

# The Limes Nursery School Curriculum overview. What we want children to learn

## Our Context

Our curriculum is designed to meet the needs of a multi-ethnic, multi-faith community. We recognise that those who are at the greatest disadvantage, benefit the most from high quality nursery education.

We aim to make all curriculum decisions with this in mind.

## Our Approach

Our curriculum is not static. We change our equipment, furnishings, layout, presentation and displays to reflect and celebrate the children's current learning and interests. It is based on a commitment to child-led, open-ended play, giving children the space and freedom to explore, create and make connections in their own learning. Our resources are organised so that children can access them independently. We have workshops and a large outdoor space to which children have free access.

### 1. Children take part in key experiences at the Limes

- To bake bread
- To read our Core books
- To tell their stories through Story Square
- To learn about the environment through gardening and composting
- To learn about their community through visits out and visitors in

### 2. Our curriculum is inclusive

Our children come from diverse backgrounds and many experience English as an additional language. Our curriculum is rich in first-hand experiences that help children to learn a wide vocabulary at an early age. We provide an inclusive curriculum, enabling every child to thrive. We believe that we should make our experiences accessible to all.

### 3. A collaboration

We know that involving parents and carers in their child's learning has a positive impact. Our key workers make strong connections with children and their families. We use an online learning diary - tapestry to share individual children's learning during their focus observation weeks and parent hub to share children's experiences at nursery with their families weekly. Parents are invited in for regular 'family times' and are invited to take part

in their child's focus observation weeks so we can talk about home and school learning in detail.

#### 4. Learning and Development

We follow the educational programmes set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage and cover the seven areas of learning. These are:

Three 'prime areas' that are 'particularly important for building a foundation for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, forming relationships, and thriving':

- communication and language
- physical development
- personal, social, and emotional development

Four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design

## Communication and Language

*The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children's language effectively. Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, storytelling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.*

Communication and Language is listening, attention and understanding and speaking

We use the internationally recognised Hanen Approach – Learning Language and Loving it.

We use this approach to teach using:

- High quality interactions with children
- Session times and routines
- Experiences which are carefully through-through so that children learn as wide a vocabulary as possible
- It also provides a framework for our staff professional development

Key elements include:

- Key workers identify children's styles and stages of language development so that they can plan an individual approach
- Talking with children not to children – observe, wait, listen
- Shared conversations, commenting, open-ended questions
- Ways to extend the topic of conversation which includes what is sometimes described as 'sustained shared thinking'
- Links to our literacy curriculum – storytelling, reading, writing

## Personal, Social and Emotional Development

*Children's personal, social and emotional development (PSED) is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives and is fundamental to their cognitive development. Underpinning their personal development are the important attachments that shape their social world. Strong, warm and supportive relationships with adults enable children to learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others. Children should be supported to manage emotions, develop a positive sense of self, set themselves simple goals, have confidence in their own abilities, to persist and wait for what they want and direct attention as necessary. Through adult modelling and guidance, they will learn how to look after their bodies, including healthy eating, and manage personal needs independently. Through supported interaction with other children, they learn how to make good friendships, co-operate and resolve conflicts peacefully. These attributes will provide a secure platform from which children can achieve at school and in later life.*

Personal, social and emotional development includes building relationships, managing self and self-regulation.

We use the **Conflict Resolution** approach. These 6 Steps are followed consistently and repeated in different contexts in which children experience conflict. Over time, children learn to use them independently. This

- empowers children to have a voice
- to learn self-regulation and how to listen
- enables children to explore their own feelings and develop an understanding of others'
- develop a sense of justice and a sense of community

We also use **JIGSAW**. This is a weekly, whole school, pre-planned part of our curriculum. It adopts a mindfulness approach to support children's emotional self-regulation and resilience.

In key groups children talk, think about, and explore some quite complex ideas eg, their rights, inclusion, diversity, citizenship, the British Values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance for those of different faiths and beliefs.

We raise more challenging issues about safeguarding eg, online safety and peer on peer harm.

We encourage children to think positively about their own mental and physical health including making healthy choices and developing independence. They learn about privacy and personal safety.

In addition, we use the **Anti-bullying Alliance** materials, to reflect on our practice and provision as a anti bullying setting.

