



Wind in the Willows Nursery

Curriculum and Pedagogy 2025

Our curriculum is the big picture of what we want our children to learn, experience and discover. At Wind in the Willows, we offer a skills-based curriculum which endeavours to support children to learn the key skills they need at each appropriate stage of development to ensure that they are prepared for the next step in their journey. We identify the key skills and developmental milestones a child will be working towards achieving at each stage of their learning and development. We use the supporting guidance (Development Matters and Birth to 5 Matters) to assist in ensuring that children are making sufficient progress in all areas of learning. We identify where children are meeting developmental expectations and where children are working towards these – where a child may not be meeting developmental expectations in any area(s) of learning, we will work with the child and their family to support them in reaching this goal alongside our staff team and other professionals when necessary. Practitioners will use their combined experience and expert knowledge of child development to recognise such instances and put together a plan to close any identified gaps. In order to support every child to reach their full potential, we need to use the right approach at the right time; again, this will be guided by the combined experience and expertise of our staff team, with the advice of other professionals when required.

We focus on the Prime Areas of Learning, as we recognise how profoundly important these are for underpinning their future learning and the acquisition of skills in the Specific Areas. We ensure a communication-rich environment in which children can develop their language and understanding skills; a nurturing environment in which children can feel safe and secure to explore their feelings and develop relationships with others; and a physically active and challenging environment where children can develop both fine and gross motor skills which are fundamental for the development of their ability to write later on. We ensure that all children are able to access our curriculum and identify any barriers and help children overcome these by providing positive relationships and an enabling environment. For example, children whose first language is not English will be supported to learn English whilst also valuing their home language; a child with delayed or disordered communication may need Makaton signs and symbols; a child with a physical disability may require space and equipment to develop their motor skills.

Our curriculum aligns with the Overarching Principles of the EYFS. As children progress through the nursery, from babies, to toddlers, to pre-schoolers, they will be offered opportunities within an environment which meets their individual needs, interests and stage of development.

We ensure that all of our practitioners are knowledgeable in child development and learning theories and can confidently apply these to their practice. We identify the best theories and approaches from history and around the globe and apply these to both our practice and our environment. We accept that children learn best through play and exploration and aim to ignite a life-long love of learning by encouraging curiosity.

We provide enabling environments with nurturing, knowledgeable and responsive adults who support and scaffold children's learning throughout both child-initiated and adult-led play-based learning. We provide an environment in which children can feel safe and secure and develop strong bonds with others, allowing them to thrive in all aspects of their development and become resilient

and caring human beings. We offer a language-rich environment where children can develop the critical skills which will lay the foundations for future learning.

We encourage a culture of reflective practice whereby practitioners celebrate their own successes, whether as an individual or as part of our TEAM, and identify where improvements can be made, leading to outstanding outcomes for all children. We endeavour for every member of our staff TEAM to reach their full potential through careful mentorship, training and continued professional development.

A Unique Child

Within each room, children will be mastering certain key skills or milestones. We recognise that children learn and develop at their own unique rate. Therefore, children's transitions throughout the setting are not determined by the child's age but their needs and abilities.

We recognise that children under 2 will be in the sensorimotor stage of their development (learning and exploring through sensory exploration) and therefore offer plenty of sensory activities and experiences.

Children aged 2 and into our preschool room will be within the preoperational stage whereby they will begin to make sense of the world through language, symbols and play – they will be beginning to play alongside others which is very important for their social development.

Bunnies

Children in our Bunnies room will be working towards...

- Becoming confident movers, mastering gross motor skills in sequence
- Weaning from milk onto solid foods
- Making their own sounds and imitating sounds made by others
- Communicating using gestures
- Separating from their main carer, building a bond with and being comforted by others (e.g. their Key Person)
- Starting to show an awareness of themselves (e.g. finding body parts, imitating facial movements, looking in a mirror)
- Beginning to explore unfamiliar situations and self-soothe or seek support from a caregiver when they feel unsure or upset
- Showing a range of different emotions

Toads

Children in our Toads room will be working towards...

