

## **Olney Pre-School: our Curriculum**

Olney Pre-School serves children and families from Olney and surrounding villages with an average of 90% of each cohort moving on to Olney Infant Academy. Our catchment area and our ethos as a community setting provide us with children from a wide range of backgrounds, including those from relatively affluent homes, those from more deprived backgrounds, children for whom English is an additional language and children who need extra support due to speech delay or diagnosed SEND. We welcome them all and ensure that our curriculum supports all of our children to join in Pre-School life and to make good progress. Our curriculum provides children with a wide range of learning opportunities, both through independent play, supported activities and sustained shared thinking, taking into account their individual needs and interests. Our curriculum is designed to support children to make progress, whatever their starting point, in what they know, in what they can do, in how they learn and in their emotional & social development. We use our Session routines and our strong Key Person system to support all our children to become comfortable and confident in a group setting and to develop the behaviours and characteristics of effective learning. We focus on developing the skills and individual resilience which will help children make a positive transition to school, and support children to value learning and their own growing independence. We aim to do this in partnership with parents and carers and to provide support and accessible information for continued development and learning at home.

We plan activities and experiences to support children's progress in the seven Areas of Learning and to foster development in the Characteristics of Effective Learning. We have an intake every half-term and each child's attendance pattern is individual, with some attending for just two Sessions a week and some accessing our full 30 hours. Our continuous provision and weekly activities therefore remain flexible so that they can be differentiated in response to the needs of individual children and each child can make progress, no matter when in the year they start with us.

### ***PRIME AREAS OF LEARNING***

#### **COMMUNICATION & LANGUAGE (C&L):**

##### **Where we want children to get to:**

All children will be supported to develop their communication skills, whether verbal or non-verbal, with focus on widening vocabulary and expressive language, so that they can communicate their needs and wants, contribute their opinions, comment on their interests and activities, answer open questions, ask questions and be able to function effectively within a group by taking turns in conversation and listening to others' responses. We aim for children to be able to speak in 4 to 6 word sentences, to use some past and future tenses when talking and to be able to respond appropriately to "why" questions.

##### **How we do this:**

We provide a language-rich environment with adults modeling speech, communication and listening skills through conversation and during activities. We structure our routines to provide many and varied opportunities for both independent talk and adult-led "speaking and listening" activities. We value staff training and ensure that staff are trained to a high level in supporting emerging language and extending children's thinking and communication skills. We carry out termly assessments of each child's communication development, using the Development Matters Observation Checkpoints and the ECaT (Every Child a Talker) development grid for reference. This means we can identify communication issues early on and plan support for children who need additional help. We plan activities around core songs, rhymes and stories, which we share with parents and explain their value as means to extend vocabulary and language. We have a daily activity at Registration, linked to our weekly letter sound (see Literacy), in which we discuss

the objects in a bowl and extend vocabulary and model explanatory language. We also use photos to provoke talk about our observations and make links, during Snack Times or at Circle Time (see Understanding the World). We welcome children who speak English as an additional language and support them and their families to value their home language as we support the children to develop understanding and confidence in English.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT (PSED):**

#### **Where we want children to get to:**

All children are supported to become comfortable and confident in the setting and able to separate from parents and carers happily. We help children to develop the empathy and social skills they will need to make friends and to take part in group activities. They are encouraged to develop a sense of self so that they can operate independently within the setting and make choices about their activities, have an awareness of behavioural expectations and setting rules, interact positively with their peers, be able to cope with and adapt to change, and regroup and retry after setbacks. Children are supported to learn about their bodies and how we each look after our own bodies and keep them healthy through exercise, hygiene, good eating choices and looking after our teeth and gums, as well as managing our personal needs independently.

#### **How we do this:**

We use our Key Person system to support children to make the jump from life at home to confidence in our setting and when making transitions between settings. Each child's Key Person carries out an Induction meeting with the parents, and they will be the practitioner who knows them best. They use this knowledge and their professional experience to ensure that our activities provide suitable learning opportunities for each child's interests and development stage, that their progress is on track, and to plan additional support or intervention as needed. We carry out assessments on children's wellbeing and involvement at least twice a year, using the Leuven Scales system, and make changes to the environment or interventions to support individuals as required. We aim for our Session routine to be simple and repetitive, with a visual timetable in each room, to enable children to understand and thus have some control over their day. Our simple behavioural rules are explained to children visually through our Golden Rules board and are developmentally appropriate so that children are able to operate independently. Our activities are planned for a week at a time, so that children have opportunities to try new things, to gain skills and develop ideas across the week and to re-try when things "go wrong". Children are supported to use the toilet independently and wash their hands, and encouraged to manage their own shoes and clothing. We use pictures around the setting and during snack & lunch times to spark conversation about healthy living and oral hygiene, as well as planning topic weeks around these areas.

