



Teaching and Learning Policy



1 Introduction

- 1.1 Early Years education is the foundation upon which young children build the rest of their schooling. It is holistic education that encompasses all learning and development.

"Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up." (Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage September 2025)

We believe in the concept of lifelong learning and regard the teaching and learning which takes place in our nursery school to be part of a learning continuum which begins before the child comes to school and continues into adulthood. At Thornton Heath Nursery School (THNS) we believe that children learn best when they are happy, healthy and safe. Through our teaching, we equip children with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to become competent, confident learners who achieve well. We believe that appropriate learning experiences help children to lead happy and rewarding lives.

- 1.2 This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at Thornton Heath Nursery School (THNS).
- 1.3 The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of practitioners working in the EYFS setting, including both teaching and non-teaching adults.
- 1.4 We are committed to a policy of equality of opportunity and fully promote an ethos of inclusion.
- 1.5 In the policy the term 'practitioner' refers to the members of staff working with children within the setting, including both teaching and non-teaching adults.
- 1.6 The EYFS applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year (children between the age of 2 – 4 attend THNS)
- 1.7 Our aim is to work with parents and carers to ensure children have access to a rich and varied learning environment, allowing children to develop their skills and abilities in order to reach their potential. We aim to:
- provide a welcoming, stimulating environment in which all children feel safe, secure and ready to learn;
 - build on previous learning;
 - equip children with the key knowledge, skills and understanding which they need for further learning, including their transition to primary school;

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- provide a language rich environment in order to develop a child's communication and language skills;
- listen to children and respond to children's interests;
- be responsive to individual children's needs and ensure they access a broad and balanced curriculum;
- enable children to access resources and equipment independently and at their level enabling them to become confident, resourceful, enquiring and independent learners;
- stimulate and encourage creative thinking;
- foster children's self-esteem and resilience and ensure that children develop a self-image of themselves as capable learners who have a 'can do' approach to learning;
- help children build positive relationships with other people encouraging them to respect the needs, ideas and feelings of others;
- enable children to understand their community, and help them feel a valued part of it;
- develop a working partnership with all parents/carers which value the knowledge, skills and experience they have to offer and also promote wider family learning.

1.9 At Thornton Heath Nursery School we are committed to underpinning our provision with the four themes of the Statutory Framework for The Early Years Foundation Stage in our nursery classes.

- a) Unique Child
- b) Positive Relationships
- c) Enabling Environments with teaching and support from adults
- d) Learning and Development

2 Unique child

At THNS we recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates and this is reflected in our provision.

- 2.1 The characteristics of effective teaching and learning support the child to become a motivated and effective learner. Children will **play and explore** and 'have a go' at using all available resources; developing their experiences.
- 2.2 Children will develop resilience and enjoy achievements through **active learning** and will make links, explore their ideas and strategies for problem solving through **creating and thinking critically**. Practitioners support the children in developing all these characteristics through playing alongside children and, where necessary, scaffolding and supporting their thoughts.
- 2.3 It is important to us that all children at THNS are 'safe'. We educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them to develop these important life skills.
- 2.4 Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards, both within school and in the wider environment.
- 2.5 We promote a healthy lifestyle including taking exercise, eating healthy food and oral health. Children are involved in preparing our healthy daily snack.

3 Positive relationships

- 3.1 We promote positive relationships between staff, parents and children and work together for the children to achieve at the highest levels possible.
- 3.2 We value the strengths and knowledge each individual brings to THNS. We respect and support learning without prejudice, bias or judgement.
- 3.3 Children are taught how to deal with difficult situations and relationships through the Personal, Social and Emotional Development curriculum as well as through their daily interactions with adults and other children.
- 3.4 We recognise that parents and carers are the child's first educators and their importance for the child's welfare and education is paramount.
- 3.5 All children are greeted as they come into the nursery classes and have a familiar routine.
- 3.6 Staff work with each child either on a one to one basis, in a small group or as part of a larger group.
- 3.7 Each child has an identified keyworker who, along with the class teacher and other professionals, helps the child become familiar with the setting, build confidence, and offers a settled relationship for the child and builds relationships with their parents and carers. It is the responsibility of the key worker to:
 - a) observe, monitor and assess each child's development;
 - b) plan and set targets for each child's learning to ensure progress is made in all areas of the EYFS;
 - c) share observations with the child and their parent/carer;
 - d) share targets with the child and their parent/carer;
 - e) celebrate and share success and achievement;
 - f) support transitions between places of learning during the day and between settings;
 - g) model correctly spoken English and appropriate behaviour;
 - h) extend children's thinking with skilful questioning and dialogue;
 - i) set clear and consistent boundaries for children's behaviour in line with our behaviour policy.
- 3.8 Each keyworker is paired with another to ensure continuity for children in times of absence. We expect parents and carers will work with keyworkers by:
 - a) ensuring their children attend regularly and arrive punctually;
 - b) talking with them about their child's progress and working to support their learning at home;
 - c) share their child's successes at home with their keyworker;
 - d) helping their children come to school ready to learn.

