

# Curriculum Policy

*Incorporating Teaching, Learning and Assessment*



*Poster designed and donated by one of our families Summer 2023*

“Children learn and develop more from birth to five years old than at any other time in their lives. If children are at risk of falling behind the majority, the best time to help them to catch up and keep up is in the early years. Every child can make progress, if they are given the right support. When we give every child the best start in their early years, we give them what they need today. We also set them up with every chance of success tomorrow. “

## The curriculum: what we want children to learn

- The curriculum is a top-level plan of everything the early years setting wants the children to learn.
- Planning to help every child to develop their language is vital.
- The curriculum needs to be ambitious. Careful sequencing will help children to build their learning over time.
- Young children’s learning is often driven by their interests. Plans need to be flexible.
- Babies and young children do not develop in a fixed way. Their development is like a spider’s web with many strands, not a straight line.
- Depth in early learning is much more important than covering lots of things in a superficial way.

*From Development Matters 2021*

Our curriculum is a hybrid curriculum, combining play-based learning, with 13 curriculum goals, core experiences and curricular structures/routines.

### Play Based Learning

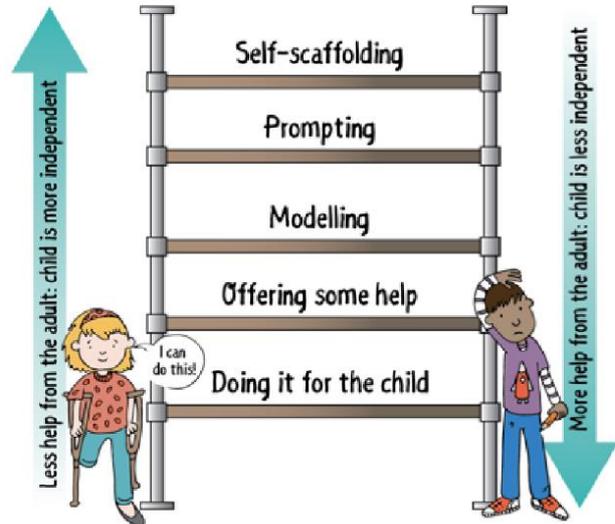
- Play based learning is at the heart of the curriculum at Lydalls. The curriculum ‘starts from the child’, building on the skills, interests and understanding for each individual learner.
- Adults are considered children’s most importance resource. High quality adult interactions are central to children’s learning. Adults guide and support children’s learning by:
  - Engaging in conversations which enrich children’s vocabulary.
  - Sustained Shared Thinking:

<b>Tune in:</b> listen carefully to what the child/children are saying, observe their body language and what they are doing	<b>Show genuine interest:</b> give your whole attention, maintain eye contact, affirm, smile, nod
<b>Respect the children’s own decisions and choices</b>	<b>Invite children to elaborate:</b> “I really want to know more about this”
<b>Recapping:</b> “So you think that...”	<b>Offering your own experience:</b> “I like to listen to music when I cook tea at home”
<b>Clarifying ideas:</b> “Right Darren, so you think this stone will melt if I boil it in water”	<b>Suggesting:</b> “You might like to try doing it this way”
<b>Reminding:</b> “Don’t forget that you said that this stone would melt if I boil it”	<b>Using encouragement to further thinking:</b> “You really have thought about where to put this door in the palace but where will you put the windows?”
<b>Offering an alternative viewpoint:</b> “Maybe Goldilocks wasn’t naughty when she ate the porridge.”	<b>Speculating:</b> “Do you think the three bears would have liked Goldilocks to come to live with them as their friend?”
<b>Reciprocating:</b> “Thank goodness that you were wearing wellies when you jumped in those puddles. Look at my feet they are soaking wet”	<b>Asking open questions:</b> “How did you..? Why does this..? What happens next..? What do you think..?”
<b>Modelling thinking aloud:</b> “I’m not sure if this will work but I remember when...”	

