provoke children's exploration of their own ideas and theories. Through our provision the children's thinking goes beyond the parameters of the EYFS.
- Encouraging children to be agents of their own learning. They make their own decision and find solutions to problems, in a collaborative process involving both adults and other children.
- Involving children in processes that are part of the nursery day to give them purposeful learning experiences and a sense of ownership and community.
- Following and extending children's interests. We respond and listen to children and parents so that we can provide a rich, meaningful and challenging learning environment.
- Seeing the value in being outdoors; the immediate outdoors, our local community, the city of Bristol and wild spaces.
- Building on the knowledge and experiences that children bring from home.
- Fostering a respect for the sustainability of our planet.

Play

"Play is the laboratory of the possible. To play fully and imaginatively is to step sideways into another reality, between the cracks of ordinary life. "

Henricks (2006)

Play is unruly and unbounded, going beyond what is already known or defined. There are many aspects to play in the Early Years, but contained within it is creativity and action, change and the possibility of transformation, which is why it is an integral part of how young children learn. In the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS, 2021) the role of play is defined in the following terms:

"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."

At Redcliffe, play is central to our ethos, with a special focus on children's self-initiated play. Children want to play because they are strongly motivated to follow their interests and enquiries, answer questions and think deeply, all of which gives them a sense of satisfaction and ownership in their play. Our ethos of listening and responding to children helps us to build the conditions for play to flourish, enabling

children to become confident and inspired learners. By tuning in with each child we are better able to understand what lies behind their play. Although it is not possible for us as adults to plan children's play for them, in our co-constructed, responsive curriculum we can plan for potential learning. We also look to recognize the interesting and remarkable in what children discover. We go on to prepare for new learning events with children, both in child-initiated and adult-directed activities in ways that are contextually appropriate and meaningful for each individual child.

The learning environment is a vital part of our play pedagogy. This includes the way we provide access to space, time and resources. We prioritise self-initiated play because we feel strongly that children need time and freedom to play. We ensure that the environment is stimulating and exciting to provoke children's imagination, intellectual investigations and physical challenges. We make the outside environment full of challenge, adventure and provide children opportunities to assess and take risks for themselves, as they try out new activities and combinations. Our overall approach to play is to create a unity between playing, learning and teaching.

The role of the key person

"Listening is a time of long pauses"

Reggio Children, 2001

Effective interactions happen when children's learning is enhanced. It can be enhanced by a practitioner making a significant contribution to an interaction with a child, or by other contributing factors; by children, by the environment or by the child's own independent inquiry (Fisher, 2016). This aspect of our practice is reinforced by the key person system, supporting children to build positive, trusting relationships with particular adults. We want children to become resilient, capable, confident and self-assured learners. By adults spending uninterrupted time engaging with each individual child, we can help them to develop these attributes.

We recognize that there are differences to the learning that takes place when children learn alongside an adult, for example in a 'group time', as to when they learn independently of an adult. Where an adult has a planned intention, based on their observations, children have the opportunity to benefit from language, behaviours and learning, being modelled and supported. The adults can respond and adapt the extent to which they support to help children move on or consolidate their knowledge. The level of adult interaction is key to the success of the child's learning. When children lead their own play, they are usually following through their own ideas, solving problems for themselves, either independently or collaboratively with other children and drawing on all they know. With adults, children are introduced to new concepts and skills, while when they learn independently, they explore what they have already learnt, taking ownership of the learning. Both situations are important and children have opportunities for either in their nursery day.

Working in partnership

While the adult practitioner is a vital part of the enabling environment in the early years, we understand how significant interactions are outside the nursery, principally in the home.

At Redcliffe Nursery school we understand the importance of building positive and respectful partnerships with parents/carers. We recognise that partnership working gives the child the very best start to their educational journey, establishing a culture of learning for all. The voice of the parent offering information to communicate needs, interests, special requirements, share what they have been doing, is absolutely vital to the secure emotional wellbeing, development and potential for learning. We believe parents feel that they are truly listened to, that they should be encouraged to participate in the child's learning journey and that we inform parents of their child's progress and development. We will work collaboratively to establish the best way to communication for each family.

The Child's Learning Diary belongs to the child. They regularly look at these and are given the opportunity to take them home and share them with family and friends. Parents are encouraged to make contributions, but are not pressurised to do so. We are always willing to listen to any concerns or worries and we encourage parents to talk to us so that we can work together to resolve any issues as quickly as possible. We will always discuss with parents if we have any concerns about development and will establish the best course of action by agreeing the most appropriate method to support both the child and the family.

