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My Time

Our Place

Belonging  
To The Environment

Being  
In The Moment

Becoming  
Me



# WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

## Helping children become effective learners

At North Islington Nursery School our aim is to ensure that our children become effective learners whilst they are here, for when they start school and throughout their lives.

We want children to develop a thirst for learning, to be inquisitive, to play and explore and to find out new things. We want children to develop resilience when things don't go as planned and we want children to be willing to have a go!

The Early Years Foundation Stage September 2021 sets out specific characteristics that enable effective learning.

**Playing and Exploring:** We enable children to play and explore by providing a beautiful and stimulating learning environment where resources are on hand and easily accessible. Resources and equipment is specifically chosen to be open ended and to support children's current interests. For example, the use of Treasure Baskets and heuristic play items (loose parts) which are frequently used in the baby room allow children to explore items using their senses. These resources also allow babies and younger toddlers to develop patterns in their play (Schemas). They can use resources to roll, line up, rotate and transport. Staff are always on hand to model play alongside the children and will observe and consider how best each child's play intentions can be supported. As staff play alongside children they will model self-talk, describing what they and the children are doing. This can encourage children to join in with talk or to simply listen and build up word meaning/vocabulary.

Playing and exploring focuses on process and not outcomes. Staff will praise children's efforts in their self-chosen play, and support them with challenges. It is the willingness to have a go, engage in play alone or with others, the thought processes during play and the thinking behind children's intentions that is the 'real' learning.







**Active Learning:** In order for children to become active learners (motivated and willing to learn), staff support them to develop their attention skills. Learning is stronger when a child focuses toward a goal and has the will and determination to achieve it. Staff support a child's ability to be an active learner through effectively interacting with them and by finding out what interests them. Staff will use resources to provoke interest and generate active learning – wanting to be involved and find out new things (developing sustained attention skills). We encourage children to keep on trying at things when they are difficult. We do this through encouragement and by recognising what they are trying to do and by joining in. We also ensure that children have the chance to repeat activities and return to learning opportunities that are challenging. When staff know that a child has accomplished a particular skill, they can build on that by providing more challenging learning opportunities thus extending their learning. This is not always done through focus teaching but through enhancing resources and encouragement of participation.

**Creating and Thinking Critically:** At North Islington Nursery School we want our children to be creative, to develop their imaginative skills and think beyond what is on front of them. We provide extended periods of free play for children to select resources to use freely and flexibly. Children are encouraged to select their own tools in art activities.

We do not enforce what they should make or draw but we may provide a provocation such as placing a bunch of flowers near to the painting easel. Paper, pens and paint is left for children to select and mix. We do not suggest what colours they should use or what size paper they should take. Choice allows for creativity and thinking ahead. We encourage children to explore and find out about the properties of materials and tools that they will then one day select for the right purpose.

Opportunities to construct, transport and design through block play and larger loose parts encourages creativity, working together and planning ahead. Staff encourage older to children to share their ideas in group play and support their learning by mutually developing strategies when problem solving.

Staff also ensure that learning experiences provide opportunities to explore what children have been thinking about and interested in. We can then take thinking one step further – staff model being a thinker - finding out together, being inquisitive, puzzled and when faced with questions, adults will respond by not answering straight away but by asking the child what they think. We try not to rush into answering children's questions for them. Allowing time and modelling being a thinker or a problem solver, enables children to be confident to have a go themselves.



# VISIONS AND AIMS

*Happy to be here*

## PARTNERSHIPS

In partnership with parents we effectively identify the needs of individual children

## SELF WORTH

Children develop self esteem, respect for each other, confidence, resilience and self worth

## RESPECT

Everyone feels valued, listened to and important as an individual

## INDEPENDENCE

Providing an environment where children are free to self select learning resources and direct their

## RESPECT

Fostering an ethos of respect, kindness and encouragement

## SUCCESS

We celebrate success and support children in discovering their individual strengths

## DIVERSITY

Diversity is celebrated and is as a way of finding out more about the world around us

## SHARING

Sharing agreed guidelines and policies to all that use the school

## EVALUATING

Evaluating all that we do to continue to improve practice and outcomes for children

## CURIOSITY

Children develop their own minds, with supportive adults who provide opportunities to develop questioning skills and enable active, confident learners

## STARTING FROM THE CHILD

Teaching is child centered, built upon what children already know, is stimulating, exciting, challenging and enables everyone to achieve their best

## PLAY

Understanding how the characteristics of effective learning help us to tune into children's learning



# PLAY, THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT AND LEARNING

Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals and solve problems. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults.

At North Islington Nursery School we ensure that children have the opportunity to play inside and outside (free flow) for extended periods of time which contributes to children's well-being, development and learning. Because we aim to not always direct children's play, children are free to explore and experiment, take risks, be challenged and are not confined to knowing the right answer. Adults carefully select resources to ensure that children can return to play that they enjoy most and what will support them to build on prior learning.



***'In an enabling environment, children choose to play, and are in charge of their play – what to do, what to use, what it is about, whether to play alone or with someone else, how long to play. They experience autonomy and can develop confidence in their own agency through their ability to make choices and take responsibility. Having freedom and time to play in an appropriately stimulating and resourced environment which is finely tuned for babies, toddlers and young children supports development and learning across all areas. Outdoor spaces particularly provide rich opportunities for sharing ideas and feelings with peers. Playing with others, such as an interested adult who participates without directing the play or with other children, is likely to foster and extend learning. Playing together often introduces new elements of play, as well as bringing the challenge of communicating ideas to each other.'*** Birth to 5 Matters 2021

***'Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals and solve problems. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults.'*** Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, EYFS reforms early adopter version 2020



# SCHEMAS

The very youngest children in our school will often develop patterns of repeated behaviour within their play which are called Schemas. Staff observe children closely to look out for these schemas in order to provide further learning opportunities which match children's fascinations. Resources and materials presented, will closely match the play patterns that children are developing. For example, the fascination of Enveloping could be supported by the provision of sheer scarves for placing gently over faces or by the provision of boxes and other interesting containers with lids to place objects in to. Staff spend time collecting good quality and as natural materials as possible for our young children to use whilst developing specific patterns of play.

