



## EYFS Curriculum Policy

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**Next review date:** June 2022

**Reviewer's Signature:** 

**Headteacher's Signature:** 

**Circulation:** This policy has been adopted by the governors, is addressed to all members of staff and volunteers, is available to parents on request. It applies wherever staff or volunteers are working with pupils.

Please note: 'School' refers to The Minors Nursery School; 'parents' refers to parents, guardians and carers.

## **Purpose of the Policy**

To outline the school's approach to delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.

## **The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and accompanying non-statutory guidance**

### Statutory Framework

The school will at all times adhere to the contents of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, linked here: PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS IS THE CURRENT GUIDANCE, APPLICABLE UNTIL 31/08 2021. THE FINAL VERSION OF THIS POLICY WILL LINK THE NEW GUIDANCE WHICH IS APPLICABLE FROM SEPTEMBER 2021

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/596629/EYFS\\_STATUTORY\\_FRAMEWORK\\_2017.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/596629/EYFS_STATUTORY_FRAMEWORK_2017.pdf)

### Non-statutory guidance

In delivering the curriculum, the school's approach will also be significantly informed by the following non statutory curriculum guidance documents:

- Development Matters (2021). This guidance outlines the seven areas of curriculum covered at the Minors. It forms a framework and provides checkpoints and is by no means an exhaustive curriculum document. Further detail and depth across all areas are planned for by the teaching teams depending on the needs and interests of the children.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/971620/Development\\_Matters.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/971620/Development_Matters.pdf)

- Birth to 5 Matters (2021): <https://www.birthto5matters.org.uk/>

## **Intent**

### **School Statement of Intent**

At The Minors Nursery School we aim to foster a love of learning in a happy, caring and secure environment for children, where they can make the best possible progress through a careful balance of child initiated and adult led learning. During their time at The Minors, the child's individual needs and interests are paramount and their educational experience is tailored to their needs by adults who know them exceptionally well.

## **School readiness and the importance of the Prime Areas of Learning**

We want children to leave The Minors as happy, confident, resilient individuals who can think creatively and show genuine curiosity and love of learning. To this end, it is our responsibility to ensure that robust foundations are laid across the seven areas of learning. A crucial element of this is ensuring that children are presented with 'the right activity at the right time' so that a balance is struck between building the child's confidence and also providing the appropriate level of challenge.

### The Prime Areas of learning

One of the most significant indicators of achievement in later stages of a child's education is how well children were doing in the Prime Areas of learning during their time in Early Years education. Once children have moved on from the Early Years curriculum, there is far less opportunity for schools to explicitly focus on the Prime Areas and therefore it is imperative that the correct foundations are laid down in the Prime Areas during the children's time with us.

The focus during children's first year at The Minors (in the Little Stars class) should lean heavily towards the Prime Areas of learning. Practitioners should not be tempted to move their focus towards the Specific Areas at the expense of securing maximum progress and depth across all three Prime Areas. The Specific Areas can certainly be incorporated into the learning and absolutely should wherever they represent the child's interests but a strong focus on the Prime Areas should be maintained at the heart of children's experiences so that children gain the solid foundations which will enable them to excel when they enter the Big Stars year and subsequent stages of their education.

In the Big Stars year, the curriculum focus broadens to encompass all seven areas of learning, both Prime and Specific, but progress in the Prime Areas must still continue to be promoted through the activities on offer. Children's' interests should drive the subject matter of the learning as much as possible across all seven areas of the curriculum and across children's time at The Minors.

## **Implementation**

This section of the policy relates to what we put into place to ensure that the aims outlined in our School Statement of Intent are achieved and that children make as much progress as possible through the curriculum provided for them.

### **The Key Person system**

Every child at The Minors is allocated a Key person who is responsible for

- knowing all of the children in their group exceptionally well
- Being aware of the children's individual needs, next steps, interests and dispositions
- Being the first line of contact with parents and communicating with parents about their child's education and wellbeing

- Completing all necessary record keeping relating to their Key Children
- Informing other staff members of any information pertaining to the child's needs and interests
- Actively contributing to class planning meetings so that the needs of their Key Children are factored into the environment and the activities on offer.

## **Pedagogy: A blended, balanced, reflective and child-centred approach**

At The Minors we take a blended approach, drawing elements of practice from a repertoire of different approaches including the Reggio Emilia approach, the Montessori approach, and elements of traditional British nursery school routines.

Teaching staff should at all times reflect on what is being provided for the children, how the children respond to what is provided, and what this means for the child's next steps moving forward. Children's interests are paramount, as is the provision of the right amount of challenge at the right time. Activities should factor in elements which the child is already capable of so that their confidence is bolstered and they develop a growth mindset and 'can do' attitude to learning, but they must also contain elements which provide the correct level of genuine challenge so that the child moves on in their learning and development.