*Thanks to Marion Dowling, Early Education*

- Guiding children towards the core knowledge, skills and understanding set out in our 13 curriculum goals (please see our Curriculum Goals document available on our website by clicking [here](#)).
- Constantly planning and assessing ‘in the moment’ as they work with children and supporting them to take next steps in their learning as they do so.

- Using strategies on our [Communication and Interaction Poster](#) to support learners who are younger and/or need more help to develop their language skills (see appendix I).
- We [scaffold](#) children’s learning. This means that we support them to do something they cannot yet do independently, reducing the amount of support over time as they gain competence and confidence.



*Credited to Sheringham Nursery School*

- We use [Emotion Coaching](#) to support children in managing their feelings and emotions. You can view a video summary of the approach by clicking [here](#).

The steps we use in practice are:

STEP 1: Recognising, empathising, validating feelings and labelling them.

STEP 2: Exploring the issue, whilst also setting limits on behaviour.

STEP 3: Problem solving with children.

An example of these steps in action might be:

STEP 1: *“I can see you look really sad. It’s OK to be sad that your brother can’t come to nursery with you.”*

STEP 2: *“I understand – you wanted to keep playing on the scooter with your brother... it’s OK to be sad about that...it’s not OK to kick the door”*

STEP 3: *“Let’s see how we can sort out this problem. What do you think?...[If a child needs help to think of solutions, we suggest some]...We could draw him a picture together or take a photo of you coming down the firefighter’s pole to show him later. What do you choose?”*

- Staff measure and support children’s [Wellbeing and Involvement](#) using the [Leuven scales](#) (see appendix II). When there are high levels of wellbeing and involvement, we know that deep level learning is taking place.
- We use [Backwards Chaining](#) to help children gain a new skill. For example, when putting on a pair of socks children would do the last step of pulling the socks up their leg, then the second last step of pulling the socks over the heel, then the third last step of pushing toes into socks, then the final step of hooking thumbs into the sock to hold it open and pushing own toes in.

### BACKWARD CHAINING



- 1** Break down task into smaller steps.
- 2** Complete all steps for child.  
(except last step)
- 3** Practice last step to mastery.
- 4** Complete all steps for child.  
(except last 2 steps)
- 5** Practice second to last step.
- 6** Repeat until they can do all steps.

- Staff use and carry a range of **visual aids** to support children. These include SCERTS cards, good listening cards, countdown spots and Makaton sign language (you can watch a useful introduction to Makaton video by clicking this [link](#)).

### **Curriculum Goals**

We have 13 ambitious curriculum goals which have been carefully designed by the significantly experienced team at Lydalls, with reference to the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, Development Matters and Birth to 5 Matters. The goals are broken down into learning which is carefully sequenced over children's time at Lydalls and ensure that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Some children will need additional support to help them achieve the curriculum goals. Staff carefully plan for these children during staff and assessment meetings and the curriculum can be broken down into smaller steps to help identified children make progress where this is appropriate. Some children with very high-level Special Educational Need (SEN) have an individually planned for and highly differentiated curriculum.

The curriculum goals ensure full coverage of the entire statutory educational programmes (see [EYFS Statutory Framework](#) pp. 8-10). The design of our curriculum goals reflects the importance of the prime areas of learning to children's success across the curriculum and the interconnected way in which young children learn (see *The Tickell Report - The Early Years: Foundations for life, health and learning, An Independent Report on the Early Years Foundation Stage to Her Majesty's Government by Dame Clare Tickell*, pp. 92-98).

Our 13 curriculum goals are

1. Express curiosity and understanding through effective language and communication skills
2. Know 8 nursery rhymes/songs
3. Take a turn
4. 'Pretend with friends'
5. Resolve
6. Independence
7. Healthy body and healthy mind
8. 'Physical Big 6'
9. Write my name
10. Tell a Story
11. Blend and segment
12. Play a counting maths game
13. Create and design

*Please see our Curriculum Goals document for details of how the requisite core knowledge, skills and understanding for each goal is sequenced across children's time at Lydalls Nursery School.*

### **Core Experiences**

There are a range of core experiences which support children's learning and provide cultural capital at Lydalls.