## Physical Development

*Physical activity is vital in children's all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives. Gross and fine motor experiences develop incrementally throughout early childhood, starting with sensory explorations and the development of a child's strength, co-ordination and positional awareness through tummy time, crawling and play movement with both objects and adults. By creating games and providing opportunities for play both indoors and outdoors, adults can support children to develop their core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination and agility. Gross motor skills provide the foundation for developing healthy bodies and social and emotional well-being. Fine motor control and precision helps with hand-eye co-ordination, which is later linked to early literacy. Repeated and varied opportunities to explore and play with small world activities, puzzles, arts and crafts and the practice of using small tools, with feedback and support from adults, allow children to develop proficiency, control and confidence.*

Physical development includes fine motor and gross motor skills.

Our approach is based on Fundamental Movement Skills taken from The Physical Literacy Handbook.

These are:

Agility; balance; coordination; speed; jumping; climbing; walking; hopping; skipping; throwing, dribbling; kicking; hitting; catching.

Examples might include balancing on a beam, running at speed through the garden, coordinating to carry a large block, jumping into a puddle.

### **Fine motor (fingers, hands, mouth, tongue, eyes):**

Our classrooms, our outdoor areas and our resources and planned experiences are carefully selected to promote fine motor skills. We have repeated and varied experiences to develop children's proficiency, control, dexterity and confidence.

These include:

Poking; squeezing; patting; rolling; pincer grip; stirring; pegging; pouring; squashing; pulling; grasp.

## Literacy

*It is crucial for children to develop a life-long love of reading. Reading consists of two dimensions: language comprehension and word reading. Language comprehension (necessary for both reading and writing) starts from birth. It only develops when adults talk with children about the world around them and the books (stories and non-fiction) they read with them, and enjoy rhymes, poems and songs together. Skilled word reading, taught later, involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words. Writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing).*

Literacy includes: comprehension, word reading and writing

At The Limes, our curriculum gives a balance between incidental teaching and pre-planned learning in Group Times at the beginning and end of sessions. Our teaching of reading is closely connected to our teaching of communication and language (see above).

### Reading

Reading is a complex process and a skilled reader needs to learn language comprehension as well as word reading strategies. This is usefully captured in the two following diagrams.

Key elements in early reading are usefully captured in the following diagram:

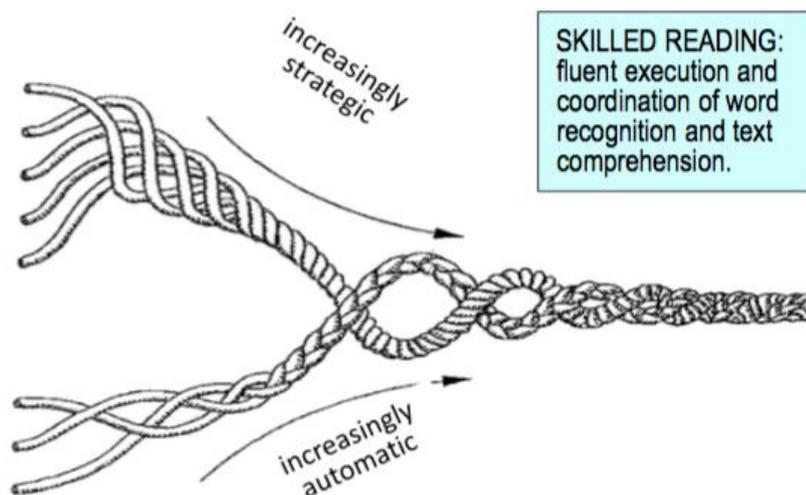
## Scarborough's Reading Rope (2001)

### LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

- Background Knowledge
- Vocabulary Knowledge
- Language Structures
- Verbal Reasoning
- Literacy Knowledge

### WORD RECOGNITION

- Phonological Awareness
- Decoding (and Spelling)
- Sight Recognition



Reading is a multifaceted skill, gradually acquired over years of instruction and practice.

The Simple View of reading also explains the vital connection between word recognition and comprehension. Children need both elements to be skilled readers.

Our approach to **Reading** is underpinned the following key strategies:

1. Core Books
2. Helicopter Stories
3. Dialogic Book Talk
4. Print Referencing Concepts about print
5. Phonics - Letters and Sounds Phase One (see below)

### *Core Books*

The quality of books is crucial, so we use an approach devised by the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education which is known as Core Books. This involves selecting high quality texts reflecting the diversity within the nursery and offering role-models of different gender/cultural backgrounds.

