

NEW BEGINNINGS CURRICULUM POLICY

Watch Us Grow: Growing Together, Learning for Life

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Academic Year 2026–2027

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NEW BEGINNINGS CURRICULUM POLICY:

Watch Us Grow: Growing Together, Learning for Life

Academic Year 2026–2027

Below is the beginning of the document in a policy style. We can then build it section by section and refine the wording as we go.

1. Policy Information

Policy Title: New Beginnings Curriculum Policy

Curriculum: Watch Us Grow

Applies to: All New Beginnings Nursery Settings

Academic Year: 2026–2027

Review Date: August 2027

Policy Owner: Senior Leadership Team

2. Our Vision

Growing Together, Learning for Life

At New Beginnings, we believe every child deserves the very best start in life.

We nurture curious and resilient children who flourish in a safe, nurturing and inspiring environment.

Together with our families and community, we create endless opportunities for every child to grow, learn and achieve.

Our curriculum reflects our belief that childhood is a time of curiosity, discovery, relationships, exploration and joy. We recognise every child as a unique individual with their own experiences, interests, strengths and starting points.

Through meaningful experiences, strong relationships, high-quality interactions and carefully planned opportunities for learning, we support children to become confident, capable and caring learners who are ready for their next stage of life.

At New Beginnings, Every child matters. Every opportunity counts. Every beginning shapes a brighter future.

3. Our Curriculum Rationale

The New Beginnings curriculum is known as **Watch Us Grow**.

Watch Us Grow provides a clear and connected approach to children's learning from their earliest experiences in nursery through to their transition into school.

Our curriculum brings together:

- our vision and values
- our five curriculum drivers
- the EYFS areas of learning
- children's interests and experiences
- meaningful stories and books
- exploration, play and investigation
- Together Time
- Enrichment experiences
- Tiny Taskforce
- life skills and independence
- our local community and the wider world

We believe that a meaningful curriculum should give children opportunities to **know, experience, explore, practise, revisit and apply their learning**.

Our curriculum is therefore both **carefully planned and responsive**.

We provide a clear journey across the academic year through monthly themes and Big Questions, while recognising that children's interests, developmental needs, family experiences and spontaneous discoveries will shape the direction of learning.

The monthly curriculum provides the **shared journey**.

The children provide the **individual pathways**.

4. Our Curriculum Drivers

At the heart of Watch Us Grow are five curriculum drivers.

These represent the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions that we want children to develop during their time at New Beginnings.

Growing Curious Minds

We want children to be inquisitive, observant, and excited about the world around them.

Children are encouraged to:

- ask questions
- investigate
- explore
- notice patterns and change
- test ideas
- solve problems
- discover how things work

Curiosity is developed through play, stories, investigation, nature, exploration, and meaningful first-hand experiences.

Growing Confident Voices

We want children to feel confident expressing their thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences.

Children are supported to:

- communicate their needs and ideas
- listen to others
- develop vocabulary
- engage in meaningful conversations
- tell stories
- share experiences
- ask questions
- develop confidence when speaking

Language is at the heart of our curriculum.

High-quality interactions, stories, songs, conversations, and shared experiences provide children with rich opportunities to develop communication and language.

Growing Independent Learners

We want children to see themselves as capable and increasingly confident in what they can do.

Children are encouraged to:

- make choices
- develop practical skills
- care for themselves and their environment
- take responsibility
- solve problems
- complete meaningful tasks
- develop confidence in everyday routines

Independence is developed throughout the nursery day and is not limited to planned activities.

Growing Resilient Thinkers

We want children to develop the confidence to keep trying, think creatively and approach challenges positively.

Children are supported to:

- persevere
- manage setbacks
- try different approaches
- solve problems
- take appropriate risks in their learning
- reflect on their experiences
- develop confidence in facing new challenges

We recognise that learning is a process and that children need time, encouragement and supportive relationships to develop resilience.

Growing Together

We want every child to feel that they belong.

Children learn to:

- develop friendships
- show kindness and empathy
- understand and respect differences
- work alongside others
- contribute to their community
- celebrate achievements
- care for people and the world around them

Growing Together reflects our belief that children learn through relationships with adults, peers, families and their wider community.

5. Our Curriculum Journey

The Watch Us Grow curriculum is organised around a **12-month curriculum journey**.

Each month provides a broad theme and a Big Question designed to inspire curiosity, discussion, exploration and meaningful learning.

The themes provide a shared structure across New Beginnings while remaining flexible enough for practitioners to respond to children and their interests.

September — Me, My Family & My Nursery

Big Question: Who am I and where do I belong?

Children explore:

- identity
- belonging
- family
- friendships
- nursery routines
- their environment
- their community

October — Autumn Explorers

Big Question: What changes do we notice around us?

Children explore:

- seasonal change
- weather
- nature
- autumn
- observing and investigating
- change in the environment

November — Celebrations, Light & Kindness

Big Question: How do we show kindness and celebrate together?

Children explore:

- kindness
- friendships

- celebrations
- light and dark
- similarities and differences
- belonging and community

December — Traditions & Wonder

Big Question: What makes this time of year special?

Children explore:

- traditions
- family experiences
- celebrations
- stories
- wonder
- cultural experiences

January — Winter Scientists

Big Question: How do ice, snow and water change the world around us?

Children explore:

- winter
- weather
- ice
- snow
- water
- change
- investigation and scientific thinking

February — Amazing Me

Big Question: What makes me unique and special?

Children explore:

- identity
- self-acceptance
- emotions
- similarities and differences
- relationships
- confidence

March — Signs of Spring

Big Question: What changes can we see in spring?

Children explore:

- seasonal change
- plants
- growth
- nature
- new life
- observation and discovery

April — Growing & Changing

Big Question: How do we grow and change?

Children explore:

- growth
- life cycles
- plants
- animals
- healthy choices
- caring for living things

May — Amazing Animals

Big Question: What animals live in our world?

Children explore:

- animals
- habitats
- mini beasts
- sea life
- animal life cycles
- caring for living things

June — People Who Help Us

Big Question: Who helps us in our community?

Children explore:

- community
- different roles
- helping others
- responsibility
- relationships
- contribution

July — Let's Celebrate!

Big Question: What celebrations do we enjoy?

Children explore:

- celebrations
- festivals
- cultures
- traditions
- community
- belonging

August — Adventures Ahead

Big Question: What new adventures will we have?

Children explore:

- journeys
- new experiences
- change
- transition
- independence
- confidence
- preparing for what comes next

6. The Role of Our 50 Books Before School

Our Thematic Story Spine

Stories and books are an essential part of the New Beginnings curriculum.

Our **50 Books Before School** collection provides a carefully selected bank of high-quality stories which support children's learning across a range of important curriculum themes.

The books are organised into themes including:

- Weather
- Life Cycles
- Growing
- Frog Life Cycle
- Mini Beasts
- Caring for Nature
- Environmental Awareness
- The World
- Geography
- Sea Life

- Nature
- Identity
- Self-Acceptance
- Diversity
- Community
- Relationships
- Emotional Wellbeing
- Friendship and Inclusion
- Global Citizenship
- Culture and Geography
- Traditional Tales
- Story Language
- Resilience
- Transition

These themes are **used alongside the monthly curriculum journey**.

The books are not taught as isolated texts or as a fixed checklist.

Instead, practitioners select and revisit books that connect with the monthly theme, Big Question, children's interests, and planned learning opportunities.

For example:

October — Autumn Explorers

Practitioners may draw from:

- Weather
- Nature
- Life Cycles
- Environmental Awareness

February — Amazing Me

Practitioners may draw from:

- Identity
- Self-Acceptance
- Diversity
- Relationships
- Emotional Wellbeing

May — Amazing Animals

Practitioners may draw from:

- Mini Beasts

- Frog Life Cycle
- Sea Life
- Nature
- The World

This approach allows stories to act as a **thread running through the curriculum**, supporting language, knowledge, imagination, emotional development and understanding of the wider world.

Books may be revisited at different points in the year as children's understanding develops.

7. EYFS Alignment and Our Approach to Learning

The **Watch Us Grow Curriculum** is designed to meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) while giving New Beginnings a clear and distinctive curriculum identity.

The EYFS provides the statutory framework for children's learning and development. At New Beginnings, our curriculum drivers, monthly curriculum journey, story spine, pedagogy and wider experiences provide the way in which we bring this framework to life for our children.

We recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. Our curriculum is therefore ambitious for every child while remaining responsive to individual strengths, interests, needs and stages of development.

Our approach brings together:

- carefully planned learning opportunities
- child-initiated play
- high-quality adult interaction
- meaningful first-hand experiences
- stories, language and conversation
- exploration and investigation
- repetition and revisiting
- routines and everyday experiences
- targeted support where required
- strong partnerships with families

The EYFS framework recognises the importance of responsive teaching, play, adult interaction and an enabling environment in supporting children's learning and development.