4 Enabling environments

- 4.1 At THNS we recognise the importance of a rich learning environment which is well-resourced and maintained. The environment needs to be clean and accessible so that children can easily use the materials they need and be involved in looking after them.
- 4.2 The environment celebrates children's work and achievements through displays that are current and attractive. It should be reflective of children's cultural and ethnic backgrounds.
- 4.3 The environment is set up in learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet and rest.
- 4.4 There is an outdoor area for children to access. This has a positive effect on the children's development. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. It offers the children the opportunity to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant.
- 4.5 As far as possible we offer the same opportunities and areas of learning in all of our environments and the children have free flow between different areas.
- 4.6 We observe the children during child initiated learning and offer additional resources and support to enrich their learning. We support, challenge and extend their learning through timely intervention.
- 4.7 To ensure that we meet the individual needs of all of our children we make regular observations of the children's interactions, interests, skills, and development of concepts.
- 4.8 These observations are used to inform our planning for groups of children, for individuals and our provision for resources as appropriate.

5 Learning and development

- 5.1 There are seven areas of learning and development which address children's physical, cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional development and are interconnected. This ensures the delivery of a holistic, child-centred curriculum which allows children to make lots of links between what they are learning. All areas of learning and development are given equal weighting and value.
- 5.2 Three areas (the prime areas) are crucial to develop lifelong learning and to help children form relationships.

Communication and Language – children have opportunities to speak and listen in a range of situations and experience a rich language environment to enable them to develop their own use of ambitious language. They increasingly build their levels of concentration and can give their attention to what others say and respond appropriately

Personal, Social and Emotional Development - children develop confidence in their own abilities and develop a positive sense of self. They learn how to look after their bodies and manage personal needs independently

Physical Development – children have opportunities to be active and develop co-ordination (both gross motor and fine motor) enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives

- 5.3 The prime areas are strengthened and applied through four further areas (specific areas):

Literacy – involves children learning how letters link to the sounds and begin to read and write. Children develop a life-long love of reading and through carefully crafted questioning acquire comprehension skills

Mathematics – children develop a deep understanding of the numbers to ten. They are provided with frequent and varied opportunities to build and apply this understanding developing a secure base of knowledge and vocabulary from which mastery of mathematics is built

Understanding of the World – children are guided to make sense of their physical world and their community. Children are supported to identify and discuss similarities and differences between things in the past and now, different religious and cultural communities and in the world around them

Expressive Arts and Design – involves engaging with the arts enabling them to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. Children are encouraged to participate in performing songs, rhymes, poems and stories with others

- 5.4 We have an overview of topics in EYFS which is designed to provide a broad, balanced curriculum in order to cover all areas of development. However, we also try to follow the children's interests when planning for individuals and groups of children and involve them in choosing activities and resources. We value all areas of learning and development and understand that they are interconnected.
- 5.5 Children, parents and carers are encouraged to be involved in the next steps for learning through the children's Learning Journey book, termly 'next step' targets and parent consultations within keyworker week.

6. Active learning through play

- 6.1 We recognise that young children learn best when they are actively engaged and involved in their learning. We understand that active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods. Therefore, we believe that early years' education should be as practical as possible and our setting has a strong underpinned ethos of learning through play.
- 6.2 We recognise the importance of children's play. It is an essential and rich part of their learning process, supporting them in all areas of development.
- 6.3 Play is a powerful motivator encouraging children to be creative and to develop their ideas, understanding and language. Play is also flexible and able to suit the preferred learning style of the child. It can provide multiple ways for children to learn a variety of different skills and concepts.

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- 6.4 At THNS practitioners provide both structured and unstructured play opportunities inside and outside.
- 6.5 Activities are designed to engage children in practical, first-hand experiences which will support children to discover, explore, investigate, develop their personal interests and areas of curiosity, and help to make sense of the world around them as they begin to understand specific concepts.
- 6.6 Play opportunities are also set up to provide children with opportunities to apply newly acquired knowledge, demonstrating their skills and level of understanding.
- 6.7 In providing these active learning opportunities through play we understand the central position of play within the EYFS framework.
- 6.8 Child-initiated learning is an important part of our daily routine and whenever possible adult-directed activities are play based, active and related to the children's interests.
- 6.9 We aim to help children with their learning through observing, getting involved in their play, supporting their thinking and asking open ended questions.
- 6.10 At THNS we believe that early years' education is important in its own right and should not be viewed simply as preparation for the next stage of children's education.

