



Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum

2023/24

*At Cromwell Learning Community Multi
Academy Trust we believe that
learning without limits means we do
not put a ceiling on children's
achievement*

Intent

Our aim within the Early Years Foundation Stage is to provide a happy, safe, and stimulating environment, which allows all children to feel secure, valued and eager to learn. We place great value on the development of children as individuals and providing them with the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to prepare them for future life. We believe the relationships which the children develop in the Early Years, with each other and with our staff, are central to their happiness and will lay the best possible foundation for them to have the confidence and skills to make decisions, self-evaluate, make connections and become lifelong learners. We will ensure that our children are:

- **Ready to learn:** Children have a positive, confident attitude to learning. They are both physically and emotionally ready to learn.
- **Resourceful:** Children show initiative, ask well thought out questions and are prepared to use a variety of strategies to learn.
- **Reflective:** Children are curious, able and willing to learn from their mistakes and can describe their progress.
- **Resilient:** Children are prepared to persevere and stay involved in their learning, even when the process is challenging.
- **Reciprocal:** Children are prepared to help each other and work as a team.

Our curriculum is an essential part of the cultural capital we know our pupils need so that they can gain the knowledge, skills and understanding they require for success. They can only do that if we embed the right habits for learning through the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning – Play and Exploration, Active Learning and Creative and Critical Thinking.

Our enabling environment and warm, skilful adult interactions support the children as they begin to link learning to their play and exploration. This is delivered through a holistic curriculum which maximises opportunities for meaningful cross-curricular links and learning experiences as well as promoting the unique child by offering extended periods of play and sustained thinking following children's interests and ideas. We value imagination and creativity and seek to create a sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning through a vibrant continuous indoor and outdoor provision.

Implementation

As part of our curriculum development, we have looked closely at child development, metacognition, building working memory, the early years curriculum, the characteristics of effective learning, the revised early learning goals and the national curriculum focusing on expectations at the end of years 1 and 2. This breadth of knowledge has enabled us to create an ambitious curriculum which consistently builds on the knowledge, understanding and skills of all children, whatever their starting points and ensures children are ready for and working towards key stage 1.

Our curriculum is designed to provide a broad and balanced education that is ambitious for all learners. We aim to:

- Offer rich and vibrant opportunities which draw upon children's own experiences and prior learning.
- Support children's personal, social, emotional, spiritual, and cultural development so that they feel safe and secure and are ready to learn.
- Develop and nurture strong, positive attitudes where they become proud and respectful of themselves, others, and their environment.
- Develop the knowledge, skills and understanding appropriate to the stage of development of each child to enable them to flourish and reach their potential.
- Use sequential building of knowledge and skills as essential to lifelong learning
- Plan ongoing opportunities for children to revisit knowledge and skills through a variety of targeted and independent learning opportunities for children to commit this knowledge and skills to their long-term memory
- Continue to build vocabulary as it is a key component to learning. The more words a child knows, and understands, the more confident they become, the easier it will be for them to read and access the rest of the curriculum. Vocabulary at age five has been found to be the best predictor (from a range of measures at age five and ten) of whether children who experienced social deprivation in childhood were able to 'buck the trend' and escape poverty in later adult life.
- Support children to make progress from their individual starting points and prepare them for the next stage of their education.

Metacognition

Metacognition is 'learning about learning' and 'thinking about thinking'. Metacognitive strategies are teaching approaches which make our children think about learning more explicitly. This is done by teaching children specific strategies to set goals, monitor and evaluate their own learning. Research has shown that developing children's metacognition can boost children's attainment by at least eight months and is particularly effective for disadvantaged children.

'On a very basic level, metacognition is about pupils' ability to monitor and direct their learning.'

(EEF)

Metacognitive strategies are particularly effective when taught in groups so children can support each other in their learning. It encourages children to take a greater responsibility for their learning, with teachers supporting and encouraging them. We encourage all children to improve their key learning skills and confidently apply them to a range of learning contexts.

We believe that metacognition should not be an add on to a learning activity but should be embedded during the learning. Therefore, we use Learning Heroes which reflect key themes of metacognition and the 'learning to learn' language.



With the use of the learning heroes and focus on the effective characteristics of effective learning throughout our provision the children will be able to articulate their thoughts, set goals, monitor, and evaluate everyday activities. We ensure that our provision consists of problem-solving activities and STEM activities so that children have a deeper involvement in activities, develop confidence and ability to approach problem solving, and become more independent in their learning.