7.1 The Seven Areas of Learning

Our curriculum supports children's development across all seven areas of learning within the EYFS.

The Prime Areas

The three prime areas provide the foundations for children's learning, development and wellbeing:

- **Communication and Language**
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development**
- **Physical Development**

These areas are particularly important in the earliest years and continue to underpin children's learning across the whole curriculum.

The Specific Areas

As children develop, the prime areas support learning across the four specific areas:

- **Literacy**
- **Mathematics**
- **Understanding the World**
- **Expressive Arts and Design**

At New Beginnings, we recognise that children's learning does not happen in separate boxes. The seven areas of learning are interconnected and are woven throughout children's experiences, play, routines, stories, conversations and investigations.

7.2 Our Curriculum Drivers and the EYFS

Our five curriculum drivers do not replace the EYFS areas of learning.

Instead, they describe the **qualities, attitudes and dispositions that we want children to develop as they learn.**

They provide a golden thread running throughout the New Beginnings curriculum.

Curriculum Driver	How it strengthens children's learning
Growing Curious Minds	Encourages children to question, investigate, explore and discover
Growing Confident Voices	Supports communication, vocabulary, listening, conversation and self-expression
Growing Independent Learners	Develops confidence, decision-making, responsibility and practical life skills
Growing Resilient Thinkers	Supports perseverance, problem-solving, adaptability and confidence when facing challenge
Growing Together	Develops belonging, relationships, empathy, inclusion, kindness and community

The curriculum drivers can therefore be seen across all seven areas of learning.

For example, a child investigating why ice melts may be developing knowledge and understanding of the world while also becoming a **Curious Mind** and a **Resilient Thinker**.

A child sharing an idea during Together Time may be developing Communication and Language while becoming a more **Confident Voice**.

A child taking responsibility for preparing the table may be developing Physical Development and Personal, Social and Emotional Development while growing as an **Independent Learner**.

A child supporting a friend may be developing Personal, Social and Emotional Development while learning to **Grow Together**.

This ensures that our curriculum focuses not only on **what children learn**, but also on the attitudes and dispositions they develop through their learning.

7.3 How Children Learn at New Beginnings

At New Beginnings, we believe children learn best when they are active participants in their own learning.

Children are given time and space to explore, investigate, practise, revisit and apply their developing knowledge and skills.

Our approach recognises that meaningful learning takes place through a balance of:

Child-Initiated Learning

Children are supported to:

- follow their interests
- make choices
- explore their own ideas
- investigate
- take appropriate risks
- practise developing skills
- play alongside and with others
- revisit previous experiences

Practitioners observe children's interests and learning carefully and use this knowledge to enhance the environment and plan appropriate next steps.

Adult-Guided Learning

Adults play an essential role in extending and deepening children's learning.

Practitioners provide:

- high-quality interactions
- modelling
- questioning
- explanation
- new vocabulary
- shared thinking
- demonstrations
- focused teaching
- stories and discussions
- opportunities to practise and revisit learning

Adults use their professional knowledge of the child to decide when to observe, when to join play, when to extend learning and when to introduce new knowledge or experiences.

Learning Through Play

Play is an essential part of life at New Beginnings.

Through play, children have opportunities to explore ideas, develop relationships, practise skills, solve problems, communicate and make sense of their experiences.

Our environments are carefully planned to provide children with rich opportunities for:

- imaginative play
- construction
- investigation
- creative expression
- physical challenge
- mark-making
- mathematical thinking
- sensory exploration
- storytelling
- outdoor learning

Play is supported and enriched by knowledgeable adults who understand when to observe, when to interact and when to introduce new possibilities.

7.4 The Characteristics of Effective Learning

The way children approach learning is as important as the knowledge and skills they develop.

At New Beginnings, the Characteristics of Effective Learning are embedded throughout the Watch Us Grow Curriculum.

Children are supported to become active learners through:

Playing and Exploring

Children are encouraged to:

- investigate
- explore
- try new experiences
- use what they already know
- develop their own ideas
- make choices

This strongly connects with our driver of **Growing Curious Minds**.

Active Learning

Children are supported to:

- maintain focus
- persevere
- keep trying
- take pride in their achievements
- enjoy completing tasks
- develop confidence when facing challenge

This strongly connects with **Growing Resilient Thinkers** and **Growing Independent Learners**.

Creating and Thinking Critically

Children are encouraged to:

- develop their own ideas
- make links between experiences
- solve problems
- try different approaches
- make decisions
- reflect on what happens

This connects particularly strongly with **Growing Curious Minds**, **Growing Independent Learners** and **Growing Resilient Thinkers**.

The existing New Beginnings curriculum approach already identifies the importance of linking learning intentions with EYFS learning, curriculum values and the Characteristics of Effective Learning.

7.5 A Curriculum That Builds Over Time

Watch Us Grow is designed as a journey from a child's earliest experiences at New Beginnings through to their transition to school.

Children may enter our nursery at different ages and stages of development. For this reason, progression is not based solely on a child's age.

Instead, practitioners consider:

- what a child already knows and can do
- their interests and experiences
- their individual strengths
- areas where further support or challenge may be needed
- their stage of development
- the knowledge and skills they are beginning to develop

The curriculum provides opportunities for children to encounter important concepts repeatedly and in increasingly meaningful ways.

Children may therefore revisit ideas such as:

- belonging
- growth
- change
- friendship
- weather
- animals
- celebrations
- community
- nature
- identity

As children grow, their understanding can become deeper, broader and more connected.

For example, a younger child may begin by noticing rain and puddles, while an older child may investigate what happens when water freezes, melts or changes.

A younger child may begin by recognising familiar people, while an older child may explore their place within their family, nursery, community and wider world.

This approach allows learning to be **revisited, strengthened and extended over time**.

7.6 Knowledge, Skills and Meaningful Experiences

At New Beginnings, we want children to develop a rich foundation of knowledge, skills and experiences.

Our curriculum therefore considers three connected elements:

What children know

The knowledge and understanding children develop about themselves, other people and the world around them.

What children can do

The skills children develop through practice, repetition, challenge and experience.

Who children are becoming

The attitudes, dispositions and personal qualities children develop as learners and members of their community.

This is reflected throughout our curriculum drivers.

We want children to leave New Beginnings not only with a secure foundation for future learning, but with curiosity, confidence, independence, resilience and a strong sense of belonging.

7.7 The Importance of Language

Language is at the heart of the New Beginnings curriculum.

Children need rich opportunities to hear, understand and use language throughout the day.

Practitioners support language development through:

- meaningful conversations
- sustained shared thinking
- stories
- rhymes and songs
- repeated reading
- small-group experiences
- imaginative play
- real-life experiences
- introducing and revisiting vocabulary
- encouraging children to explain their ideas
- listening carefully to children's voices

Our **50 Books Before School** story spine provides an important source of language, vocabulary, imagination and discussion.

Children are given opportunities to revisit familiar stories while also experiencing a rich and diverse range of books, characters, experiences and worlds.

The EYFS framework highlights the importance of reading frequently to children and providing opportunities to engage with stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems while embedding new vocabulary in meaningful contexts.

7.8 The Role of the Adult

Practitioners are central to the successful delivery of the Watch Us Grow Curriculum.

Adults create the conditions in which children can feel safe, confident and motivated to learn.

Practitioners:

- build warm and secure relationships
- know children as individuals
- observe children's learning and interests
- create enabling environments
- model language and behaviour
- introduce new knowledge and vocabulary
- extend children's thinking
- provide appropriate challenge
- recognise when children need support
- celebrate effort and achievement
- work in partnership with families

Practitioners make thoughtful decisions about **when to step in and when to step back**.

At times, the most valuable role of the adult is to observe.

At other times, an adult may introduce a new word, pose a question, model a skill, provide encouragement or create a new opportunity that moves learning forward.

7.9 Our Approach: What Before How

A key principle of the Watch Us Grow Curriculum is:

What do we want children to learn before deciding how we will teach it?

When planning meaningful learning opportunities, practitioners should consider:

1. **What do we want children to know, understand or be able to do?**
2. **Why is this learning important?**
3. **What do the children already know or understand?**
4. **How does this connect with our monthly Big Question or curriculum journey?**
5. **Which curriculum driver may this strengthen?**
6. **Which EYFS area or areas are involved?**
7. **How will children experience, explore or practise this learning?**
8. **How can adults support and extend learning?**
9. **How will we know whether children's understanding is developing?**

This approach ensures that activities are not planned simply to keep children busy.

Every planned experience should have a clear purpose while remaining flexible enough to respond to children's ideas and interests.

Our Curriculum Promise

At New Beginnings, our curriculum is not something that only happens at a table, during a planned activity or at a particular time of day.

Our curriculum lives in:

- conversations
- stories
- play
- routines
- friendships
- outdoor adventures
- investigations
- celebrations
- responsibilities
- challenges
- community experiences
- quiet moments
- shared discoveries

Every part of the day provides an opportunity for children to **Watch Us Grow**.