### **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT (PD):**

#### **Where we want children to get to:**

All children are supported to develop the physical coordination and strength to support their growing independence and to foster the dexterity needed for writing and tool-use, as well as providing grounding in healthy activity and exercise. We provide daily opportunities for developing gross motor muscles and coordination, as well as fine motor muscles, focusing on hand-eye coordination and the grips needed for effective writing and scissor skills. Children are supported to challenge themselves and to develop an awareness of risk and protective measures in a safe environment.

#### **How we do this:**

We plan physical activity into our curriculum and support children to understand the value of keeping themselves active. We plan activity and challenge into our environment and routines to help develop gross motor muscle coordination, strength and balance, including climbing and descending the stairs in our play house and the steps at our front entrance, and support children to assess and manage age-appropriate risks when, for example, using the workbench or during large block play. We provide a wide range of activities, such as play dough, threading, messy play, craft projects, cutting activities, mark-making activities and construction, to develop fine motor muscles, focusing on coordination and grip strength, and aim to develop an effective pencil grip and scissor skills. We encourage children with physical disabilities to take part in all our activities through closer support.

### ***SPECIFIC AREAS OF LEARNING***

#### **LITERACY (L):**

##### **Where we want children to get to:**

We support children to develop pre-reading skills, introducing sound differentiation and identification in a range of contexts and activities. We support development in this area, aiming for children to be able to hear and say initial sounds, to have an awareness of rhyme and of rhythm in the spoken word and to have experienced some oral segmenting and blending games by the time they go to school. We provide many opportunities to explore and talk about stories, and support children to take part in discussions about story events and characters and to suggest what might happen next. We support children to develop pre-writing skills, with many mark-making activities and support children to try forming recognisable letters and adding their name to their work.

##### **How we do this:**

All children have opportunities to enjoy a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books, both independently and during supported activities, and to become familiar with core stories and rhymes. We provide examples of familiar logos around the setting so that children can start to understand that print carries meaning. We use books to extend interests and knowledge, providing them as resources as part of activities as well as sharing them at Story Time and encouraging story recall. Children have frequent opportunities to experience the written word within the setting environment and during activities and to try out mark-making and emergent writing in a range of different contexts. Children are supported to write their name on their work, when ready, and introduced to letter formation as that becomes developmentally appropriate. This area overlaps with the work we do in Physical Development to ensure that children are physically ready to hold and use a pencil. We currently follow Phase One of "Letters and Sounds" (the National Literacy Strategy guidance), focusing on differentiating sounds and exploring rhythm, rhyme and alliteration, and also introduce children to the pictures, "pure sounds" and letter formation phrases used in the Read, Write, Inc synthetic phonics system taught at OIA and many other local schools. We plan weekly activities around letter sounds, encouraging children to make connections and see links. We have a short daily letter sound activity during Registration, once children are ready, in which we explore the sound linked to each week's picture, look at how to form the lowercase letter (in the air, and on paper if ready), and talk about a selection of objects that begin with our sound.

#### **MATHS (M):**

##### **Where we want children to get to:**

We help children become confident in one-to-one correspondence when counting and in number sequence from 0 to 5 and then on to 10. We aim for them to develop number recognition 0 to 5, with an awareness of 6 to 10 (and beyond if appropriate). We focus on children gaining a deep understanding of numbers up to 10

so that they can then build on this with confidence once they move on to school. We support children to gain an awareness of quantity, be able to subitise three objects, and have an awareness of how we use numbers to label quantities of objects. We aim for children to be able to recognize and describe more/fewer /the same. We support children to learn the names and features of basic 2D shapes, and to work in 3D through practical activities. We introduce children to weighing, measuring and capacity through age-appropriate activities and support them to have a go at comparing and describing different weights, sizes, heights, lengths, volumes in everyday language. We use play, experiences and everyday language to help children gain an awareness of pattern, time and money.

**How we do this:**

All children have many opportunities to develop an awareness and understanding of basic maths concepts through play and in supported activities, counting songs and stories. We use developmentally-appropriate maths resources, to enable children to develop confidence in sorting, counting and number work, linking numerals to quantity, estimating, using more than/less than/ the same, investigating one more/one less and sequencing. Children have many opportunities to investigate such mathematical concepts as shape, space, weighing & measuring, volume, pattern, time and money through their independent play in our continuous provision, and through supported activities and experiences. We use role play activities such as “shops” and “cafes” to enable children to explore the practical applications of mathematical concepts, and construction sets and activities to enable children to explore practical maths and problem solving. We incorporate opportunities for mathematical mark-making opportunities into activities and introduce children to numeral formation songs.

**UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD (UW):**

**Where we want children to get to:**

We encourage children to be curious and to use their senses to explore, investigate and make sense of the world they live in. Children are encouraged to observe and to talk about their observations, identifying similarities, differences and change as they develop a sense of place. Children are shown ways to care for their environment through a range of activities. We support them to develop a sense of self, both as an individual with individual responsibilities and as a member of various different communities. Children are supported to develop an awareness of their personal story by being confident to talk about their own home, family and special times, so introducing an idea of past and future as well as present. We help children to identify ways in which their lives and homes are similar to those of others, and ways in which they are different, modelling the fact that each are equally valuable.

**How we do this:**

We provide all children with play opportunities and experiences so that they can explore different materials and their properties, and use their senses and natural curiosity to investigate “how things work”, basic forces and patterns. We encourage children to explore and observe the natural world around them, in our garden, on walks and in our planting and observational painting activities. We use these activities to introduce a sense of responsibility and environmental awareness, by talking about recycling, not wasting materials and how to look after the plants in our garden. We find out about the local community, different occupations and the wider world through books, visitors and trips within the town. We incorporate “talking times” into our Sessions, for example as part of Registration and Snack Times, as well as during planned Circle Time activities. We use these to introduce pictures of eg animals in their natural environment or people in different countries, and to talk about what we can see. We structure topic work around the changing of the seasons and plan experiences such as egg-hatching and caterpillars-to-butterflies to develop an awareness of life cycles and changes over time and an understanding of our responsibility to provide care. We plan

activities around a selection of festivals, supporting children to learn about and value similarities and differences in families across the world. We use activities about ourselves and our families to instill a sense of our own life stories and then compare and contrast them to those of others. We incorporate a sense of the past into relevant activities, for example by pointing out ways in which stories show people's lives in different times and looking at pictures of fire engines from the past as part of a "people who help us" topic.

### **EXPRESSIVE ARTS AND DESIGN (EA&D):**

#### **Where we want children to get to:**

We want children to develop the confidence to try a range of design and creative activities, exploring and becoming more proficient in using a range of techniques and tools. We support children to try new things and to experiment with and explore media through their activities. We support the development of children's imaginative play and help them travel from individual non-verbal small-world play to using language and working in conjunction with their peers to develop storylines and scenarios. Children will become familiar with a core group of nursery rhymes and be able to join in singing them.

#### **How we do this:**

We provide all children with many opportunities to express their interactions with the world around them creatively, using a variety of techniques and media. We investigate colour and colour-mixing in a range of activities. We place value on the processes involved as much as on the end product, and encourage children to design, adapt and personalise their work according to their creative interests. We provide many opportunities to design, problem-solve and create in 3D through construction and supported work-bench activities. We support children to develop their imagination, story-telling skills and creative thinking through role-play and small-world activities. We use music, singing and percussion instruments as standalone activities and to support development in other areas, such as identifying rhythm and sound differentiation as part of our pre-reading work, and moving in response to music during our physical development work. We use nursery rhymes as essential learning tools, and encourage parents to continue this at home, to support development in areas such as extending vocabulary, developing an idea of story and character, looking at rhyme, looking at rhythm, and looking at repeating pattern.

### **PROGRESS TRACKING:**

We value our Early Years practitioners and their experience and knowledge of child development, and see them as our most important tool in fostering and tracking children's progress. We put a lot of thought into planning the learning environment, our Session routine, our continuous provision and our weekly activities, and this is subject to continual review, so we are confident that most children will make progress through their independent play, supported activities and interactions with others during their time with us.

Practitioners use their skills and their observations of children's play and experiences to assess whether they are "on track" or not, referring to the non-statutory "Development Matters" and "Birth to Five" to structure their analyses, and then plan interventions and support when necessary if a child is not on track in the Prime Areas. When a child starts with us, observations are used to form a baseline from which to foster and judge progress. We also write these formally in the statutory Progress Check Age Two when children start with us before their third birthday. We use the Observation Checkpoints detailed in "Development Matters" for the three Prime Areas of Learning to focus our analyses of each child's progress when they reach age three. We then continue to focus in detail on the Prime Areas and intervene with additional support where needed.

We discuss children's progress in all Areas of Learning, and pool our knowledge and understanding of how to identify and support continued forward development, at staff meetings, during colleague discussions and during termly Supervision Meetings. Each child's Key Person carries out a termly analysis of progress in each

Area of Learning, and plans intervention and support if necessary. We make a record of our life as a setting, based on photographs, pieces of work and the children's comments about their learning, as well as individual Learning Journeys for each child to share with their parents showing some of their key development moments.