Children in the baby room spend time finding out about objects that roll by exploring the schema of rotation. Lots of baskets are always on hand in the baby room for those that love to transport objects!



## HOW DO WE ORGANISE LEARNING?

***Children are unique and holistic learners, thriving within environments that support their individual and diverse motivations, interests and needs. They require a wealth of possibilities within varies contexts, and this is best supported within stimulating and challenging environments that value exploration and play.*** Birth to 5 Matters 2021

At North Islington Nursery School our classrooms are set up in a workshop style way so that all resources are easily accessible to children. We encourage children to be independent when selecting resources and we ensure that materials are attractively displayed to encourage participation. Children have opportunities for real choice and autonomy which together with time, allow children to fully immerse themselves in independent exploration and enquiry.

Within this play, children are given the opportunity to also connect with both other children and staff. The enabling environments in all three classrooms ensure that children benefit from the opportunity to choose their own learning through play. Children are free to move between each well-resourced play space both within the inside classroom and when outside or from inside to outside.

Staff pay careful attention to children's ages, stages of development and interests to ensure that resources and play opportunities encourage participation whilst providing the opportunity for children to develop those characteristics of effective learning. Each classroom is spacious and children have direct access to the outside gardens. Resources are clearly displayed and it is our intent that spaces 'make sense' to children. Children become familiar with how to use the resources safely and effectively.





Every space is set up to ensure that children are exploring and learning even when an adult is not on hand to support play.



Books are placed in every area to encourage and develop listening and attention and reading skills. A mixture of fiction and non-fiction texts allow children to find out about a wide range of subjects.



Mark making opportunities are also encouraged with the use of clipboards across the inside and outside environments.





The classrooms are mainly static in appearance. We believe that learning should not be interrupted. If a child needs tape or scissors, then they know exactly where to obtain these resources and they are kept in the same place to ensure consistency.

By observing children, staff get to know how they learn, their interests and stage of development in the 7 areas of learning. This knowledge is shared with colleagues to ensure that purposeful enhancements are made to our continuous provision. This means that learning opportunities build on what children already know and can do and enable them to achieve the next step in their learning and development.

Children's work is displayed on neutral backgrounds. Their work adds the colour and vibrancy to each classroom. Children are encouraged to share their hard work with everyone and displays provide the perfect opportunity for this.





# PLANNING IN THE MOMENT

At North Islington Nursery School, we follow an in the moment planning approach to teaching and learning. Children are encouraged to develop their naturally inquisitive minds in well planned and appropriately resourced classrooms. Adults form close relationships with children and spend time observing them playing and exploring. During this play, staff will know when to sit back and when to intervene to create a 'teachable moment'

We know that children are learning when they are focussed and engaged. This level of involvement is most often seen when children are doing things that they enjoy and have chosen for themselves. By facilitating and promoting child led play, it allows for long periods of time where children can be engaged in activities of their own choosing. Adults respond to children's interests by joining in their play and enriching it with language, suggestions, challenges and shared knowledge.

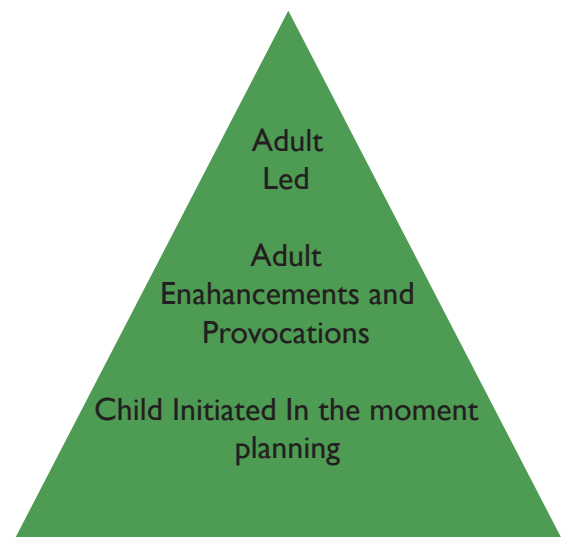
Staff are committed to ensuring that interactions with children are purposeful. Even young babies are capable of sustaining attention during an interaction with an adult. It is during these interactions that adults will 'teach'.

Planning ahead means that children may have to wait to perhaps accomplish a new skill in an activity that they enjoy. By planning in the moment, staff are on hand to add resources, allow for a new direction in learning and enable the child to achieve the next step in learning there and then. This means that the cycle of Observation - Assessment - Planning is all done at once.

Rather than planning what we intend to do, staff record 'teachable moments' these recordings depict what a child has achieved, learned, understood during an interaction with an adult. This information is used to continue to build on what children know and helps staff to continue to enhance the learning environment appropriately.

Although our intent is to very much allow children to lead their own learning, we acknowledge that there is a place for carefully planned activities.

These planned activities are delivered in the form of learning opportunities at group times, our language groups, activities led by our artist in residence, music and movement sessions, cooking and games. Adults will also 'plan' by enhancing provision as previously mentioned. These enhancements to provision or provocations as we call them, are deliberate and are intended to provide new ideas and concepts for children to explore.



***Teaching as described by Ofsted (July 2015): 'Teaching should not be taken to imply a 'top down' or formal way of working. It is a broad term which covers the many different ways in which adults help young children learn. It includes their interactions with children during planned and child-initiated play and activities: communicating and modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling, providing a narrative for what they are doing, facilitating and setting challenges. It takes account of the equipment they provide and the attention to the physical environment as well as the structure and routines of the day that establish expectations. Integral to teaching is how practitioners assess what children know, understand and can do as well as take account of their interests and dispositions to learning (characteristics of effective learning), and use this information to plan children's next steps in learning and monitor their progress.'***



# THE ROLE OF THE ADULT AND EFFECTIVE INTERACTIONS

## The Key Person

At North Islington Nursery School we aim to create safe, warm, respectful and loving relationships with all of the children that attend. These relationships enable children to thrive. Staff ensure that children are happy and secure and that their physical and emotional needs are met. Our key person approach enables us to ensure that right from the start, the 'special' adult/s can begin forming a secure relationship with each of their key children which reflects that of a family relationship.

