

LEARNING AND TEACHING POLICY

This Policy was updated in June 2017.

The Policy will be reviewed and updated bi-annually.

Trustee with Responsibility: Lesley Carrington, Teaching and Learning Team

Regular review of this policy will enable staff to evaluate its impact and effectiveness.

The Treehouse School

Rationale

We believe that the most effective educational experiences for children are those that are developmentally appropriate for them, where the curriculum is designed to meet the child and not where the child is expected to fit into the curriculum. In addition, The Treehouse School places the highest priority upon the development of positive and respectful relationships between all members of its community. This fundamental part of the school's work is essential for effective learning to take place.

Principles

The Treehouse School bases its practice and provision on the following principles:

- A curriculum which is relevant to the children;
- Opportunities for first-hand experiences and learning using the senses;
- Classroom Management which promotes individualised and effective learning;
- Observation-led assessment;
- Learning inside and outside of the classroom;
- Opportunities for children to work at length and depth;
- Opportunities to play;
- Strong partnerships with parents and carers;
- High quality relationships between all members of the school community.

A Relevant Curriculum

The world is full of real-life problems that need solving which children are irresistibly drawn to because they are meaningful and reflect children's experience and culture. At the Treehouse, wherever possible, children will be given learning opportunities that mirror the real world and are therefore relevant and purposeful.

Forming the core of our curriculum are those areas of learning that we believe are essential for every child's future. They are: language, communication and literacy; physical development; problem solving, reasoning and numeracy; social and emotional development; and the development of metacognitive or thinking skills.

Knowledge and understanding of the world; creative development, Information Communication Technology and British Values form the remainder of our curriculum. Within each of these areas of learning, essential skills and knowledge have been identified, drawing on a range of sources including The National Curriculum.

Long Term Planning

The purpose of our long-term plan is to ensure that over time the children at The Treehouse receive a broad and balanced curriculum. These plans are developed on a retrospective basis, identifying the areas of learning or subjects that have been addressed by topics or themes during the school term or year. They draw from The National Curriculum, Local Authority's agreed Syllabus and the areas that we have identified as important (refer to School Aims). Our goal is to achieve depth and quality of learning and so, it is not our intention to cover the National Curriculum in its entirety.

Medium Term Planning

Appropriate learning objectives, drawing from a range of sources including the National Curriculum are identified during a unit of work or theme. At the end of the unit, the learning objectives are revisited and an assessment made of the cohorts' attainment. This also enables the school to keep accurate records of coverage so that the children receive a broad and balanced curriculum. This approach has been developed to enable the school to be both flexible and responsive to children's needs and interests.

Short Term Planning

The purpose of short-term planning is to ensure that teachers think about, reflect and are prepared for what every child needs in order to have a challenging and rewarding learning experience day in and day

out. At this stage, teachers will use their observations and assessments of the children, who may be a similar age but very different in needs, to inform their plans. Teachers will pay close attention to, and plan for, the differences between the children rather than trying to treat them as a homogenous whole. For example, some children may be advanced in their English or maths skills but need greater help in their social development. The information gleaned from observations of children learning will lead naturally into ways of planning that support a developmentally appropriate curriculum.

The timetable will include opportunities for adult focused and initiated learning to take place alongside child-initiated learning. This approach recognizes the value of child-initiated learning as well as increasing opportunities for teachers to give their full attention to high quality, focused teaching in which they can concentrate on the needs of the individual child, alone or within small groups learning together.

Opportunities for First-Hand Experiences and Learning using the Senses and Movement

At The Treehouse, we are as concerned about how children learn as what they learn. Our provision will accommodate the natural, spontaneous learning styles of primary age children. Children will be able to be active, to be playful, to be independent, to be interactive and to have time to follow their spontaneous interests. The majority of the learning opportunities presented to the children will be experiential, rather than passive and abstract.

