Reviewed July 2025

Strong Close Nursery School

Understanding the World Policy

Rationale

"Play is the highest form of research."
Albert Einstein

When we nurture children's curiosity to explore and investigate, we support their understanding and help develop resourcefulness and resilience. Children need the capacity to take risks, think flexibly and respond to any challenges they encounter. Children also need opportunities to be actively involved in local community life, this helps children to develop a sense of responsibility, a duty to care and a respect for diversity. In addition, first hand experiences in caring for wildlife and the natural world provides children with an appreciation of ecological balance, environmental care and the need to live sustainable lives. Through offering a wide range of experiences across the aspects of understanding the world children will have the opportunity to practice these important traits.

"Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community. The frequency and range of children's personal experiences increases their knowledge and sense of the world around them – from visiting parks, libraries and museums to meeting important members of society such as police officers, nurses and firefighters. In addition, listening to a broad selection of stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems will foster their understanding of our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world. As well as building important knowledge, this extends their familiarity with words that support understanding across domains. Enriching and widening children's vocabulary will support later reading comprehension."
Statutory Framework for the EYFS Educational Programme.

To provide effectively for the learning, interests and needs of all our children we will use the 'Statutory Framework for The Early Years Foundation Stage' to inform our practice. The seven key features of effective practice from the non-statutory Development Matters will be at the heart of our day-to-day practice. We recognise the individuality of all children and the need to nurture their confidence, capabilities, and independence. Our curriculum will reflect the needs and interests of our children and we will develop more in depth learning through schemas, projects, real world experiences and repeated and motivating activities. To this end we will ensure that our practice reflects the characteristics of effective teaching and learning; Playing and Exploring, Active Learning and Creating and Thinking Critically. Our children that are on or being assessed for our resourced places are assessed using the Developmental Journal resources.

Aims

Our aims set out how we intend to deliver a high-quality curriculum

- To provide a broad and differentiated range of stimulating, investigative and observational experiences to children both indoors and outdoors

To use our community and the wider world to extend children's knowledge, experiences and understanding of their rich cultural surroundings, including that of others.

- To have a particular focus on the aspects of understanding the world in our planning and assessment
  - Past and Present
  - People, Culture and Communities
  - The Natural World

- To provide opportunities that help children to become aware of and explore issues of differences in gender, ethnicity, language, religion, culture and of disability or special needs issues.

- To ensure that all children are supported in making the best possible progress.

Objectives

Our objectives set out how we implement our aims

- We will provide experiences that encourage children's exploration, curiosity, appreciation and respect for living things.

- We will ensure that adults use scaffolding techniques with children so they are able to use equipment and tools effectively and independently.

- We will provide experiences that require close observation and also observation of change over time

- We will use our project books in class to revisit previous learning

- We will ensure that staff understand their role in interaction and provide lots of opportunities for children to talk, discuss and question.

- We will spend time with children talking about their past and present experiences, including how they maybe similar or different to others.

- We will provide experiences that encourage problem solving, predicting and decision making

- We will use the indoor and outdoor environment, visitors, trips and outings as sources of extending experiences, knowledge and learning

- We will encourage children to begin to record their findings in the most appropriate way

- We will increase staff knowledge about Understanding of the World through relevant in-service training.

- We will involve and support parent / carer in our work by sharing individualised, specific and relevant strategies from our schema toolkit, 50 Things to do Before you're 5 app and Tiny Happy People website in relation to Understanding of the World

- We will discuss children and their interests weekly to inform planning, and share at home with parents and carers through our What's Happening to help support and deepen children's learning through play. Half termly planning newsletters are also developed by staff and shared with parents/carers.

- To ensure that children are making the best progress, over time, we will assess their progress and interests termly using Development Matters and the key observational checkpoints including the Developmental Journal materials for those children on specialist places, supported to make smaller steps of progress. The results of these, will inform future planning both at an individual level and also at a curriculum level.

The following support the **implementation** of this policy and ensure we monitor **impact**

a. Guidelines on Curriculum Planning

b. Communication Strategies with Children

c. Understanding the World Guidelines

d. Energy Code

e. Development Matters

f. Developmental Journal

g. Assessment Policy and Guidelines

h.

Understanding the World Policy Guidelines

- Plan activities based on first hand experiences that encourage exploration, experimentation, observation, problem solving, prediction, critical thinking, decision making and discussion.

- Teach skills and knowledge in the context of practical activities, for example, learning about cooking eggs or investigating what plants need to grow**.**

- We will show children how to respect and care for the natural environment and all living things through experiences such as; composting, recycling, litter picking, growing plants and looking at life cycles of chicks and caterpillars.

- Provide a range of everyday objects and materials that can be explored and used.

- Allow children to safely explore physically and through their senses**.**

- Overtime incorporate a wide variety of tools and equipment that children can choose to use in their investigations.

- Encourage children to use a range of methods for recording information and findings as appropriate.

- Adults help children select books and resources related to their interest/project.

- Allow children to explore how things work and encourage them to talk about the differences between materials and the changes they notice for example, floating and sinking.

- Help children become aware of, explore and question differences in gender, ethnicity, language, religion, culture, special educational needs and disability.

- Ensure children experience meeting people, artefacts and stories from other cultures

- Provide a range of resources and activities to help children become aware of different countries in the world and talk about the similarities and differences.

- Give children accurate information which challenges cultural, racial, social and gender stereotypes.

- Allow children to act out their real-life experiences, past and predicted.

- Use parents' knowledge to extend children's experiences of the world.

- Make effective use of outdoors, including the local neighbourhood and further afield, based on children's interests.

- Provide opportunities for children to learn about different occupations, for example people who help us- cook, firefighter, doctor, vet, through visits and visitors.

- Use routines and activities such as recycling and saving energy, supporting sustainable development and to support children's understanding of the need for this.
- Use correct terms so that, for example, children will enjoy naming a chrysalis if the practitioner uses its correct name.

- Pose carefully framed open-ended questions, such as "How can we…?", "Why do you think…?" or "What would happen if…?"

- Encourage children to tell each other what they have found out, to speculate on future findings or to describe their experiences. This enables them to rehearse and reflect upon their knowledge and to practise new vocabulary.