



Early Years Curriculum: Our Approach to Learning, Development and Teaching

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Introduction

Learning starts at birth and continues throughout life:

"Any subject can be taught to any child at almost any age in some form which is true and useful..." [Brunner 1977]. For young children learning [and life] is not compartmentalised into subject areas, everything is linked.

Research highlights the importance of the early years of life. A high percentage of children's learning takes place during these years. This is the time when attitudes are shaped, first relationships formed, concepts developed and the foundations for later learning made [Evangelou et al 2009].

Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults.

Our approach uses cross-curricular themes with the teachers and early years' educators being aware of the areas of learning and related subjects that offers a wealth of experiences which encourages children to be enthused about their own learning. Using this knowledge, we extend the child's learning and ensure that each child has access to a rich range of opportunities for learning and development.

Our Aim

Our aim is to support the learning and development of each child by providing an integrated, balanced, broad, stimulating and differentiated curriculum. To achieve this we work in partnership with parents, carers and children and as a multi-disciplinary team. We aim to provide a secure learning environment, which enables all children to be:

- respectful of themselves and others
- happy and confident
- independent and sociable
- compassionate and caring
- tolerant and patient
- curious and creative
- appreciative and appreciated

Areas of Learning and Development

The areas of learning and development outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage [EYFS] statutory framework provides a structure for the planning and analysis of our curriculum for the early years.

While all the areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected, three are seen as particularly important as they stimulate curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and the capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. These three areas, the *prime areas of learning*, are the essential foundations for children's life,

learning and success and develop through the interaction of children's innate developmental patterns with experiences. (Tickell 2012:95).

The prime areas are:-

- **Personal, social and emotional development**-Self-confidence and Self-awareness, Managing feelings and Behaviour and Making relationships
- **Communication and Language**- Listening and Attention and Understanding and Speaking
- **Physical development** – Moving and Handling and Health and Self care

The other four areas are called the *specific areas of learning*, and are the areas in which learning developed through the prime areas are applied. They are influenced by the times we live in and society's beliefs about what is important for children to learn (Tickell 2012:96).

The specific areas are:-

- **Literacy** – Reading and Writing
- **Mathematics** – Numbers and Shape, Space, and Measures
- **Understanding of the world** – People and Communities, The World and Technology
- **Expressive arts and design** – Exploring and Using media and materials and Being imaginative

In our curriculum statement we explain how we promote learning and development in each area. Our approach is informed by the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning:

- **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; and
- **Creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

We also use the Leuven scales as a means of assessing and providing experiences that supports the positive wellbeing and involvement of children as they learn through play.

Learning Behaviours

These are intentionally taught and modelled so that they will stand each child in good stead for their future. These behaviours focuses on the ability to actively listen, take turns, learn appropriate behaviour for all contexts, take risks, understand failure, adopt a growth mindset, follow direct instructions, show respect to self, others and the environment.

Early Excellence

At Campsbourne, we follow the Early Excellence approach and baseline assessment for nursery and reception children. The progression and development of all the children is monitored and recorded regularly. Observations of learning, summative assessments, regular moderation of children's work is recorded, then analysed to reflect on the progress made and follow up needs identified.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Personal, social and emotional development is about understanding, respecting and valuing others and ourselves. It helps us to develop a sense of self, positive self-esteem and confidence.

Aspects of Personal, Social and Emotional Development:-

- ***Self-confidence and Self-awareness*** is about children having a sense of their own value and understanding the need for sensitivity to significant events in their own and other people's lives.
- ***Managing feelings and Behaviour*** is about how children develop a growing understanding of what is right and wrong and why, together with learning about the impact of their words and actions on themselves and others.
- ***Making Relationships*** - is about the importance of children forming good relationships with others and working alongside others companionably.

