Tachbrook Nursery School

Understanding the World Policy

'Happy, healthy & high expectations'

Reviewed: September 2024

Understanding the World

At Tachbrook Nursery we recognise the significance of fostering children's curiosity, exploration, and understanding of the world around children during their early years. This policy aims to provide a rich and stimulating environment that promotes children's knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the natural and made world. We believe that developing an early understanding of the world lays the foundation for children to become active and informed global citizens. This policy reflects our commitment to providing a wide range of experiences, resources, and opportunities for children to explore, investigate, and make sense of their environment.

Aims:

1. Importance of Understanding the World:

a. Understanding the World is recognised as a specific area of learning, encompassing knowledge about the physical world, people, communities, and technology.

b. Children will be encouraged to develop a sense of awe, wonder, and respect for the natural world, cultural diversity, and the environment.

c. Opportunities will be provided for children to develop skills such as observation, questioning, critical thinking, and problem-solving in relation to the world around them.

2. Exploratory Environment:

a. Both our indoor environment and garden will be carefully planned and equipped to encourage exploration and investigation, offering a variety of materials, tools, and resources related to the natural and built environment.

b. Real-life and hands-on experiences, local trips, visits from people in the community, and use of technology will be incorporated to expand children's understanding and engagement with the world.

3. Knowledge and Understanding:

a. Children will be exposed to a broad range of topics, including but not limited to nature, animals, plants, seasons, geography, history, science, technology, religious celebrations and cultural diversity.

b. Age-appropriate resources, such as books, maps, artefacts, magnifying glasses, photographs, and multimedia materials, will be accessible to promote exploration and deepen understanding.

c. Staff will facilitate discussions, by asking open-ended questions, and encouraging children to share their ideas, observations, and experiences to promote meaningful learning.

4. Cultural Understanding and Inclusion:

a. Diversity and inclusivity will be celebrated and promoted through activities that foster respect, empathy, and understanding of different cultures, traditions, and perspectives.

b. Opportunities for children to explore their own culture and share their heritage will be provided, as well as opportunities to learn about and appreciate other cultures within their local and global communities.

5. Environmental Awareness:

a. Children will be encouraged to develop an understanding of environment issues, such as, conservation, and the impact of human activities on the natural world.

b. Opportunities for outdoor play, gardening, recycling, and other practices will be integrated into daily routines to foster a sense of responsibility towards the environment.

6. Collaboration with Families and Communities:

a. Collaborative partnerships with parents, carers and community members will be nurtured to enhance children's understanding of the world.

b. Parents and carers will be encouraged to share their knowledge, experiences, and cultural traditions to enrich children's learning opportunities.

7. Staff Training and Development:

a. Staff members will receive training and professional development to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the world and develop strategies to facilitate children's exploration and understanding.

b. Ongoing professional development opportunities will be provided to keep staff members informed about current research, best practices, and educational approaches related to understanding the world.

How we teach Understanding of the World

Children's learning is linked to our curriculum progression map. This maps out progress children should make during their time at Tachbrook. Half termly learning objectives are linked to individual learning activities which all children are able to access.

The 'Early Years Foundation Stage' framework sets out Understanding of the World in three specific areas:

- Past & Present
- People, Culture & Communities
- The Natural World

Past & Present

Below is outlined the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes we want individual children to:

- Have a developing sense of 'Me' and who I am
- Be aware of differences between the past & present – before they were born, staff & parents were once children, when IPads, mobile phones, computers did not exist, that dinosaurs are now extinct etc.
- Have a developing sense of time passing- past, present, future now, later, yesterday, today, tomorrow, before, after etc.
- Be able to recall & reflect on events in the past e.g. when I first started nursery
- Be able to think about the future
- Know and use the vocabulary of time –hours, minutes, days of the week, months, seasons
- To knowing date of their birthday
- To notice and talk about changes in seasons
- To talk about similarities and differences in the natural and made world
- To develop an understanding of a sequence of events linked to books and storytelling

How We Support this Development

Most of the learning in this area of the curriculum will take place through talk, discussions, conversation and children's own observations. The adult's role will focus particularly on putting the child's life experiences into context and supplying the language which will help a child to structure their experiences into a developing concept of the passage of time.