In planning and guided children's activities, practitioners will reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in their practice. Teaching strategies identified as promoting young children's thinking skills fall into four phases:

- **Tuning in phase:** the adult observes, listens, encourages, and shows sensitivity to the children before deciding to intervene in their play or practical activities;
- **Development phase:** the adult uses modelling, scaffolding, or questioning strategies to extend the thinking experience; e.g. sustained shared thinking, pole bridging
- **Creative phase:** the adult provides open-ended and practical tasks for the children and encourages them to think beyond the routine, emphasising the importance of completing an activity with flair and imagination;
- **Reflective phase:** the adult encourages the children to reflect on their experiences, introducing perhaps a degree of ambiguity into the children's thought processes to allow challenge to take place.

Our teaching builds on careful baseline assessments carried out when children join the setting and progress within the phase is carefully planned for and tracked throughout the year. The practitioners assess the skills development of each child and record this in the electronic learning journals. This assessment forms an important part of the future curriculum planning for each child.

The timetable is carefully structured so that children have a balance of direct teaching and exploration opportunities. The direct teaching is in English, maths and phonics everyday with regular circle time sessions to focus on PSED. These sessions are followed by group work where children work with a member of staff to develop their individual targets. This focused group time means the teacher can systematically check for understanding, identify, and respond to misconceptions quickly and provide real-time verbal feedback which results in a strong impact on the acquisition of new learning.

Children are provided with plenty of time to engage in 'exploration' throughout the variety of experiences carefully planned to engage and challenge them in the provision. The curriculum is planned for the inside and outside classrooms and equal importance is given to learning in both areas. The curriculum is planned in a cross-curricular way to enable all aspects of the children's development including understanding the world and expressive art and design as well as to promote sustained thinking and active learning.

Through the seven areas of learning we provide topics that excite and engage children, building on own interests and developing their experiences of the world around them. Staff work hard to ensure that the learning opportunities provided widen their knowledge and understanding of the world, setting ambitious expectations for all children so that they are ready for the next stage in their learning phase.

Learning is planned through broad themes, based on quality texts, where core skills and learning behaviours can be practised and developed. We have developed our own suggested text list for Early Years. These texts are chosen for their level of challenge and quality language. They have also been chosen with a view to promoting reading for pleasure.

We provide opportunities for children to gain new vocabulary through the activities they are engaged in, but also ensure vocabulary is taught explicitly through a range of ways such as modelling when cooking, playing, painting, and reading. The most rapid way for children to increase their vocabulary is through listening to stories, rhymes, and poems, that they can internalise, repeat, and commit to long term memory.

The teaching of phonics is based on the stages of development so initially Nursery focus on developing listening skills and developing an awareness of a range of sounds. This then develops into focusing on discriminating between sounds and practising Fred talk. Speaking like Fred helps children to understand that words are made up of sounds and doing this throughout the day helps children practise blending

sounds together. Once this skill has been developed, initial sounds are taught daily through Read, Write, Inc. sessions. Planned opportunities throughout the day ensure that children revisit and embed their learning. Reading and writing opportunities are available in all areas of learning both indoors and outdoors.

The maths curriculum is taught through daily dedicated sessions that are based on the White Rose Maths Scheme of Learning. These sessions are carefully planned using concrete resources and build on prior learning and real-life experiences across the theme and year. The sessions are enhanced through a range of planned independent activities through continuous provision where children are given opportunities to rehearse, review, embed and extend their learning. Pupils learn through games and tasks using concrete manipulatives which are then rehearsed and applied to their own learning during exploration.

Nursery pupils begin to develop these key skills during daily maths meetings where they explore sorting, quantities, shape, number and counting awareness. These early mathematical experiences are carefully designed to help pupils remember the content they have been taught and to support them with integrating their new knowledge across the breadth of their experiences and into larger concepts. We want our children to become confident mathematicians who can apply what they have learnt to real life experiences.

We have carefully plotted out essential knowledge and skills that need to be taught in science, history, geography and art and design so that children are ready for year 1 and so that there is clear progression from the early years into key stage 1. These skills and concepts are taught through a thematic approach ensuring that children

Impact

Our curriculum and its delivery ensure that children make at least good progress. Children in our early years, on average, arrive with much lower starting points than national. During their time in our EYFS, children make at least good progress so that we meet the national expectation for GLD at the end of the year. Pupils also make good progress toward their age-related expectations before transitioning into Year One. We believe our high standards are due to the enriched play-based exploration alongside the rigour of assessment and teaching the children have as they move through the early years – a rich diet of balanced learning experiences is undoubtedly the best way to develop happy, curious children.

We endeavour for pupils to be Reception and Year 1 ready and prepared for the next phase at primary school. The impact of our curriculum will also, in fact, be measured by how effectively it helps our pupils develop into well rounded individuals who embody our values and carry with them the knowledge, skills and attitudes which will make them lifelong learners and valuable future citizens.