Copies of policies and procedures are available at reception for parents to look through at any time. We have a clear route to follow for any concerns or complaints. Most issues can usually be resolved promptly and satisfactorily by speaking to the right person. We aim to establish and maintain an effective, high quality and responsive system for dealing with concerns and complaints. If a complaint is made we will continue to offer our services to the parent and children while the complaint is being investigated. We will always ask the complainant what they think needs to happen to resolve the issue.

Parents interested in being involved in the Nursery are encouraged to share their ideas, become a volunteer, join the PTFA and/ or to consider becoming a Governor. Many parents have told us that they really value their time at Redcliffe because they felt that they were heard, and they had a sense of belonging.

"It is a wonderful, nurturing and inclusive place with hugely dedicated staff. WE feel privileged to have had the chance to send both our children to be part of its hopeful and progressive community." – Anonymous parental feedback (2021)

Bringing the world to the children

“Learning WITH rather than about the world” Giorza 2018

All children at our nursery will have already had many wonderful experiences which fuel their motivation to communicate and share with us their knowledge. We understand how important first-hand, lived experiences are for children and how when learning alongside and in the world, they make more connections than we anticipate. From our observations of children’s play, we come to notice how pivotal the ‘everydayness’ of life is fascinating to children.

All children visit a wild woodland space at least once every fortnight. They travel in our own mini bus to different woodland/green spaces. Children encounter a variety of terrains, go in all weathers and experience the changing seasons. They are encouraged to develop self-regulation, assess risks, be resilient and form connections with the natural world. Visits also include trips to coastal areas. There is an emphasis on the characteristics of effective teaching and learning where children are encouraged to be active, explore, be creative, ask questions and express their thinking. We aim to give children experience of the local harbour each year. Travelling by boat to take in the perspective of the city from the floating harbour, meeting the people who work, live, and use the harbour.

We also understand that in order to raise the profile of young children in our society, we need to enable children to be visible in their community, influencing the city to be more child friendly and focused.

When planning experiences in our community, we deliberately leave the purposes of the visits unintended to allow for the children’s curiosity to lead and not our pre-planned objectives, being open to what might unfold and what the children might question and explore. Sellers (2013) refers to this interpretation of listening and responding and igniting children’s curiosity as “presenting curriculum as a dictionary of possibilities”.

SEND and Safeguarding - A nursery for every child

As a staff team we are constantly reviewing and reflecting on our inclusive values and the extent to which all children are enabled to access the nursery provision.

We continually strive for positive relationships and respect for each child and their family. With sensitivity to children’s individual characteristics and motivations, our paramount aim is to ensure that children feel a sense of trust in us and feel that we are doing everything to understand and respect who they are. Honouring children’s continual growth and evolution in these most crucial first years.

Our curriculum is designed to foster thought, curiosity and a desire for learning in all pupils, regardless of their backgrounds, strengths and needs. It is a gateway to opportunity, leading to a fulfilling and prosperous early childhood for each child.

We understand that children’s development is not linear and cannot be classified or limited to age bands.

Communication is fundamental for every human being and we continue to strive to broaden our communication skills and offerings to enable each person a voice. Through our ongoing empathetic observations of children, we act on children's growing 'voices' by noticing details that speak of discomfort, anxiety and joy and respond in ways to soothe and connect. We see that with each communicative effort, a crucial relational connection is made, which gains us respect from the child and to further openings into the child's view. We are also continually growing in our professional and personal knowledge of the differences in people and with this have openness to the powerful and sometimes different input that other professionals can bring to develop our understanding of children. We actively seek ways to work with our professional colleagues in order to make the best use of different perspectives to broaden our lens and opportunities for children.

A 12-year-old boy with autism reflects on his time at this nursery 7 years ago,

"I remember being in the garden and the forest and you let me play and run, I couldn't speak then and I used to get nervous going places, but I liked going to nursery".

We are dedicated to promoting children's independence and autonomy, encouraging them to take responsibility for their own learning – initiating and making decisions. We also understand that learning cannot take place unless children's emotional needs are met and they feel safe to take risks. No child is ever denied opportunities to be involved in experiences at this nursery, children may decline or show us that they do not wish to participate and we respect this choice of the child's and try other ways to approach an experience to enable a child to involve themselves another time.

We believe strongly that planning for children starts from looking at their character, strengths and by understanding their family context and experiences so far.

