



# DUKE STREET & HIGHFIELD NURSERY SCHOOL



## WELCOME TO OUR CURRICULUM



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## Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>An introduction to our unique and aspirational Curriculum.....</b>      | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Our Curriculum Implementation.....</b>                                  | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Our Curriculum Impact .....</b>   | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>The Unique Child.....</b>   | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Positive Relationship's.....</b>  | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>An Enabling Environment .....</b>                                       | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>Teaching and Learning .....</b>   | <b>11</b> |
| <b>How do we teach Reading?.....</b>                                       | <b>12</b> |
| <b>How do we teach Phonics?.....</b>                                       | <b>13</b> |
| <b>How do we teach Writing?.....</b>                                       | <b>14</b> |
| <b>How do we teach Mathematics?.....</b>                                   | <b>15</b> |
| <b>A Unique approach for children with Special Educational Needs. ....</b> | <b>16</b> |
| <b>A unique approach for children who are two years old. ....</b>          | <b>17</b> |





## An introduction to our unique and aspirational Curriculum...

At Duke Street and Highfield Nursery School, we respect and nurture a child's natural curiosity to learn and explore. We support a child's own intrinsic desire to find out about the world around them, helping them to be effective and enthusiastic learners for life. Children flourish in their learning when they have solid inner characteristics. Our Curriculum places the 'Characteristics of Effective Learning and Teaching' at the heart of its delivery.

### ***Our Curriculum Intent***

We aspire for our children to leave us as:

***Highly motivated and curious learners who*** are internally driven to learn and constantly seek to know more. Who are keen to explore and are interested in asking questions and following their ideas and fascinations. We support 'thinkers' and 'doers'.

***Confident communicators*** who know that their ideas matter. Who communicate effectively, making a positive contribution to society.

***Secure and loving individuals*** who develop strong attachments with others. Who create positive, respectful, and long-lasting relationships.



***Children who are secure in their skin*** as they understand and respect their emotional needs and can regulate themselves effectively through various strategies.

***Resilient and confident individuals*** with positive skills and habits enabling them to be their best selves.

***Individuals who adore reading and seeking*** it out, soaking up the power of a story or using a non-fiction text to find out fascinating facts.

***Lifelong learners*** with an inner drive to achieve their very best and the belief that they can do anything if they put their mind to it can embrace challenges and overcome them with perseverance and a bounce-back ability.





**Masters of mathematics** who see the fun in maths and are able to know the purpose, which it brings to every day life.

## Our Curriculum Implementation

Positive relationships:

Each child's journey through our nursery school begins with us building solid relationships with children and their families.

Family is the single most important influence in a child's life. Positive parental relationships and engagement are potent levers to a child's success and progress.

Curriculum:

We provide a rich, balanced, creative curriculum where children actively learn through play experiences.


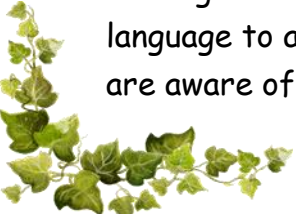
Our unique curriculum reflects our school community and ensures that all children reach their full potential, introducing them to new experiences and building upon and widening the experiences they already have, thus building their long-term memory.



The Characteristics of Effective Learning and Teaching, 'playing and exploring', 'active learning', and 'creating and thinking critically', underpin the children's learning and development.

We nurture and celebrate individuality. The strong emphasis on relationships ensures practitioners know the children well.

Highly skilled practitioners use careful observations to follow the child's lead. We know children learn best when they are interested and motivated. 'In The Moment Planning' allows us to capture the moment a child is highly engaged and inspired, allowing practitioners to build and extend learning appropriate to the unique child. We call this a teachable moment.

Our environment is a haven for children. Soft furnishings and a home-from-home feel support emotional well-being and calm behaviour. Following the 'Curiosity Approach' enables learning possibilities to be endless, encouraging curiosity, awe and wonder. Such a magical place to be! Throughout each child's journey at nursery, we focus on language. From early language to aspirational language, we believe that language unlocks learning! We are aware of the word gap between our most deprived children and their peers,





both locally and nationally, and this continually drives our focus. Following the 'Hanen' approach, practitioners are skilled at using the correct level of communication with the child's interaction type and ability level.

All children are treated fairly regardless of gender, race, religion, disadvantage or ability, and we strive to treat children equitably, which is not always equal.