A distinctive feature of the school's work will be that the surrounding area will be frequently used as a rich educational resource. Situated within a rural location, the children will have the opportunity to spend up to half of their week learning outdoors/off-site. Alongside carefully timed input from the adults, children will be encouraged to use all of their senses during the learning process. These natural learning tools help to stimulate vital connections between the hand, the body and the brain.

Classroom Management

Children will learn in a range of contexts: whole class, small group and when appropriate, on an individual basis. There will be a balance between learning that is initiated by the adults and learning that is initiated by the children. Child initiated learning capitalizes on the child's natural and spontaneous urge to find out about and make sense of their world. Adults will learn a great deal about children by observing them engaged in independent, self-driven activities where there is no imposed ceiling to their learning.

We aim to use the three contexts for learning: adult-focused, adult-initiated and child-initiated throughout the day. The balance between these activities rests with the teacher and is likely to change according to the age of the children, day to day and from one session to another. Sometimes observations will reveal that a child or group of children would benefit from an adult-focused input around a particular skill or area of knowledge or understanding.

Observation-led Assessment

Observation and dialogue will be used as the main strategy for assessing children's progress. It will be used:

- to discover as much as possible about the child as a learner;
- to use this information to provide the appropriate next steps for learning.

Developmentally based practice is dependent upon observations and conversations with children when they are learning. The most robust evidence for attainment and progress for learners is what children say and what they do. Teachers will dedicate time watching, listening and noting what individuals can do, during adult and child-initiated learning. The relevant and valuable information gathered will then be fed back into planning so that the next steps for children's learning can be identified and provision evaluated, developed and improved (for more information see Assessment policy).

Observation and dialogue is also the key to good intervention, helping the teacher to know when to step in, or indeed whether to step in. The adults will tune into what the children are thinking and trying to achieve so that a decision can be made about how best to take things forward. Sometimes this might mean leaving the child or children to solve things for themselves, other times it may mean suggesting or introducing something that will take their learning to a new level.

Observation of individual children will enable staff to introduce and adapt learning to suit a child's particular needs and interests. However, meeting the needs of individual children does not mean that every child will need something different every day. Often, children are at similar stages of development and there will be overlap in terms of the concepts and skills that are to be introduced.

Learning Inside and Outside the Classroom

Building a Learning Culture

Right from the outset, emphasis will be given to the ways in which effective learning takes place so that children understand more about how they learn best, the characteristics of good learning and that learning is not just confined to the classroom. Our aim is for them to understand that you can learn from:

- playing and finding things out yourself;
- friends and people working with you;
- adults;
- the things around you in the indoor or outdoor environment.

Promoting Independent Learning

The learning environment at The Treehouse will promote choice, encourage decision-making, and promote collaboration and independence. Independent learning for children means managing the space, the resources and each other. To facilitate this all resources will be accessible. Time will be spent helping them learn how to maintain and look after the resources, learning how to clean and tidy the resources with access to the things that they need to do this e.g. brooms, dustpans, mops, cloths etc. Children will also learn how to manage each other, how to negotiate resources, wait their turn, use a different resource when something isn't available and to share spaces.

The Learning Space

Active learning requires space. The learning space at The Treehouse comprises the indoor and outdoor environment. Space indoors and outdoors will be used flexibly and will be under constant review, with input from the children, to ensure that it promotes and accommodates the kind of learning that the school desires. It will comprise quiet spaces and places for action; spaces for individuals, small groups and larger groups; spaces to be alongside an adult and to learn alone.

The Outdoor area

Outdoor learning areas, both on-site and off-site, are an integral part of The Treehouse's provision. Using community spaces, such as the local park, in addition to the school's own grounds, enables the school to provide a range of contexts for learning. Being outdoors has a positive impact on children's sense of well-being and helps all aspects of children's development. It offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. It gives children first-hand contact with weather, seasons and the natural world and offers them freedom to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant.

Forest School

Children of all ages will participate in a 'Forest School' session on a weekly basis.