These selected texts are read with, to and by the children regularly. They are available indoors and outside. They are made up of three collections: the learning to read collection, the literature collection and the information collection.

### *Helicopter Stories*

Through this approach we help to connect children's love of play with their love of stories, narrative and character. Children have opportunities to role play familiar stories and their own stories, storytelling are recorded and acted out by a small group with a familiar adult.

### *Dialogic Book Talk*

This approach describes the way in which practitioners (and parents) read with children. This approach is vital in helping children's development of language comprehension. They prompt the child to say somethings about the books, evaluate their response, expand on the child's response by rephrasing and adding information, then repeat the prompt to make sure the child has learned from the expansion. There are a range of different types of prompts that can be use.

### *Print Referencing Concepts about print*

For children to become skilled readers they need to know about how print and concepts about print work. When we read with and to children, we use this opportunity to explore:

- the meaning of print,
- book and print organisation (who is the author, top to bottom, left to right, page order etc
- letters eg, names of letters, upper case lower case etc
- words - the idea of a word as a distinct unit of print

## *Phonics*

Phonological awareness is fundamental to word reading. We use the Letters and Sounds document to teach these concepts to children. These activities are planned in our group time sessions and reinforced incidentally in children's play and interactions.

Phonics is taught systematically in Reception. In nursery we focus predominately on Phase One of letters and sounds which includes:

- Phonological awareness - the ability to reflect upon and consciously manipulate the sound structures of language at each level—word, syllable, and phoneme
- Phonemic awareness is one aspect of phonological awareness and refers to the skill of manipulating the smallest unit—phonemes. For example, isolating the initial sound 'd' in 'dig'
- Phase One of Letters and Sounds concentrates on developing children's speaking and listening skills and lays the foundations for the phonic work which starts in Phase Two

Phase One is divided into seven aspects. Each aspect contains three strands: tuning in to sounds (auditory discrimination); listening and remembering sounds (auditory memory and sequencing) and talking about sounds (developing vocabulary and language comprehension).

- General sound discrimination - environmental
- General sound discrimination - instrumental sounds
- General sound discrimination - body percussion
- Rhythm and rhyme
- Alliteration
- Voice sounds
- Oral blending and segmenting

## *Writing*

Writing is physically and intellectually demanding. We recognise that spoken language and children's physical development underpins the process of becoming a writer. Children's readiness to write varies and we support children when they are ready to move from making marks to writing.

Our approach to writing supports children's:

### **Motivation to Write**

We show children that writing is a form of communication and self-expression by acting as a model using writing in our interactions with them and acting as a scribe recording their words during story telling.

We use the children's interests to engage them in writing for a purpose.

The learning environment is resourced with high quality writing materials that are freely accessible to children both indoors and outdoors.

We offer resources in role play scenarios – encouraging children to take on a role and write as a shop keeper, traffic warden, doctor etc

We show an interest in children’s early mark making and developing writing asking children to talk about what they have done. We display their learning in the environment.

We create an audience for children’s writing, reading, and sharing it with them– appreciating that a piece of writing only comes to life when someone reads it.

Exposure to hand-written print is important and we ensure that it is displayed in the environment.

### **Capability to Write**

We support the children’s physical development - both gross and fine motor skills help to build children’s core strength, dexterity and hand-eye coordination these skills are all required as a foundation for writing.

When children are ready physically, we:

- Teach the children that there are rules to print both through reading and writing, such as moving from left to right across a page.
- Introduce correct letter formation to children through modelling writing, describing the movements they need to make, where they need to start each letter. Using their name as a starting point.
- Encourage children to hold and use writing tools using a tripod grip once they are physically able.

Reading & Writing float on a sea of talk (James Britton)

## Mathematics

Developing a strong grounding in number is essential so that all children develop the necessary building blocks to excel mathematically. Children should be able to count confidently, develop a deep understanding of the numbers to 10, the relationships between them and the patterns within those numbers.

By providing frequent and varied opportunities to build and apply this understanding - such as using manipulatives, including small pebbles and tens frames for organising counting - children will develop a secure base of knowledge and vocabulary from which mastery of mathematics is built. In addition, it is important that the curriculum includes rich opportunities for children to develop their spatial reasoning skills across all areas of mathematics including shape, space and measure.

It is important that children develop positive attitudes and interests in mathematics, look for patterns and relationships, spot connections, 'have a go' and talk to adults and peers about what they notice and to not be afraid to make mistakes.