### The balance between child initiated and adult led learning

It is important that the correct balance between adult led and child initiated learning is achieved and, as children progress through their early years, more adult led learning becomes appropriate. We also recognise that there are elements of a child's learning and progression that will require adult input particularly in, for example, maths.

During their time at The Minors, we aim to gradually build up the amount of more structured adult-led learning so that this closely matches the children's developmental needs. Across their time with us, the amount of structure is built up gradually and imperceptibly to the child, however child initiated play always remains a very significant part of the day, even during children's final terms with us.

## **The Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning (CoETL)**

The Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning (CoETL) are highly important in helping practitioners to understand **how** a child learns and provide them with learning experiences which will motivate and challenge them.

The CoETL are kept in mind by practitioners when interacting with children, when planning for their next steps and when assessing their progress. The CoETL are assessed on a regular basis alongside the seven areas of learning and children's wellbeing and involvement.

## **Self-regulation**

Throughout their time at The Minors, we broaden children's emotional vocabulary, supporting them to develop an understanding of a wider range of emotions over time, so that they are better able to accurately identify the emotions they are feeling as and when they arise. This happens through:

- Staff modelling (e.g. staff 'thinking aloud' in relation to emotions "oh no, the music player isn't working. This is a little bit frustrating for me. I'll try again and if it still doesn't work then I'll go and ask someone to help me")
- direct teaching, such as a circle time, adult directed activity or group time which explicitly relates to emotions
- supporting children in the moment, as and when emotions arise in them. Staff acknowledge the feeling the child seems to be going through "I can see that you're feeling quite angry now. Let's take some deep breaths together to help you to calm down. Now let's think about where we can put the rest of that anger. Maybe we could go and kick a football or jump up and down outside or sit quietly together for a story. What do you think would help?"

"Name it to tame it" - In tandem with supporting children's understanding of emotions and ability to identify them, we teach children strategies to enable them to cope with the emotions they are feeling. The aim is for children, over time, to be able to identify the emotion they are experiencing (name it) and then draw upon strategies to help them work through it (tame it).

## **Wellbeing (including oral health)**

At The Minors we want children to feel happy, comfortable and at ease, and recognise that in order to learn effectively and progress well, children's wellbeing and involvement must first be in place. Children's wellbeing and involvement are kept at the forefront of practitioner's minds at all times and practitioners must always respond to children in ways which will best promote the individual child's wellbeing and involvement.

We track children's wellbeing and involvement using the Leuven Scales and where practitioners see that a child's wellbeing and/or involvement is manifesting as 'low' more than occasionally then extra support should be put in place for that child and a conversation with the parents should be arranged as soon as possible.

## **Equality and representation**

At The Minors we are committed to making sure that every child is included, involved, valued and seen regardless of their background or personal characteristics. It is imperative that equality of opportunity is reflected in and runs throughout all that we do. The nursery school is committed to anti discriminatory practice, equality of opportunity and to valuing diversity in our children, families and staff.

More information can be found in our Equal Opportunities and Inclusion Policy but, in the context of our Curriculum Policy, it is important to note that all learning resources, books and teaching must reflect, include and involve a diverse range of individuals

and families, and every child should be able to feel seen and represented in the resources and books they see around them. Books and learning resources shared with children should represent a wide range of people in a wide range of roles and all resources must be free from stereotypes. Any stereotyping seen or heard must be challenged.

It is important that all children know that all resources in the nursery are for them and practitioners should encourage children to follow their own lines of interest, being mindful of not allowing any unconscious bias colour their responses to children at any time. All staff must be mindful of any unconscious bias and ensure that this does not flow into their practice at any point.

## **The 'plan, provide, assess' cycle**

We recognise that the assessment of children is never an end point, but instead an ongoing process through which practitioners ascertain which learning experiences a child should be provided with next in order to help them make the best possible progress.

Practitioners **PLAN** experiences based upon children's' developmental needs and interests. They then **PROVIDE** the appropriate learning experience. Based upon their observations and reflections during and after the learning experience they **ASSESS** and then the cycle begins again, with new learning experiences being planned based upon the most recent assessments and reflections.

Assessment takes place through observation and interaction with the child. No formalised assessment of children should take place and children should never have any awareness or feeling that they are being 'tested' or assessed.

## **An Enabling Learning Environment**

At The Minors we recognise the crucial role of the classroom environment in promoting children's progress. We are therefore committed to providing:

- A stimulating but calm environment, which is carefully thought out, avoids 'sensory overload' and enables children to make their own independent choices and develop their own lines of enquiry

- Open ended, attractive resources which stimulate children's innate curiosity

- Areas of the classroom which remain consistent so that children have opportunities to revisit and embed their learning, known as areas of 'Continuous Provision'. These are carefully planned to provide challenge for all children and are supplemented by new and fresh experiences day to day or week to week, planned according to children's specific interests and needs.