We begin this journey with home visits where the key person and an additional staff member visits the family home of their key child. It provides an opportunity to 'get to know' the child in a familiar environment. At these visits, staff find out vital information to ensure that when the child begins at the setting, an enabling environment has been created for them.

Staff can prepare their favourite toys and activities and on day one, there will be familiar faces that a child recognises from the visit to their home.

The key person becomes a safe base for a child to explore from and the key person is responsible for supporting parents in settling their child for the first time, sharing updates on their child's development by being part of the triangle of trust— Home-Child-School.

During the time that a child is in one class, the key person will ensure that all of the staff know about them, their likes, dislikes, what they can already do, etc. This allows for the environment to be enabling and to ensure that the child's needs are met right from the start.

When a child transitions from one room to another, their key person, in partnership with parents/carers, will hand over to a new key person during a transition meeting. Similarly, when a child is transitioning to

primary school, the key person will take the child to visit their new setting and handover to their new class teacher.

## Effective interactions

***'Warm, trusting relationships with knowledgeable adults support children's learning more effectively than any amount of resources.'*** Birth to 5 Matters 2021.

When a child joins the setting, it is important for them to feel secure and for staff to ensure that their well-being is a priority. A child who feels secure, acknowledged and cared for will be ready to learn and flourish. Once this foundation is solid, the adults working alongside the children begin by supporting children's learning by knowing what they can already do and have achieved whilst introducing new concepts, ideas and learning opportunities.

One of our key principles in the way in which we 'teach' at North Islington is to allow children to take the lead. We understand that children learn best when they are in control of what they are doing/wanting to achieve so we ensure that time is spent observing children and finding out about them; what fascinates them and their intentions. Once we know this, we can join in and support children's play without taking over or making the agenda of learning fit what we want children to do.

As skilled practitioners, staff will often wait to be invited into children's play. Sometimes it may not be suitable to 'interfere' so we wait. Even babies will let us know when our attention is wanted or not. A gesture, a smile or a giggle will allow the adult to know the right time to join in. Once staff are involved in playing alongside children they use their sound knowledge of child development to sensitively 'teach' new concepts and ideas, to challenge and to pose open ended questions to extend learning in a holistic way.

Knowing that an adult is interested and wanting to join in is a powerful experience for a child. It shows respect from the adult and develops confidence and self-worth in children.

At North Islington we focus on The Spark! This is, what has captured the child's imagination? What is it they are doing and learning? How can we best support, extend and challenge this learning?



What resources can we provide to enhance our environment for this particular child/group of children?

Purposeful interactions between adults provide opportunities for:

**Getting to know and understand a child better** – being able to effectively provide a child with what they need, emotionally and physically.

**Modelling language** – children will be exposed to new words, the correct phonetic, semantic and grammatical models of language.

**Modelling thinking** – being able to support children to pause, ponder, think about what they already know and make sense of the world.

**Scaffolding** – the gap between what a child can achieve on their own and what they could achieve with adult support.

**Affirming and consolidating learning** – not rushing learning but taking time to ensure solid foundations for learning are built

**Extending children's knowledge and understanding** – adding something physical to the environment or by offering suggestions, a thought or posing a question to build naturally upon what a child has said or done.



# PARENTS AS PARTNERS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

***‘Research tells us that regardless of the quality of settings, the most important predictor of children’s future outcomes is the quality of the home learning environment.’***

Birth to 5 Matters 2021.

It is our aim to develop a respectful partnership with parents/carers to develop ways in which we can support learning both at home and in the setting. We believe that parent/carers are a child’s first educator and will be best placed to inform us about their child. Using this information we can begin preparing the learning environment for each child, building on what we know about them and the information that parents share with us. We encourage parents to continue sharing information with us at different points of the school year so that we stay informed about what is important to each child.

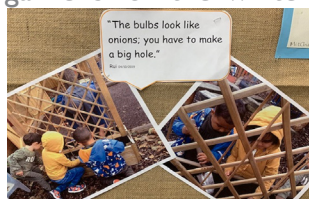
At North Islington Nursery School, we encourage regular opportunities for parents/carers to join in with their child’s learning. We ask for parents to provide information on All About Me sheets each term which helps staff begin thinking about enhancements for continuous provision. We also share our knowledge of children with their parents through our use of profile books. More formal feedback is given termly where staff meet with parents and talk in depth about the progress that their child is making.

Linked to children’s interests and fascinations and also to seasons and celebrations, parents often come into school to read, cook, sing and share knowledge with children. Our social events which take place after school and on weekends ensure that parents explore new learning opportunities with their children. Each year we hold **International Evening** where we celebrate food, music and dance from around the world.

Adults attending make food traditional to their home country and children spend the time also cooking and preparing food from different countries and traditions.



Fun Friday's are held each month and offer the opportunity for parents to come into school and play and learn alongside their children. We often theme these sessions around the seasons/celebrations or the content is related to an area of development that parents want to understand more about. For example, each October our Fun Friday is held to encourage parents with their children to prepare our gardens for the winter. This will involve preparing the vegetable garden, planting bulbs and also making full use of nature by creating art work with fallen leaves and pine cones etc.



At the setting we aim to ensure that ALL children and their families are treated fairly and that the opportunities that we offer to support well-being, care, learning and development are provided to enable ALL children to achieve today and for the future.

Sometimes, inclusive practice means making changes and adaptations so that achievement can be made. Not all children learn in the same way and some will need more support and time than others.



Sometimes, children may need additional teaching support whilst they are at the nursery school in order to ensure that they make the best possible progress that they can. Staff use their knowledge of child development and information from parents to identify those children who would benefit from additional support and intervention. At North Islington we are able to offer daily language groups to support children develop listening and attention skills, to build vocabulary and understanding of language. We want children to gain confidence using spoken language, to be able to express themselves and to voice their views and opinions. Staff work closely with our link Speech and Language Therapist and Educational Psychologist to ensure that the intervention is purposeful and impacts positively on children's communication and language skills.