Mathematics includes: number, patterns and connections and spatial reasoning

At The Limes, we provide time and opportunity for children to make connections in their mathematical understanding. They are therefore provided with opportunities throughout the indoor and outdoor environments to deepen and develop their understanding through play, as well as through discrete teaching sessions.

*Our mathematic curriculum* is predominantly led by the children's needs and interests.

Maths skills are taught sequentially, and children are given an opportunity to develop fluency, reasoning, and problem solving across all areas of the mathematical curriculum.

*Lessons are carefully planned* to ensure links between maths concepts are made when appropriate. Children are supported in their learning through the Concrete, Pictorial, and Abstract ways of learning.

*Mathematical vocabulary is taught explicitly*, and children are given regular opportunities to talk about mathematics and rehearse newly taught vocabulary.

*Practitioners engage* with children's mathematics in their play (posing problems, modelling language, and helping children to mathematise).

Practitioners provide different contexts for children to explore the same mathematical idea and multiple representations of this idea (including pictorial, informal marks and mathematical resources). To deepen their understanding children are encouraged to communicate their mathematical thinking in a wide variety of ways through manipulation of resources, gesture, pointing, body language mark making, and talk.

*New mathematical concepts* are introduced using a ‘Concrete, Pictorial and Abstract’ approach enabling all children to experience hands-on learning when discovering new mathematical concepts and allowing them to have clear models and images to support their learning.

*It is important* that children begin to develop a sense of the underlying concepts and structures of mathematics. For example, children may be able to name numbers and count – but do they always understand what these numbers mean? We support children’s development of the underlying mathematical concepts through a ‘Concrete – Pictorial – Abstract approach – whereby we provide real life ‘concrete’ resources to model the abstract concept of numbers.

At the Limes, we encourage children to explore new mathematical concepts in a concrete way using real-life situations and objects and use mathematical representations such as counters in varying forms (natural counting materials, alternative counting mediums), to help them make sense of abstract numbers and symbols. Being able to touch, feel and manipulate the physical nature of mathematics motivates learners and begins to develop an understanding of the underlying concepts.

Children move from that solid starting point to a pictorial approach, teaching children how to represent objects, it is not practical to get three sheep and two cows into the room to sort them, so what could the children use instead to help them? Moving from a representation with a clear link (such as toy versions of the animals) to representation with something less obviously linked (such as lines on paper) ensures children develop an understanding of representation, building a firm foundation for future mathematic success.

In order to develop mathematical mastery, children should begin to develop abstract mathematical thinking.

For example, using movement or sound – how many claps did you hear? Can you jump four times? This approach ensures children are not relying solely on visual cues, helping them take steps towards working in the abstract.

*When introducing mathematical concepts* we use correct mathematical language, mathematical concepts and their associated language are embedded into everyday life. Helping children to understand how the concepts apply in a variety of real-life situations.

*Mastery through play* - setting up mathematical provocations for children to explore mathematical concepts independently.

*Developing understanding with questioning* - whilst children play and interact, we create opportunities for the development of mathematical understanding and development – for example “how many blocks taller is my model compared to yours?”

*Adding mathematical language and activities to the daily routine* - developing maths language in our daily routine gives children the opportunity to understand it while using real life concepts.

*Sorting and grouping* – helps children to reason and look for patterns – children use critical thinking skills to come up with a range of ideas and justifications based upon the concrete properties of objects.

*Children experience mathematics* through a subtle balance of teaching, adult interaction, play based learning, provocations and in continuous provision.

*We dedicate time* within each session during snack time for mathematical experiences to be specifically planned/sequenced/using intentional teaching.

*To support our curriculum*, we have a range of mathematical resources in classrooms and in the outdoor environment including ‘loose part’ resources, open ended alternative counter representations, puzzles, number lines, resources to support experimental measuring - standard and non-standard measures, scales, timers, large and small building blocks, numerals, and props to represent number in songs and rhymes.

Our indoor and outdoor environments are carefully planned to provide mathematical experiences for children. Each classroom has:

- A large block area
- Construction
- Maths area – puzzles, open-ended resources for counting, shape, measures
- Water play
- Loose parts

Outdoor

- Games/number games
- Loose parts and blocks
- Water area
- Smaller open ended maths resources

## Understanding the World

Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community. The frequency and range of children's personal experiences increases their knowledge and sense of the world around them – from visiting parks, libraries and museums to meeting important members of society such as police officers, nurses and firefighters. In addition, listening to a broad selection of stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems will foster their understanding of our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world. As well as building important knowledge, this extends their familiarity with words that support understanding across domains. Enriching and widening children's vocabulary will support later reading comprehension.