Children classed as vulnerable learners are identified as early as possible, and advice is sought from our more experienced practitioners and external professionals. Our vulnerable learners include those with special educational needs, and disabilities, looked-after children and those with other safeguarding concerns, learners with behaviour and attendance needs, early year's pupil premium and learners with social, emotional and mental health needs.

We pride ourselves on our inclusive provision, which meets the needs of some of our most vulnerable learners. Highly trained practitioners provide specialist provisions to ensure that all children reach their full potential.

We use the knowledge from the 'Attachment Friendly Schools Award' to ensure all behaviour is treated as communication, unpicking the root causes and nurturing the child to a calm state of mind. We aim to provide the right help at the right time. Using effective 'Windows of Tolerance' plans ensure that children's emotional well-being is always the priority.

Our curriculum is only as good as those who deliver and facilitate it! We highly value continuous professional development for practitioners at every level.

Training is personalised and bespoke for every member of staff. Investing in all staff and volunteers, including students, is highly regarded.

We know the value of sharing expertise and strengths within our team, using peer-to-peer support across the federation to develop the quality of teaching. Our leadership team focuses on ensuring consistent implementation of our unique curriculum.

### [Our Curriculum Impact](#)

We aim for most of our children to be 'on track' across the development areas when they start primary school. However, our focus is to ensure that children progress from their initial starting points. We recognise that children develop at different rates. We moderate progress to ensure this is accurate.



## Observation and Assessment

Practitioners develop strong relationships with children and their families to ensure effective and accurate observations are collated using various methods. These include using practitioner knowledge, conversations with parents, snapshots and termly focus child observations that feed into six monthly summative assessment checkpoints.

Children are assessed six monthly following their birthday. When being assessed we use the end points that are based on three stages by 36 months, by 42 months and 54 months. During the assessment practitioners meet and make a professional judgement as to if a child is on track, working towards or not on track to meeting the relevant end points. Each child then has an individual plan where their key worker will write a short summary about the child's development, how they are going to further support the child and what can be done at home to help support the child. This is then shared with parents.



A baseline is completed within 4 weeks of a child first starting.

We choose to summatively assess children six monthly. Young children need time to 'master' skills and develop knowledge. Children learn best through repetition. It is through this repetition that pathways are formed and made stronger within the brain, thus becoming permanent. By assessing children six monthly based on their birthday it allows children time to develop those skills and knowledge thus making pathways in the brain remain permanent.

Children are assessed formatively every day, with every interaction, our skilled practitioners support the child's next steps there and then in the moment. They will also use that information to feed into the environment/circle time planning and plan appropriate provision.

We developed this rationale based on guidance from the School Inspection Handbook July 2022, which amongst other things states:

"Assessment should support the teaching of the curriculum, but not substantially increase teachers' workloads by necessitating too much one-to-one teaching or overly demanding programmes that are almost impossible to deliver without lowering expectations of some pupils."



And the reformed EYFS September 2021, which states reducing unnecessary paperwork is a key aim of the new EYFS framework, this is so practitioners can spend more time engaging with children.

If a practitioner is concerned about a child's development then they do not wait until the child's summative assessment they will speak to the relevant parties.

Children who have been identified as having complex needs and requiring more support are assessed four monthly (termly). To complete this assessment we use the 'Special Educational Needs and Inclusion Team Developmental Journal' to measure smaller steps of progress.

Our 2-year checks are thorough, and quality assured to ensure they identify needs and next steps to support development. These are always shared with parents. Other professionals are informed if assessment indicates a need. When this is the case, staff quickly and effectively tailor the curriculum to meet the child's unique needs, delivering a range of interventions in areas required.

Considering the reformed EYFS, we prioritise and recognise the importance of practitioners spending quality time with children instead of time spent recording 'observations'.

Practitioners use Tapestry's online system to document snapshot observations of children's learning and experiences. Parents feed into this and share their comments about children's education at home. Any other professionals, such as childminders, are also encouraged to contribute. This gives us a holistic understanding of each child.

We use summative assessment in our schools to ensure that:

- Practitioners clearly understand a child's progress across all areas of learning and development.
- The practitioners have the skills and knowledge to enable the children to progress.
- Parents understand their child's progress and are helped to support learning and development at home.
- Concerns about individual children's progress are identified and addressed.
- The quality of provision is monitored, and improvements are made where necessary.
- The progress of groups of children can be monitored to ensure they are given the best opportunities to learn.



## The Unique Child

Our nursery schools are specialists in meeting the needs of all children, and we celebrate the little (but crucial) things that make children unique and special.

