

# St Pauls Nursery School & Children's Centre

## Teaching & Learning Policy



### Rationale:

At St Pauls, learning in the early years is celebrated and promoted as a profoundly important stage of a child's life when vital emotional, social, physical and intellectual development takes place.

We believe that from birth, children are strong, competent, motivated and confident learners who explore and test their ideas, solve problems and try to make sense of their world. We recognise that learning needs to be first hand, experiential and active; it should promote children's independence and autonomy, encouraging them to take responsibility for their own learning – initiating and making decisions. Learning needs to take place in the social context and we believe 'talk' is central to the learning process. We also understand that learning cannot take place unless children's emotional needs are met and they feel safe to take risks.

We believe that parents/ carers are the first and most enduring educator who has the most impact on their child's life and education. Therefore, we work in partnership with parents to seek their perspective of their child to inform planning a meaningful and purposeful curriculum based on the interests and strengths of their children.

We value the process of learning utmost and understand that young children have the right to communicate and explore their learning in many different ways.

Above all we believe that learning is 'learnable', and strive to support children to develop specific learning capacities which will enable them to be effective lifelong learners.

Learning happens best when it exercises and challenges the learner's capacities as they emerge at a given developmental level; when it encourages them to develop talents. Young children need time and space to become resilient lifelong learners.

### Aims and Intentions

In response to the Early Years foundation stage we have drafted our curriculum goals for children –our intentions for their experience at nursery in all 7 areas of learning.

**Though effective learning and teaching opportunities our intent is to ensure that all children are enabled to:**

- Feel valued as an individual
- Show enthusiasm and confidence with high self-esteem and self-worth
- Be independent, curious, creative and resilient learners, researching the world around them, following their own fascinations
- Be courageous and take risks, challenging themselves and each other
- Know they have a voice, feel heard and that they can make a difference
- Be able to identify and communicate their own needs and feelings
- Be empowered to meet their own needs
- Respect themselves, each other, their communities and environment
- Feel safe and secure and have a sense of belonging and strong attachments
- Establish effective and supportive relationships and be able to work collaboratively
- Know themselves as a learner, leading and co constructing learning experiences in a meaningful way to develop mastery

- Have high aspirations, build on their previous best and excel in whatever they choose to do

### Guidelines and Implementation

We use the following implementation strategies to support the children in developing all of the above:

#### **Our Practitioners will:**

- Have a firm understanding of child development and an awareness of age appropriate needs, behaviour and learning
- Ensure the role of the Key Person is embedded to support strong attachment and containment
- Be attuned to individualised feelings, needs, fascination and lines of enquiry
- Be attentive to any patterns of play that may be emerging or reflecting an emotional need
- Encourage children to communicate in a variety of ways and value 1<sup>st</sup> language and cultural heritage
- Develop and deliver a curriculum that is personalised, progressive, challenging but achievable
- Be responsible for assessing children's development against agreed mile stones
- Ensure quality interactions which scaffold and prompt thinking, building on children's interests, strengths and questions
- Encourage and support children's interactions with other children and adults.
- Model feelings, learning characteristics and researchful learning
- Model language of learning and exploration of emotional well- being
- Be attentive to the 4 principles of Assessment for Learning: learning intentions, feedback, questioning and self-evaluation/challenge
- Support children to become mastery learners- to ask questions, take and evaluate risks, develop resilience and have ownership for their learning
- Ensure the environment is safe, calm, purposeful, challenging and supportive.
- Provide inspiring learning experiences and provocations in which children can become the leaders
- Maintain 'practice' leadership ensuring authentic connection with daily practice

#### **Our enabling emotional and physical environment will:**

- Provide a daily routine that is structured to include time for personal exploration, small and large group sessions and social experiences.
- Ensure time for children to repeat, revisit and reflect on their previous experiences, which includes a long, uninterrupted 'explore time' during which children can really 'get lost' in their learning
- Be consistent, thus ensuring children feel secure and are able to operate independently.
- Offer elements that are varied, and enriching experiences which maintain and stimulate children's attention and learning.
- Ensure children are emotionally contained in a small consistent group – with their home base supported with pictures displayed of their families or other significant people
- Ensure boundaries are clear and consistent across the setting
- Enable children to be empowered to manage their feelings, keep themselves safe and resolve conflicts using the Conflict/Resolution steps alongside emotionally literate adults.
- Ensure children have continual, free flow access an environment both inside and outside at all times
- Ensure planning is informed by children's interests, their learning styles and preferred ways of communication
- Resources are easily accessible, plentiful, well maintained and organised and appropriate – with an emphasis on open ended exploration and collaborative learning

## **Developing Learning Power**

We believe that children can become confident lifelong learners if equipped with the appropriate skills, attitudes and capacities for learning from an early age. Children need to become Resilient, Resourceful, Reflective and Reciprocal Learners (Claxton). In order to develop these appropriate attitudes we:

- Enable children to initiate and carry out their own activities and make independent choices and decisions
- Encourage children to find, use and replace equipment and resources independently (in an organised, labelled and accessible learning environment).
- Encourage the children to make plans, modify plans, review and reflect on their own learning.
- Set challenges for children and support them through the process of problem solving.
- Model and use the language of learning with both children and adults alike
- Use and encourage use of open ended and challenging questioning techniques
- Model 'being stuck' and learning from mistakes
- Using consistent strategies for what to do if you get stuck!
- Encourage collaboration
- Enable children to see each other as tools for learning as well as the teaching staff
- Developing noticing skills
- Encourage absorption, and an awareness of distractions
- Plan for varied imaginative play situations
- Encouraging children to make connections from their experiences and explore possibilities.

