



# Teaching and Learning at Holmewood Nursery School and Treehouse Children's Centre



# The Characteristics of Learning at Holmewod Nurery School

## Playing and Exploring:



We encourage children to investigate and experience things and 'have a go'.

*"Exploratory play is important to all of us. It is how children begin to understand their surroundings and the relationships between themselves and others, using all their senses and every part of the body"*  
(Hutchin, 2013).



# Active Learning:



Children learn to concentrate, keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements.

*“Keeping on trying, as it is called, is all about persistence, being motivated to master a new skill or understand a new idea, even though this may require considerable effort”*  
(Hutchin, 2013)

# Creating and Thinking Critically:



Children are encouraged to have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

*“In order to be able to solve problems in their daily experiences, children, like adults, need to generate their own ideas and put these to good use. Play and exploration are fundamental to this, something we as parents or practitioners close to the child should be encouraging children to do so that they can develop their own ideas”*  
(Hutchin, 2013).



The EYFS uses the term Learning and Development to describe seven areas of learning. These are all related to each other; however they are divided into Prime and Specific Areas.

## **Prime areas**

Personal, Social and Emotional Development  
Communication and Language  
Physical Development

The Prime areas are the foundations upon which future learning can be built.

## **Specific areas**

Literacy  
Mathematics  
Understanding the World  
Expressive Arts and Design

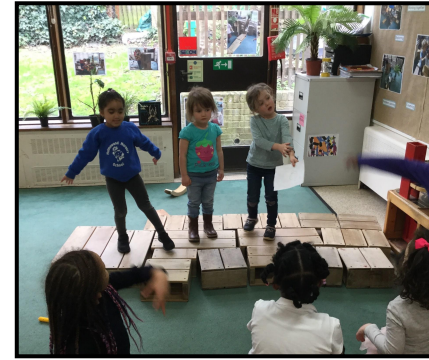
At Holmewood Nursery School, we believe young children learn best through direct hands-on real-life experiences. They do not make distinctions between 'play' and 'work' and neither should the adults who support them.

# **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT:**

**At Holmewood, we believe personal, social and emotional development is an essential building block for success in life. It supports children's development by helping them to interact effectively and develop positive attitudes to themselves and others.**

## **Self-Regulation**

This aspect is about how children can understand their own and other people's feelings, and how they learn to manage their feelings appropriately. Children are encouraged to investigate and explore from the security and support of a key person. We ensure that children develop a positive self image and celebrate their successes. Displays around the school proudly show the children's achievements for all to see and allow the children to reflect and build upon these achievements. Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and to understand what is right, what is wrong and why. Children will learn to recognise emotions within themselves and how to deal with these feelings appropriately, whilst also learning to recognise how others are feeling and act upon this considerately and calmly.



## **Managing Self**

This aspect is about how children come to develop confidence in who they are and what they can do and in expressing their own ideas. We help children to see the value in practicing and consolidating skills, sharing and celebrating their strengths and understanding the importance of overcoming any challenges or difficulties. Children are encouraged to explore and develop their knowledge and interests. Children learn to care and show concern for each other, living things and their environment and begin to understand that there are consequences to their actions. Throughout the year, children become more independent and take more responsibility learning to manage their self-care routine, dressing and feeding themselves and using the toilet independently. Children find out about the effects of a healthy life style on their bodies. This includes all the factors that affect healthy development including making healthy choices in relation to food. Children learn to respect property by taking care of the equipment around them. Through questioning, describing and introducing new vocabulary, adults play a significant role in helping children to develop their sense of self.

## **Building Relationships**

This aspect is about how young children learn to get along with other children and with adults; how they can see something from somebody else's point of view and take that into account when they play and work with other children. It is also significant in developing friendships. To be able to do these things children need role models – adults who show them how to be with others; how to be kind and to understand why people behave in certain ways. It is through collaborative play children learn to co-operate and share, and begin to take account of the opinions, thoughts and feelings of others, leading to the crucial skill of respecting themselves and other people. We encourage the children to negotiate with others and take account of what they say, understanding that others may have differing views and opinions whilst also standing up for their own rights appropriately.





# PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT:

## **Gross Motor and Fine Motor**

As well as developing the gross motor skills required to move about children also need to develop control of all the smaller muscles which move when we pick something up or put it down – these take time to develop and come through using and playing with objects such as spoons, beakers, cars, puzzles, etc. From this early start children develop body-confidence which encourages them to want to push a car along a track, ride a scooter or jump in a puddle. As children develop control and coordination they eventually learn how to handle items such as a felt pen, a pair of scissors or a paint brush.