Opportunities for children to work at length and depth

We believe in giving the children the time that they need to learn and achieve both depth and quality of learning. To ensure that children's learning is cohesive and disrupted as little as possible, timetabled 'slots' will be kept to a minimum.

Registration

The school day will start at 8.45 am with children self-registering and taking part in an early activity. This will promote co-operation, collaboration or enhance a particular skill that a teacher has noticed requires development. The day will begin with a Morning Meeting to enthuse and inspire the children about the day ahead and to discuss any issues or news that the children wish to raise.

Playtimes ("Brain Breaks")

There will be an open-door policy so that children can access the outdoor area to get all the physical, mental and emotional ebb and flow of activity and energy that they need to optimize their formal learning time. Breaks will be taken as and when the adults and children decide they are required depending on the activities in which the children are particularly involved.

Snack time

All children will have a fruit snack daily. They will be encouraged to drink water as and when required.

Lunchtime

This will be at a set time every day. At this time, children and adults have the opportunity to spend time socializing together. This time will also be used to learn more about different foods, the importance of what constitutes a healthy diet.

PE

With regular access to well-planned outdoor learning experiences, children will have the opportunity to take part in a range of physical activity and development on a daily basis. Gymnastic skills such as climbing, jumping, balancing, rolling and motor skills such as throwing, spinning, bouncing, catching and aiming will all occur on a regular basis out of doors. In addition, timetabled Physical Education slots covering a wide range of activities including swimming, cycling and dance will take place weekly.

Play-Based Learning

Children of all ages, but particularly those under the age of seven, still love and need to play. Play remains a driving force for children to discover more about themselves and the world around them. Children learn social skills such as co-operation and teamwork through play. This is recognised at The Treehouse where the youngest children will learn from a predominantly play-focused curriculum with substantial amounts of child-initiated learning, and adults facilitating and supporting learning rather than directing it. However we recognise that neither adult-initiated learning nor child-initiated learning will survive or thrive without adult support at key moments in the process.

Children of all ages will be given time to develop play that has both depth and purpose. With opportunities to follow their own interests and manage their own outcomes, children can demonstrate their capacities, and teachers can observe and extend their learning through carefully judged verbal or physical interventions. Observations of children playing will be used to reveal a richer view of the child because it encompasses so many different facets of that child.

Partnership with Parents and Carers

We recognize that children do not arrive at The Treehouse as empty vessels. What a child learns in the course of the day depends on a complex matrix of past experiences and current concerns. Children come from homes, from families, from communities that are rich in experiences that touch on every aspect of school learning.