In our school's behaviour policy, children are encouraged to show respect for themselves and others. Our expectations of the children's behaviour are based on this premise. (See appendix 1 for further examples)

Communication and language

Communication and language helps us explore and express our needs, feelings, ideas and thoughts and helps us to understand those of others. An inability to do this isolates us. Through language we can move from the here and now to the past, the future and alternative worlds.

Aspects of Communication and Language:-

- ***Listening and Attention*** is about how children become communicators. Learning to listen and speak emerges out of non-verbal communication, which includes facial expression, eye contact and hand gesture. These skills develop as children interact with others, listen to and use language, extend their vocabulary and experience stories, songs, poems and rhymes.
- ***Understanding and Speaking*** is about how children learn to use language to imagine and recreate roles and experiences and how they use talk to clarify their thinking and ideas or to refer on events they have observed or are curious about.

(See appendix 2 for further examples)

Physical Development

Physical development is about developing awareness of our bodies and learning to use our bodies in a positive and confident way. It is about encouraging progress in gross and fine motor, co-ordination, and awareness of space and learning about healthy living. Physical development is also concerned with how and why bodies move.

Aspects of Physical Development

- ***Moving and Handling*** is about how children learn to move with confidence, imagination and safety, with an awareness of space, themselves and others and use a range of small and large equipment.
- ***Health and Self care*** is about how children learn the importance of keeping healthy and the factors that contribute to maintaining their health. (See appendix 3 for further examples)

Literacy

Through writing children are able to record and keep their thoughts and ideas and share them with others. Reading enables us to find out more about other peoples thoughts, ideas and views and deepen our understanding of the world around us. Literacy is about understanding the correspondence between spoken and written sounds and learning to link sounds and letters. We encourage a love of stories and reading – fiction and non fiction, prose and verse.

Aspects of Literacy

- ***Reading*** is about children understanding and enjoying stories, books and rhymes, recognising that print carries meaning, both fiction and fact, and reading a range of familiar words and simple sentences.
- ***Writing*** is about how children build an understanding of the relationship between the spoken and written word and how through making marks, drawing and personal writing children ascribe meaning to text and attempt to write for various purposes. It is about the ways in which children's random marks, lines and drawings develop and form the basis of recognisable letters, words and sentences which carry meaning. (See appendix 4 for further examples)

Mathematics

Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy is about making sense of the world through an understanding of similarity and difference, pattern and logic. We use mathematical ideas to analyse and communicate information and ideas and to tackle a range of practical tasks and real life problems. Mathematics is about developing an awareness of concepts, such as heavier / lighter, and mathematical

rules such as addition and subtraction. It helps us to solve problems relating to shape, position, and size and quantity.

Aspects of Mathematics

- **Numbers** is about how children gradually know and use numbers and counting in play, and eventually recognise and use numbers reliably, to develop mathematical ideas and to solve problems. Calculating - is about how children develop an awareness of the relationship between numbers and amounts and know that numbers can be combined to be 'added together' and can be separated by 'taking away' and that two or more amounts can be compared.
- **Shape, Space and Measures** is about how through talking about shapes and quantities, and developing appropriate vocabulary, children use their knowledge to develop ideas and to solve mathematical problems. (See appendix 5 for further examples)

Understanding the World

Understanding of the world helps us to develop our knowledge and understanding of our environment and other people, features of the natural and man made world.

Aspects of Knowledge and Understanding of the World

- **People and Communities** is about how children begin to know about their own and other people's cultures in order to understand and celebrate the similarities and differences between them in a diverse society. Children find out about past and present events relevant to their own lives or those of their families.
- **The world** - is about how children become aware of and interested in the natural world, and find out about their local area. Children investigate objects and materials and their properties, learn about change and patterns, similarities and differences, and question how and why things work.
- **Technology** - is about how children find out about and learn how to use appropriate information technology such as computers and programmable toys that support their learning. (See appendix 6 for further examples)

Expressive Arts and Design

Expressive art and design is a way of understanding the world through a variety of forms in which thoughts, perceptions and emotions are expressed through originality.

