



## **Welcome to Little Sunbeams Nursery Class**

It is a pleasure to welcome you and your child to Elliott Park nursery class and we trust that your child is going to feel happy and settled in their new class. Below we will take a closer look at the curriculum that your child will be following in the coming academic year.

Children in the nursery and reception classes at Elliott Park School follow educational and developmental guidelines known as the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). This comprises seven areas of learning; three are classed as 'Prime' areas of learning (and are fundamental to all the other areas of learning), and four 'Specific' areas:

### **Prime Areas**

Communication & Language (CL)  
Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED)  
Physical Development (PD)

### **Specific Areas**

Literacy (L)  
Mathematics (M)  
Understanding the World (UtW)  
Expressive Arts and Design (EAD)

A brief summary of each of these areas and how they are taught in the nursery follows;

## **Communication and Language**

In the nursery we aim to give children all the tools they will need to become successful readers and writers. These tools are more wide-ranging than is sometimes expected but all play a vital role.

### **Language and Listening:**

Language is perhaps the most important of all the tools. Good language skills underpin our ability to communicate effectively with others, to read and write intelligently and to think logically and creatively. Great importance is therefore placed on the development of good language skills in the early years.

Children in the Nursery are encouraged to use language to talk about themselves, their experiences and interests both individually and in small groups. They are encouraged to verbalise what they are

doing, observing and thinking during activities and to make connections between different activities and experiences.

Teachers continually model this process of 'thinking' and 'wondering' aloud as they work and play alongside the children. They will also introduce the vocabulary that children need to express themselves accurately. Imaginative play is one of the most effective contexts in which young children can practise and develop their language skills as it provides a meaningful context for communication and any element of self-consciousness is removed.

Effective communication with others depends on the ability to listen with attention and comprehension, to remember and respond appropriately to what is heard, and sufficient self-control to be able to wait when necessary before replying.

Listening and attention skills are taught implicitly by good modelling and explicitly through planned activities including stories, singing and a wide variety of games. Additional programmes of activities are often planned for those children who would benefit from further practise.

If your child is receiving speech and language therapy for an identified delay or disorder, we would appreciate being informed of this so that we can support them as much as possible in the nursery.

## **Personal, Social and Emotional Development**

This area of learning covers relationships, behaviour, attitudes to learning, self-care and developing a sense of community. It is often considered to be the most important of the six curriculum areas in the Early Years because successful development of abilities such as self-regulation, being able to conduct positive relationships with others, having the confidence to try new activities and the independence to take control of one's own learning is a pre-requisite for future success.

Teaching in this curriculum area will sometimes take the form of planned adult-directed activities. For example, the teacher may timetable a group discussion to agree some 'Golden Rules' for behaviour in nursery. However, much of the teaching takes place in response to situations that arise throughout the course of the day. For example, when one child snatches a toy away from another child, the teacher will use that opportunity to talk to the children concerned about sharing and turn-taking.

In the autumn term, the focus is on learning one another's names, becoming familiar with the new environment, learning new routines and developing independence in personal hygiene and in dressing/undressing.

In the spring term, there is an increased focus on developing care and concern for others, developing self-control, and managing our own behaviour in consideration of others.

In the summer term, the focus is on developing positive attitudes to learning including attention, persistence and independence.

## **Physical Development**

This area of learning includes Health, Movement, Spatial Awareness and the development of fine and gross motor skills through using a range of simple tools and equipment.

In the autumn term the children are supported to develop good personal hygiene practices such as thorough hand washing. They begin to develop spatial awareness as they move around and play in the nursery environment. They develop fine motor movements through practical activities such as manipulating play dough, threading beads and handling puzzles and small toys. They use larger

equipment such as trikes and scooters. In structured P.E sessions they participate in activities leading to Dance.

In the spring term the children begin to learn about healthy eating and practise road safety. They are taught to hold pens and pencils with a proper grip and develop increasing control in their use of these and other tools including scissors. In P.E. sessions they practise travelling, balancing, climbing and jumping.