We know how important children's emotional well-being is. Children who feel safe and secure and are able to manage their feelings and emotions in an age appropriate way, will be in a better position to learn and take on board new ideas and ways of thinking. We work closely with a Play Therapist and staff from CAMHS to ensure that our children are given support in managing feelings and emotions.

## INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

At North Islington Nursery School we are committed to valuing and respecting the diversity of individuals, the families and the community that we serve. The setting meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2021 which states that '...no child or family is discriminated against in terms of the protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership.' We value and celebrate diversity and strive to use these differences as teaching points. We want children and their families to be proud of who they are – their voice matters to us.

Staff are confident in using books and stories to tackle sensitive issues around race, religion, gender and sexual orientation. We use circle time and key person time to listen to children and create opportunities to talk.



We also provide small circle time's and one to one work to support children's well-being.

Our resident artist works with identified and all other children that show interest, to develop their confidence in communication and language which she promotes through art. She leads on work with clay, colour mixing, photography, wood work and modelling. During these activities, children are encouraged to comment on what they are doing, there is shared sense of fun, awe and wonder. Children who are relaxed in play will always be more inclined to gesture, comment or chat freely about what they are enjoying.

## OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT

As staff interact with children, they observe and find out what children can do. They use this information to create snap shots of learning to share with each other and to share with parents. We begin with collecting information about children at the home visit, and then during the settling in process. Over time, observations are documented to build up a picture of what a child has achieved. This type of assessment is ongoing and provides staff with an up to date picture of how children are working towards developmental milestones. This assessment informs the planning of the environment and enables staff to provide effective support in extending children's learning through play.

When a child turns 2 years old, staff meet with their parents/carers for a progress review meeting where progress and achievement is discussed (checking that children are meeting expected, developmental milestones).

Each term every child is a 'focus child' for a week (2 weeks for part time children). During this time the adults working in the room will liaise with the parents/carers of the focus child to collect relevant information about their learning and development at home to find out if any special events/family moments are happening. This information provides staff with a starting point for talk and conversation and helps build up a child's learning journey that is shared between home and school.

Also, within these 'special books' we collect photos from home and school and staff and children together, select pieces of work to stick into the books which are then shared at group times and can be taken home.



At the end of each term staff use their knowledge about each child and documents such as Development Matters and Birth to Five Matters to support them in summarising children's progress which is then shared at a review meeting with parents/carers.

This information is used to decide on priorities for learning for the next term. Priorities may be individual or for a group of children. Sometimes, priorities reflect teaching and may create a training opportunity. The purpose of having an overview of children's attainment is to ensure that all children are given the opportunity to make the very best progress that they can.

## ROUTINE OF THE DAY

Although we promote free flow play and uninterrupted periods of child led play we also believe that routine is important in early years. Routine allows for babies and young children to know what is going to happen next. This supports the sense of security and emotional stability. Our routine of the day provides children with a context for learning. The daily routines and transition points provide opportunities for children to see how their world is organised and what they need to do to be successful within it. Each day provides some element of continuity and children know what to expect.

Our reception area provides a welcoming environment where children can sit with an adult and share a story whilst they are waiting to go into their classroom. We encourage those children that can, to hang their coats and find their names on the registration board. A warm greeting is given to both the child and their family/carer. This greeting is important and ensures that there is a smooth transition from home to school.

# A SEASONAL AND CULTURAL APPROACH TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

Breakfast, lunch and tea are provided at the same time every day. Older children are encouraged to help prepare for mealtimes by helping to lay tables. Meal times are a really important part of our daily routine. Staff encourage positive interactions with children and initiate conversation/talk about what children have been doing or about the meal that they are eating. Self help skills are encouraged. Our babies are supported to feed themselves and our toddlers and nursery aged children are encouraged to help themselves to food and water and to clear away their plates and cutlery after they have eaten. After eating, our children are encouraged to look into the mirror and wipe their hands and faces.



Snack times happen both in the morning and afternoon sessions. Babies sit together to eat their snack and join in with a short story telling session whilst they eat. In the toddler and nursery class, snack time is less formal. The children are encouraged to cut up their own fruit pieces and help themselves to crackers and water. In the nursery class the children are encouraged to wash up dirty cups and cutlery after their snack.

At the end of each morning and afternoon session each room hold group times. These sessions are valuable as direct teaching times. In the baby room, the groups are short but consists of songs, rhymes, stories and music. Coming together at that the end of each session enables children to be part of a more direct style of teaching – learning new words, developing listening and attention skills, finding out new things, singing songs and experiencing music and movement. In the nursery class, the adults use group times to develop letter and sounds knowledge, to learn about rhyme and alliteration and to develop a love for listening to and sharing stories.

Group times are also used to celebrate achievement. We share children's special books during group times and talk about what each of us have been doing, sharing photos and stories from home. Sessions such as these support the children's self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities.

Our nursery school is fortunate to welcome families from many different cultural backgrounds and we ensure that the beliefs and values that each of us holds informs our curriculum. North Islington Nursery School is a place where similarities and differences are celebrated and we ensure that our starting points for teaching and learning begin with what a child is most familiar with.

When a new child joins the setting they will be allocated a key person who will conduct a home visit. This visit allows staff to gather information about the child and their family. This information is then used to begin providing relevant resources and learning experiences right from the child's very first day at school. We may begin by making special family books or by creating a family photo wall so that children sense familiarity. Parents are encouraged to settle their child into school slowly and at this stage, to be on hand whenever needed. This partnership in children's learning is continued throughout the time that a child attends the setting.

Although we do not follow topics or themes, we do encourage children to notice changes around them. We use weather as a way of teaching children about the immediate world around them and changes in seasons offer a wealth of opportunities to learn about planting, growing, new life and religious celebrations. Every year the children are encouraged to observe first hand, the life cycle of a duck and a butterfly. We work with Living Eggs and Insect Lore to provide these hands on experiences for the children in all classrooms.



