



Chestnut Nursery School

Curriculum and Assessment Policy 2025-6



'In early years settings, the starting point must be the needs and characteristics of the child: the educator must assess these through observation and by collaborating with parents. The wide range of developmental stages and needs of very young children put a great responsibility on educators to provide a curriculum which can take into account the similarities and differences within any group of under-fives and also provide continuity with what went before and progression to what will follow.'

Starting with Quality: the Rumbold Report (1990)

Aims and Principles

- At Chestnut Nursery School, we believe that all children are entitled to a broad and balanced curriculum which is interesting, engaging and provides a range of learning opportunities that help develop children's lifelong love of learning.
- Children learn at different rates and each child's development is unique. Therefore, their starting points and progression will differ.
- Children learn best when they are happy, secure, and actively involved in their own learning. We discuss children's learning with them. We make children's enjoyment and choices our priority. We want children to leave here with a love of learning.
- Effective teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage meets children's identified needs and interests and helps children to learn and develop in all seven areas of learning and development.
- Different aspects of early learning require different approaches. Much of early maths, for example, is sequential: learning new concepts must build on the foundations of earlier concepts. On the other hand, learning about the world is much less sequential. The order of learning matters less than building on children's interests and widening their horizons and introducing early concepts.
- We are open and transparent. We regularly discuss and review our work with each other and with parents. Discussion and review help us to ensure that children take part in learning with joy and enthusiasm. It helps us to ensure that their learning at Chestnut Nursery School prepares them well for the next stage in their education, so that they can confidently handle a transition and continue their learning journey and find their inner gold.
- We believe that all children are born to be great. Every child can progress well in their learning, with the right support. At Chestnut Nursery School, we are committed to creating a high quality, safe and encouraging environment and caring ethos which values and includes everyone.

- We value parents and work in partnership with them to enrich the curriculum. We encourage them to become involved with the nursery school and ask for their feedback.
- Our curriculum starting point is with each child. It is also underpinned by our evidence based, understanding of child development, our use of Thrive and characteristics of effective learning. This includes learning inside and outside in all weathers.
- We are dedicated to our practitioner development: what we do, and how we do it, matter equally. We are committed to staff training, plan thorough and relevant CPD and give all staff appraisals and supervision throughout the school year.

We offer a high quality broad and balanced curriculum which has four main elements based on the learning and development requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2021:

- 1. Teaching and learning** based on children's interests and needs.
- 2. A cycle of learning** incorporating: core texts rhymes and songs; our school environment being outside in nature(including Forest School); community opportunities (including collaborations with a local care home, or trips to local parks and community).
- 3. Core experiences** including developing sense of self and forming relationships.

7 key Chestnut Nursery School experiences and goals

- ★ Develop a positive sense of self
- ★ Cook together and eat new foods
- ★ Experience awe and wonder in all weathers and seasons
- ★ Have first-hand experience of life cycles
- ★ Hear some incredible stories
- ★ Cultivate a philosophical way of thinking
- ★ Develop a sense of responsibility, place and sustainability for the world we live in

- 4. Curriculum goals and next steps for each child.** The goals are adaptable to the children. We offer scaffolding and extra support to help every child to access the curriculum and to ensure they make progress through it. We recognise, however, that every child will not make the same progress through the curricular goals. Many children will learn, for example, to make playdough. For some children with complex needs, managing to tolerate the feel of flour and water, and mix it together to make playdough, will represent strong progress. Whilst others will follow the recipe and be able to talk about texture and the change that they see.

Teaching and Learning at Chestnut Nursery School

Staff have a good understanding of the characteristics of effective teaching and learning – playing and exploring, active learning and thinking creatively and critically.

- We value communication and language. Language is at the heart of the curriculum and underpins all seven areas of learning.
- Learning is play-based and takes place indoors and outside.
- There is a combination of child led and adult-initiated experiences (guided learning and direct teaching).
- Adults take children's interests and strengths as a starting point, seeing each child as a competent learner. Adults will then follow the child but extend it and at times model new ideas of what to do and how to play.
- Parent involvement is crucial. We learn a great deal about each child from their parents. Parental support and a high-quality home learning environment make a huge difference to children.
- We designed our curriculum with the particular strengths and needs of the children of Chestnut Nursery School in mind. For example, many children are multilingual: we celebrate the different languages children speak, and staff use a range of communication strategies when interacting with children.

- Developing sense of self and ability to self-regulate is core and connects to building relationships with others. We use Thrive as a model to understand emotional development. Children at Chestnut Nursery School are supported with warm and trusted adults. Self-regulation depends on, and grows out of, co-regulation where adults and children work towards a common goal. This work includes planned activities and unplanned 'in the moment' responses to situations. We have incorporated into our timetable planned times to teach calming techniques including Yoga and Mindfulness.
- We recognise that children have preferred learning styles, that can change depending on mood, tiredness and time of the day. We build this into our planning and delivery of sessions. We provide suitable learning opportunities for all children by matching the challenge of the task to the ability and learning style of the individual child. We achieve this in a variety of ways.
- We use and value our school environment including the stunning outside garden which includes a covered outdoor teaching area, a range of mature trees, a bug hotel, outdoor playground equipment, a climbing wall, mud kitchen, sand pit and large outdoor spaces for children to create their own collaborative play. We use the natural world through all seasons. We aim, through our curriculum, to teach respect for our environment and the world including sustainability and how we should care for the planet for future generations, as well as our own.

Monitoring, Assessment and Review

Children and their achievements are celebrated regularly at Chestnut Nursery School, through Tapestry and displays in setting and shared parental events.