There are many events in a child's life that provide appropriate starting points for talk and reflection in an historical sense:
•Birthdays - calendar in each room
•Birth of siblings
•starting nursery/starting full-time/leaving nursery
•Routines of the nursery day/week/term
•Festivals
•Child's own growth from babyhood to adulthood e.g. when I was a baby I couldn't talk or when I grow up I want to be a fire-fighter

We can use photos, books to stimulate discussion and thought about:
•How the children and staff have developed over time
•How the school has changed
•How the local area has changed
•How transport, toys, houses etc. have changed

Visits to museums and galleries can show children a wider range of artefacts beyond what is available at school. Staff can talk to children about their own childhood, their experiences of school, their favourite activities and stories. Parents and grandparents can be invited into school to contribute their memories, photos etc.

People & Communities

Below is outlined the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes we want individual children to achieve:

- To confidently talk about themselves and their family
- To know and talk about their life and some aspects of their family history, heritage, culture, languages spoken, foods eaten, clothing etc.
- To know about and form positive attitudes towards a range of cultures, religions, religious festivals and take part in some cultural events and celebrations
- To know about the lives of other people around them and in society
- To know that people have different occupations
- To explore the natural and local environment
- To know about local landmarks
- To understand the purpose of a map
- To use drawing to represent their environment- map making
- To know how and why maps, globes, digital maps are used
- To know and explain similarities and differences between life in this country and others

How We Support this Development

Much of this will be covered through observing and talking about artefacts from different religions. Looking at books about festivals and celebrations as well as helping to have celebrations at school. Children will be encouraged to help make traditional foods and decorations for celebrations. As well as inviting families in to teach us how they celebrate their own traditions. Visits to local landmarks and places of interest such as local shops, Vauxhall city Farm, schools, parks, the river Thames, Tate Britain, the top of the block will help children to learn about the environment and local area. As well as developing their knowledge of the garden using maps to plan a route around the garden on the trolley, find and plot where key places are in the garden such as the wobbly bridge or where the forest is. Other activities that support this area of development are:

- Inviting parents to help celebrate festivals
- Cooking traditional foods
- Looking at artefacts
- Books linked to festivals
- Displays about festivals
- Taking photos on these trips
- Presenting children with photos of the nursery/local area
- Discussion on where children live i.e. house/flat; which floor; lift/stairs
- Having A-Z, atlases, tube/bus maps, maps of the garden, local area; globe freely available and used for discussion and imaginative play
- Trips to the balconies/Grosvenor Road/the cellar to see the school and garden from different angles
- Observing/recording weather and seasonal changes
- Lots of opportunities to represent geographical knowledge in drawings, paintings and model-making of all types

The Natural World

Below we outline the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes which our curriculum covers; individual children will achieve different aspects according to their own development

- Observing and commenting on the natural environment.
- Taking an interest in the natural world.
- Knowing what living things need to survive- plants, animals, humans
- Noticing changes in eth natural world including seasons
- Knowing how to care for living things
- Understanding changing state processes such as freezing, melting, baking
- Planting, growing and taking care of a seed
- Exploring and discussing collections of materials e.g. fossils, rocks, shells, leaves etc.
- Observing and talking about the life cycle of a frog, chicken, butterfly
- Growing and harvesting something to eat
- Having knowledge of maps and what they represent
- Knowing and using vocabulary of position and directions – turn left, right, straight ahead, near, far, miles, kilometres
- Having a growing knowledge of weather & seasons
- Observing effects of rain, sun, wind, volcanoes, earthquakes etc.

Organisation & Resources

Books and resources are available at all times for discussion and fact finding.

We plan for regular local outings.

Celebration of birthdays and festivals are appropriately planned for and organised, these may change over time. Staff should find out about cultures and celebrations that are important to their key children.
Staff remember to record important life events such as moving house or birth of a sibling.

Equal Opportunities

(See also Equal Opportunities Policy)

This area of the curriculum provides a valuable and effective way of valuing all children's backgrounds and experiences. Care should be taken when discussing other countries that greater value is not given to one culture over another. Books should be chosen with this in mind as some offer negative or one-sided views. Differences can be acknowledged yet still valued and similarities found.

All children should go on trips. Children with special needs might need more adult support but this should not prevent them going.

Parents/ Carers

Parents and carers can be involved by:

- coming on trips with us
- sharing experiences, memories, photos with us
- keeping us informed of significant life events

Curriculum

Daily and weekly plans will be informed by the curriculum and observations of children, their play and interests. Weekly plans will include the progressive 'Understanding the World' curriculum set out in the Curriculum Progression Map. Planning should also incorporate child initiated play and our response to this.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure its effectiveness and alignment with current best practices, educational standards, and global issues. Feedback from staff members, parents/ carers, and external experts will be used to support the development of this policy.