Also, each year we host a Saturday fun day with a visiting farm so that all children can come and handle goats, guinea pigs, a donkey, rabbits and other small farm animals.



Being situated in London, close by to the tube and train network, we are able to take children on outings to experience and explore new surroundings, visiting places such as London Zoo, Highgate Woods, The Natural History Museum, The Science Museum, Royal London Parks, Buckingham Palace and Changing of the Guards, The Tate Modern Art Gallery and the theatre.



We ensure that we base our visits on children's interests and fascinations and often we may go to more local places such as the café, other children's houses, the tube/train station, the local church or mosque, the bakery or similar shops etc.

Our calendar of celebrations and religious festivals ensures that staff are prepared in advance and can offer resources and learning experiences based on what children already know.

We use parents and familiar adults to come in to the classrooms and share their knowledge and experiences with children.

This may be through telling stories in home languages, cooking traditional food dishes with children or through dance and movement.

Simply setting up new resources linked to a cultural celebration or time of year is enough to spark interest.



## LEARNING OUTDOORS

Being outside is really important to everyone at North Islington Nursery School. Staff value the importance of the learning that takes place in our garden spaces and outdoor learning is fully integrated within our curriculum.

The spaces in the outside areas offer the potential for children to learn about the world around them and to develop skills on a much larger scale than inside. We try to ensure that outside learning offers different opportunities than those inside. For example, when outside, children have the opportunity to develop gross motor skills such as transporting and constructing with large and heavy blocks.



They have the opportunity to climb, balance, swing and roll. These types of skills are difficult to practice and refine when indoors so we ensure that our children have maximum time to be outside if that is what they choose. We do not have a set period of time for being outside. Our free flow policy enables children to choose which learning space that they want to be in and their play is not interrupted by calling children inside. The outside spaces are treated as classrooms and are just as important and valued by the staff as the inside.

Being outside is really important to everyone at North Islington Nursery School. Staff value the importance of the learning that takes place in our garden spaces and outdoor learning is fully integrated within our curriculum.

At North Islington Nursery School, we go outside in all kinds of weathers. Sunshades protect us from the sun during warmer times and waterproof clothing and wellies allow the children to go outside and jump in puddles and to build snowmen! When weathers are extreme, staff monitor how hot/cold children are to ensure they are comfortable and safe.



The environment outside is well cared for and provides opportunities for children to grow plants and vegetables which are used in cooking activities. It provides spaces for children to hide, whilst developing imaginative play games or to find a quiet spot to reflect and be calm. Many of the children who attend the school do not have an outside space at home so it is vitally important to provide an outside learning space that is fit for purpose, used and loved by all.



# CORE BOOKS

In both the toddler and nursery class we follow a core book approach. Quality texts are chosen each half term as our core book. The books are selected for different reasons depending on the cycle of the school year. At the beginning of the school year when children are settling in "Owl Babies" is often chosen as it introduces the theme of separating from a parent/carer but being reassured they will come back. Short, repetitive texts or those with a rhyme content are also chosen as they enable children to quickly become familiar with the books and to anticipate sentence endings.

The core book approach is shared with parents and children are encouraged to take these books home. Our core books are also used alongside visual aids such as magnetic story props and puppets to enable children to practice sequencing the story as they become more familiar. Key texts from the story including the title and character names are also used to support children in recognising letters and linking sounds to letters to begin reading.

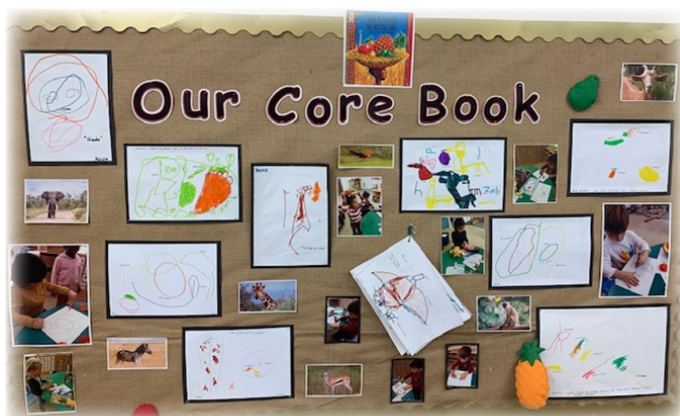
Big books are used to allow for shared reading opportunities. Adults model how to turn pages and children will be encouraged to follow text from left to right.

The use of core books often lends itself to cross curricula activities. When a book is correctly chosen it can be used to deliver many teaching opportunities such as mark making, using number and counting, learning about the world around them and for the development of personal, social and emotional skills.



## COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE

It is important to us that every child at North Islington is able to communicate effectively with the staff and their friends. We hope that all children are able to do this independently by the time that they leave us to go to reception class. There are lots of ways in which staff across the school support children to become effective communicators. We encourage the very youngest children to use gestures, and Makaton is our 'universal language across the school'. Staff model signs and say the corresponding word so that children become familiar with signs and words. In the baby room, signing and gestures enable children to express themselves and make simple requests, long before the use of single words.



Visual aids are used for some children so that words used are matched with a photograph. This allows children to communicate by pointing to a photograph when something is desired or chosen. This type of communication is also two way, and staff use photos to express a task/instruction such as to indicate that it is “Story Time” to support this transition. Visual aids also help children to feel more in control of communicating their learning/intentions by being able to express wishes or choices without frustration.

Some children will be provided with specific support around the development of their communication skills such as one to one time, language intervention groups or targeted support from our link Speech and Language Therapist. All of this work is always done in partnership with parents and provides extra opportunities for children to be effective communicators.

Staff play alongside children and offer language during play. Although our intention is not to question children, we offer language that will widen vocabularies and encourage children to be inquisitive. Staff differentiate language used with children to ensure that it is age/stage appropriate and relevant. Knowing what to say and when can be tricky and can put children off or make them feel put on the spot. This is why we subtly talk alongside children rather than directing too many questions at them. Pondering and wondering are far better ways of encouraging thinking and conversation than asking questions that require a ‘yes’, ‘no’ or a correct answer.

