

# Thomas Coram Centre

## Curriculum Statement

Our Approach to Teaching and learning

2019-20



## INTRODUCTION

This document sets out our approach to learning, development and teaching at Thomas Coram. The experiences we offer reflect the philosophy and practice expressed in the statutory framework 'The Early Years Foundation Stage' (-EYFS).

All aspects of our work demonstrate our commitment to the EYFS four themes and principles:-

- every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;
- children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**;
- children learn and develop well in **enabling environments**, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers; and
- Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. (DfE 2012:3)

Through the experiences we offer we aim to promote each child's wellbeing, learning and development during their time with us as well as providing the foundation for later success in the National Curriculum and life.

We are committed to deliver our curriculum by working closely with the Mums, Dads and Carers of all the children who attend our school (See section on Partnership with Parents and Carers)

### **The importance of the early years**

Long standing 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.

### **Our objectives**

The following objectives underlie our approach:

- 1 To provide a safe, secure, stimulating environment that supports all areas of children's development.
- 2 To value all children as individuals and celebrate the diversity of our community in terms of race, gender, culture, faith and non-faith.
- 3 To value parents and carers as the primary educators of the child and work in partnership with them
- 4 To have high expectations of ourselves and the children
- 5 To ensure that all staff receive appropriate training and maintain high standards of practice.
- 6 To develop practice which is informed by relevant and current research in the field of child development and education
- 7 **To introduce children to a rich range of experiences in the fields of the arts and sciences?**

## **Equality of opportunity**

We recognise that discrimination and bias exist within society and seek to ensure that all children, especially those who are already disadvantaged, have the opportunities they are entitled to in order to thrive. We seek to promote British Values in all aspects of our work, these include tolerance, liberty, the rule of law, the upholding of democracy and equality of opportunity.

## **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities**

We are committed to the principles of inclusion. Having children with additional needs at our school helps all children learn about diversity. We believe that Children with special needs, whether in the short or long term, are entitled to the same access to the curriculum as other children. This includes children who have a disability, an additional need or are identified as gifted and particularly able.

We fully support each child's rights to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum and promote access to the curriculum by focusing on individual children's needs and interests. We collaborate closely with Mums, Dads and Carers in planning next steps for children. We also utilise expertise within the school and from outside professionals such as speech therapists, educational psychologists, occupational therapists etc. (with permission from families).

## **English as an additional language - Bi and Multi-lingual children**

Many children at the centre have English as an additional language. Research and our own experience tells us that learning more than one language is a great asset to children and we greatly value bi and multi-lingualism. We encourage parents to use their first language(s) with their children at home because we know this helps children learn to speak and listen in their home language(s) and in English too.

When children start at nursery we discuss with families the best way to support their children's language development at school and at home. Children who haven't yet learned English or are not communicating verbally are given support to access the full curriculum and be as independent as possible as soon as they start (Please talk to your child's Key Person to find out more about this)

## **Ethnicity and Culture**

We seek to reflect the rich cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity of our community, including LGBT families in all aspects of our work, in the resources we offer children and in our curriculum. We try to ensure that every area of provision reflects the varied cultural backgrounds and interests of our community. The Seasonal Themes that we introduce to children draw on the cultural and religious diversity in our local and community and the wider world.

## **Gender**

We seek to challenge gender stereotypes through the resources we have available, activities we support and through discussion with staff, children and families.

This ensures that all children benefit from the full range of experiences on offer and builds a foundation for greater parity, equal opportunity and understanding as children progress in life.

## **The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum**

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is a government programme that sets standards for the learning development and care of children from birth to five years old. It includes two key documents that are easily found online. **The EYFS statutory Framework (DFE 2017)** sets out the legal requirements relating to care and development of young children and the requirements relating to safeguarding welfare.

**Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (DFE 2012)** is a curriculum framework including 'The Characteristics of Effective Learning' and seven key areas of learning. While all the areas of learning and development are seen as important and inter-connected three are seen as the foundations for learning and are called 'Prime areas', the others are 'Specific areas'.