8. Curriculum in Action

The **Watch Us Grow Curriculum** is brought to life through the everyday experiences, routines and opportunities that are unique to New Beginnings.

Our curriculum does not exist separately from the nursery day. It is experienced through relationships, play, conversation, responsibility, exploration and meaningful shared experiences.

Four important elements help bring our curriculum to life:

- **Together Time**
- **Enrichment**
- **Tiny Taskforce**
- **Life Skills**

These are not additional activities placed alongside the curriculum. They are an integral part of how children develop knowledge, skills, confidence and a sense of belonging.

Together, they provide meaningful opportunities for children to experience our five curriculum drivers:

-  **Growing Curious Minds**
-  **Growing Confident Voices**
-  **Growing Independent Learners**
-  **Growing Resilient Thinkers**
-  **Growing Together**

8.1 Together Time

Coming together, every day

Together Time is a regular opportunity for children and practitioners to come together as a nursery community.

It provides a space for children to share, listen, communicate, celebrate and connect with one another.

Together Time may include:

- conversations
- songs and music
- stories
- discussions
- celebrations
- sharing experiences
- exploring feelings
- discussing current events or children's interests
- reflecting on experiences
- introducing new ideas and vocabulary

Together Time supports children to develop a strong sense of belonging and helps establish the nursery as a community in which every child's voice is valued.

The current New Beginnings approach describes Together Time as an opportunity for children and practitioners to come together through songs, stories, celebrations, discussions and shared experiences, supporting communication, confidence, emotional wellbeing and positive relationships.

Our Together Time Focuses

Across the week, Together Time provides opportunities to develop different aspects of children's personal, social and emotional development.

Motivation Monday

Children are encouraged to:

- celebrate achievements

- recognise their strengths
- develop confidence
- set personal goals
- feel proud of their efforts

Teamwork Tuesday

Children are supported to:

- work alongside others
- cooperate
- share ideas
- value the contributions of others
- develop positive relationships

Wellness Wednesday

Children have opportunities to explore:

- feelings
- emotional wellbeing
- self-regulation
- healthy lifestyles
- caring for themselves and others

Thinking Thursday

Children are encouraged to:

- ask questions
- be curious
- explore ideas
- solve problems
- think critically

Feel-Good Friday

Children have opportunities to:

- celebrate successes
- recognise acts of kindness
- reflect on positive experiences
- strengthen relationships
- celebrate their nursery community

These weekly focuses are already established within the New Beginnings approach to Together Time.

Together Time provides a natural connection between our monthly curriculum journey and children's everyday experiences.

For example, during **Amazing Me**, Together Time may provide opportunities to discuss identity, feelings and what makes each person unique.

During **People Who Help Us**, children may share experiences of people who support their families and communities.

During **Let's Celebrate!**, children may share celebrations, traditions and experiences that are important to them.

Together Time therefore ensures that the curriculum is not simply something delivered **to** children, but something that is also shaped **with** them.

8.2 Enrichment

Bringing Learning to Life

At New Beginnings, we believe children develop a deeper understanding of the world when they have meaningful experiences to connect with their learning.

Enrichment provides opportunities for children to experience things that may be new, exciting or memorable.

These experiences help children build knowledge, vocabulary, confidence and curiosity.

Enrichment may include:

- outdoor adventures
- nature walks
- visitors
- community experiences
- creative experiences
- music
- movement
- cultural experiences
- cooking
- gardening
- celebrations
- investigations
- special events
- trips and local experiences, where appropriate

Enrichment experiences are connected to the curriculum journey, children's interests and the opportunities available within the local and wider community.

They are not simply one-off events.

Practitioners consider:

What will children experience?

What might children learn or discover?

What vocabulary and knowledge could this experience introduce?

How can the experience be revisited afterwards?

A visit, visitor or special experience may therefore become the starting point for:

- conversations
- storytelling
- imaginative play
- drawing and mark-making
- investigation
- construction
- role play
- further research and exploration

Enrichment helps ensure that children have a rich range of experiences from which to build their understanding of the world.

8.3 Tiny Taskforce

Small Responsibilities. Big Opportunities.

Tiny Taskforce provides children with meaningful opportunities to contribute to the life of the nursery.

We believe children are capable of taking responsibility, helping others and making a positive contribution to their community.

Through Tiny Taskforce, children are given meaningful roles that support the development of:

- confidence
- independence
- responsibility
- leadership
- communication
- cooperation
- pride
- belonging

The existing New Beginnings approach identifies roles such as Storyteller or Presenter, Book Buddy, Meal Helper, Friendship Ambassador and Handwashing Hero, with opportunities for

children to develop confidence, speaking and listening, independence, responsibility, kindness and healthy habits.

Examples of Tiny Taskforce roles may include:

Storyteller or Presenter

Supporting children to:

- share ideas
- develop confidence when speaking
- retell stories
- communicate with others

Book Buddy

Supporting children to:

- develop a love of books
- share stories
- care for books
- encourage others to enjoy reading

Meal Helper

Supporting children to:

- develop independence
- take responsibility
- contribute to routines
- understand practical life skills

Friendship Ambassador

Supporting children to:

- welcome others
- show kindness
- develop empathy
- support positive relationships

Handwashing Hero

Supporting children to:

- develop self-care
- understand healthy routines

- take responsibility for themselves and their environment

Eco Champion

Supporting children to:

- care for the environment
- develop an awareness of sustainability
- take responsibility for shared spaces
- explore ways to care for the world around them

Nature Ranger

Supporting children to:

- care for outdoor spaces
- observe the natural world
- notice change
- develop curiosity about plants and wildlife

The exact roles offered may develop over time in response to the needs and interests of each nursery community.

What matters is that roles are **meaningful**.

Children should be able to see that their contribution makes a difference.

Through Tiny Taskforce, children learn:

“I can help.”

“I can contribute.”

“My ideas matter.”

“I am an important part of this community.”

This strongly reflects our curriculum driver of **Growing Together**, while also developing independent learning, confident communication and resilience.

8.4 Life Skills

Building Skills for Life

At New Beginnings, we want children to develop the practical, social and emotional skills that will support them both now and in the future.

Life Skills are developed throughout the day rather than being taught as a separate subject.

Children are given opportunities to develop skills such as:

I Can Look After Myself

Children develop increasing confidence in:

- dressing and undressing
- managing personal belongings
- self-care
- toileting routines, where developmentally appropriate
- recognising their own needs

I Can Communicate My Needs

Children are supported to:

- express themselves
- ask for help
- communicate preferences
- share feelings
- develop confidence in speaking

I Can Solve Problems

Children are encouraged to:

- think of possible solutions
- try different approaches
- seek help when needed
- manage small challenges
- develop perseverance

I Can Help Others

Children are supported to:

- recognise when someone may need help
- show kindness
- cooperate
- contribute to their community
- value the strengths of others

I Am Ready for School

As children approach transition, they are supported to develop increasing confidence in:

- independence
- communication
- relationships

- self-care
- managing routines
- listening and attention
- resilience
- curiosity
- confidence when facing new experiences

Being **ready for school** is not viewed as a checklist of isolated skills.

Instead, we aim to support children to develop the confidence and capabilities that will help them approach their next stage of learning positively.

8.5 How Curriculum in Action Connects

Together Time, Enrichment, Tiny Taskforce and Life Skills work alongside the monthly curriculum journey.

For example:

Monthly Theme	Together Time	Enrichment	Tiny Taskforce	Life Skills
Me, My Family & My Nursery	Belonging and sharing	Exploring the nursery and local environment	Welcome helpers	Communicating needs
Autumn Explorers	Sharing discoveries	Nature walks	Nature Rangers	Looking after equipment
Celebrations, Light & Kindness	Kindness and community	Cultural experiences	Friendship Ambassadors	Helping others
Winter Scientists	Curiosity and questioning	Ice and water investigations	Investigation helpers	Solving problems
Amazing Me	Identity and feelings	Experiences celebrating individuality	Confidence presenters	Looking after myself
Growing & Changing	Talking about change	Gardening and growing	Garden helpers	Taking responsibility
Amazing Animals	Caring for living things	Animal encounters or investigations	Animal and nature helpers	Caring for others
People Who Help Us	Community conversations	Visitors from the community	Helping Hands	Taking responsibility
Let's Celebrate!	Celebrating together	Festivals and shared experiences	Celebration helpers	Cooperation
Adventures Ahead	Reflection and confidence	Transition experiences	Nursery leaders	Ready for school

This connection ensures that children experience a curriculum that is **coherent, meaningful and connected**.

The monthly Big Question may spark curiosity.

The books may introduce ideas and language.

Play and exploration allow children to investigate.

Together Time gives children a voice.

Enrichment brings learning to life.

Tiny Taskforce provides responsibility and purpose.

Life Skills help children apply their learning in everyday situations.

Together, these elements help children to truly **Watch Us Grow**.