- Enjoying songs, rhymes and music and show this by moving their whole bodies to the beat or joining in with actions and singing
- Showing focus and concentration on an object, activity or experience of their own choosing for a period of time
- Understanding single words in context and some "yes" and "no" boundaries
- Showing an interest in making sounds such as by using sounds in play or beginning to say single words
- Imitate some words and sounds and follow some simple instructions such as "find your nose"
- Independently walking and becoming steadier on their feet and using walking as a means to move from one space to another
- Developing fine motor skills such as by picking up small objects between their thumb and fingers or holding a crayon with whole hand to make marks
- Attempting to use a spoon to feed themselves and independently drink from a cup or bottle

- Cooperate with some caregiving experiences such as nappy changing, having face cleaned, being put to bed
- Explore new and familiar environments with a familiar caregiver close by and check in with them often or seek them to “recharge” when in need of comfort or rest
- Responding to their own name and finding named objects
- Building relationships with their Key Person as well as other adults and children in their room

Moles

Children in our Moles Room will be working towards...

- Developing spatial awareness and appropriate fine and gross motor skills
- Gaining more bladder and bowel control, communicating toileting needs and then potty training
- Confidently and independently exploring in new and familiar situations, returning to a “secure base” (e.g. Key Person) to check in or when in need of comfort
- Expressing their own needs and interests, likes and dislikes
- Beginning to understand and comply with some rules and boundaries
- Being able to sit and listen/show focus for short periods of time
- Parallel play/playing alongside others (adults and children)
- Following simple, single step instructions
- Recognising their own and others’ feelings
- Engaging in imaginative play (e.g. small world, role play etc.)

Badgers

Children in our Badgers Room will be working towards...

- Younger / less able form learning groups called ‘Cubs’
- Older / more able form our Badgers groups
- Becoming more independent, for example putting on own coat, using the toilet, washing hands, blowing nose, feeding self, using cutlery etc.
- Being confident to be away from their primary caregiver
- Communicating confidently – needs, interests, ideas, thoughts, feelings
- Engaging in physical activity and developing gross motor skills, core strength and balance
- Developing fine motor skills such as by using tools, threading, exploring small objects
- Making marks (including tracing, colouring, drawing and attempting to write) and safely using scissors and other tools for creative activities such as glue sticks, paint brushes
- Sitting still and listening/showing focus for short, but increasing, periods of time
- Following instructions and showing an understanding of rules and boundaries
- Enjoying stories, rhymes and songs in a variety of formats
- Sharing, turn-taking, interacting and playing with others (adults and children)
- Counting objects and mastery of number up to 10 and mathematical concepts (knowing what the number means, how many objects it is, representation using fingers, more and less, bigger and smaller, shape, recognising patterns, sorting and grouping)
- Showing an interest and curiosity about the world around them, exploring new experiences and environments, asking questions
- Understanding what makes them similar and different to others and being respectful of our differences
- Hold a conversation, listening and taking turns as well as contributing their thoughts, feelings and ideas
- Being resilient to changes
- Feeling confident to say when something isn’t feeling right
- Being prepared for the upcoming transition to school

These are not exhaustive lists but the key skills children in each room will be working towards achieving. Some skills are repeated in rooms to consolidate learning and ensure deep mastery of skills. Practitioners use their knowledge of child development and their knowledge of the needs, interests and fascinations of the children they work with to ensure children are prepared for the next phase of their journey. We know our children, families and community and use this to support us in choosing which aspects of early learning and care are of high priority.

Positive Relationships

In order to develop positive relationships with children, we recognise the importance of attachment and providing a secondary attachment figure away from home. We implement this through our Key Person system and understand how this can look different depending on the age and stage of a child. Although each child will have a Key Person, who is most likely to be their primary figure of attachment within the setting, all practitioners will endeavour to form positive relationships with children in their room and the wider setting.

Parents are a child's first educator and we identify the importance of working in partnership with them. We ensure open and two-way communication and respect parents' wishes. We provide a number of opportunities for communication and collaboration including daily handovers, termly parents' evenings, stay and play sessions, online systems and much more.

At Wind in the Willows, we are one big family and provide children with warm and nurturing relationships in which they can feel safe and secure, without which they cannot thrive and reach their full potential. Practitioners are attuned to the needs of each individual child and support their learning as play partners.

Practitioners will know when to sensitively and appropriately intervene and when to stand back, watch and encourage.

Enabling Environments

We are a home-from-home setting – an extension of the home rather than a watered-down version of school. Our environment will be flexible so as to meet the needs of the children. We take inspiration from pedagogical approaches around the globe including The Curiosity Approach which offers calming and homely environments full of authentic and natural resources which inspire curiosity. The environment should be calm and free from clutter and overstimulating bright colours and unnecessary labels, displays and resources; everything will have a purpose and plastic toys will be limited. Children will have access to a rich variety of loose parts which will offer plenty of opportunity for imagination and creativity. We make use of our indoor and outdoor spaces, all year round and in all weathers.