At Holmewood, there is continuous and exciting provision to support both fine and gross motor development. The children can develop ball skills including throwing, catching, kicking, bouncing and aiming. They can learn to use wheeled toys by pedaling, scooting and steering around obstacles. They can develop spatial awareness and the ability to judge space, distance and speed. Children’s fine motor skills are developed through using malleable materials, pencils, paintbrushes, scissors and other tools. They can learn to manipulate small nursery equipment like Lego and to develop hand/eye co-ordination through activities like threading beads and using woodwork tools.



# **COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE:**

## **Listening and Attention and Understanding**

It is important for children to listen to the views of others and attend to what they say. Children learn new ideas by listening to others, watching and imitating them and through joining in with rhymes, stories and games using sounds and words. They learn when to listen and when to speak and begin to have conversations with others. Daily story times give children the opportunity to listen to and join in with exciting story books.

Adults support the development of sustained, shared thinking amongst the children, their ideas are shared and explored for a sustained amount of time and experiences and involvement is deepened.



Children are encouraged to listen to adults and each other and to follow simple instructions and routines. A range of open and closed questions give children the opportunity to share their understanding, including recounting experiences they have had or predicting possible endings to a storybook. A range of resources and activities provide children with ample opportunity to develop and deepen their understanding, for example, activities planned around the story of The Three Little Pigs have included story props and puppets, exploring the different materials in the story, building houses and learning songs.



## **Speaking**

Adults are role models in using clear language when speaking with the children and modelling new vocabulary in a range of situations. Children are encouraged to have real conversations with adults and children, to listen and take turns to talk. Every day there are opportunities to talk, to ask questions, share ideas and form relationships with others. A range of techniques are used to develop children's vocabulary, including the use of core books, Talking Tables (in which children talk about a favourite toy with their friends) and Talking Boxes (whereby children learn new vocabulary around a certain theme, for example, vehicles).

Children are encouraged to talk about themselves and their achievements in their 'Special Book' which contain photographs and examples of their work. These books are very valuable for fostering a positive self-image. Children are encouraged to act out and retell favourite stories or rhymes, using props and other resources they choose.





# **MATHS:**

## **Number**

When something has real meaning for a child they will learn about it – so even three year olds will recognise the number 3 after looking at and talking about their birthday cards. Children often say 'that's my number' when they see numbers two, three, four or five – because their age (which they are referring to) is special for them. Similarly when a child recognises they have the same number of raisins as another child they are beginning to apply their knowledge of quantity.

At Holmewood, we use provide meaningful opportunities for developing early number sense. Comparing, matching, sorting, counting and exploring mathematical ideas and concepts throughout the day. We encourage the children to use numbers and counting in play, for example counting out items and counting the bricks they use to build with or using telephones in our role play areas. At story time, children learn to apply their knowledge of numbers in a variety of ways, including: counting and sharing out fruit, estimating a number of objects, or matching a numeral to it's quantity. Children begin to develop an awareness of the relationship between numbers and amounts and know that numbers and quantities can be combined to be 'added together' and can be separated by 'taking away'.



## **Numerical Patterns**

Every day we use our knowledge of shapes and measurements. Children learn to recognise different shapes and what they can be used for because of their properties, for example, wheels need to be round to move efficiently. Children should explore lots of different materials and resources, developing their understanding of different measurements, for example, how long the paper needs to be to make a crown.

At Holmewood, children are encouraged to look at the shapes around them. Through talking about shapes and quantities, and developing appropriate vocabulary, children use their knowledge to develop ideas and to solve mathematical problems. Children use their knowledge of shapes and space and use this to create observational drawings, and plan and design models using a variety of construction materials. By using the vocabulary associated with length, weight, height, distance and time children begin to explore, compare and measure for themselves.

# **LITERACY:**

## **Word Reading:**

At Holmewood we teach phonics through a discreet and supportive programme called Letters and Sounds. We spend a lot of time singing and encouraging children to join in, adding actions and movements. Children soon begin to tune into different sounds and start playing with them and developing confidence. The children are encouraged to listen to and differentiate between different sounds and play games involving sound and language. When ready, we will introduce graphemes (letters) to match the phonemes (sounds) following the systematic approach used in the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds. Children start to identify sounds in words, blending sounds to make words and breaking words into individual units of sounds.

## **Comprehension**

Vocabulary development comes from having lots of experiences which extend the child's spoken language and their understanding of what is being said to them. By exploring a range of books, children gain confidence in speaking aloud and begin to make up their own stories.



At Holmewood, children are exposed to high quality books and experience to expand and develop their vocabulary. Books are shared with the children every day. We use core books that are supported with a range of creative and exciting activities to enhance learning, enjoyment and engagement as well as encourage reader response. All of this is complemented by a wide range of other reading material, including non-fiction and poetry. Children are encouraged to find their own name cards and use these in their play. Soon, children start to recognise not only their own name cards but also the names cards of their friends and teachers.

Story props and puppets are used alongside the story to develop a child's recall and understanding. During play, children are encouraged to use new vocabulary by retelling stories they have heard together and by making up their own stories.