Creativity is part of all areas of learning. Art is a vehicle for self-expression and developing aesthetic awareness. We offer the children many opportunities to develop their ideas in a variety of media - painting, drawing, textiles, blocks, model making, clay etc.

Aspects of Expressive Arts and Design

- **Exploring and using media and materials** - is about children's independent and guided exploration of and engagement with a widening range of media and materials, finding out about, thinking about and working with colour, texture, shape, space and form in two and three dimensions. Children take part in independent and guided explorations of sound, movement and music. Focusing on how sounds can be made and changed and how sounds can be recognised and repeated from a pattern, it includes ways of exploring movement, matching movements to music and singing simple songs from memory. Children learn about the construction process and the tools and techniques that can be used to assemble materials creatively and safely.
- **Being imaginative** - is about how children use what they have learnt about media and materials in original ways, thinking about uses and purposes. They respond in a variety of ways to what they see, hear, smell, touch or feel and as a result of these encounters, they express and communicate their own ideas, thoughts and feelings. It is about how children are supported to develop and build their imaginations through stories, role-plays, imaginative play, dance, music, design and art. (See appendix 7 for further examples)

Inclusion/Equal Opportunities (Including SEND)

Children will be taught to respect the cultural differences and abilities of all the children and their families and to recognise feelings involving other people. When appropriate, advice and guidance will be sought from outside agencies and professionals to support individual children. No child will be excluded or disadvantaged because of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, special educational needs, disability, gender or ability. The teachers differentiate the learning opportunities to meet the abilities and aptitudes of the children, offering support and extension work as required. In the case of children with special needs, reference must be made to the SEND Policy. The SENDCO is Morgan Currie (Deputy Head), who manages all SEND queries and potential concerns.

All children are given equal access to, and are encouraged to participate in all curriculum activities.

Continuity with the next phase

The following table shows how the areas of learning and experience relate to National Curriculum subjects.

EYFS areas of learning	National Curriculum
Personal social and emotional development	PSHE
Communication and language	English
Physical development	Physical education
Mathematics	Mathematics

Literacy	English
Expressive arts and design	Art and Music
Understanding of the world	History and Geography Science and Technology

Appendix One - Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Personal, social and emotional development involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities.

Examples

We encourage children to develop their understanding of this area of learning through the following;

- The children are encouraged to develop their sense of self and relationships with the wider world. It is important that the children feel happy in the school and experience a sense of belonging. For example, using photos of the children engaged in different experiences to enhance self-esteem, developing portfolios/ big books celebrating the children's work and using the children's comments and assessment, developing relationships with the teacher and early years educators , celebrating birthdays, etc.
- The children are encouraged to develop the skills and attitudes [sharing, turn taking, caring for others, confidence] which they need to make successful relationships and to support and develop existing relationships with family and friends. We do this through using family walls and photos of the children around their class, bringing objects from home – especially during the settling period, sharing home experiences with school staff and children.
- We encourage self-discipline and support the children to develop strategies for self regulation. We ensure that the rules and expectations at school are expressed in a way that is understandable to the children and based on respect for themselves and others.
- Children are encouraged to negotiate and to talk through conflicts with the support of an adult and to make recompense if they are in the wrong. The staff act as appropriate role models for behaviour.
- Looking after animals and plants
- Reflecting cultural diversity in our choice of resources and books.
- Developing the children's awareness of the local and wider community through trips.

Appendix Two - Communication and Language

Communication and language development involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations.