- Core Stories
  - A key feature of the curriculum at Lydalls are book weeks, which take place five times a year and immerse children in the language and plot of a particular story. Children entitled to Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) are given copies of each of the five books annually. All children are able to borrow copies of the books from our lending library. Many children at Lydalls speak English as an Additional Language (EAL), something we celebrate within our school community. We work with families to record versions of the books in home languages to share at nursery.
- Forest School

- All children in the main nursery school attend Forest School on a weekly basis. This is led by our level 3 qualified Forest School lead, Sally Oxley. Forest School is a child-centred learning process, providing, hands-on experiences in the natural environment. Children also access adult led learning during this session – for example, when telling stories around the campfire or collecting items for a natural collage.
- Theatre Experience
  - Where there is an appropriate production available, our older children visit the theatre to see a show in the autumn term. We have also put on our own shows for children, basing them closely around one of our core stories.
- Hatching eggs and raising chicks
- Farm visit
- Growing plants, fruits and vegetables

### **Curricular Structures and Routines**

- We recognise the importance of adult led learning to children’s development and progress across the curriculum.
- All children in the main nursery school take part in a daily carpet time. We typically sing songs and nursery rhymes during carpet time. Sometimes we may tell stories (for example during a book week), or look at material related to the focus learning plan that week (for example, watching a stop-motion clip of a bean growing).
- All children in the main nursery school take part in a daily group time with their key person. Planning for group times is led by key people and follows the learning needs of particular groups over their time at nursery. When children first start nursery, group times are focused on routines and expectations, singing nursery rhymes, sharing stories, and playing SPIRALS (a communication and language support program) inspired games to support with confidence and proficiency in communication and language. During group times children also regularly practice phonics and maths skills (as daily ‘warm-ups’), as well as cover the full curriculum. Children build up a sequence of learning over a week or more. For example, they may plant cress seeds, examine them carefully with magnifiers as they start to grow, read books about growing plants, learn the names for different parts of a plant, experiment with what plants need to grow and make sandwiches using the cress they have grown.
- Children in the 2 year old base have a shorter daily group time, typically focused around singing songs and rhymes, stories, music, movement and ring games.

### **The Characteristics of Effective Learning**

In the Early Years we are sowing the seeds of a lifetime’s learning and the Characteristics of Effective Learning are all about the skills, attitudes and positive dispositions to learning that we support children to develop at Lydalls Nursery School. In order for effective learning to take place, children need to feel secure and safe in their environment through their relationships with key people. Children are supported by adults to learn actively through play and exploration and to have a carefully planned environment that enables this to happen. Children are supported by practitioners to develop resilience, persistence and perseverance and to make progress by being encouraged to make connections in their learning and experiences.

At Lydalls Nursery School we facilitate The Characteristics of Effective Learning through our interactions and conversations with children using a whole range of teaching strategies that we call ‘sustained shared thinking’. We listen carefully to the children’s ideas and interests, we help children to problem solve, we talk about our experiences, we help children to explain their thinking and ideas, we help children to try their ideas out, we encourage children to try different approaches, we show children new skills, we praise children for the process and not just the finished product (e.g. instead of saying ‘well done’ we

might say 'you really kept trying on the monkey bars, I saw how you can reach for the next bar now') and we ask open ended questions. Above all, we encourage children to make choices and take decisions, letting the children lead their learning as long as it is safe to do so!

The characteristics of effective learning are also woven into our 13 curriculum goals.