In the summer term the children learn about the importance of exercise in keeping healthy. They develop increasing control in their use of balls and simple bats. In P.E. sessions they participate in activities leading to Games including simple team games. The nursery also takes part in Sports Day.

## **Literacy**

### ***Sounds and Letters:***

Phonic awareness is the fundamental tool for the development of literacy skills. This is planned for and developed progressively in the nursery.

In the autumn term, the focus is on general sound discrimination and on rhythm and rhyme.

In the spring term, the focus is on the discrimination of sounds in words, including alliteration and the oral blending and segmenting of sounds.

In the summer term, the focus is on linking sounds in words to letters of the alphabet. Please note that at this stage it is more useful for children to know the sound that the letter represents, rather than its name.

Whilst all children participate in and benefit from the activities described above, some children will begin to link sounds to letters at a much earlier stage. This will be encouraged and developed in a way that is appropriate and meaningful for the child.

### ***Reading:***

As parents, we are usually eager to see our children discover the pleasures of independent reading and we rightfully encourage their recognition of letters and words. However, the mere decoding of words becomes an automatic and meaningless skill if the child fails to derive any true understanding from what they are reading. Therefore, it is more important in the early years to develop a child's pleasure in books and stories and their ability to truly comprehend and relate to a narrative than in prematurely teaching them to recognise words out of context.

Throughout the year, children will hear and will talk about stories every day in nursery. Puppets, props and role play will often be used to help children engage with the narrative. They will be encouraged to notice details in the illustrations in picture books and use these to help them understand what is happening, empathise with the characters and predict what may happen next. These same skills are developed in imaginative play too.

In the spring term children will borrow a class library book to bring home and share with you in the same way each week. Children begin to understand how print works.

In the summer term children learn about the concept of a 'word' and to recognise some familiar words.

### ***Writing:***

Through being made aware of signs and writing in the environment around them, young children learn that written marks can communicate meaning. 'Mark-Making' is a term often used in the early years to refer to all the marks made by young children. These marks may not yet resemble letters but they are part of the process by which young children come to understand that written marks can communicate meaning. It is the precursor to writing and is therefore encouraged and valued.

In the autumn term, even if the children are not yet able to write recognisable letters, they are encouraged to personalise their drawings and paintings with their own marks. Teachers use every opportunity to model writing to the children, demonstrating the link between spoken and written words.

In the spring term role play provides meaningful contexts for the children to write for a purpose. For example, the waitress pretends to write down an order in the 'restaurant'; 'shopping lists' are written before going to the 'shops' to buy food. Children who are already beginning to link sounds to letters will be encouraged to use this knowledge in their writing. Children learn about print directionality.

In the summer term, children learn to break speech into individual words. They are supported to trace or copy words as headings on their drawings, and become involved in helping to 'write' group stories. As they acquire increasing knowledge about letters and sounds, they are supported to incorporate these into their writing.

### ***Handwriting:***

It can be counterproductive to force a young child to hold and use a pen or pencil before they have developed the necessary strength, dexterity and co-ordination in their fingers. Therefore, the foundation of good handwriting lies in developing good fine motor control and coordination. Many activities that the children enjoy in their play directly contribute to this development. For example, manipulating play dough and Plasticene builds strength in tiny fingers; pegging dolls clothes onto a washing line develops the pincer movement that is important for holding a pencil correctly, balancing one block on top of another develops control and coordination of hand movements. Such activities are encouraged throughout the Nursery year. Additional activities to develop good handwriting are planned each term.

In the autumn term, children participate in a wide variety of mark-making activities including drawing, painting and tracing pictures. Games are developed to encourage children to draw straight vertical and horizontal lines and to trace along a pathway. Children who are not yet ready to hold a pen or pencil can still make marks using fingers in trays of sand or paint. They are encouraged to look carefully at their name cards and attempt to form at least the initial letter. As soon as children are using a pen and pencil confidently, they are shown how to hold it correctly with a tripod grip. This means that the pencil is gripped firmly between the thumb and index finger, resting against the others that are placed behind it. Good body posture is important for handwriting and children learn that both hands have a job to do.