For our youngest children in particular, we aim to ensure consistency between the setting and home. Children can bring "transitional" objects to help them settle and soothe and where possible, their home routine will be mirrored. As children progress through the setting, the routine will begin to have more structure however in all rooms, children are given plenty of time for uninterrupted, child-led play throughout which practitioners will support the children as play-partners. Practitioners will scaffold children's learning within their chosen play activities.

Wind in the Willows is a community-based setting and we take pride in being a valuable part of our wider community. We utilise our community spaces to allow children a vast range of learning opportunities beyond our nursery doors.

Learning and Development

Our skills-based curriculum provides opportunities for children to master key skills at each stage of their learning and development. We focus on key milestones and offer learning opportunities

tailored to each cohort's needs and interests, recognising each child as a unique individual. Depth in learning is far more important than covering lots of skills in a superficial way.

We accept that not all children receive the same start and will have had the same opportunities and experiences as others. Cultural capital, where we endeavour to provide all children with opportunities and experiences which will support them to make progress and achieve as individuals. In each room, we provide children with opportunities and experiences which will prepare for the next step in their journey, be it in education or life in general. We will follow children's needs and interests in order to identify the key experiences we will offer to our current cohort and in line with our diverse community.

At Wind in the Willows, we are firm believers that children learn best through play and exploration and therefore offer plenty of opportunity for child-initiated play, exploration, enquiry and conversation. Adults will support children as play partners and scaffold children's learning by being present and engaged with the child. We aim to ignite in children a drive to learn and be curious by being flexible and responsive to children's fascinations.

Our practitioners work within Ofsted's definition of teaching in the Early Years:

"Teaching should not be taken to imply a 'top down' or formal way of working. It is a broad term that 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 that adults provide and the attention given 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 taking account of their interests and dispositions to learn (characteristics of effective learning), and how practitioners use this information to plan children's next steps in learning and to monitor their progress." **Assessment**

Children are formatively assessed on an ongoing basis through observations by practitioners. Focus Child assessments are carried out termly and these are an opportunity for practitioners to reflect on the child's learning and development in line with the areas of learning – for children aged 2 and under, the Prime Areas will be focused on and for those aged 3 and above, the Prime and Specific Areas will be focused on. Where practitioners identify that children are not meeting typical developmental expectations, additional support will be put in place depending on the individual needs of the child; where necessary, this will require partnership working with the child, their family, practitioners and managers within the setting, the SENDCo and other professionals. Rather than assess children within given age bands, we use these as a guide to determine whether a child is on track or not on track. We recognise that some children will require significantly more help than others to become and remain on track with typical developmental expectations but understand that "every child can make progress if they are given the right support" (Development Matters, 2021).

WIND IN THE WILLOWS CLIMATE ACTION PLAN (SEPTEMBER 2025) – Potter to oversee implementation and review

GOAL	ACTION	WHO	TIMESCALE
EMBED SUSTAINABILITY INTO OUR BESPOKE CURRICULUM	Integrate environmental themes; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recycling - Nature - Climate care - Books about... - More planting ideas - Repurposing 	TEAM	ONGOING
ENGAGE FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share sustainability tips and updates - Invite families to share recycling ideas and habits - Actively take part in national days eg; earth day / recycling week 	TEAM	ONGOING
REDUCING & REUSING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reusing cartons and boxes eg; junk modelling 		
WEATHER / CLIMATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore outdoors and trips in ALL WEATHERS - Educate parents about play in all weathers 		
EXPLORING BIO DIVERSITY			
SUSTAINABLE SHOPPING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Karen Cooper - Staff to be aware of usage / savings etc 	KC	ONGOING
BEING PART OF A COMMUNITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Milton area visits - Shearwater 		

WATER CONSERVATION & CLEAN AIR	- Only half fill toddler bottles		
THINKING ABOUT FOOD	- Karen Cooper when purchasing - Lucie Taff when cooking - Mya Leigh as PANCO - Tea menu to use leftovers from lunches		

- Children's voices (committee)
- Family feedback during parents evenings / stay and play sessions / questionnaires ... Ideas encouraged
- Mini audit termly to check progress and identify impact & improvements