Assessment

Learning Diaries

Children are assessed holistically day to day, by their key people and other adults working with them. Developments are recorded in the form of observations in their learning diaries, these may be taken at group times or during their child-initiated play. We use The Birth to 5 Matters document as a guide to communicate the learning within each observation. The learning diaries belong to the children and are available for them to access and engage with. Parents/Carers can also contribute to the diaries and document the learning and experiences that are happening outside of the nursery.

Formal assessment

We carry out formal assessments at three points in the year. In October, to document what the children already know, then again in February and finally in July before the transition to school or a move from Blackbirds to Seagulls. We have created our own assessment document, based on the Birth to 5 Matters document with the addition of statements to reflect our ethos and curriculum. Staff consider which of the Characteristics of Effective Learning the children are showing evidence

of at each assessment point, as well as giving a best fit score for each aspect within the Prime areas, Maths and Literacy. These scores are inputted to an excel spreadsheet and the data used to see the percentage of children reaching their age expected level at each point in the year. We are able to use the data to look at target groups of children, allowing us to monitor and compare. For example, looking at gender differences, and the impact having English as an additional language has on development. In Blackbirds, we can compare children accessing and eligible 2-year-old place with those in a paying day-care place. In Seagulls, we are able to monitor the impact attending Blackbirds has on their development. We are also able to track our 'vulnerable' children as they move through the nursery to ensure that we give additional support where necessary.

After each assessment, key people are able to see a clear picture of their group as a whole in the form of a graph. They also receive individual progression wheels for the children in their group, providing a clear picture of their development. Key people are able to reflect on their practice and provision and target any areas they may need to develop further for their group or individual children in particular. Room Leaders can see their cohorts as a whole and analyse and reflect whether any changes need to be made to the provision. Senior Leaders can plan for professional development for individual staff or the whole staff team in response to what the assessments show us.

For children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), a discussion is had between the key person, support worker and SENDCo about whether the child should be assessed using the Differentiated Early Years Outcomes. If so, the assessment is used in the same way to create best fit scores which are inputted and individual development wheels created. These can be used to support referrals and conversations with other professionals, funding paperwork and transitions.

High Quality Transitions

At Redcliffe, we recognise the importance of high-quality transitions and the impact these can have on a child's future learning and well-being. Starting nursery and school are both significant milestones in early childhood (Einarsdottir et al, 2019) and for many young children, their first major experience of transition. To ensure we provide a supportive and effective transition to Redcliffe, and then onto primary school, the child will be at the heart of our transitional practice. Young children are experts in their own lives (Clark and Moss, 2011) and have the right to be consulted on matters that affect them. By listening to children, practitioners can gain a better understanding of how best to support children during this period of change.

When children start with us at Redcliffe, we will follow the children's lead, working closely with their families to provide time and space for the child to feel secure in their new environment. Each individual child's transition into nursery will be different. Through home visits and discussions with both the child and their family, key people will gain a better understanding of the child and their interests to ensure they feel welcome and begin to develop a sense of belonging. We document this time through observations and will use learning diaries to aid settling during this period.

Transitioning from Blackbirds (under 3s) into Seagulls (Over 3s) is also a transition point that some children will experience during their time with us at Redcliffe. This shift in identity and change of learning environment is one that key people will support children in preparing for. This transition will take place either in the January or September after a child has turned three years old. Though the two rooms share the outdoor space and children may recognise practitioners from either room, there are still many changes the children have to navigate, including new expectations, higher child: adult ratios, a larger space and a higher number of peers. Key people will follow the same practice as described above to ensure this period of change is successful for children and their families.

During the summer term, key people will begin to prepare the children for their transition to primary school by facilitating open discussions with children about their new school, the transition and any concerns they may have. Practitioners will listen to children's advice and follow any enquires they may have about starting school.

*"I am most excited about playing and running with my friends.
I'm excited about going to school but I don't want to wear a uniform"*

*"I feel a bit nervous because I've never been to big school before"
"I'm worried about hurting myself. Also, that people won't play with me."*

Positive communication and collaboration between nursery and primary schools is essential to ensuring a successful transition. The transition lead and SENCO aim to build professional relationships with local primary schools, to ensure information is effectively communicated and children's voices are heard. As a nursery, we will work closely with parents/carers during this time, recognising the emotional impact this transition can have on families.

Professional Development

Research and Reflective practice are the cornerstones of our teaching and learning. This is necessary for our ongoing development and to sustain improvements in our teaching and learning. Continual dialogue with all staff and our professional development days give opportunity for staff to share good practice and reflect on ways for improvement. Staff update their practice by reading research papers, doing further professional qualifications and through attending courses and conferences outside the Nursery (See professional development policy).