This goes beyond the effective characteristics of learning identified in the EYFS.

## **Parents in Partnership:**

Parents and carers are fundamental in their children's development and learning therefore we actively seek to learn from them and share with them in all aspects of their child's learning.

We foster this relationship through:

- An ethos of openness and honesty, that encourages parents /carers to share their knowledge, understanding, hopes and concerns with us
- Opportunities to listen to and value personal histories
- An open learning community – sharing and celebrating ALL our learning
- An open door policy – all parents can join us at any point (pandemics permitting)
- Opportunities for parents/child/practitioner to co-construct learning priorities and document children's learning and interests
- Invitations to join nursery and contribute to assessments for children's spotlight months
- Up to date communication through website, texts, newsletters, noticeboards, displays etc and consultation
- Ensuring access and removing barriers to engagement
- Operating a key person system, which supports authentic and meaningful relationships
- Home-visiting
- Signposting and connecting to 1:1 support, workshops and training opportunities through an empowerment model

## **Curriculum:**

We believe that every child has the right to a well-planned and meaningful curriculum that will provide them with the tools needed to succeed throughout their lives, regardless of culture, social class, gender, physical and cognitive capabilities and beliefs.

We prioritise our support for personal, social, and emotional development, communication and language in all we do.

Our St Pauls curriculum has been developed to include all the things we want our children to know, do and experience whilst at nursery. It is broad, balanced and sequential and is matched to children's developmental stages.

Our curriculum goals inform our direction of travel. However, children learn and develop at different rates, they bring with them different funds of knowledge and life experiences and have individual needs. Because of this, the curriculum delivery is both responsive and personalise, informed by:

- What each child brings
- What excites and fascinated them
- Their own lines of enquiry

We support and challenges the children in their learning through:

- High quality interactions and scaffolding
- Planned provocations
- Small or large group adult led experiences

### **Assessment and Planning:**

We are committed to narrowing the gap, ensuring that no child underachieves, especially those from identified underperforming or underrepresented groups and those living in poverty.

Regular monitoring and evaluation of children's progress enables us to continually adjust our provision in response to any areas of underachievement that may be identified.

Our planning contributes to children reaching their developmental mile stones, our curriculum goals and the educational programmes as defined in the statutory frame work for the EYFS 2021.

Assessment is a fundamental part of the planning process. To help us decide what to provide we observe children in their play in a range of situations. "On-going assessment is in integral part of the learning and development process' (Revised EYFS 2021 p.18)

We respond to the development and learning of each child by planning a range of experiences which support all 7 educational programmes, and the Characteristics of Effective Learning.

Diversity and inclusion are our priority and therefore we differentiate our planning and provision to ensure every child can access the learning experiences at their stage of development. No child is excluded from activities.

### **Long Term Planning:**

- Our School and Centre Improvement Plan (CIP) and curriculum goals support our long term planning
- We have a range of policies for learning and teaching including; Inclusion and SEN, Transition, Parent Partnership
- We have developed quality criteria for adult interactions and an enabling environment which inform our practice development
- We plan for continuous provision inside and outside.

### **Mid Term Planning:**

- Bi annual cohort tracking groups of children informs the termly plan with possible learning foci which will meet the needs of the children
- Plans are informed by contributions from the parents, practitioners and the children to ensure learning experiences are drawn from the interests of the children
- Plans are evaluated to ensure breadth and challenge
- Longer term plans, provocations or research projects can be resourced for optimum learning, and will be planned to engage children, parental and practitioners and may involve the work of our artist

### **Weekly/Daily Responsive Planning:**

- Staff hold daily evaluation meetings which enables them to reflect on children's self-initiated learning, interests and possible lines of enquiry etc, this informs the provision plan for the next day
- Daily adult led 'group times' ensure that every child accesses a broad and balanced curriculum across the Prime and Specific areas of learning
- Group and individual interests may be identified which may develop focus plans to extend across a week

### **Assessment tools**

We use a range of assessment tools to assess children's development and progress:

For all children:

- OPAL
- 2 year check
- The Accounting Early for Life Long Learning Programme (AcE) Domains to assess: The Characteristics of Effective Learning, Attitudes and Dispositions to Learn, Social Competence and Self Concept and Emotional Well Being

For those children needing further support:

- Bristol Every Child a Talker (BECAT) to identify children who need additional support with: Listening, Understanding, Social and Expressive language development.
- Laevers Levels of Involvement and Well Being
- BELL
- DEYO

All our teaching is based on our knowledge of the children's current learning, interests and developmental stage. This knowledge is gathered and continually updated through a variety of on-going assessments, which take the form of:

- Daily observations/scrapbooks/learning stories
- OPAL spotlight months
- OPAL spotlight meetings/reviews with parents
- Video, photo documentation
- Work samples

Following an in house research project that supported staff to deepen their understanding of young children's patterns of play in a way which enables them to hold the child as leader in all our learning St Pauls Nursery School & Children's Centre have developed their own

### **Reflective Planning Wheel.**

This leads practitioners through the continuous cycle of reflecting on : **context, assumptions, questions, distilling of learning and challenge.** ( See Wheel)

Each teaching team uses whiteboards to document their 'wonderings' about children's learning, or how they have responded to new provocations. This informs both planning and shifts in practice.

Agreed December 2021

Review December 2022

**Documentation Links:**

- Reflective Planning Wheel
- Planning & Assessment Cycle
- Policy for Key Person
- Inclusion and SEN
- Transition
- Vision and values
- Staff Handbook