- An environment that is continually reviewed and adapted to children's needs so that it promotes progress as much as it possibly can.

## **Breadth and depth**

Our aim is to achieve a breadth and depth of curriculum which enables the child to truly progress, to develop their thinking skills and to consolidate their learning.

The curriculum guidance documents (Development Matters, Birth to 5 Matters and our in-school resources) are to be viewed as guidance only. They should be viewed as the 'skeleton' of the curriculum, with the bulk of the learning experiences that children have being planned by practitioners based upon children's needs and interests over time.

The curriculum statements and checkpoints should not be used as an exhaustive 'tick list' of targets and the curriculum should not be narrowed towards or led by the checkpoints. These are checkpoints only, and practitioners are empowered to, as a collaborative team, create a curriculum that best suits the needs and interests of the cohort of children in front of them. We are aiming for a breadth and depth of curriculum; in 'hitting the target' (i.e. ticking off a statement) we mustn't be 'missing the point' - the point being to empower children to truly progress in their learning. If, in order to progress, a child needs to work on a developmental skill which is not mentioned in the curriculum guidance, this skill should be covered so that the child's learning can move forward.

## **The child's voice: listening to the child and the importance of conversations and the importance of feedback**

*The importance of conversations with children, interactions with children and of listening to children cannot be overstated.*

In listening to children, we gain highly valuable insight into their thinking about their own learning. This insight helps us to know the children increasingly well and provide activities which will enthuse and challenge them. Practitioners should be attuned to and aware of when and how to interact and when to 'step back' and observe the child. Wherever it is appropriate and beneficial to interact, every possible opportunity should be taken to engage with children in their learning and play and to engage in sustained, shared thinking. By interacting and joining children in their play we impact significantly on their learning and progress both 'in the moment' and also subsequently, through the insight these interactions give us in relation to our planning and provision.

### Feedback

Research shows that feedback is one of the most effective ways we can help children of all ages to progress in their learning and extend their thinking. Feedback in the context of Early Years is best given in an informal way, through speaking with the child. Feedback could be a simple provocation given during play by, for example, a

practitioner saying to a child 'but I wonder what would happen if we used these blocks like this instead?' or 'I like the way you just kept trying even though it was difficult and decided to swap the containers when you realised you needed a bigger one'. Feedback can also be very effectively provided to children in the context of child conferencing with them (more on this in the relevant section below).

Feedback can take the form of a provocation to consider a different way of trying something or a comment on what a child did well. Practitioners should always be specific in their praise (e.g. 'Your tower is so tall! Wow!' Rather than 'well done, what a fantastic tower') and encourage a growth mindset by praising effort and the CoEL.

## **Awe and wonder and Cultural Capital**

### Awe and wonder

When planning learning experiences for children, consideration should be given to the provocation of 'awe and wonder', harnessing children's innate curiosity and their uniquely powerful ability to learn from their experiences. Moments of awe and wonder are those 'magic moments' that captivate children, provoking excitement and deep concentration and leading to deep engagement. Whilst 'awe and wonder' may result from a 'wow' type activity set up and orchestrated by an adult, we should also bear in mind that many very everyday things that we as adults see as quite mundane may be the subject of deep fascination to children. As such, we need to respect the child's interests and allow them the time and freedom to explore whatever it is that provokes awe and wonder in them as an individual.

### Cultural capital

When planning for learning experiences, we should bear in mind how to increase children's cultural capital. For children in our specific school context, cultural capital can often be built up through exposure to the wider community that they perhaps do not always have chance to engage with. Trips to the Post Office, local market stalls in Notting Hill or visits from the firefighters, for example, can be of huge benefit in helping children to broaden their view of the culture that is all around them, as can sessions delivered by parents and community members about the rich and diverse range of cultures that form our school community. Children should also be exposed, whilst they are with us, to diverse stories, music and art created by a diverse range of different people. At the heart of our approach to cultural capital is the idea that every child and their context is unique and therefore any planning relating to cultural capital should reflect this.

## **ICT**

ICT should be used only where it is of practical use and helps to connect the child with the wider world around them. Examples of this would be the use of stop motion and green screen technology to engage in creative storytelling, the use of Zoom to connect with others who cannot be physically present in school and the use of USB microscopes so that children can look closely at and explore elements of nature.

The use of apps which do not allow for a practical element to learning and result in children sitting and simply interacting with the screen are strongly discouraged.

## **Parents and carers as partners**

We are committed to supporting parents to help support their child's learning at home and we recognise that a close working relationship between home and school is hugely beneficial to the child. We hold regular parent events and meetings to support parents in understanding how young children learn and alongside these, provide parent materials and information about children's individual next steps.