Parents are kept informed about the curriculum through spoken feedback, newsletters, planned meetings (reviews/discussions), Tapestry, next steps and our website.

We regularly review our curriculum and the resources we use (including a child's right to foster respect for their own and other cultures). Reviews also happen through the curriculum committee and governor visits.

The purpose of monitoring and evaluation is:

- It helps inform future planning and promote high standards.
- It supports and identifies professional development of staff.
- It helps evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of the nursery school's curriculum provision.
- It ensures the appropriateness and relevance of sessions to all children.
- To identify areas for development.
- Parents are kept informed through formal and informal discussion and we have an open-door policy to parents.

Assessment and tracking overview

Assessment serves children's learning and our curriculum.

One of the most powerful forms of assessment takes place in the here-and-now, not on-screen or in learning journeys. This is when we notice something important about a child's learning and respond to it to help them build their learning.

That response can take different forms. Adults might scaffold a child's learning by:

- standing back and be encouraging.
- getting involved to extend the learning, by joining in with the play, engaging in a conversation, or showing the child a specific skill to help them accomplish what they want to do.
- reflecting afterwards and bring in new resources or plan something special in response to what we noticed.

Most assessment is then formative, so that it quickly helps us to make a difference to children's learning.

Feedback

Most of our assessment of children's learning is done through feedback in here-and-now. Practitioners are skilled in modelling metacognitive /sustained shared thinking for children and this in turn helps children to develop a growth mindset. To become an effective learner, children need to be able to organise their thinking. Shared sustained thinking with an adult enables children to think for themselves and solve their own problems. Thrive refers to this as adults

sharing their thinking brain. Later it can enable children to use a plan/ do/ review approach in their learning

We also want to celebrate record and share a child's learning journey and progress specifically with the children themselves as it helps to develop a sense of themselves and builds confidence. Parents value this and it's important for other agencies. We feel that a learning journey is a holistic way to do this. We need to have an overview of children's progress so we can take further action if needed and identify 'eyes on' and 'focus' children. This information is collated on Tapestry and CPOMS.

Our objectives are therefore:

- Dialogue with parents, so that we can work in a respectful partnership to support children's learning at home and in the nursery.
- Dialogue with children, focused on how they learn, to promote their own thinking.
- Early identification of children who need temporary extra help, and children who may have special educational needs.
- Checking that individual children, and groups of children, are making progress and taking prompt action where this is not the case.
- Reporting formally to parents and to the receiving reception teacher when the child leaves us.

Examples of Planning and assessment

In the first term, the majority of our planning is focused on the three prime areas. These are communication, self-confidence/regulation and awareness and physical health.

Key people spend quality time getting to know their key children and their families. This trusting relationship helps children to settle into nursery and grow in confidence in their new environment.

Our assessment starts with home visits and a settling-in and starting points assessment.

Home Visits

Every child is offered a home visit. Parents share information about their child's interests, communication, confidence and physical health with visiting staff. The key person will use the information shared by parents to add to the child's starting points document. They will also build the child's interests into the planning of the provision.

Building on and deepening learning

We will then give the children opportunities to practice their skills and build on and deepen their learning.

For example: ride a balance bike

First milestone: children sit on a trike with good balance and scoot along. As children become more confident at scooting, they will develop more control through steering and stopping/starting. They will not crash into so many things.

Second milestone: children pedal and steer their trike. As children become better at coordinating pedalling and steering, they will be able to navigate challenges e.g. riding in and out of cones, or over a set of hollow blocks.

Third milestone: children sit on a Balance Bike with good balance, with both feet on the ground. Once children become confident at balancing, they scoot slowly along keeping one or both feet on the floor. They begin to use the handlebars to avoid obstacles and other children. Adults will slowly raise the seat to encourage balancing.

Final milestone: children ride a Balance Bike, balancing with both feet off the ground, and maintaining control by steering and being able to slow down or speed up. They can ride a Balance Bike safely along the pavement.

Recording

Parents are encouraged to actively engage with Tapestry to observe and feed into their child's progress.

We will provide written feedback, including the statutory 2 year old progress check, and meet parents after a child has settled in on entry and on exit.

We will review a child's progress and ensure that the child's next steps are meaningful and relevant. Some children will need additional reviews.

Transition to Primary School

Chestnut Nursery School has formed strong bonds with many primary schools within the Chestnut area in Exeter. Primary school staff and pupils are encouraged to visit us and meet with our children and to use our outside space.

During the term that a child leaves Nursery School, to aid transition, their new school may offer visits before they start. Reception Teachers/staff are also invited into the Nursery School to meet with the children during their regular session time.

Inclusion

It is expected that all children will be given the opportunity to learn in a creative and encouraging environment, which encompasses a range of learning and teaching styles. At Chestnut Nursery School, it is hoped that our approach will motivate and support children's learning at all levels, including children with EAL and those identified with a Special Educational Need and Disabilities (SEND). No one is excluded.

Roles and Responsibilities

Head

- Delegates responsibility for the Curriculum to the Lead Teachers.
- Ensures monitoring practices are in place, outcomes and evaluation recorded with appropriate review actions.

Lead Teacher

- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum in meeting the needs of all the children.

- Evaluate practice
- Provide feedback to staff
- Identify priorities for development.
- Feedback and report to colleagues, Head and the Curriculum Committee, Governing body.

Governing Body (Curriculum sub-committee)

- Monitor the quality and effectiveness of the curriculum provision carried out by the Nursery School.

.....

On behalf of the Governing Body

Renewed date:November 2025.....

Next renewal date: November 2026.....