Curriculum in Action: Our Promise

At New Beginnings, we want every child to experience a curriculum that feels meaningful to them.

We want children to:

- **belong**
- **explore**
- **question**
- **communicate**
- **create**
- **try**
- **persevere**
- **help**
- **celebrate**
- **grow**

Our curriculum is not simply about preparing children for the next stage.

It is about making their **current stage of childhood rich, meaningful and full of possibility**.

9. Our Thematic Story Spine and the 50 Books Before School

Stories are at the heart of the **Watch Us Grow Curriculum**.

At New Beginnings, we believe that books provide children with opportunities to explore ideas, develop language, understand themselves and others, imagine new possibilities and make sense of the world around them.

Our **50 Books Before School** collection forms our **Thematic Story Spine**.

The collection is organised into a range of curriculum themes and is used alongside our **12-month curriculum journey**. The themes provide a carefully selected bank of books that practitioners can draw upon to support each month's Big Question and the learning that develops from it.

The books are therefore connected to the curriculum journey through:

Month → Big Question → Relevant Book Themes → Shared Experiences → Children's Learning

The story spine provides structure and consistency across New Beginnings while allowing practitioners the flexibility to respond to the children in front of them.

9.1 The Purpose of Our Story Spine

The 50 Books Before School collection has been selected to expose children to a broad range of stories, characters, experiences and ideas.

Through our story spine, children have opportunities to explore:

- themselves and their identity
- families and relationships
- emotions and wellbeing
- friendship and inclusion
- diversity and belonging
- nature and the environment
- animals and living things
- weather and seasonal change
- growth and life cycles
- different places and communities
- celebrations and traditions
- cultures and the wider world
- imagination and storytelling
- challenge, resilience and change

The collection supports the development of:

- a love of books and reading
- listening and attention
- vocabulary
- comprehension
- imagination
- communication
- knowledge and understanding
- empathy
- confidence in sharing ideas

The books also provide opportunities for children to encounter ideas and experiences that may be different from their own.

9.2 Our Thematic Book Collection

The 50 books are organised into a range of overlapping curriculum themes.

These themes allow individual books to support more than one area of the curriculum and to be revisited at different points in the year.

Our current thematic collection includes:



Exploring the Natural World

- Weather
- Nature
- Growing
- Life Cycles
- Mini Beasts
- Frog Life Cycle
- Sea Life
- Environmental Awareness
- Caring for Nature



Understanding Our World

- The World
- Geography
- Global Citizenship
- Culture & Geography
- Community



Understanding Ourselves and Others

- Identity
- Self-Acceptance
- Diversity
- Relationships
- Emotional Wellbeing
- Friendship & Inclusion



Stories, Imagination and Culture

- Story Language
- Traditional Tales
- Culture & Geography

Developing Confidence and Resilience

- Resilience
- Transition
- Growing

The themes are not intended to create separate categories of learning.

Instead, they help practitioners make meaningful connections between books, children's experiences and the wider curriculum.

A single book may therefore be used across several themes.

For example, a story about growth may support learning about:

- nature
- life cycles
- change
- resilience
- caring for living things

Similarly, a story about friendship may support learning about:

- relationships
- identity
- emotional wellbeing
- diversity
- inclusion

This allows books to be revisited with different purposes as children's understanding develops.

9.3 Mapping the Story Spine Across the Curriculum Journey

The thematic book collection is used to support the monthly curriculum journey.

The following map provides the broad connection between each month, its Big Question and the book themes that are likely to be most relevant.

September — Me, My Family & My Nursery

Big Question: Who am I and where do I belong?

Relevant book themes include:

- Identity
- Community
- Relationships

- Self-Acceptance
- Diversity
- Friendship & Inclusion

Stories can support children to explore:

- who they are
- the people who are important to them
- their nursery community
- friendships
- similarities and differences
- belonging

October — Autumn Explorers

Big Question: What changes do we notice around us?

Relevant book themes include:

- Weather
- Nature
- Life Cycles
- Environmental Awareness
- Caring for Nature

Stories can support children to:

- notice seasonal changes
- explore weather
- investigate the natural environment
- develop vocabulary connected to autumn
- care for the world around them

November — Celebrations, Light & Kindness

Big Question: How do we show kindness and celebrate together?

Relevant book themes include:

- Emotional Wellbeing
- Friendship & Inclusion
- Relationships
- Culture & Geography
- Diversity
- Global Citizenship

Stories can support children to explore:

- kindness
- empathy
- friendship
- celebrations
- light and dark
- different experiences and traditions

December — Traditions & Wonder

Big Question: What makes this time of year special?

Relevant book themes include:

- Traditional Tales
- Culture & Geography
- Global Citizenship
- Story Language
- Relationships

Stories can support children to explore:

- traditions
- celebrations
- family experiences
- cultural differences and similarities
- storytelling
- imagination and wonder

January — Winter Scientists

Big Question: How do ice, snow and water change the world around us?

Relevant book themes include:

- Weather
- Nature
- Geography
- Environmental Awareness
- The World

Stories can provide a starting point for:

- scientific vocabulary
- observation
- investigation
- predicting
- noticing change
- exploring water, ice and snow

February — Amazing Me

Big Question: What makes me unique and special?

Relevant book themes include:

- Identity
- Self-Acceptance
- Diversity
- Emotional Wellbeing
- Relationships

Stories can support children to:

- celebrate individuality
- develop confidence
- recognise similarities and differences
- explore feelings
- understand that everyone is unique
- develop positive relationships

March — Signs of Spring

Big Question: What changes can we see in spring?

Relevant book themes include:

- Growing
- Life Cycles
- Nature
- Mini Beasts
- Environmental Awareness

Stories can support children to observe:

- new growth
- plants and flowers
- changing weather
- animals and mini beasts
- signs of seasonal change

April — Growing & Changing

Big Question: How do we grow and change?

Relevant book themes include:

- Growing

- Life Cycles
- Caring for Nature
- Nature
- Frog Life Cycle

Stories can support children to explore:

- how plants grow
- how animals change
- life cycles
- caring for living things
- changes in themselves and the world around them

May — Amazing Animals

Big Question: What animals live in our world?

Relevant book themes include:

- Mini Beasts
- Sea Life
- Frog Life Cycle
- Nature
- The World

Stories can support children to explore:

- different animals
- habitats
- similarities and differences
- animal life cycles
- caring for living things
- animals from different parts of the world

June — People Who Help Us

Big Question: Who helps us in our community?

Relevant book themes include:

- Community
- Relationships
- Friendship & Inclusion
- Growing Together
- The World

Stories can support children to explore:

- different roles within the community
- how people help one another
- cooperation
- kindness
- responsibility
- belonging

July — Let's Celebrate!

Big Question: What celebrations do we enjoy?

Relevant book themes include:

- Culture & Geography
- Global Citizenship
- Traditional Tales
- Relationships
- Friendship & Inclusion

Stories can support children to explore:

- celebrations
- festivals
- traditions
- families
- communities
- similarities and differences

August — Adventures Ahead

Big Question: What new adventures will we have?

Relevant book themes include:

- Transition
- Resilience
- Growing
- Geography
- The World

Stories can support children to:

- talk about change
- develop confidence
- explore new experiences
- think about journeys
- manage transitions
- look forward to future adventures

9.4 Core Books and Flexible Book Selection

The 50 Books Before School collection provides a shared curriculum entitlement for children at New Beginnings.

However, the delivery of the story spine should remain flexible and responsive.

Practitioners should not feel required to read a particular book simply because a specific date or month has arrived.

Instead, book selection should consider:

- the monthly Big Question
- the curriculum theme
- children's interests
- children's prior knowledge and experiences
- developmental needs
- current events or celebrations
- opportunities arising from play and exploration

Some books may become **core texts**, which are intentionally introduced and revisited.

Other books may be used as:

- supporting texts
- enhancement texts
- responsive texts
- favourite or familiar stories

Books may also be revisited later in the year when children are ready to explore them in greater depth.

9.5 Repetition, Revisiting and Deepening Understanding

Children need opportunities to return to familiar stories and ideas.

Revisiting a book is not repetition without purpose.

Each return to a story can allow children to:

- notice something new
- understand vocabulary more deeply
- make new connections
- retell parts of the story
- anticipate what will happen
- compare experiences
- apply previous knowledge
- develop confidence

A book introduced during one curriculum theme may therefore be revisited later through a different theme or question.

For example, a book initially explored through **Nature** may later support learning about **Environmental Awareness** or **Caring for Nature**.

A book first used to explore **Identity** may later support learning about **Diversity**, **Relationships** or **Self-Acceptance**.

This approach reflects the connected nature of children's learning.

9.6 Stories Beyond Group Time

Our story spine is not limited to a daily story session.

Books should be visible, accessible and woven throughout the nursery environment.