Staff at North Islington Nursery School will consistently model and facilitate, opportunities for developing attention and listening skills. Staff have high expectations of children’s ability to take notice of what others say and to also show that this is reciprocated. Staff model how to hold conversations and encourage children to wait their turn. Group times, even for the very young children, are used to develop children’s listening and attention skills. We play games to support children being able to tune into different environmental sounds and to model conversation and discussions.

We are very fortunate to have a wonderful selection of children’s fiction and non fiction books.

Stories are read frequently with children and they offer valuable points for developing vocabularies and conversations. Staff will provide books that match children’s interests and books are seen in all areas of the classroom. Songs and rhymes also offer the same rich opportunities for learning words and the meaning of words.

## Helicopter Stories

In the nursery class the staff have had bespoke training to be able to deliver Helicopter Stories. Simply, Helicopter Stories, allow children to dictate their own stories which adults write down, exactly as told and then later, groups of children gather and the stories are acted out. The ethos of this activity is that the child is at the centre of it. Children are encouraged to describe their own thoughts into stories that are then shared in a group.

The benefits of this approach:

- An inclusive, whole-class approach which values every child’s contribution;
- Facilitates high levels of engagement;
- Creates confidence and self-assurance;
- Supports the development of speaking skills as children express and share their ideas;
- Helps to develop accurate, active listening skills and understanding;
- Supports co-operative and collaborative and creative learning;
- Develops positive relationships within a shared storytelling experience;
- Allows children to explore early literacy and the power of words as they see their stories come to life, and develop their ability to use and adapt language to communicate;
- Offers children a bridge into the world of creative writing as they begin to see the links between the oral stories they compose and the words on a page.





Large scale painting on an easel, pulling and pushing equipment, transporting of big blocks and crates, digging with spades and opportunities to climb and swing develop muscles in children's arms that will be important for children when they start to write. Whilst engaging in these learning opportunities, children are of course learning how to work alongside and together with other children. Negotiating space is important and taking turns is vital when wanting to use equipment. Staff encourage children to develop spatial awareness and to pay attention to those around them. Modelling language to negotiate turn taking is helpful and resources such as a sand timer or a list of names enables children to take charge of turn taking.

Fine motor development is also an integral part of every day nursery life. Each classroom provides numerous opportunities for children to develop dexterity and strength using the small muscles in their hands. Play dough and other sensory play activities allow children to pinch, pat, roll, squeeze and form malleable resources and the use of dried materials such as salt and sand can be used to pour, scoop and fill whilst developing hand eye co-ordination skills.

We encourage children to try to put on their own clothes and to zip/button up their own coats. With younger children we will use the chain method – the adult starts off the doing of the zip and the child continues until the day that they can do it all for themselves.

Mark making opportunities are seen across the school – younger babies make marks with finger paints and cornflour, toddlers begin to enjoy mark making on a large scale – painting with water on the walls and floors outside and then our older children may begin to enjoy mark making with paint brushes, pens, pencils and chalks on the floor. Clipboards, easels and a chalk boards are evident inside and outside all of the classrooms and readily provide the opportunity to make marks as part of intended play.



## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Active learning is important at North Islington Nursery School. Staff consider how children can develop important physical skills as an integrated part of learning. Many opportunities are provided for children to develop gross motor skills whilst they play and learn both inside and outside. Resources to practice stepping, walking, climbing, jumping, swinging and running are on hand daily and are not restricted to certain times of the day. Often other teaching is incorporated into physical play such as turn taking in ring and running games or the use of positional language is developed during play on an obstacle course.

Appropriate challenge is provided and staff encourage children to have a go, being on hand to help if needed. An appropriate level of risk can be exhilarating and confidence boosting for children. It also develops perseverance and a desire to achieve.

Lots of opportunities to develop upper arm strength is on offer in the toddler and nursery class.

# PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

One of the most important aspects of being a child at North Islington is about receiving the support necessary to become a happy and independent learner. Staff focus on ensuring that children feel safe and secure through a key person system. Home visits and a slow, consistent settling in period allow children to become familiar with the setting, the children and staff. Staff also ensure that they enable children to manage their feelings and emotions in an age/stage appropriate way.

## Self Regulation

***‘Self regulation involves children’s developing ability to regulate their emotions, thoughts and behaviour to enable them to act in positive ways towards a goal.’*** Birth to Five Matters pg.20 2021.

At North Islington Nursery School, staff are consistent with the use of strategies from the school’s positive behaviour management policy. Our strategies are designed to work in partnership with children to enable co-regulation – staff model ways of managing feelings and emotions in a positive way, they respond promptly and calmly to distressed children and support children to think about their feelings and support them to learn about ways forward. These strategies also support children’s understanding of routine, boundaries and acceptable behaviour.

At every stage of development and in an age appropriate way, staff empower children to try to manage their own conflicts and disputes. This is done by allowing children time to work things out if safe to do so or by providing language used to negotiate and turn take. As children develop we begin to see that they can do this for themselves with staff on hand if necessary to support.

The learning environments are set up to encourage parallel and co-operative play. Spaces are also provided to ensure that children can take

themselves away from the hustle and bustle of the rooms such as inside a den or cosy corner. Older children are often encouraged to use these quieter spaces if they need some time out to calm down or reflect on something.

Staff encourage children of all ages to be independent and to try and do things for themselves before stepping in. Staff also spend time modelling skills and language to scaffold learning – (helping children to do something today that they can later do for themselves).

The classrooms provide excellent opportunities for children to direct their own learning and do things for themselves. Furniture and resources are well selected to enable children to help themselves to materials, to transfer resources to space to use in their play and to ensure the flow of play is not interrupted.

## LITERACY

Talking and conversation, alongside songs and rhymes provides a good starting point for children to become literate. We promote reading with children and encourage the home school sharing of books and song bags. Picture books are chosen in the baby room to support children learn new words, progressing to the use of simple, repetitive or rhyming books that support anticipation of words or word endings. These books encourage children to join in and they soon become familiar. Staff will always try to match books with the interests of children and to display books attractively alongside popular activities. Staff are also always on hand to read with children when requested. We want children to develop a love for books, to enjoy listening to texts that develop imagination and to provoke thoughts and discussions.