The Early Years Foundation Stage document 'Development Matters' (2021) describes the Characteristics of Effective Learning as follows;

- **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

### **Planning for Sequences of Learning**

- The curriculum goals and the requisite core skills, knowledge and understanding are mapped over year. Some learning is scheduled in advance (such as hatching chicks in the spring term, growing plants in the summer, book weeks). Other aspects of the curriculum goals are planned to respond to individual cohorts' needs. We reflect in our planning meetings on children's learning needs and interests and respond accordingly with our curriculum focus. We track carefully how the curriculum sequence is developing for individual cohorts to ensure that learning is planned for carefully and methodically, over time.
- Each week the adults plan a focus for the main nursery school and 2-year-old base and key people plan for their own group times. We have a hybrid approach to planning: our focus may be subject based (e.g. numbers and counting), text based (starting from a story) or based around a theme (e.g. when we hatch chicks). This enables us to be responsive to the learning needs of our young children.
- Alongside the focus plan, we create 'room plans' for each area of the main nursery school and 2 year old base. Many of the learning activities relate to the focus plan, whilst others reflect our observations of children's learning needs across the curriculum. These room plans contain details of our *enhanced provision*.
- Adults constantly observe, plan and assess 'in the moment' as they work with children, supporting them to take next steps in their learning as they do so. For example, an adult sitting alongside a child who is drawing may observe they need support with their pencil grip, model adding features (e.g. eyes and nose to a face) and support a child to find their name card and write their name. They may also add additional resources to enhance learning 'in the moment', such as adding further resources to support a child who is experimenting with floating and sinking in the water tray.

### **Continuous and Enhanced Provision**

We plan our learning environment carefully. Our continuous provision is made up of the high-quality resources that are available to the children every day. These resources become familiar to the children, they know where to find them and they expect that these are always available to them. This familiarity supports the children's developing independence in the environment and their ability to self-direct their own learning and creativity.

The enhanced provision are the resources that are 'added extras' that we put into the environment to further develop and extend children's learning across the curriculum, provoking children's lines of exploration, enquiry, imagination and language development. The enhanced provision comes from our observations of the children and their interests or an adult-led intention to introduce a new experience, activity or skill to the children. Our enhanced provision is detailed on our room plans.

We have a lot of resources available to us at Lydalls and not all of them are available at all times. Each week we select which ones to use in enhanced provision to extend and enrich learning very carefully. We know that a 'less is more' approach to organising the learning space, where enhanced provision is carefully planned, enables children to focus, engage and have high levels of involvement in their learning.

## Assessment: checking what children have learnt

- Assessment is about noticing what children can do and what they know. It is not about lots of data and evidence.
- Effective assessment requires practitioners to understand child development. Practitioners also need to be clear about what they want children to know and be able to do.
- Accurate assessment can highlight whether a child has a special educational need and needs extra help.
- Before assessing children, it's a good idea to think about whether the assessments will be useful.
- Assessment should not take practitioners away from the children for long periods of time.

*From Development Matters 2021*

### Assessment

- Much of our assessment is formative and ongoing on a daily basis; it facilitates short term planning based on a sound knowledge of the child's strengths and needs. It informs 'in the moment' support that adults give to children to enable them to take next steps in their learning.
- During our weekly staff meeting, staff raise children who they have observed are needing more support and strategies to provide for their learning are agreed.
- We make summative assessments using Development Matters on a termly basis and on children's entry to nursery. These are agreed upon and moderated during assessment meetings with key people. It is important that all assessment is used to move children's learning forward. The summative assessments we make are used to create an 'Intervention and Support' document, where agreed strategies to support identified children are detailed and used within the nursery to facilitate children to make next steps in their learning. We also use this data to look at trends within the nursery, enabling us to adapt our curriculum planning and sequencing to meet the needs of individual cohorts.
- Assessment is based on mental observations, as well as photos, videos and written observations added to children's Tapestry learning journals. Adults record significant pieces of learning on Tapestry, with the combined aim of informing their assessments of children's learning and bringing children's learning to life in a shared way with parents and carers.
- Assessment is objective and as unambiguous as possible, based on explicit and commonly agreed criteria (Development Matters), and is free from stereotyping, generalisation and bias, particularly in respect of gender, race, religion, class and special educational needs.
- 2-Year-Old Progress Checks are undertaken, in line with the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- A leavers report is written for children leaving the main nursery school to join primary schools or other settings.
- We use additional assessments in a targeted way to assist our work with children needing additional support with their learning. These include WellComm and Derbyshire language assessments.
- Children with high-level SEN needs have a Developmental Journal. These assessments are used to inform their next steps, pupil profiles and learning outcomes, to enable them to make progress across the curriculum.
- We carefully track English language development for children who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL) using our 'Learning EAL at Lydalls Nursery School' assessment, which has been adapted from the Oxfordshire County Council Early Years publication: *Guidance for Early Years practitioners on*