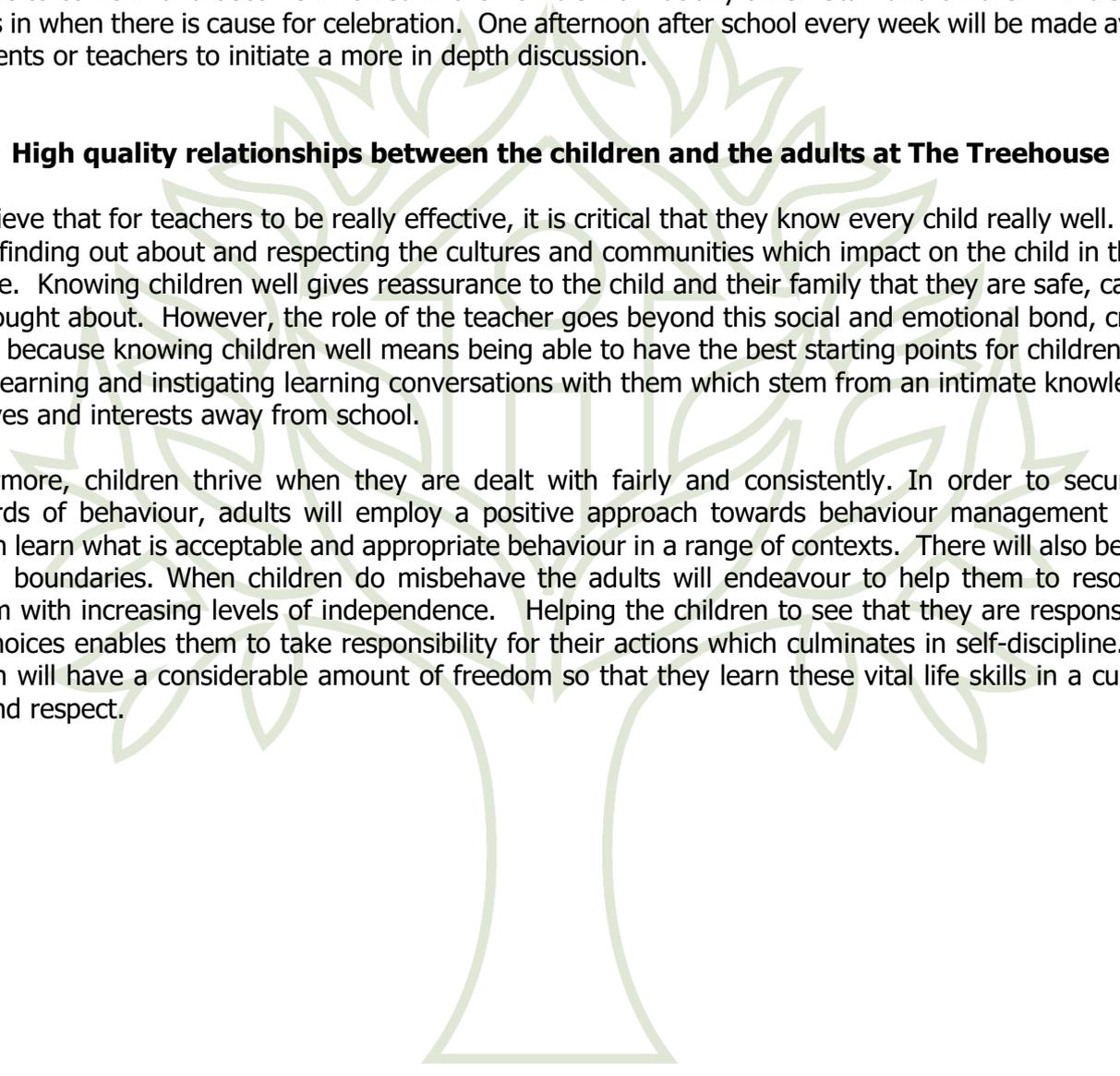
As a starting point for planning it is crucial to establish children's previous learning experiences. Before they join the school, parents will be asked to provide information about the child's progress in the core areas of development. (See Admissions Policy)

Building close working relationships with each child's family and viewing parents as partners in their child's education will be an essential element of the school's work. An open door policy will mean that parents are welcome to come in and become involved in their child's work at any time. Staff and children will also invite parents in when there is cause for celebration. One afternoon after school every week will be made available for parents or teachers to initiate a more in depth discussion.

High quality relationships between the children and the adults at The Treehouse

We believe that for teachers to be really effective, it is critical that they know every child really well. This entails finding out about and respecting the cultures and communities which impact on the child in their daily life. Knowing children well gives reassurance to the child and their family that they are safe, cared for and thought about. However, the role of the teacher goes beyond this social and emotional bond, crucial as it is, because knowing children well means being able to have the best starting points for children's future learning and instigating learning conversations with them which stem from an intimate knowledge of their lives and interests away from school.

Furthermore, children thrive when they are dealt with fairly and consistently. In order to secure high standards of behaviour, adults will employ a positive approach towards behaviour management so that children learn what is acceptable and appropriate behaviour in a range of contexts. There will also be clearly defined boundaries. When children do misbehave the adults will endeavour to help them to resolve the problem with increasing levels of independence. Helping the children to see that they are responsible for their choices enables them to take responsibility for their actions which culminates in self-discipline. The children will have a considerable amount of freedom so that they learn these vital life skills in a culture of trust and respect.



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