Staff model how to handle books, turning pages and holding the book the correct way up, pointing to texts to model reading from left to right. The use of big books during shared reading activities is helpful and older children will often begin to recognise familiar letters, words and punctuation marks.

In the nursery class staff use a combination of Ruth Miskin’s phonics resources such as letter formation, letter rhymes and patter alongside activities set out in Phase 1 of Letters and Sounds.



Neither is used solely or systematically but rather as an introduction into letter sounds, names and letter formation which are skills that are important in learning to read.

Staff will 'teach' letter sounds when children are beginning to show an interest in reading and writing and this is initially 'taught' whilst playing alongside and with children rather than sitting children down for whole group 'teaching'.

During group times staff will focus on developing children's listening and attention skills. This is done through sound lotto games and using hidden everyday objects for children to identify the sound of. These activities encourage children to tune into sounds and to pay attention. Other activities such as Kym's Game, Bertha's Bus, Simon Says etc. supports the teaching of sound discrimination, initial letter sounds and rhyme and alliteration. In the Spring and Summer terms, Our letter of the week activity encourages children to begin to identify letter sounds in a more systematic way. Children are encouraged to find objects that begin with a particular initial sound and an interactive display is created.

Shared reading opportunities allow children to develop early reading skills. Adults encourage children to follow texts, to point to letters that they are familiar with and to notice features in texts such as capital letters, full stops and speech bubbles. Print in the environment that is relevant to what children have been learning about also provide opportunities for children to develop reading skills. Whilst at the setting, some children will begin to read simple words and sentences. Where this is the case, we use the Collins Big Cat set of books to support this learning.

Our aim is for all children to leave the setting being confident writers. Right from the baby room through to the nursery class opportunities to develop skills needed to mark make and write are provided.

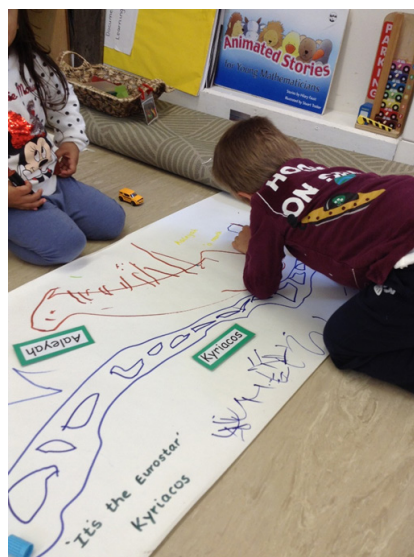


We encourage children to develop upper arm strength required for writing by providing opportunities to push and pull, to climb and swing and to paint and mark make on a large scale.

Opportunities to develop dexterity and strengthen small hand and arm muscles is provided in the form of malleable materials such as play dough and clay. Children will pinch, pat, roll and shape these materials which in turn provide a great starting point for developing hand eye co-ordination skills – all which are needed to be effective writers.

Staff ensure that opportunities to mark make are inspiring and representative of children's interests. For example, placing trucks in painting trays will encourage a child fascinated by transport to notice marks the trucks make when rolled across paper on the floor.

Although we create spaces where mark making resources can be sourced, mark making, drawing and writing happen all over the classrooms inside and out. Writing needs to be purposeful and meaningful. Placing clipboards with paper in the block area encourages children to draw their designs or write about what they have made. Simple writing frames inspire children to make shopping lists in the home corner and cards and envelopes provide opportunities for children to send greeting cards or party invites to friends and family.



One of our aims is to support children to develop an effective pencil grip ready for handwriting. Staff model how to hold a pencil correctly and when age/stage appropriate, they will encourage children to use the 'pick and flick' method of getting the pencil grip 'right'.

All mark making is valued and staff encourage children to read back what they have written, reinforcing that writing is a form of communication. Mark making is displayed attractively on walls and in children's profile books.

Name cards and alphabet cards are on hand for children to refer to. Staff will also use 'patter' to encourage children to think about the formation of letters.

When children are confident using early writing skills, staff work alongside them when they are mark making to encourage them to use their knowledge of letter sounds to begin to write words. We encourage children to write the sounds they hear. This may begin with children being able to identify the initial sounds in words before being able to identify blends, middle sounds and word endings. Using robotic talk often helps children break down sounds in words for both reading and writing.



## MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

At North Islington Nursery School, we aim for maths to be an everyday experience that all children explore. Maths for us is a wide subject encompassing number, space, shape and measure which requires skills in problems solving and understanding concepts. Our aim is for children to develop the confidence to have a go and problem solve, drawing on the knowledge that has been shared with them and concepts that have been taught.

Children are exposed to mathematical learning through open ended play with carefully chosen resources. Babies may fill empty containers with keys, cubes, pine cones etc. with adults sitting alongside them, using number, modelling counting and using language such as more, empty and full etc. will also reinforce the concept of space and measure. Stacking boxes and rings enable babies to explore shape and size as well as supporting developing schematic play patterns.



Throughout the school, children are encouraged to join in with counting songs which explore putting numbers in order, counting backwards and forwards and simple subtraction and addition. Songs provide early opportunities for children to practice saying number names in order and recognising the pattern of number.

The construction area and block play both inside and out ensure that children are exploring 3D shapes and size. Working out which shapes make the best wheels when making model vehicles with Lego, or the most stable shaped blocks for making towers in the block area. Which sized block fits the space? How many planks are needed to create a bridge when outside?

## Open ended play and adult led games

Resources provided for messy and malleable play such as bun tins and cupcake cases provide an opportunity for young children to learn about 1:1 correspondence. Adults playing alongside children model saying one number for each object placed/touched to model counting. Staff also model similar counting strategies such as partitioning, moving objects that have been counted. It is also at this stage that we model that the last number counted is the total. Much of this teaching is through open ended play but we also focus on 'teaching' mathematical concepts through adult led games. Games are important to us at North Islington Nursery School. Our games always reflect the interests of children and may feature popular culture or other thematic focusses but each game will always lend itself to encouraging children to participate, take turns, have a go and develop skills and concepts that can then be transferred in other activities with the classroom. Games led by adults also ensure that staff can be confident that children are grasping key problem solving strategies and mathematical knowledge and concepts.



# UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

At North Islington Nursery School our intent is to build upon what children already know and have experience of. We welcome parents and carers sharing their family experiences with us so that we can encourage children to retell and recall experiences and celebrate them. Special profile books enable children to share their experiences through photos.

We begin by ensuring that children have uninterrupted periods of play to explore their immediate environment. Carefully selected resources and provocations are provided so that children are developing a sense of awe and wonder, using all of their senses and 'questioning' what is around them. Children are encouraged to transport resources to use for their own intended purposes. The more open ended a resource, the more opportunities there are for problem solving, exploration and challenge.

Although we do not plan through themes or topics, staff find out what children are interested in or use a seasonal approach to teaching. Staff build upon individual interests which often results in large group learning. For example, one child's interest in trains can quickly become a whole class experience with role play activities, a visit to the train station, making tickets and planning journeys to drawing tube maps and making large scale models.

The learning environments both inside and out provides opportunities for children to make new discoveries. For example, there are purposely placed logs and darkened spaces in each garden for children to hunt for and explore mini beasts. Age appropriate texts, photos and tools enhance this experience.

All children are encouraged to take part in seasonal planting activities and foods grown are always used in cooking activities. Other weekly cooking activities are linked to current interests and reflect what children already know or are finding out about. For example, we will cook with ingredients familiar to a particular child's cultural background with the support of a family or staff member.

Another example is baking gingerbread cookies when our core book is The Gingerbread Man.

The use of technology is ensured through carefully chosen and age/stage appropriate resources. Children in the nursery class have access to the use of the class computer, printer and interactive whiteboard. Smaller resources are also free for children to use such as torches, stop watches, microphones, CD player and the light box. Staff model how and when the resources are used so that children handle them with care and respect.

It is our aim at North Islington Nursery School to enrich children's lives with new experiences that widen their understanding of their immediate world. We try to make the most of what London has to offer for young children and will plan short trips linked to seasonal/current learning as much as we possibly can.

When it is not possible to go on outings, we ensure that we invite visiting artists in to the setting such as George the Drummer who leads on African drumming sessions, Safari Pete – a visiting zoo and Theatre Tots who perform traditional and alternative stories for young children.





# EXPRESSIVE ARTS AND DESIGN

***‘Expressive Arts and Design fosters imagination, curiosity, creativity, cognition, critical thinking and experimentation and provides opportunities to improvise, collaborate, interact and engage in sustained shared thinking.’*** Birth to Five Matters. Pg. 45 2021.

The learning environment at North Islington Nursery School is set up to allow children to develop creative skills in an open ended way. Resources are displayed for children to access themselves and to use in ways in which best suits the ‘job in hand’. As far as possible, we encourage the transportation of materials across the rooms and both inside and outside. Often, children may create a model that they wish to take outside and roll down a slide or a child may wish to push a doll in a buggy from inside to outside.

The classrooms attractively display resources which inspire children to select materials to explore colour, shape and form. Our continuous provision ensures that there are high quality mark making and art materials for children to use. Paintbrushes are offered in size/thickness order to encourage children to think about the correct brush for their work. Pens, pencils and crayons are organised in colour groups and in the nursery class children are encouraged to mix and create their own paint colours using the primary coloured powder paints.

Each classroom ensures that there are daily opportunities to explore texture and to play with materials where shape and form can be manipulated. Whilst dough is on offer most days, in the nursery class the children are encouraged to make their own play dough, learning about ingredients and consistency. Clay is another material that is frequently used in the classroom. Tools are always on hand nearby for children to use to roll, shape, cut and mould.

Equally, there are always many resources on offer for children to use for imaginative play scenarios such as small world resources, loose parts and play people.

Staff alternate these resources so that they reflect current interests and offer something new and interesting. The small world resources are always placed near other resources and areas of provision such as block play and construction as the materials lend themselves well to combining with small world and loose parts.

Children begin to role play at an early age and we encourage and provide opportunities to develop this interest. Role play supports all areas of development in particular communication and personal, social and emotional skills where children have the opportunity to extend language skills, to play collaboratively within a group, to share ideas, negotiate and to make stories.



At North Islington Nursery School we ensure that there are resources available for children to “act out” and imagine events they have observed or experienced. For example there are dolls available in every classroom for the children to pretend to feed and put to bed or a home corner with bags and dressing up clothes to have pretend parties. Staff also encourage opportunities for the children to make their own props to extend their imaginative play ideas such as a map for a pirate or magic wands.

Recycled materials such as cardboard boxes, cartons, tubes and paper are part of our continuous provision and provide opportunities for children to create their own props to support and extend play. Staff work closely with children to realise their intentions and to support with designing and creating props whilst modelling how to join materials together.

Group times offer daily opportunities for children to sing, move and dance. We encourage children to develop confidence in listening to music whilst moving in rhythmic ways and we also encourage children to learn how to use simple percussion instruments effectively and to accompany our favourite songs. Where appropriate we ensure that children are exposed to many different types of music from traditional songs, popular culture and songs from around the world. These experiences are often tied into cultural celebrations or times of year.

**Celebrating success** PERSISTENCE

Everyone is valued, listened to & is important

**HAPPY TO BE HERE**

**HAVING A VOICE** SUPPORTIVE ADULTS

**RESPECT FOR EACH OTHER**

**THINKING CREATIVELY AND CRITICALLY**

**PLAYING AND EXPLORING**

**STARTING FROM THE CHILD**

**ENABLING CONFIDENT, ACTIVE LEARNERS**

**WILLING TO HAVE A GO**

**DISCOVERING INDIVIDUAL STRENGTHS**

**RESILIENCE AND SELF WORTH**

**CELEBRATING DIVERSITY DEVELOPING SELF ESTEEM**