The Prime areas are:

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

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

## **The Characteristics of effective learning**

Development Matters sets out the characteristics of effective learning. These include the skills and attitudes children need that underpin learning and development in all areas of the curriculum in the early years and throughout life. They are grouped in three categories:-

- **Playing and exploring** - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'
- **Active learning** - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
- **Creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

(Dfe 2012:7)

## **The Role of the key person**

We believe that it is essential for all children to have a warm and secure relationship with at least one adult in the Nursery School. When a child is offered a place at the Centre they are allocated a key person who is either qualified as an Early Years Educator or as a Teacher. The key person's role is to form a close relationship with each child and their family in their key group. They work with Mums, Dads and Carers to support each child to settle in and to flourish at nursery. The child's key person plans and supports learning for each child in their group and monitors their progress. They also meet regularly with their Key children's families, informally and formally to discuss how things are going.

## Our approach to Teaching and Learning

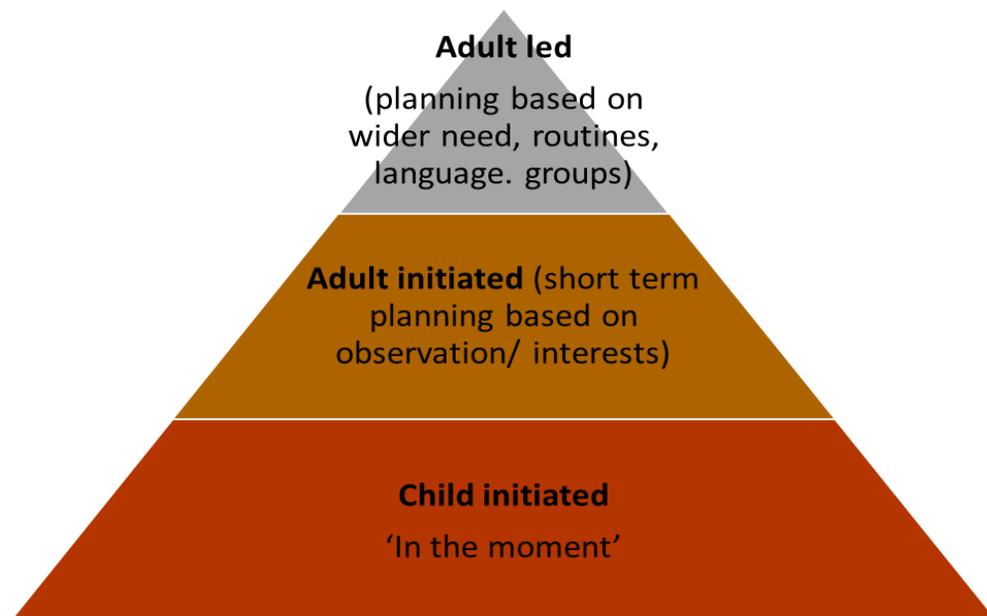
**"Play is the answer to the way anything new comes about" Jean Piaget**

### **Adult and child interactions - the continuum from child initiated to adult lead learning**

Learning is a shared activity and the adults around them significantly influence children's attitudes. The way we present an experience can either encourage children to become involved or lead them to avoid the activity. *Learning, Playing and Interacting* (DCSF 2009) examines the relationship between child initiated and adult led experiences seeing them as part of a continuum. This continuum includes

- child initiated play with or without adult support;
- adult-guided or initiated playful learning activities
- Adult-directed activities with little or no play.

We believe that there is a role for carefully planned, adult led experiences which enable children to learn specific skills and knowledge or be introduced to some new ideas. However it is through play that children learn most effectively and where we gain an understanding of what children have understood. We therefore offer a balance of a play based curriculum which has lots of opportunities for free play (sometimes with the direct support and involvement of adults), alongside some time spent in planned, adult directed activities (see below). However we teach we always endeavour to be 'child centred' and to think carefully about what is appropriate and engaging for children at this stage of development.



## **Child initiated Activity; The Role of Play**

Play is a hugely motivating activity that is a powerful vehicle for learning and development, particularly for young children. Because children love to play and become deeply immersed it is the most effective way for them to learn. Play gives children the chance to explore concepts for themselves, practice and rehearse ideas and skills as well as develop their language and communication, thinking skills and social skills. Child initiated play also gives adults an insight into their interests which helps practitioners choose engaging resources and ideas to extend or enrich children's play and learning. We ensure that children have lots of opportunities for child initiated play in a high quality environment with sensitive, skilled adults and this is the foundation of our curriculum and approach to teaching and learning.