Examples

We encourage children to develop their understanding of this area through the following;

- Creating an emotional environment that encourages communication by providing a supportive place where children feel secure and confident.
- Creating a physical environment to encourage communication e.g. organising furniture to create enclosed, cosy areas for conversation, using fabrics on the walls to absorb distracting background sound, using music etc as appropriate not as background sound.
- Organising the routine to leave plenty of time for unhurried interactions between adults and children and children and children to give children the opportunity to express and explore their experiences, feelings and ideas.
- Adults are spread around the space inside and out
- Being receptive and responsive to early vocalisation and gesture and encouraging the children to initiate and sustain conversation.
- Making sure children have time to respond and make their own comments or add information - being open to opportunities for conversation during routine times.
- Knowing when to offer an idea, when to ask a question and when to be silent!
- Ensuring that adults speak quietly and model the use of appropriate language which enhances children's vocabulary.
- Using pondering comments/speculations rather than questions and reflect back to the child what they have said
- Drawing on Sustained Shared Thinking Strategies and scaffolding techniques – ask genuine questions that involve more than *yes*, *no* or single word answers
- Developing vocabulary through meaningful contexts e.g. language for weighing through cooking activities, conversation language during role play...
- Support story telling with props
- Encouraging children to develop non-verbal forms of communication, for example signing, as appropriate.
- Working with parents and colleagues to understand the level of development when children's home language is not English and for advice on how to support their communication in their home language.
- Monitoring all children's acquisition of English to make sure they are getting the opportunities they need to communicate clearly, to ask for what they need, to take turns during conversations, to ask questions, to give explanations, to concentrate when others speak etc.
- Introducing children to drama developed from their imaginative play.
- Using songs and music to develop listening and discrimination skills.

Appendix Three - Physical Development

Physical development involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food.

Examples

We encourage children to develop their understanding of this area of learning through the following experiences;

- **Moving and Handling** – We provide plenty of access to space and equipment inside and out, so all children are able to develop their ability to move with confidence. At this age, children are developing rapidly and need opportunities to use their developing skills- bikes, climbing frame, etc to develop their large motor skills, co-ordination, agility and balance. Development of small motor skills, manipulation and hand-eye co-ordination is provided for in different areas [e.g. scissors in art, pencils in writing area/home corner/office, sewing, puzzles, etc], feeding, dressing and undressing themselves, learning skills such as putting on socks, pulling up pants, buttoning, zipping etc.
- **Health and self-care** - We support the children in becoming independent in their self-care (toileting, washing hands, etc). From an early age children are encouraged to begin to take a growing responsibility for their own self-care. Children able to help themselves [or with assistance] to coats, gloves, wellies etc. Children are encouraged to make healthy choices through the food options provided. Eating areas attractive and relaxing. There are opportunities for the children to cook /prepare a range of healthy foods. Fresh water and milk is always available and children are able to help themselves to fruit. The children's need to explore the world physically is matched with encouraging an awareness of Health and Safety.
- **Relationships and Sex Education** – We handle this area with sensitivity. Children's questions are answered truthfully and factually at the appropriate level, the information given matching their level of understanding. We do not treat relationships and sex education as a separate subject but rather answer children's questions as they occur [e.g. dressing and undressing, using the toilet and during a theme on babies, relationships – families, etc].

Appendix Four – Literacy

Literacy development involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children are given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems, and other written materials) to ignite their interest. Opportunities to read and write for a purpose are provided in all areas.

Examples

We encourage children to develop their understanding of this area of learning through the following experiences;

Reading

Children are read to and told stories and rhymes from a variety of cultures. There are daily opportunities to share books and talk about them.

- Each class has a collection of core books based on the children's favourite books.
- A range of non-fiction books – dictionaries, maps and atlases, local environment are available in relevant areas.
- Children are encouraged to retell well known stories (T4W) and rhymes, talk about books they know and recognise familiar words and letters in meaningful contexts [e.g. reading their own name, reading display labels, making their own books about their experiences]. These activities help them to understand that print conveys meaning.
- The variety of books we use reflect the children's experiences and extend their understanding of themselves and others. We also encourage the use of story props to develop understanding of the text and support concentration. We encourage them to be aware of the wide variety of languages that are part of the community we live in.
- We encourage children to develop their phonological awareness drawing on the strategies outlined in 'Letters and Sounds'. During their time at the school children learn how to distinguish between sounds and become familiar with rhyme, rhythm and alliteration. They are encouraged to read simple words and sentences by sounding out and blending.