*supporting children learning.* This enables us to provide targeted support to children and further differentiate the curriculum as appropriate.

### **Intervention Groups**

We use our assessments of children's learning to provide additional support for identified children. We run intervention groups to support children where these are appropriate. We typically run a Language and Communication intervention group, based around the SPIRALS program, as well as a maths support group. Other intervention groups have focussed on reading (sharing stories) and fine motor development.

### **Working with Parents and Carers**

- We value parents and carers as the first and most enduring educators of their children and work closely with families to form an effective working partnership.
- Children have a welcome visit prior to starting at Lydalls, where families meet with their child's key person. During this meeting we seek to understand what is important to children and their families and any support they feel they may need at this stage. We also host a new parent's meeting and a new children's tea party, and all children must do at least one stay and play visit to nursery before starting (we have open visiting hours for new starters 9.30-10.30 and 1.30-2.30 every day). This is to enable children to settle into nursery, a key foundation for their wellbeing and subsequent progress across the curriculum.
- Parents/carers are able to talk to staff informally during drop-off a pick-up times, as well as during parent's evenings, which are held twice a year. Staff frequently support families with ideas and guidance around subjects such as the use of a dummy, toilet training, or nighttime routines during the school day.
- The home learning environment is further supported by ideas and website links on group leaders weekly 'Share with Parent Planning', as well as on Facebook or via Parentmail.
- We act to offer support as early as possible when it is recognised that children and/or their families require additional support. As well as supporting families through the 'Early Help' process we have developed a 'Working Together' plan. This acts as a means of recording actions that are agreed by home and school following a meeting between families and the SENCO/deputy SENCO and/or their child's key person. This may include sign posting to and/or making referrals to other agencies.
- Children who have SEN meet with the SENCO and/or deputy SENCO at least three times a year to discuss progress and set or adapt outcomes.
- We recommend to all families the 50 Things To Do Before You are 5 website/app and the Tiny Happy People website to help their child learn at home.



[Click here for website link](#)



[Click here for website link](#)