Children should have opportunities to encounter books through:

- story times
- small-group reading
- one-to-one reading
- child-led book sharing
- cosy reading spaces
- role play
- continuous provision
- outdoor learning
- investigations
- enrichment experiences
- Together Time
- conversations with adults

Books may inspire:

- artwork
- music and movement
- construction
- imaginative play
- mark-making
- investigations
- gardening
- cooking
- discussions
- visits and experiences

This helps children understand that stories can connect with their everyday lives and the wider world.

9.7 Our Shared Reading Culture

We want children to leave New Beginnings with positive experiences of stories, books and reading.

Our aim is for children to see books as:

- enjoyable
- comforting
- exciting
- informative
- imaginative
- meaningful

Practitioners play an important role in modelling enjoyment and enthusiasm for books.

Children should see adults:

- reading with enjoyment
- sharing favourite stories
- talking about books
- revisiting familiar texts
- using books to answer questions
- making connections between stories and real life

We recognise that families also play an important role in developing a love of reading.

Where possible, we will create opportunities for families to engage with the New Beginnings reading culture and to share stories at home.

Our Story Spine Promise

Through our **50 Books Before School**, we want every child to experience stories that:

open doors, spark curiosity, build language, develop empathy and inspire imagination.

Our books help children to:

See themselves in stories.

See lives and experiences beyond their own.

Ask questions about the world.

Imagine what might be possible.

Develop a lifelong love of books and learning.

10. Planning and Curriculum Implementation

The **Watch Us Grow Curriculum** provides a clear and shared curriculum journey for all children at New Beginnings.

Planning is the process through which practitioners bring this curriculum to life for the individual children and groups they know.

We believe that effective planning should be:

- purposeful
- flexible
- responsive
- rooted in children's needs and interests
- informed by professional knowledge
- connected to the wider curriculum
- focused on meaningful learning rather than the completion of activities

Planning should support practitioners in thinking carefully about **what children need to learn and experience**, rather than creating unnecessary paperwork.

10.1 Our Planning Principles

At New Beginnings, planning begins with the question:

What do we want children to learn?

Before deciding on an activity, resource or adult-led experience, practitioners should consider the purpose of the learning.

Planning should reflect the following process:

1. Start with the child

What do we know about the children?

Consider:

- their interests
- previous experiences
- current fascinations
- existing knowledge and skills
- individual strengths
- areas where further support or challenge may be needed

2. Make the curriculum connection

Consider how the learning connects with:

- the monthly curriculum theme
- the Big Question
- the relevant book themes
- the 50 Books Before School collection

- the five curriculum drivers
- the EYFS areas of learning

Not every experience needs to connect with every element.

The purpose is to ensure that learning is meaningful and connected rather than fragmented.

3. Identify the intended learning

Practitioners should be clear about what they hope children will:

- know
- understand
- experience
- practise
- explore
- develop

The intended learning should be appropriate to the developmental stage of the children.

4. Consider how children might learn

Practitioners then consider the most appropriate approach.

This may include:

- child-initiated play
- adult interaction
- small-group experiences
- focused teaching
- stories
- investigation
- outdoor learning
- enrichment
- routines
- repeated opportunities for practice

The same intended learning may be experienced in different ways by different children.

5. Respond and adapt

Planning does not end when an activity has been prepared.

Practitioners should observe how children respond and adapt accordingly.

Children may:

- show a particular interest

- ask unexpected questions
- need more time
- require additional support
- demonstrate deeper understanding
- take learning in a new direction

Responsive planning allows practitioners to follow these opportunities while maintaining a clear sense of curriculum purpose.

10.2 The Monthly Curriculum Journey

The monthly curriculum journey provides the overarching structure for planning.

Each month includes:

A Curriculum Theme

This provides a broad area for exploration.

A Big Question

This encourages curiosity, conversation and investigation.

Relevant Book Themes

These connect the monthly curriculum with the 50 Books Before School collection.

Possible Experiences and Enrichment

These provide meaningful opportunities for children to experience and explore the theme.

The monthly journey is not intended to be a rigid scheme of work.

It provides a shared direction while allowing practitioners to respond to the children.

For example:

October — Autumn Explorers

Big Question:

What changes do we notice around us?

Practitioners may plan opportunities for children to:

- observe the weather
- collect natural materials
- explore leaves, seeds and plants

- investigate changes in the outdoor environment
- read stories connected to weather and nature
- develop vocabulary related to seasonal change

However, if children become particularly interested in worms, rainbows, pumpkins or wind, practitioners can follow this interest while maintaining the wider curriculum connection.

The curriculum provides the **framework**.

Children's curiosity helps shape the **journey**.

10.3 Long-Term, Medium-Term and Short-Term Planning

Planning at New Beginnings takes place at different levels.

Long-Term Curriculum Planning

The long-term curriculum provides the broad overview for the year.

It includes:

- the 12-month curriculum journey
- monthly themes
- Big Questions
- links to the 50 Books Before School story spine
- key opportunities for enrichment
- celebrations and experiences relevant to the nursery community

This provides continuity and progression across the academic year.

Medium-Term Curriculum Planning

Medium-term planning considers how the monthly theme may develop.

Practitioners consider:

- the children's starting points
- possible areas for exploration
- relevant books
- vocabulary
- meaningful experiences
- opportunities for enrichment
- possible links to Together Time
- opportunities for Tiny Taskforce and Life Skills

Medium-term planning should provide direction without attempting to predict every aspect of children's learning.

Short-Term and Responsive Planning

Short-term planning is informed by the children and their current learning.

It may respond to:

- children's questions
- interests
- observations
- emerging skills
- current experiences
- significant events
- ideas arising from play

Short-term planning may take many forms appropriate to the needs of the team.

The emphasis should remain on **clear thinking and effective teaching**, rather than the production of extensive written documentation.

10.4 Planning for the Whole Child

Planning should recognise that children develop across interconnected areas.

A single meaningful experience may support several aspects of learning.

For example, children planting seeds may develop:

Communication and Language

Through discussing what they notice and learning new vocabulary.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Through taking responsibility and working alongside others.

Physical Development

Through using tools and developing coordination.

Literacy

Through engaging with stories, labels and meaningful mark-making.

Mathematics

Through counting, comparing and noticing patterns.

Understanding the World

Through observing growth and investigating living things.

Expressive Arts and Design

Through representing their experiences creatively.

The purpose is not to artificially record every possible area of learning.

Instead, practitioners should understand the richness of the experience and focus on the learning that is most meaningful for the children involved.

10.5 The Role of the Learning Environment

The environment is an important part of curriculum implementation.

At New Beginnings, environments should be:

- welcoming
- purposeful
- accessible
- inclusive
- stimulating
- calm
- flexible
- responsive to children's interests

Resources should encourage children to:

- explore
- investigate
- communicate
- create
- problem-solve
- collaborate
- practise independence

The environment should reflect the current curriculum journey where meaningful, while remaining a rich and flexible space for children's own ideas and interests.

Displays, resources, books and provocations may be used to introduce or revisit ideas.

However, environments should not become overly themed or dominated by adult-created displays.

The children's learning, thinking and experiences should remain visible.

10.6 Continuous Provision

Continuous provision provides children with repeated opportunities to practise, develop and apply their learning.

High-quality continuous provision should:

- provide familiar resources and experiences
- allow children to revisit learning
- support independence
- encourage children to make choices
- provide appropriate challenge
- be enhanced in response to children's interests and the curriculum journey

Enhancements should have a clear purpose.

They may be introduced to:

- spark curiosity
- introduce new vocabulary
- encourage investigation
- provide challenge
- connect with a story
- extend children's current interests
- revisit previous learning

The question should always be:

What learning opportunity does this provide for children?

rather than:

What activity can we put out today?

10.7 Planning for Vocabulary

Vocabulary is carefully considered across the curriculum.

Each monthly theme provides opportunities to introduce meaningful language connected to children's experiences.

Practitioners should:

- identify useful vocabulary
- introduce words naturally
- explain their meaning
- model their use
- revisit vocabulary regularly
- use words in different contexts
- encourage children to use new language in meaningful ways

Vocabulary should not be taught as an isolated list of words.

Children need opportunities to hear, understand and use language through:

- stories
- conversations
- play
- investigation
- real-life experiences
- repeated encounters

10.8 Planning for Inclusion

The Watch Us Grow Curriculum is for **every child**.

Planning should take account of:

- individual developmental needs
- SEND
- communication needs
- children's cultural and family backgrounds
- individual interests and strengths
- children learning English as an additional language
- children's previous experiences

Practitioners should consider how the curriculum can be made accessible to every child.

This may involve:

- adapting resources
- providing visual support
- using additional communication strategies
- offering alternative ways to participate
- breaking learning into smaller steps
- providing additional repetition
- adapting the environment
- offering appropriate challenge

Adaptation should support children to access the shared curriculum while recognising their individual starting points.

10.9 Planning with Families

Families are an important part of children's learning.