Writing

- The children are given many opportunities to develop their mark making and writing skills, building on the experience they already have.
- We help them to understand that print conveys meaning, the difference between writing and drawing and to understand the conventions of the English script [that print moves from left to right across the page and from top to bottom, that lines of writing are divided into words, that words are divided into letters and that letters have a name and sound].
- Banks of simple words [sound mats, cvc, HFW, tricky words, etc] that the children may want to use in their writing are available
- We encourage and support the children's early mark making. Children are introduced to other scripts as appropriate and introduced to correct letter formation at the appropriate stage of development.
- Children are offered models of writing by the adults in the school through signs, notices, book making etc.
- They are encouraged to write simple words by using their phonics knowledge to identify the letter/s that matches the spoken sounds [encoding].

Appendix Five – Mathematics

Mathematics involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces, and measures.

Example

We encourage children to develop their understanding of this area of through the following:

- The intervention of knowledgeable adults who enjoy mathematics
- Using number lines around the school and in daily activities
- Building opportunities for number work into the daily routine e.g. counting children after the register, identifying the total number of children in the class and by subtracting the number present identifying how many are absent
- Organising home corner equipment, outside resources etc. to teaching sorting, ordering and counting.
- Participation in everyday experience of the school such as, measuring cooking ingredients, arranging furniture, etc.
- Using rhymes and games to promote mathematical concepts.
- Ensuring we have books that focus on mathematical concepts.
- Measuring materials for a task in art or construction.
- Practical experiments, such as filling and emptying containers with sand and water, experiences,
- Numbers for labelling, counting and calculating – learning number names and reciting correct number sequence [first rote then meaningful], number symbols [numerals] and number lines; counting- one to one correspondence [one number attached to item counted] and conservation of number , counting forwards, then backward, how many?- last number counted in a set signifies total number of items [cardinal number], one more, one less, addition and subtraction number. Rank order first, second, third [ordinal number] predicting next in sequence, generating own patterns; Fractions as part of the whole (half, one-fourth/quarter), estimating.
- Space, shape and measure – using everyday language to talk about weight, capacity, position, distance, time and money. recognition of 2-D and 3-D shapes, learning shape names ; language for measuring –; positional prepositions, comparative language [e.g. bigger/smaller, longer/shorter, higher/lower and big/bigger/biggest, long/ longer/ longest]; using non-standard measures in length, area, volume, capacity, weight and time; introduction of simple standard measures [e.g. metre, litre, kilogram];

Appendix Six - Understanding the World

Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.

Examples

We encourage children to develop their understanding of this area of learning through the following;

- The beginnings of understanding of *People and communities* lies in early attachment and other relationships which are developed as part of PSE development.
- Children are encouraged to explore their world - inside and out - using all their senses. They have opportunities to care for plants, garden, explore materials [sand, water, clay, dough] cook, access to batteries, bulbs, motors, programmable toys, clockwork toys, magnifying glasses, magnets, electrical circuits etc.
- Adult initiated, structured and investigative experiments are based on the child's interests and abilities.
- Opportunities to create their own models using a wide range of resources are on offer. Older children are encouraged to devise experiments to solve problems and to evaluate
- Classes have planters to grow herbs, vegetables and flowers.
- Child have regular cooking opportunities – cold and hot.
- We offer the children plenty of opportunities to explore the local community, drawing their attention to particular features developing their sense of place [geography], they also have regular forest school activities. We take them on journeys further afield to widen their experiences. We take photos of our trips to help the children recall their experiences. We introduce them to maps and map making by recording diagrammatically small-world layouts and 3-dimensional models. We extend children's knowledge of other countries through family connections and recall of holiday experiences and by using photos and postcards. We also encourage the observation and recording of the changing seasons and weather patterns.
- We use the child's natural curiosity about their own past to give them access to historical ideas and language [e.g. old/new, before/after, past/present] We tell stories set in the past and use artefacts or pictures to stimulate descriptive language and discussion of differences and similarities. We use birthdays, festivals, our environment - home and nursery, transport to show the passage of time in a meaningful way.
- ICT Computers, telephones, tape recorders, machines are all used to encourage the children's understanding of information and communication technology. ICT resources are used to support learning across the curriculum.