## Strategies to support Communication and Interaction development

<p><b>Descriptive Commentary</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a running commentary of what the child is doing as they are doing it.</li> <li>Keep language simple and repetitive.</li> <li>Match your language to the child's level. E.G. Use 1 word to comment if the child uses single words when they speak, 2 if they use 2 etc.</li> <li>Add sound effects to play e.g. 'moo', 'brum', particularly if children are not yet using any spoken language.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Match Plus 1</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Match what the child says and add a word. E.G. if the child says 'cat', you could say 'cat gone' or 'cat running'. If the child says 'Mummy car', you could say 'Mummy's red car'.</li> <li>Add verbs e.g. 'running', 'eating', 'sleeping' as these are essential language 'building blocks', from which children can later build longer, more complex sentences.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Parallel Play</b></p> 	<p>Copy what the child is doing and saying in their play (this includes copying words, babbling and other sounds they might make). This is a powerful way to help children begin to understand that interests and attention on a task can be shared and that their actions and the sounds they make have an impact on someone else. This is a simple but incredibly powerful way to encourage social relationships and communication.</p> <p>E.G. - Mirror the child as they push a car back and forth across the floor. If they lie down to play, lie down too. When they reach for another car, you get another one too. Let them lead the play.</p>	
<p><b>Anticipation Games</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Play 'Ready Steady... Go' in a range of situations, letting children's interests lead. E.G. – a child is interested in the water sloshing towards him as a group of children clean the water tray with brushes. Adult says 'Ready Steady.... Go', as they brush the water towards him.</li> <li>Once the game is established, wait for a response before saying 'GO' – this could be the child giving eye contact, making a sound or saying a word.</li> <li>Other anticipation games include songs such as 'Round and Round the garden' (pausing before the 'tickle you....' part) and 'Row Row Row your boat' (pausing before making a screaming noise after 'don't forget to scream').</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Turn Taking games</b></p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Turn taking games can be played in lots of ways – e.g. posting items into a box, rolling a ball, rolling cars down a ramp, tipping sand into a container with a spoon.</li> <li>Use children's interests and play to lead and guide your intervention.</li> <li>Use the language of turn taking. E.G. 'Fred's turn', 'Steph's turn'.</li> <li>Initially play with 1 adult and 1 child.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Choices</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase vocabulary and opportunities to communicate by offering choices.</li> <li>E.G. Ask 'milk or water?' at snack time, holding out or pointing to each one in turn as you say the word.</li> <li>Children may reach for, point to or make a sound to indicate their choice.</li> <li>Give the child the language again once they have made a choice, using the word level they are working at. E.G. 'Orange' at a single word level.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Recasting</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support sound production by repeating back to the child clearly and correctly what they have said. E.G. Child: 'ilk ease', adult: 'milk please'</li> <li>Recasting can also be used to support children's grammar. E.G. Child: 'I goed shop', adult: 'you went to the shop'.</li> <li>Do <b>NOT</b> get children to repeat it back to you again. It is enough for them to hear it clearly from you and may knock their confidence if you correct them in this way.</li> </ul>	

## Appendix II

The Leuven Scale for Well-being		
Level	Well-being	Signals
1	Extremely low	The child clearly shows signs of discomfort such as crying or screaming. They may look dejected, sad, frightened or angry. The child does not respond to the environment, avoids contact and is withdrawn. The child may behave aggressively, hurting him/ herself or others.
2	Low	The posture, facial expression and actions indicate that the child does not feel at ease. However, the signals are less explicit than under level 1 or the sense of discomfort is not expressed the whole time.
3	Moderate	The child has a neutral posture. Facial expression and posture show little or no emotion. There are no signs indicating sadness or pleasure, comfort or discomfort.
4	High	The child shows obvious signs of satisfaction (as listed under level 5). However, these signals are not constantly present with the same intensity.
5	Extremely high	The child looks happy and cheerful, smiles, cries out with pleasure. They may be lively and full of energy. Actions can be spontaneous and expressive. The child may talk to him/herself, play with sounds, hum, sing. The child appears relaxed and does not show any signs of stress or tension. He/she is open and accessible to the environment. The child expressed self-confidence and self-assurance.

The Leuven Scale for Involvement		
Level	Involvement	Signals
1	Extremely low	Activity is simple, repetitive and passive. The child seems absent and displays no energy. They may stare into space or look around to see what others are doing.
2	Low	Frequently interrupted activity. The child will be engaged in the activity for some of the time they are observed, but there will be moments of non-activity when they will stare into space, or be distracted by what is going on around.
3	Moderate	Mainly continuous activity. The child is busy with the activity but at a fairly routine level and there are few signs of real involvement. They make some progress with what they are doing but don't show much energy and concentration and can be easily distracted.
4	High	Continuous activity with intense moments. The child's activity has intense moments and at all times they seem involved. They are not easily distracted.
5	Extremely high	The child shows continuous and intense activity revealing the greatest involvement. They are concentrated, creative, energetic and persistent throughout nearly all the observed period.