7. Assessment and record keeping

- 7.1 In response to the new statutory framework for the early years foundation stage, Thornton Heath Nursery School has devised a bespoke assessment criterion which focuses on children embedding core skills throughout the early years in readiness for year one. The non-statutory Development Matters revised 2023 was used as a guide to develop this.
- 7.2 On-going assessment is an essential aspect of the early years provision at THNS. Regular, planned and focused assessments are made of children's learning, wellbeing and individual needs so that our curriculum can be tailored to engage all learners.
- 7.3 A record of each child's progress in all areas of their learning is kept by retaining and filing their assessment data.
- 7.4 The main EYFS assessment method is through practitioners' observations of children in different teaching and learning contexts, including both adult focused activities and child initiated play.
- 7.5 Observations take place on a daily basis (both formally and informally). Practitioners make time to carry out planned observations of individuals and groups of children regularly. They also make spontaneous observations in order to capture significant moments of children's learning.
- 7.6 All practitioners are involved in observing children. They use observations to support their developing knowledge of individual children. It informs them of children's abilities, needs, interests, play schemas and learning styles and supports planning

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relevant learning opportunities for next steps and progress.

- 7.7 Assessments are updated at least once each term to track individual progress.
- 7.8 At the end of the year these assessments provide a summary of every child's development and learning achievements.
- 7.9 Within the first six weeks of entering the foundation stage, practitioners use the THNS assessment criterion to make baseline judgements about children's development across all areas of learning.
- 7.91 A written report is sent to each child's parents at the end of the summer term. It is a summative record of the child's yearly achievement and identifies targets for the child's next steps for learning.

8 Monitoring

- 8.1 Senior leaders and teachers are responsible for monitoring teaching and learning in the EYFS.
- 8.2 This involves observing lessons, looking at children's work, checking planning, professional dialogue with practitioners and looking at data in order to ensure that we are providing the best for and expecting the best from our pupils.
- 8.3 We use the information gathered to inform future planning and identify particular strengths and weaknesses in our practice.

9 Planning

- 9.1 Long term plans are informed by the non- statutory Development Matters revised 2023 document which suggests the skills and attributes required to achieve Early Learning Goals (ELG) in each curriculum area at the end of reception. We use this guidance to ensure that children leave THNS with the necessary skills for their onward journey.
- 9.2 All areas of learning and development are planned for and available to access within the setting. The learning opportunities provided include a range of adult focused and child initiated activities indoors and outdoors whenever possible.
- 9.3 Educational visits within the local community are also planned to support children's learning within the classroom and provide children with first-hand life experiences.

10 Parents and carers as partners

- 10.1 At school we recognise the importance of establishing positive relationships with parents and carers, as highlighted in the EYFS framework. We understand that an effective partnership between school and home will have a positive impact on children's learning and development.

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- 10.2 Practitioners endeavour to encourage the regular sharing of information about the children with parents and carers. Through questionnaires completed with the parents before children start school in September and informal conversations at the beginning and end of the day practitioners build a picture of a child's life beyond school. During parent consultation meetings, practitioners encourage parents and carers to share their unique knowledge of their child, providing further insight into the child as an individual (e.g. characteristics, interests, experiences, likes, dislikes). This supports practitioners in establishing interesting and stimulating learning experiences, responding to children's needs and interests and creating enabling environments.
- 10.3 Parents and carers are kept informed of what is happening in the setting through regular letters, reading diaries, our website and through talking to teachers.
- 10.4 This information sharing also gives suggestions of how parents and carers can support their children's learning at home; consolidating and building on what has been covered in school.
- 10.5 Parents and carers are invited to attend parents' consultation evenings during the course of the academic year. The first of these takes place in the first six weeks of the child starting school, followed by three more which take place each term.
- 10.5 Parents are also invited to get involved with school life. There are opportunities for them to help with activities such as educational visits and reading, as well as offering their particular skills (e.g. cooking, art, music) to support children's learning. Parents may be invited into school on other occasions and special events e.g. workshops, charity events, coffee mornings etc.
- 10.6 Thornton Heath Nursery School has a friendly, open-door ethos and practitioners are available to talk to parents and carers at the beginning and end of the day. Parents and carers are always welcomed into school and encouraged to discuss and concerns they might have.

11 Transition to primary school

- 11.1 With parental permission, practitioners from your child's future primary school visit the children whilst they are still at THNS. The aim of these visits is to support practitioners to develop their knowledge and understanding of each child in order to make the transition period to their new school as smooth as possible.

12 Equal opportunities

- 12.1 In the EYFS, as in all areas of school life, we believe that equal opportunities should exist for all children irrespective of gender, ability, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability or social circumstances.
- 12.2 We respect the experiences children bring to school and we seek to expand them by providing further new experiences and stimuli.