Appendix Seven - Expressive Arts and Design

Expressive arts and design involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

Example

We encourage children to develop their understanding of this area of learning through the following experiences;

- **2 and 3 d representation** The children are encouraged to develop their skills e.g. control of pencils, scissors, etc. and explore different ways of using materials (such as pasta, textiles) and various techniques, e.g. sewing, sculpture, printing, painting, photography...to express their ideas and feelings. Older children are able to mix their own colours from primary colours with white and chose from a range of resources such as materials for mark making, brushes, paper, collage, recycled materials. There are opportunities for weaving, sewing, sculpting, construction, modelling and printing. Children are encouraged to combine different media to express their ideas. Displays and examples of artwork from various cultures help them develop aesthetic appreciation.
- **Creating Music and Dance** Music is used throughout the day. Children have access to a wide range of instruments and music from a variety of cultures to encourage them to develop ideas about rhythm, pitch, tempo and dynamics. Children are offered opportunities to create their own simple instruments and music. They have access to a variety of tapes and records for comparison of styles and appreciation of content and form. Time is given to singing well-known songs and rhymes and introducing children to new ones. In addition to this, the children have a designated music session once a week with a specialist teacher. Mirrors enable the children to observe their expressions and movement. Opportunities to dance and resources to enhance creative movement e.g. scarves and ribbons.
- **Developing Imagination and Imaginative Play** Children have access to well-resourced home corners and the opportunity to explore other imaginative play such as hospital, shops, and transport inside and out. Familiar stories and characters are used to stimulate imagination and children have resources to take on character and super hero roles. Unstructured props that children can ascribe various meanings to, are available and small world resources encourage storytelling and narrative.
- **Designing and Making** - Children learn about safety, the correct use of tools, appropriateness of materials, the skills of separating and joining etc. The School environment offers many opportunities for children to develop their technological skills. We encourage children to be creative when solving problems e.g. making a model of a fire engine could involve the child in deciding on the design, drawing it, choosing appropriate materials, making it and evaluating its success. Crates and early excellence resources are available to support children's creativity.

The visual arts

2 dimensional representations include drawing, painting, printing, photography, textiles...

3 dimensional representation, includes construction, sculpting and modelling.....

These involve experimenting using the following elements:

- Pattern repetition of shape, colour, light
- Texture characteristics or quality of colour
- Colour hue, intensity, brilliance
- Line mark, stroke, dash
- Tone lightness, darkness, shade
- Shape outline
- Form three- dimensional experience of shape
- Space area between shapes

The performing arts

Music is the exploration of sound, voice and instrumentation through performance and composition. It involves experimenting using the following elements:

- Timbre – characteristics or qualities of sound
- Texture – the way in which sounds are put together
- Pitch – high /low /higher /lower
- Dynamics – volume/loud /quiet /quieter /louder
- Tempo – speed /fast /slow / faster /slower
- Duration – long/short
- Harmony –two or more musical notes produced together

Dance is a form of expression, which encompasses the development of the whole child through production, performance and composition. Dance enables children to develop spatial awareness and discover the movement possibilities of their own bodies. It involves experimenting with the following elements:

- Basic actions
- Gesture
- Stillness
- Pattern

Drama and Imaginative play – This enable the child to consolidate their understanding of the world through an examination of their own ideas, feelings and conflicts. It involves experimenting with the following elements:

- Imitative play
- Role play
- Imaginative play
- Fantasy play