We welcome every child and their family to our 'Duke Street and Highfield Family' with open arms and work extremely hard to establish close working relationships with the whole family.

We recognise that we are the family for some children and their parents. We go the extra mile constantly, whether collecting children to get them into the nursery or providing additional support through our family worker. We are their safe space, their sounding board and their unconditional support.

We use the knowledge gained from the 'Attachment and Trauma School Friendly' award to ensure all 'behaviour' is viewed as communication, and we unpick the root causes as we nurture and love the child to a calm state of mind. Our aim is always to provide the right approach at the right time whilst giving the child lots of 'time in' with a special person.



## Positive Relationships

Our priority is ensuring solid relationships between children and their key person. This ensures that children's emotional well-being is high as they feel safe and secure and, therefore, can learn.

Children are part of their consistent key group, which helps them develop a sense of belonging. The children and adults get to know each other exceptionally well as they enjoy lots of time together. Group teaching, snack time and story time are shared through this group experience.

We know that when children are happy and engaged, they can learn and achieve at a high level; therefore, progress is made. Through the programme 'My Happy Mind', we teach children to understand why positive relationships matter and





how to build them, focusing on the building blocks of good relationships and friendships.

Our practitioners in the nursery are curious as they tune in to each unique child and allow their fascinations to flourish, often being amazed at the ideas they come up with.

### An Enabling Environment

Our nursery spaces are calm and tranquil both inside and out. There is a homely feel with low lighting, soft materials and authentic furniture, which ensures that children feel safe and secure. It is a place of love with cosy spaces for adults and children to snuggle together, read stories or chat about the day.

The learning space has recently been transformed into a treasure chest full of exciting and creative resources waiting to be discovered. This approach supports children to be curious learners. As adults support these explorations, new and aspirational language is introduced.

A range of open-ended resources allows children to use their imagination and follow their ideas.

Following the successful verification of the Attachment and Trauma Award, there is an increased focus on supporting children's emotional well-being throughout the provision. Foot spas are a regular feature, and children access these independently as they learn to recognise the needs of their bodies and adopt self-help strategies from a very young age.

Many of our children begin nursery with low speech and language levels; as such, we have many Communication Friendly Spaces dotted around the learning spaces. These may be spaces for two to squeeze in tight or a dark den to pile into as a group with torches.

We know that some children, particularly boys and children with English as Additional Language, learn best in the outdoor environment; therefore, free flow from outside is established well throughout the nurseries.

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The learning spaces support children's sense of belonging as all children have their coat peg and cubby to put in any personal and essential items. The importance of family is highly valued, and photographs are collected and displayed for children to see and talk about during the session.

Sometimes children need a more concrete link to home, and this is provided on an individual basis, such as with unique tins or personal displays.

We know that children become highly engaged and learn best when following their interests. The environment provides for this in lots of different ways, either through photographs, finding out more together on the internet, or bringing in a pet from home.

The learning space provides a wealth of stimulating and multi-sensory





experiences as we know that this is how children learn best. Authentic, hands-on and active learning engages both sides of the brain, enabling the child to know and remember more.

Both settings have a sensory room and have developed specific rooms to support the learning of children with additional needs. These rooms remain calm and neutral to avoid sensory overload and have a higher adult-to-child ratio to support children's education. We have an increased focus on meeting individual needs, and we recognise that for some children, the primary environments are too busy and more sensory exploration is needed.

The continuous provision continues throughout the year as new resources are slowly added with skills and a knowledge-based approach to teaching and learning. This success leads to a mastery of skills and a more profound learning experience whilst fostering independence.

### Teaching and Learning

The importance of play for children is highly valued, and we ensure that children have long, uninterrupted periods to play throughout the nursery day. This enables deep-level learning and involvement. When practitioners sensitively and skilfully join children in their play, learning is accelerated to a higher level. Teaching and Planning in the Moment allows this to happen immediately.

The adult-led teaching and learning at group time are always interactive and multi-sensory, with clear differentiation to ensure all children succeed and thrive. Senior leaders plan for these sessions with a learning objective that lasts for the whole week whilst being explored in different ways. This allows for high-quality learning and the ability to consolidate knowledge within the continuous provision and throughout the week, increasing a child's long-term memory. Small group times offer a different learning dimension for children, so we deliver this at the nursery session's beginning and end.