In order to help parents gain a regular insight into their child's learning we hold weekly 'stay and play sessions' wherein parents can spend time in the classroom, looking at their child's Special Book, reading or playing with their child and simply experiencing and getting involved in 'classroom life'. Where someone other than the child's named parent (e.g. a nanny, uncle etc) would like to attend a stay and play session, express permission must be given by the parent. Parents are also invited to deliver story sessions or sessions relating to, for example, their culture, home country or occupation and these sessions are very highly valued by all involved.

We have an 'open door' policy when it comes to speaking with parents and they may email or request a conversation with their child's Key Person as and when they wish to.

## **Paperwork and Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time**

Paperwork and record keeping should be limited to that which will provide genuine benefit to the children. Paperwork should not impact unnecessarily on practitioner's contact time with the children.

SLT will determine the appropriate amount of PPA to be allocated to practitioners and the decision will be a fair one, which takes into account how much time is needed by practitioners to carry out the necessary tasks to the expected Gold Standard. PPA time given will be allocated consistently across practitioners, unless their role would dictate otherwise (for example, a part time practitioner would receive PPA commensurate with the hours they work and the number of Key Children allocated to them).

### Child conferencing

Children's 'Special Books' are completed as a joint effort between child and practitioner during 'child conferencing' time which is set aside for all practitioners on a weekly basis. Through the process of child conferencing, children gain ownership of the books and are able to engage in thinking about their own learning over time.

The child and Key Person together stick into the Special Book photographs, samples of children's learning and observations. Whilst doing so, the Key Person engages in conversation with the child and hears, for the child's perspective, what they thought about their own learning shown in the image or sample. The Key Person records the child's voice verbatim so that the Special Books become a powerful document relating to the child's own personalised learning journey. Child conferencing also provides a prime opportunity for the Key Person to give feedback to the child, thereby helping

them to progress and think about their learning in ways they may not have previously considered.

## **Staff Development (CPD)**

At The Minors Nursery School, we are highly committed to the ongoing professional development of all staff members. Each member of staff has a termly supervision meeting with the Headteacher, during which opportunity is given for a discussion of any current training needs and wishes. When allocating training to staff, the needs of the school as determined by SLT, are taken into account along with any training needs raised by staff members.

## **Impact**

Practice and the impact of practice must be continually subject to reflection to ensure that we continue to provide the very best standard of education and care for the children. All members of the teaching team have a responsibility to continually reflect upon what is working well for the children and what could be made even better. Where things are working particularly well or could be improved, practitioners should speak to their Class Leader and Class Leaders should refer to SLT to discuss any and agree any changes to be made. This process also enables SLT to consider whether any changes being made in a class would be of benefit if implemented across the whole school.

## **Assessment & Record Keeping**

### **The Early Excellence Assessment Tracker (EExAT)**

EExAT is a secure online tracking system, closely linked to the curriculum and used by practitioners and SLT to carefully monitor the progress of individual children over time.

### **Assessment**

Children's progress across all seven areas of learning is regularly monitored and kept track of using the Early Excellence Assessment Tracker. Key People complete the tracker using their practitioner knowledge and any evidence collected in the child's Special Book. Assessment is an ongoing process and allows practitioners to keep track of where a child is, which learning experiences would benefit them next and in which areas, if any, a child may need either additional support or additional stretch and extension.

Assessments must always be based upon what a child can do independently and consistently and, when assessing, practitioners should bear in mind accuracy above all else and, for example, not be tempted to be 'cautious' or 'generous' where a child is working above or below their current age related expectation.

Assessments are discussed by SLT and Key People during Pupil Progress meetings as part of the conversation about each child.

### **Pupil Progress Meetings**

Each term, SLT will meet with each Key Person for a Pupil Progress Meeting. The meetings centre around a discussion of each individual child's progress, focusing on the child as an individual, their learning and progress and their next steps.

### **Special Books**

Each child has a 'Special Book' in which they and their Key Person create together. The book contains written observations, physical samples of the child's learning (for example, pictures created by the child), annotated photographs and input from parents, families and, most importantly, the child's own voice.

The intention is that each item placed into the book captures a moment of real progress for the child, so that the book comes to reflect the child's own individual learning journey and voice across each year that they spend with us. Each child's book therefore highly individualised and reflects their own interests and unique learning journey.

### **Written Reports**

During the Little Stars year, the Two Year Integrated Review is completed for each child in the Autumn Term (later for January starters), highlighting their progress in the Prime Areas. A further progress report is written for every child in the summer term, which details their progress in all seven areas of learning. These reports are sent out to parents and discussed with them, and parents also have the opportunity to add their own written comments to these reports.

During the Big Stars year, parents again receive two written reports, one in the autumn term and one in the summer term, with both of these detailing their child's progress in all seven areas of learning.