In the spring term, children continue to practise more precise patterns and tracings and are shown the correct place to start when writing the letters of their name. Anti-clockwise circular movements are practised. Children are supported to write their own names on their drawings and paintings.

By the end of summer term, most children will be able to copy their names from their name card. Many children will be able to write their names independently. Some children will be using their knowledge of letters and sounds to write simple words phonetically. All children will be shown how to form letters correctly.

## **Mathematics**

This area of learning includes counting, number recognition, calculation and awareness of shape, space and measures. Many young children learn to recite numbers by rote at quite an early age. This skill is important but is not in itself sufficient. Children need to develop an understanding of what is known as the cardinality of number: the 'threeness' of three, the 'fourness' of four etc. In other words to understand that three apples will remain 'three' however they are positioned or wherever they are placed as long as no more are added and none are removed. They also need to understand the relationship that 'three' has to 'four' and also to 'two', for example. It is a wonderful achievement for a four-year old to be able to recite numbers to one hundred, but if they do not also develop a sound understanding of fundamental principles, they may come unstuck at a later stage when mathematics becomes more complex. Young children develop such understanding most effectively through trial and error in practical activities that have a meaning and a purpose for them. Play is the most effective vehicle of purpose for a young child. Paying for an item in the pretend shop provides a genuine reason for counting out a particular quantity of coins, for example. Throughout the nursery year, activities are planned that use a playful context to provide opportunities to count, re-count, compare and contrast, and to link quantities with numbers.

In a similar way, practical activities and games are used to develop and consolidate understanding about shape and measure and develop early computational skills. For example, children learn about the attributes of shape when using shaped blocks to build models; they discover about volume by pouring and filling from containers of different sizes in the water tray; they develop computational skills by working out how many more cups are still needed at snack time.

Our role as teachers as we work alongside the children in mathematical activities is to help them pay proper attention to what they are doing, to model and teach the language they need to be able to express what is happening, and to encourage them to make connections between experiences in order to develop their understanding.

## **Understanding the World**

This area of learning covers science, history, geography, designing and making, cultures and beliefs, and information and communication technology (ICT)

Learning Themes each term create a context for and cohesiveness between these different aspects. These themes are:

Autumn term: Our School and Celebrations

Spring term: Traditional Nursery Rhymes and Our Senses

Summer term: Growth and Change

Within each of these themes, practical activities and first hand experiences provide meaningful learning opportunities for the children. For example, cookery activities provide opportunity to observe how materials change when heated or cooled; planting seeds provides opportunity to learn about plant growth; visiting the Post Office to post letters, provides opportunity to discover about places in the local community; playing outside every day provides opportunity to observe and experience seasonal changes.

Children learn about different cultures and beliefs through the celebration of major religious festivals including Christmas, Easter, Chinese New Year, Eid and Diwali. Parents and children are encouraged to tell us about other important family occasions and celebrations so that we can share these in class too.

Computing is taught using the interactive white board and floor robots called Bee Bots. The children also learn to capture experiences using a digital camera and use the 'walkie-talkies' in role-play.

## **Expressive Arts and Design**

This area of learning includes art and craft, imaginative play and music.

In the autumn term, children explore colour and colour mixing through a wide variety of practical activities. Songs are sung daily and the children are able to use the percussion instruments. Role play is developed in the home corner.

In the spring term, children explore texture in a variety of media and materials. They learn how to alter sounds when using the instruments and listen to music from different cultures.

In the summer term, children explore shape in 2 and 3 dimensions. They learn to produce sounds on the percussion instruments with increasing control. Traditional stories stimulate imaginative play.

We hope that you find this introduction to the nursery curriculum helpful. We operate an 'Open Door' policy in the nursery class, which is to say; if you have any questions or concerns regarding your child we want you to feel that you can come and talk to us at any time. We regard parents as partners and value feedback from you on what your child is learning at home. Links made between learning at home and learning at school can benefit your child by consolidating and reinforcing what they learn.

If you have further questions please contact me at the school and I will be pleased to speak with you.

Mrs C Hiller