Parents and carers provide valuable insight into:

- children's interests

- experiences outside nursery
- family celebrations
- cultural traditions
- significant events
- developing skills

Where appropriate, practitioners should use this knowledge to make meaningful connections between home and nursery.

Families may also contribute to the curriculum through:

- sharing stories
- discussing traditions and celebrations
- contributing experiences
- joining enrichment opportunities
- sharing skills or knowledge
- supporting children's interests at home

This strengthens the connection between the child's different worlds and helps create a more meaningful curriculum.

10.10 A Simple Planning Framework

When planning learning, practitioners should be able to answer the following questions:

1. Where does this fit?

What is the connection to the monthly theme, Big Question or children's current interests?

2. What do we want children to learn or experience?

What knowledge, skill, understanding or disposition are we supporting?

3. What do children already know?

What are their starting points?

4. How will children engage?

Will this be through play, investigation, a story, an experience, adult interaction or another approach?

5. How will adults support learning?

What might practitioners model, introduce, explain, question or extend?

6. What might we look or listen for?

How will practitioners recognise developing understanding?

7. What next?

Should learning be revisited, extended, adapted or allowed to develop in a new direction?

Our Planning Promise

At New Beginnings, planning exists to support **better learning**, not to create more paperwork.

Our practitioners are trusted professionals who know their children.

The Watch Us Grow Curriculum provides a clear shared framework.

Professional knowledge, observation and responsive teaching bring that framework to life.

Our planning will always begin with:

11. Teaching, Adult Interaction and Responsive Practice

The quality of adult interaction is central to the success of the **Watch Us Grow Curriculum**.

At New Beginnings, we recognise that children learn through warm and secure relationships with knowledgeable adults who understand their development, interests, strengths and needs.

Practitioners play an active role in children's learning.

They create opportunities, introduce new knowledge and vocabulary, model skills, encourage curiosity and support children to think more deeply.

At the same time, practitioners recognise the importance of allowing children time and space to explore, practise, make discoveries and develop their own ideas.

Effective practice requires a thoughtful balance between:

- observing and participating
- listening and responding
- supporting and challenging
- guiding and allowing independence
- introducing new ideas and following children's interests

Our aim is for every practitioner to know:

When to step in.

How to support.

When to challenge.

When to step back.

11.1 The Role of the Practitioner

Practitioners at New Beginnings are not simply supervisors of children's play.

They are skilled educators who actively contribute to children's learning and development.

Practitioners should:

- build secure and trusting relationships
- know children as individuals
- understand children's developmental stages and needs
- observe carefully
- listen to children's ideas
- recognise learning as it happens
- introduce new knowledge and vocabulary
- model skills and behaviours
- extend children's thinking
- provide appropriate challenge
- respond to children's questions
- support children to become increasingly independent

The role of the practitioner will vary according to the child, the experience and the learning opportunity.

There is no single "correct" level of adult involvement.

Professional judgement is essential.

11.2 Knowing When to Step In

Adults should actively join children's learning when their interaction can add value.

This may include moments when a practitioner can:

Introduce new knowledge

For example:

- explaining how something works
- sharing information
- introducing a new concept
- making a connection to a previous experience

Introduce meaningful vocabulary

For example, during a nature walk, an adult might introduce words such as:

- observe
- investigate
- change
- habitat
- melt
- freeze

The intention is not simply for children to repeat words, but to hear and use language in meaningful contexts.

Model a skill

Adults may model:

- how to use a new tool
- how to solve a problem
- how to approach a challenge
- how to communicate with others
- how to manage a practical task

Extend children's thinking

Practitioners may:

- draw attention to something
- make a connection
- encourage comparison
- invite children to explain their thinking
- offer an additional challenge

Support inclusion

An adult may step in to:

- support communication
- help a child access an experience
- break learning into manageable steps
- provide reassurance
- adapt an activity or environment

11.3 Knowing When to Step Back

There are also times when the most effective teaching happens when adults allow children time and space.

Practitioners should step back when children are:

- deeply engaged
- developing their own ideas
- solving problems independently
- negotiating with peers
- experimenting
- practising a skill
- concentrating
- taking ownership of their learning

Stepping back does not mean disengaging.

The practitioner continues to observe, listen and consider how learning is developing.

A well-timed pause can give children the opportunity to:

- think for themselves
- make decisions
- persist
- test ideas
- communicate with one another
- develop confidence

At New Beginnings, we value children's agency and recognise that adults do not need to direct every moment of learning.

11.4 High-Quality Interactions

High-quality interactions are responsive, meaningful and appropriate to the child and the situation.

Practitioners should aim to:

- get down to the child's level where appropriate
- give children their attention
- listen carefully
- respond to what children say and do
- allow time for children to think and respond
- model rich language
- build on children's ideas
- make meaningful connections
- show genuine curiosity
- encourage children to communicate

Interactions should feel natural rather than scripted.

The purpose is not to ask children large numbers of questions.

The purpose is to develop **thinking, communication, understanding and connection.**

11.5 Sustained Shared Thinking

Sustained shared thinking occurs when adults and children work together to develop an idea, solve a problem or explore a question.

It may happen during:

- construction
- imaginative play
- investigations
- outdoor learning
- story discussions
- creative experiences
- everyday routines

For example, a child may notice that a structure keeps falling down.

Rather than immediately fixing the problem, the practitioner might:

- observe what the child is trying to achieve
- acknowledge the problem
- give the child time to think
- explore possible solutions together
- encourage the child to test an idea

The adult and child are then engaged in shared thinking rather than the adult simply providing the answer.

This approach strongly supports:



Growing Curious Minds



Growing Confident Voices



Growing Resilient Thinkers

11.6 Modelling Language

Language development is everyone's responsibility.

Practitioners should provide children with a rich language environment throughout the day.

This includes:

- describing experiences
- introducing new vocabulary
- modelling full and meaningful sentences
- extending children's language
- retelling experiences

- using descriptive language
- talking about feelings and ideas
- sharing stories
- singing songs and rhymes

Adults should build upon children's existing communication rather than overwhelming them with unnecessary language.

Practitioners should be sensitive to:

- children's developmental stage
- communication needs
- confidence
- home languages
- individual ways of communicating

Every child should feel that their communication is valued.

11.7 Questioning to Develop Thinking

Questions can be a valuable tool for extending children's thinking.

However, questioning should not feel like a test.

Practitioners should avoid asking questions when they already know the answer simply to check whether a child can provide it.

Instead, questions should create opportunities for children to:

- think
- explain
- predict
- reflect
- imagine
- make connections

Useful prompts may include:

- **I wonder what might happen if...**
- **What do you notice?**
- **Tell me about that.**
- **How did you do that?**
- **What could we try next?**
- **What do you think?**
- **I can see you have noticed...**

Sometimes the most powerful interaction may be a comment rather than a question.

For example:

"You've noticed that the ice is getting smaller."

This gives the child information and creates space for them to respond.

11.8 Scaffolding Learning

Scaffolding means providing children with the right amount of support to help them achieve something they may not yet be able to do independently.

Support may include:

- modelling
- demonstrating
- giving a small prompt
- breaking a task into steps
- providing visual support
- completing part of a task together
- offering encouragement
- adapting resources

As children become more confident, support should gradually be reduced.

The aim is always to help children move towards greater independence.

This strongly reflects our curriculum driver:

Growing Independent Learners

11.9 Challenge and High Expectations

At New Beginnings, we have high expectations for every child.

High expectations do not mean expecting every child to achieve the same thing at the same time.

They mean believing that every child is capable of learning, developing and making progress from their individual starting point.

Practitioners should provide appropriate challenge by:

- introducing new experiences
- encouraging children to try
- offering manageable problems
- extending existing interests
- encouraging deeper thinking
- supporting children to persist

- providing opportunities to revisit and practise

Challenge should build confidence rather than create unnecessary frustration.

Children should experience the satisfaction of:

**trying something new,
working something out,
keeping going,
and succeeding in their own time.**

11.10 Supporting Emotional Wellbeing Through Relationships

Children learn best when they feel safe, valued and secure.

Positive relationships are therefore central to effective teaching.

Practitioners support emotional wellbeing by:

- responding sensitively to children
- helping children recognise and communicate feelings
- supporting children through challenges
- celebrating achievements and effort
- providing reassurance when needed
- helping children repair relationships
- modelling kindness and respect

Our curriculum driver of **Growing Together** is reflected in the relationships children experience every day.

Children should know:

**I am safe.
I am valued.
My voice matters.
I belong here.**

11.11 Reflective Practice

Effective practitioners continually reflect on their teaching.

Practitioners should regularly consider:

What worked well?

What did the children learn or demonstrate?

Who engaged and who did not?

What barriers may have affected participation?

What could we change or improve?

What might children need next?

Reflection may take place individually, within room teams or through professional discussions with leaders.

The purpose of reflection is not to create additional paperwork.

It is to improve practice and ensure that the curriculum continues to meet the needs of children.