## **Writing:**

Writing can seem deceptively simple to competent writers but it is highly complex as it involves many skills including physical, thinking and language skills. It begins with talking, listening and mark-making and then develops over time as children acquire an understanding that spoken words can be represented in signs and symbols. When appropriate, children are encouraged to add letters and letter-like shapes in their drawing. Adults demonstrate and model writing for a purpose and children enjoy copying this – for example, children create their own registers or write cards and shopping lists.



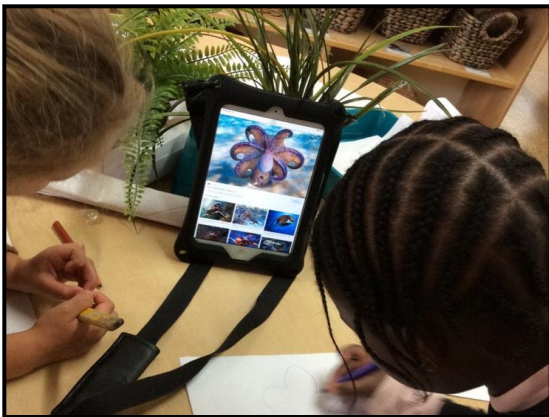
At Holmewood, children practice their mark making skills and draw for a range of purposes alongside familiar adults. Children are encouraged to make marks in their play, for example, drawing story maps, story characters, or making train tracks in the mud for their trains. Children are encouraged to develop making meaningful movements and marks – for example, making large actions and gestures to music, drawing in wet sand or cornflour, and having access to a variety of mark making equipment. Adults model mark making and children gain confidence in giving meaning to the marks they make. With adults and other children they have many opportunities to explore writing letters and letter-like shapes in their pictures.

# UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD:



## **The Natural World**

At Holmewood, we are fortunate to have a beautiful and extensive outdoor environment that allows children many different opportunities to discover and talk about the natural world, learn about animals, plants and natural and found objects. Children explore, listen, observe and are encouraged to comment and ask questions about what they see and think. Children do get very wet and messy! Inside the classroom, children have free access to malleable materials such as sand, water, dough and other materials that allows children to explore with all their senses.



## **People Culture and Communities**

As children learn about the world around them they learn about their parents, grandparents and friends and they develop an interest in their own story as well as the stories in their family – this is the beginning of developing an understanding of the past and helps them to learn about how other people are different from them, yet share some of the same characteristics and ideas. We celebrate and talk about different religious celebrations and acknowledge other events such as Black History Month and Diversity Month to support children’s awareness of other children developing a respectful view of others.



## **Past and Present**

To talk about the lives of themselves, others and people in society, showing some understanding of their roles and the similarities and differences between the past and now. To know and describe similarities and differences between things in the past and now. Understanding the past through storytelling. Children enjoy looking through their special books reflecting on what they have done and achieved and sharing their thoughts with their key person and friends.

**We approach the teaching of Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development through the ethos of our school, which stresses respect and caring and quality for each other, the environment and animals.**



# **EXPRESSIVE ARTS AND DESIGN:**

## **Creating with Materials**

Children have opportunities to develop skills and techniques through exploring a variety of media including paint, collage materials, clay and other modelling resources. Collage is a popular experience and we try to combine as many different materials as we can. We encourage children to talk about what they are doing and the materials they use. Adult support children in taking risks and using these materials creatively and imaginatively.

We celebrate each mark a child makes on their journey to representation and offer a variety of different experiences in which to make marks, for example, in sand, using water and paintbrushes, on large and small scales.



## **Being Imaginative and Expressive**

This is about children's adventures into the world of pretense, building on their experiences of the real world and transforming them into something new – whether through role play, music, pretend play, block play or small world play or a range of other areas.

A range of equipment is available to encourage children to engage in imaginative play. Dressing-up clothes, home-corners (which can be converted into a variety of situations including doctor's surgery or the hairdressers), small world toys like 'play people', model animals, dolls houses, cars and trains are among the innumerable resources available to the children. Such resources help children to explore roles and relationships, acting out experiences and ideas. Puppets also help children to re-tell and invent stories. Digital cameras and video cameras are used to record our imaginative play.

Adults encourage attitudes of curiosity and questioning as well as creative skills or techniques. By encouraging children to choose and use materials and resources in an open-ended, children are helped to make choices and to have confidence in their own ideas. Retaining childhood confidence in their ideas and skills can easily be lost if others 'take over' and try to suggest what the child is making, thinking or doing. Adults may express an interest in the process a child has gone through or ask open questions such as 'Can you tell me about it – that looks interesting' to further encourage and support children's creativity and exploration.

Most children respond to music with enthusiasm. Adults encourage children's awareness, appreciation and confidence in music and movement. Each classroom has a music area with its own piano and a range of percussion instruments. Children are encouraged to make their own instruments through the year.