For children who need additional support, our experienced teachers and support practitioners work closely with the SENCO to write a personalised curriculum based on the child's individual needs. This may also include a Targeted Learning Plan (TLP). It is delivered by our practitioners, who have extensive knowledge and expertise in supporting children with additional and complex needs.



## How do we teach Reading?

We highly value the power which is a competent and motivated reader brings. Most importantly, we aim to inspire our children to adore reading, to see this as a joy to behold and to crave the magic and escapism that comes from simply opening up the front cover of a book.

The provision for our youngest readers and those with complex needs contains a range of books with various interactive appeals, such as lift-the-flap sections or noise buttons. Children enjoy and revisit familiar texts; a popular range is the 'That's not my....' selection with different textures to touch and feel.


An exciting range of reading material is available for all children, and individual interests are explored whenever possible; this may include big books, tiny books, non-fiction, poetry books, photography or photo books with the actual children inside. We have found that our children also love the responsibility of looking at a thick, heavy 'grown up' book, as they become highly engaged in the print and sometimes diagrams and maps.

We have many cosy places to snuggle together and read throughout the learning space. Some children crave this 1:1 time, and adults always read to or with a child if asked. Adults know the value of sharing a book with a child and the accelerated learning in vocabulary this can have. Practitioners also 'go with the flow' of children and spot the teachable moment as they sometimes sit reading crouched on the floor or under an umbrella in the rain!



We ensure that all children listen to and enjoy a high-quality story daily. Disadvantaged and vulnerable children are encouraged to share a story 1:1 within the session whenever possible, as we know that this group of children are less likely to receive a story at home. This is also a unique, emotional bonding session with their key person.

Stories are chosen carefully, and teaching is planned to introduce various concepts, including aspirational and new vocabulary. The same story is shared for two weeks, supporting children in developing a deep understanding of the structure, language and themes. The children are often seen 'reading' the story word for word within the environment.

The story is explored through a multi-sensory and interactive approach. Children live the story as they put their feet in cold water to feel the river or







experience the rain sprinkle over them with a water spray. Laughter and giggles, awe and wonder, is our gauge for a successful reading experience.

To further support reading and storytelling, our children take part in Helicopter Stories. This learning experience allows children to become the author and tell their own stories while a practitioner scribes; putting their ideas in writing gives them ownership and pride. Older children can re-enact their stories independently while our younger children act out simple stories in small groups.



The importance of nursery rhymes is sometimes overlooked, but never by us! Many of our children come to the nursery knowing few if any. We know that having a solid awareness of rhythm and rhyme is the bedrock for later reading experiences. For our youngest learners, nursery rhymes are sung with enthusiasm and movement at the end of every session and throughout play experiences.



The Poetry Basket introduces another element of rhythm and rhyme for our older children. These interactive and multi-sensory rhymes are irresistible to join in with, and many of our families come to love the poems as much as we do. This supports home links to learning.

### How do we teach Phonics?

Our teaching provides children with a solid foundation of phonics. We use a phonics scheme: Red Rose Phonics. This supports the children's ability to tune into sounds, discriminate between them and enjoy a wide range of speaking and listening experiences. This happens throughout the session as and when the opportunity arises, it is also pre planned into provision and circle times. We ensure all children are masters in pre-phonics learning before we move to phonetical sounds. We give children the foundation and tools ready to access and absorb the phonics taught when they move onto their next stage in education.

Our younger children and children with additional needs take part in regular Chattering Chimps sessions which contain many of the aspects of phase one phonics. The multi sensory experience develops children's listening skills, a skill that underpins phonics teaching. Children learn to join in with rhymes, play different instruments, follow a beat and understand stories.





When children are ready we continue with a systematic approach to phonics and begin to teach Phase Two: 'Red Rose Phonics'. These sessions are incredibly fun, active and multi-sensory to engage the two parts of the brain and to ensure maximum learning potential.

### How do we teach Writing?

Within our federation, writing is viewed as a whole-body experience. We know that children need to develop their upper arms and shoulder muscles first, and so lots of emphasis is placed on providing physical and active learning experiences daily include things like climbing, rolling big tyres, pulling, digging in the sand and lifting heavy bricks.

Mark-making is very sensory; adults encourage children to make significant marks in shaving foam, whisking bubbles in water and dancing with ribbon sticks to music.

Children are also challenged to develop their fine motor skills through various experiences such as threading beads, manipulating playdough and peeling vegetables in the role-play kitchen. 'Dough Disco' is a big hit with all children who enjoy exercising their finger muscles with playdough and music.