11.12 Our Teaching Promise

At New Beginnings, we believe that excellent teaching is built through:

**knowledgeable practitioners,
strong relationships,
careful observation,
responsive interaction,
meaningful challenge
and a deep understanding of the children we teach.**

We will not rush children through childhood.

We will provide them with the knowledge, experiences, support and confidence they need to explore the world around them.

We will notice their ideas.

We will listen to their voices.

We will celebrate their achievements.

And, when the time is right, we will encourage them to take the next step and say:

“Let's see what you can do.”

12. The Learning Environment and Continuous Provision

The learning environment is an essential part of the **Watch Us Grow Curriculum**.

At New Beginnings, we recognise that children learn through the spaces, resources, relationships and experiences that surround them. Our environments are therefore carefully considered to provide children with opportunities to explore, investigate, communicate, create, practise and become increasingly independent.

We aim to create environments that are:

- safe and welcoming
- inclusive and accessible
- calm and purposeful
- stimulating without being overwhelming
- rich in opportunities for exploration
- flexible and responsive
- reflective of children's interests and experiences
- appropriate to children's stages of development

The environment should communicate to every child:

You belong here.

You can explore here.

Your ideas matter here.

You are capable here.

12.1 The Environment as Part of the Curriculum

The environment is not simply the place in which the curriculum is delivered.

It actively supports children's learning.

A well-planned environment can encourage children to:

- make choices
- follow their interests
- revisit previous learning
- develop independence
- communicate with others
- investigate and problem-solve
- take appropriate risks
- develop imagination
- practise physical skills
- apply knowledge in different contexts

The environment should provide a balance between familiar, accessible experiences and new opportunities that spark curiosity.

Children need both.

Familiar provision allows children to build confidence and revisit learning.

New experiences and carefully considered enhancements can introduce challenge, vocabulary and fresh possibilities.

12.2 Our Principles for High-Quality Provision

At New Beginnings, continuous provision should be:

Accessible

Children should be able to access appropriate resources independently wherever possible.

Resources should be organised in ways that support children to:

- make choices
- select what they need
- use materials purposefully
- return resources
- take responsibility for their environment

Accessibility supports our curriculum driver:

Growing Independent Learners

Purposeful

Resources and areas should provide meaningful opportunities for learning.

Practitioners should consider:

What might children do here?

What skills, knowledge or dispositions could this support?

Provision should not be filled simply for the sake of appearance.

Every area should have a clear purpose.

Flexible

The environment should be able to change in response to:

- children's interests
- the monthly curriculum journey
- current learning
- children's developmental needs
- seasons and significant experiences

Flexibility allows the environment to remain responsive without losing consistency.

Inclusive

Every child should be able to see themselves reflected within the environment.

Provision should reflect:

- different families
- cultures and communities
- languages
- identities
- abilities
- experiences

Resources should also provide opportunities for children to learn about people, places and experiences beyond their own.

Inviting

The environment should encourage curiosity and engagement.

Resources should be presented thoughtfully and cared for.

Children should be able to see possibilities for exploration without every experience being directed by adults.

An inviting environment says:

“Come and see.”

“What could you do?”

“What might happen?”

12.3 Continuous Provision

Continuous provision refers to the opportunities and resources that are consistently available to children.

These areas allow children to revisit, practise and apply their developing learning over time.

High-quality continuous provision may include opportunities for:

- communication and language
- reading and storytelling
- imaginative and role play
- construction and loose parts
- mathematics
- creative expression
- mark-making and early writing
- sensory exploration
- investigation
- physical development
- outdoor exploration

The precise organisation of provision may vary between rooms according to the ages, developmental stages and needs of the children.

However, the principles of **accessibility, purpose, independence and flexibility** should remain consistent across New Beginnings.

12.4 Enhancements and Provocations

Enhancements are additional resources, experiences or opportunities introduced into continuous provision.

At New Beginnings, enhancements should always have a clear purpose.

They may be introduced to:

- connect with the monthly theme
- explore the Big Question
- extend children's interests
- introduce new vocabulary
- revisit a story
- encourage investigation
- provide challenge
- connect learning with an enrichment experience

For example, during **Autumn Explorers**, practitioners might introduce natural materials collected during a walk.

These could support children to:

- sort and compare
- investigate
- create
- discuss what they have noticed
- revisit vocabulary
- use materials imaginatively

The purpose is not simply to create an "Autumn activity."

The enhancement should create meaningful possibilities for learning.

12.5 Avoiding Over-Theming

The monthly curriculum journey provides a shared focus, but New Beginnings environments should not become completely dominated by adult-created themes.

Children's interests and ideas must remain visible.

For example, during **Amazing Animals**, the environment should not simply become a room filled with pre-selected animal resources.

Instead, practitioners might introduce meaningful opportunities connected to animals while remaining responsive to where children's curiosity takes them.

One group of children may become fascinated by:

- animal homes
- footprints
- movement
- eggs
- caring for animals
- animals from different parts of the world

These interests may develop in different directions.

The curriculum provides the starting point.

Children's exploration helps determine where learning goes next.

12.6 Indoor and Outdoor Learning

At New Beginnings, indoor and outdoor learning are connected parts of one curriculum.

The outdoor environment provides opportunities that cannot always be replicated indoors.

Children can:

- move in larger spaces
- take physical challenges
- investigate natural materials
- observe weather and seasonal change
- explore plants and wildlife
- engage in messy and sensory experiences
- work collaboratively
- experience managed risk
- use their whole bodies in learning

The outdoor environment should therefore not be viewed simply as a break from indoor learning.

It is a valuable learning environment in its own right.

Our monthly curriculum journey provides many natural opportunities for outdoor learning.

For example:

Autumn Explorers

Children can observe changing leaves, weather and seasonal changes.

Winter Scientists

Children can investigate ice, water and different weather conditions.

Signs of Spring

Children can look for new growth and changes in the natural environment.

Growing and Changing

Children can plant, care for and observe living things.

Amazing Animals

Children can search for mini beasts, observe habitats and explore the natural world.

12.7 Supporting Curiosity and Investigation

Our environments should encourage children to ask:

What is this?

How does it work?

What might happen?

Why?

Can I try?

Practitioners can support curiosity by providing:

- open-ended resources
- real objects
- natural materials
- tools appropriate to children's development
- opportunities for investigation
- changing materials and experiences
- time for sustained exploration

Children should be given opportunities to test their own ideas.

Not every experience needs a predetermined outcome.

This is central to:



Growing Curious Minds

and



Growing Resilient Thinkers

12.8 Supporting Independence Through the Environment

The environment should enable children to do as much as possible for themselves.

Practitioners should regularly consider:

Could the child access this independently?

Could the child choose this?

Could the child return this when finished?

Could the child take responsibility here?

Supporting independence may include:

- accessible storage
- clearly organised resources
- appropriate furniture
- visual prompts where helpful
- routines that children can participate in
- opportunities to care for equipment
- meaningful responsibilities

Children do not become independent by adults doing everything for them.

They develop independence through repeated opportunities to try.

Adults should therefore create an environment in which children can experience:

“I can do it.”

and, when needed:

“I can't do it yet, but I can keep trying.”

12.9 Children's Voices in the Environment

Children should play an active role in shaping their environment.

Their ideas may influence:

- resources
- investigations
- displays
- role-play areas
- creative opportunities
- projects

- books
- enrichment experiences

Children's work and thinking should be valued.

Displays should reflect meaningful learning and experiences rather than simply adult-created decoration.

Where appropriate, practitioners should capture children's:

- words
- questions
- theories
- discoveries
- creations

This helps children see that their ideas are important and that they are active participants in their nursery community.

12.10 The Role of the Adult in the Environment

Practitioners continually evaluate the effectiveness of the learning environment.

They should consider:

Are children able to access and use resources independently?

Which areas are engaging children?

Which areas are being overlooked?

What are children doing, saying and exploring?

Is the environment supporting meaningful learning?

What might need to change?

Practitioners should avoid making changes simply because an area "looks untidy" or because a new theme has started.

Children sometimes need provision to remain available over time so that they can return to ideas, develop deeper engagement and continue their learning.

Changes should be purposeful.

12.11 A Connected Environment

The strongest learning environments make connections.

A story may inspire a construction project.

A nature walk may lead to an investigation.

An investigation may introduce new vocabulary.

A child's question may inspire a new area of exploration.

A Tiny Taskforce responsibility may lead to a greater understanding of community or the environment.

Together Time may provide an opportunity to reflect on these experiences.

This is how the **Watch Us Grow Curriculum** becomes visible in everyday practice.

The environment, the practitioner and the child work together.

Our Environment Promise

At New Beginnings, we will create environments where children can:

**belong,
explore,
choose,
create,
question,
take responsibility,
take appropriate risks,
make mistakes,
try again
and grow.**

Our environments will not simply look beautiful.

They will be **places where meaningful learning happens.**

13. Assessment, Observation and Progress

At New Beginnings, assessment is an ongoing part of high-quality teaching and learning.