Understanding the world includes exploring past and present, people, culture and communities and the natural world.

At The Limes, we base our approach to this area of learning on our community using the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the children and their families and our local environment to inform and add richness to our curriculum.

The resources and displays in the nursery reflect our diverse world.

Celebrations, experiences, and events that reflect the children's cultures and faiths are organised throughout the year.

Opportunities to explore a range of cultures and language are provided continuously through experiences such as preparing and experiencing food from a range of countries, storytelling, books, and songs.

The physical environment is organised both indoors and outdoors so that it invites children to explore concepts and be curious about the world around them. Concepts may reflect the children's interests or naturally occurring phenomenon of interest such as puddles, spring or light and dark that adults use to support teaching and learning opportunities.

The nursery garden offers lots of opportunity for the children to explore their natural world alongside their peers and adults. Access to our gardening area, composting and participation in growing and caring for our garden is a core experience for children.

We make local trips with the children to the cycle track, park and shops as well as organising trips further afield to explore the city of Bristol.

Technology is used with the children to find out about the world around them, to document learning and to involve the children in their own learning.

## Expressive Arts and Design

The development of children's artistic and cultural awareness supports their imagination and creativity. It is important that children have regular opportunities to engage with the arts, enabling them to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. The quality and variety of what children see, hear and participate in is crucial for developing their understanding, self-expression, vocabulary and ability to communicate through the arts. The frequency, repetition and depth of their experiences are fundamental to their progress in interpreting and appreciating what they hear, respond to and observe.

Expressive arts and design, involves enabling children to create with materials and access opportunities for being imaginative and expressive sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through art, music, dance, role play and design and technology.

### **Art and Design**

At the Limes, we aim to foster a passion for creativity and the arts. By offering children high quality experiences that focuses on the process of creative learning not the product.

We acknowledge and celebrate the '100' languages of children (Reggio).

We support children in developing their preferences for forms of expression and value their contributions. We hope to engage with the creativity of parents and invite them to share their expertise and to invite artists to the setting, visit art galleries, street art, theatres, and music events.

Our art and design provision is based on a workshop approach. Children have independent access to media and materials, as part of our continuous provision. We provide a range of different sized and types of paper and mark making equipment - pencils, pens, chalks, crayons, paints and water colour palettes, and a range of different sized paintbrushes. We have different coloured shaped and textured materials for collage as well as glue, scissors, string, sellotape, masking tape and clay.

We recognise that children need support in learning new techniques or skills such as cutting, printing, colour mixing, observational drawing, representation of shape and form, collage or joining. Teaching new skills is based on/or around children's interest and is supported by an adult introducing new media and skills. We model, explain and support children in learning about new techniques or possibilities alongside examples of art from different cultures and our local community (Bristol Artists) as provocations.

We use Transient Art as a technique/approach for children to freely explore creating.

Children participate in woodwork projects at least twice a year using real tools and wood on our woodwork bench. Skills in techniques such as joining and using tools safely are taught to the children.

Well-resourced block areas and construction areas in each room allowing children to design and build using open ended resources.

## **Music and Dance**

There is an identified and well-resourced Outdoor Music and Dance Area in the garden, allowing children to be loud, and active when exploring music and dance.

Music curriculum delivery is supported by the Early Education Musical Development Matters (Nicola Burke) document.

Children take part in exploration and learning based on the themes of:

- Hearing & Listening
- Vocalising & Singing
- Moving & Dancing
- Exploring & Playing

Children can listen to a range of music via desktop DJ.

Children are taught ring games and songs during group times.

Stages and shows are created for children to perform singing and dancing to audience.

## **Imaginative Play (pretend play/role play)**

Every room has a well-resourced home corner that reflects the children's cultural backgrounds.

Adults support children taking on roles in their play by engaging in pretend play and modelling pretending.

Storytelling and Story Square approaches, offer scaffolding for taking on and exploring different roles.

Every room has a well-resourced small world area with additional props to encourage children to build and create their own props for play.

Outdoor crate and loose parts area supported by provocations to encourage themed play such as number plates, tyres, nets and tubes.