## **Adult initiated or enhanced activities**

Research indicates that more effective learning occurs when the teaching material is pitched at such a level that it is demanding but still within the learner's reach. Our aim is to extend each child's learning by identifying their current level of understanding and planning activities, experiences and explorations that will take them on to the next stage of understanding. We draw on Vygotsky's theory of the "zone of proximal development" and Bruner's concept of "scaffolding" to help us do this. The Early Years Educators and Teachers who work with the children observe their interests and what they are able to do and then plan experiences or add relevant resources that will support them to move to the next stage. We help children to begin to gain an understanding of the progress they are making, for example by sharing their 'Profile Books' with them and discussing how much they've learned (sometimes known as meta-cognition).

## **Adult led Activities**

There are some things that we want all children to have an opportunity to learn about, for example seasonal changes or a cultural event like Eid or Christmas. There are also some elements of the curriculum that benefit from focused teaching of discreet skills, for example sharing books in a small group. We use short engaging adult led group times to introduce children to these ideas and skills which are then explored further through free play or adult initiated experiences.

## **Partnership with parents and carers**

It is important that the significant adults in the child's life, at home and in the centre, work together and appreciate their complimentary contributions to the child's development and well-being. Home life provides many opportunities for learning and nursery aims to build these on. We place particular emphasis on parents' involvement in their children's learning and encourage this through:

- Visits for prospective parents
- Home visiting
- The settling in period
- Newsletters
- Regular parent Key person meetings- informal conversations most days
- Displays
- Surveys of parents views
- Loan of learning resources for use at home
- Workshops where families and practitioners share their knowledge on key topics around child development

## **The role of other children**

Children learn an enormous amount from their interactions with other children. To facilitate this we bring children together in groups and actively encourage friendships. As they grow children increasingly interact with other children, form relationships with and learn from each other. We encourage the children to be respectful and responsible for their own actions. Through playing and exploring with others children develop the ability to see things from different. For the older children, working in a group with peers provides a cognitive challenge through exchange of thoughts and ideas, together with opportunities for developing listening, negotiating and leadership skills. We provide opportunities for children to play alone, in pairs and in small and larger groups.

## **The physical environment and educational visits**

Our aim is to create a stimulating, aesthetically pleasing, uncluttered environment that reflects our community and the needs and interests of the children. The nursery environment is organised to take account children's developmental stages, with separate areas in each wing for children who are 2-3 years old ('Toddlers'), and for children who are 3 and 4 years old ('Kinder'). The physical space is organised to ensure that children have room to move freely, and can sustain and develop their own interests and become independent. The provision indoors is complemented by the resources in the outside area, which is freely accessible for most of the day. The outside provision carries the same high status as the indoors provision.

The children are taken out locally to the local area, for example The Foundling Museum or Coram Fields as well as further afield. The Kinder children also attend a block of six weekly visits to Forest School based at The Calthorpe Project. School trips and educational visits are planned to enhance all areas of development.

***We welcome all parents and carers on educational visits and actively encourage you to join us as often as you can***

## **The use of time**

We give careful thought to how we organise the children's time. Having a regular routine of the day such as arrival and departure time, key group time, and meal times all contribute to children's understanding of their environment and to their sense of well-being.

We want to ensure that children have the opportunity to become involved in experiences for sustained periods of time without distractions and have the opportunity to develop their interests at their own pace. To facilitate this we have a flexible snack times and older children have a later lunch to increase the amount on uninterrupted time they have in the morning.

## **Continuity with the next phase of Education**

Children start primary school in their reception year which is covered by the EYFS. Children begin to work with the National Curriculum from Year 1 in primary school.

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

| <b>EYFS areas of learning</b>             | <b>National Curriculum</b> |
|---|----------------------------|
| Personal social and emotional development | PHSE                       |
| 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<br>Science and Technology<br>Religious education |