Its purpose is to help practitioners understand each child as an individual, recognise their strengths, identify what they know and can do, and consider how best to support their continued development.

Assessment is not separate from everyday practice. It happens through:

- knowing the child well
- observing children as they play and learn

- listening to what children say
- noticing their interests and achievements
- talking with families
- reflecting on children's development over time
- considering children's individual needs and next steps

Assessment should always have a clear purpose and should support **better teaching, meaningful experiences and positive outcomes for children.**

13.1 Our Approach to Assessment

At New Beginnings, we use a balanced approach to assessment.

We do not believe that children's learning can be understood solely through written observations or recorded evidence.

Practitioners build a picture of each child through their daily interactions, professional knowledge, observations and conversations with families.

Assessment helps us to consider:

- What does this child know and understand?
- What can this child do?
- What are they interested in?
- What are their strengths?
- What learning or development is emerging?
- Are there any barriers to learning?
- Does the child require additional support or challenge?
- What opportunities should we provide next?

Our assessment processes should be proportionate and meaningful.

The focus remains on **the child and their learning**, rather than on collecting unnecessary evidence.

13.2 Using Family

New Beginnings uses the **Family app** as part of our communication, observation and assessment processes.

Family provides a platform through which practitioners can record and share meaningful aspects of children's learning and experiences with parents and carers.

The app supports the partnership between nursery and home by allowing families to see and celebrate important moments in their child's development.

Information recorded through Family may include:

- observations
- photographs and learning experiences, where appropriate
- children's achievements
- significant developmental milestones
- Wow Moments
- relevant next steps or areas of development
- communication between practitioners and families

Famly is used to support professional practice and communication.

It is not intended to replace practitioners' professional knowledge of the children in their care.

13.3 Observations

Observations are one tool within our wider assessment process.

At New Beginnings, a planned observation for each child is completed **once every three weeks**.

The purpose of this observation is to capture a meaningful aspect of the child's learning, development, interests or progress.

Observations should not be completed simply to meet a recording requirement.

A meaningful observation may help practitioners to:

- recognise a new skill or understanding
- identify developing interests
- capture significant progress
- consider how a child approaches learning
- identify an area requiring further support or challenge
- inform future planning

Observations are recorded using the **Famly app**.

However, practitioners continue to assess children's learning every day through their professional interactions, discussions and knowledge of the child.

The three-week observation cycle should therefore be understood as a **structured opportunity to capture and reflect on learning**, rather than the only time that assessment takes place.

13.4 The Three-Week Observation Cycle

The New Beginnings observation cycle ensures that each child has a meaningful observation completed and reflected upon at least once every three weeks.

The process should be:

Observe

Notice a meaningful moment in the child's learning, development, interests or experience.

Reflect

Consider what the observation tells us about the child.

For example:

- What is the child demonstrating?
- What knowledge, skill or understanding is developing?
- What interests are emerging?
- How is the child approaching their learning?

Respond

Consider whether any action is needed.

This may include:

- providing further opportunities to practise
- revisiting an experience
- introducing additional challenge
- adapting the environment
- supporting a developing interest
- discussing a concern with the appropriate practitioner or leader
- sharing relevant information with the family

Not every observation requires a formal or separate next-step activity.

Sometimes the most appropriate response is simply to recognise the learning and allow the child further opportunities to develop naturally through play and everyday experiences.

13.5 Wow Moments

Every child at New Beginnings will have a **Wow Moment shared with their family once per month**.

A Wow Moment is an opportunity to celebrate a significant achievement, development, experience or moment of pride.

Wow Moments may capture:

- a new skill
- growing confidence

- increased independence
- perseverance
- a meaningful achievement
- a kind or thoughtful action
- progress in communication
- an important personal milestone
- a memorable learning experience

Wow Moments recognise that children's achievements are not limited to traditional academic skills.

A child showing the confidence to join a group, independently completing a task, supporting a friend or persisting with a challenge may all represent important moments in their development.

Wow Moments are shared with families through the **Famly app**.

This provides regular opportunities for parents and carers to celebrate their child's achievements and strengthens the connection between children's experiences at nursery and home.

13.6 Assessment and the Watch Us Grow Curriculum

Assessment should help practitioners understand how children are developing within the Watch Us Grow Curriculum.

When reflecting on children's learning, practitioners may consider both:

What is the child learning?

For example:

- new vocabulary
- knowledge about the natural world
- understanding of number
- developing physical skills
- communication
- social understanding

and:

How is the child learning?

For example, are they demonstrating:



Curiosity?



Confidence in communicating?

- ★ Increasing independence?
- 🧠 Resilience when facing challenge?
- ❤️ The ability to grow and learn alongside others?

The five curriculum drivers provide an additional lens through which practitioners can understand and celebrate children's development.

They do not replace assessment against the EYFS.

Instead, they help us recognise the wider qualities and dispositions that we want children to develop.

13.7 Using Assessment to Inform Planning

Assessment should lead to meaningful action.

Information gathered through observation, professional knowledge and conversations should help practitioners make informed decisions about:

- the learning environment
- children's next experiences
- adult interactions
- appropriate challenge
- additional support
- books and stories
- enrichment opportunities
- children's interests

Assessment should not automatically result in a written next step for every child.

Practitioners should use professional judgement to decide what is most appropriate.

For example, if a child is deeply interested in building bridges, practitioners may respond by:

- providing new construction materials
- introducing relevant vocabulary
- sharing a story
- exploring bridges in the local environment
- encouraging children to test and adapt their ideas

The response is connected to meaningful learning rather than simply completing a next-step record.

13.8 Identifying Children Who May Need Additional Support

Ongoing assessment helps practitioners identify children who may need additional support.

Where a practitioner identifies an area of concern, this should be discussed promptly with the appropriate member of the team.

Further assessment and observation may be required to develop a clearer understanding of the child's needs.

Appropriate action may include:

- adapting teaching or provision
- providing targeted support
- involving the setting's SENCO
- working with parents and carers
- seeking advice from relevant professionals, where appropriate
- monitoring progress over time

Families should be involved as partners in discussions about their child's development and any support that may be required.

Assessment should be used to identify strengths as well as areas where additional help may be beneficial.

13.9 The Progress Check at Age Two

New Beginnings completes the **two-year progress check** for eligible children.

The progress check provides an opportunity to review a child's development and to share a written summary with parents and carers.

The check focuses particularly on the child's development within the **prime areas of learning**:

- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development

The progress check should:

- recognise areas in which the child is progressing well
- identify any areas where additional support may be needed
- consider any emerging concerns
- outline appropriate strategies or next steps where required
- involve parents and carers

The two-year progress check is completed using the nursery's agreed assessment and recording procedures and is shared with parents and carers.

Where appropriate, the setting will work with families and relevant professionals to ensure that children receive the support they need.

13.10 Partnership with Parents and Carers

Parents and carers know their children best.

At New Beginnings, we value the knowledge, insight and experiences that families bring.

Assessment is strengthened when nursery and home work together.

Families may share information about:

- new skills
- interests
- significant experiences
- family events
- celebrations
- achievements at home
- changes that may affect a child

The **Famly app** supports this ongoing communication and allows important moments to be shared between home and nursery.

We encourage families to celebrate their children's achievements and share information that helps us develop a fuller understanding of each child.

13.11 Professional Discussions and Monitoring Progress

Assessment should not sit only within an individual child's online record.

Practitioners and leaders should regularly discuss children's progress and development.

These discussions may help teams to identify:

- children who are making strong progress
- children who may require additional challenge
- children who may need additional support
- patterns across a group
- areas of learning that may require greater curriculum focus
- potential barriers to participation or progress

This allows assessment information to inform both individual support and wider curriculum development.

13.12 Assessment and Transition

Assessment information should support effective transitions.

As children move:

- between rooms
- between key persons
- through different stages of nursery
- towards school

relevant information about their strengths, interests, needs and development should be shared appropriately.

The purpose of transition information is to help the next practitioner understand:

Who is this child?

What do they enjoy?

What are they good at?

What support helps them?

What might help them thrive in their next environment?

Transition should build on children's existing strengths and support continuity in their learning and development.

Our Assessment Promise

At New Beginnings, assessment is not about collecting evidence for its own sake.

It is about **knowing our children well**.

We will:

- notice their progress
- celebrate their achievements
- recognise their strengths
- respond to their needs
- share meaningful moments with families
- identify where additional support may be needed
- use our knowledge to provide the best possible next experiences

Our approach combines:

Daily professional knowledge and assessment

with

One meaningful observation every three weeks

and

One Wow Moment shared with families every month

alongside

The statutory two-year progress check and other required assessment and transition processes.

In this way, assessment remains purposeful, manageable and focused on what matters most:

Understanding each child and helping them to Watch Us Grow.

The next section should logically be **14. Inclusion, SEND and Equality**, ensuring the curriculum clearly sets out how Watch Us Grow is ambitious, accessible and meaningful for every child.