Parents and carers are supported to understand early mark-making, and suggestions are given for how this can be explored at home following our approach. We educate parents and carers about the journey of phonics as we explain to them the importance of correct letter sounds, pronunciation and the stages of emergent writing.

Writing and mark-making are available throughout the environment, both inside and out. Progression is achieved through our various approaches, our use of tools and writing implements and the learning experiences which are modelled and taught by our highly experienced practitioners and teachers.

We know that when children write, they do so for a purpose, and so we find shopping lists in the home corner, maps in the construction and envelopes

We understand that writing and the early mark-making stages can be sensory





issues for some children. We give children opportunities for early mark-making by supporting them to desensitise to textures that they may find uncomfortable. For some children, it is simply adding the 'mess' into a clear sealable bag so that the effects of the messy play can be enjoyed without the upset of touching it.

Children are taught to recognise their names and know the letter sounds. The correct letter formation is modelled, and they are always encouraged to 'have a go.' We follow the Red Rose phonics letter formation rhymes. We never trace letters or draw around dots as we know that this provides children with a crutch which leaves them helpless when this is removed later. We much prefer children to be confident to write without the fear of making a mistake or that they may do it 'wrong.'

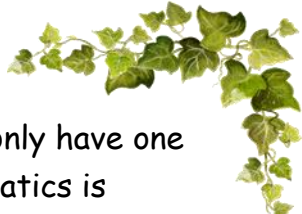

We recognise that some children, particularly boys, can feel less enthusiasm to write and mark make independently, and this is overcome with approaches such as invisible ink with torches, superhero writing 'buddies' and large-scale writing outside or in tiny little dens. The message centre also works well through its use of secret symbols.

### How do we teach Mathematics?

At Duke Street and Highfield Nursery School, we believe that every child has the power and ability to be a confident and capable mathematician. Mathematics is woven into our nursery day and involves many purposeful and authentic learning experiences. Maths is life! It is everywhere! Our highly skilled practitioners and enabling environment work together to bring mathematics to life.

Our children adore 'big' numbers and love nothing more than using the language of 'thousands' and 'millions.' Likewise, they don't want to build a tower with just ten blocks; they want to build Morrison's chimney, which has 50! Our philosophy is a 'low floor, high ceiling approach', which ensures that children are challenged with their mathematical thinking and understanding of key concepts.

Mathematics is embedded in our teaching of the prime areas of learning. At the age of two, our youngest children begin to learn object permanence and the understanding of quantity. For these children, maths is play; it is explored



through the physical nature of their bodies- 'I have one nose,' 'I only have one mitten, but when I put the other one on, then I have two!' Mathematics is explored through these simple and natural everyday interactions following the 'our every second counts' approach.

We understand that adults can have an inner lack of confidence regarding maths, and many practitioners feel it is not their strength. This is overcome through many opportunities to talk about maths as a team. We use our pedagogical leadership to talk about 'how' we teach maths and strengthen our teacher knowledge by thinking about 'what' we want our children to learn.

We understand that counting is a complex process, which can almost be described as a journey. Children naturally enjoy counting, and this is something which they imitate from adults from an early age. This develops into memorising number names, saying these in random order, and generally being very 'busy' in their approach. We value subitising and encourage children to gain confidence in doing this with small quantities. The environment has many loose parts for children to practise this, such as wooden reels, pine cones, pumpkins of different sizes etc. We encourage children to use props in many forms, their fingers being the prominent counting or subitising tool.



We strive for our children to become Math Masters and to really understand the many concepts involved including, grouping, sequencing, patterns, matching and spatial awareness. Many of our children with additional needs thrive within these areas and have a real love for the wide area that math covers, which is supported and developed by our highly trained teachers and practitioners.

### [A Unique approach for children with Special Educational Needs.](#)

We believe in empowering children with special educational needs and are passionate about ensuring that every single child can thrive and reach their full potential. We embrace and focus on what our children 'can do' and celebrate their strengths and abilities together.

A specialist provision ensures the needs of all children are met, with a calm and homely approach being the priority. Children feel safe in this purposefully designed space with a higher adult-child ratio.





Fully qualified and highly experienced Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators ensure that any barriers to learning are removed quickly with expert, external agencies referred to when necessary. We also place training and reflection for practitioners as a high priority as we constantly learn and research new approaches and skills.

Sensory circuits facilitate sensory processing, ensuring that children can regulate and organise their senses to achieve the 'just right' or optimum level of alertness required for effective learning. Our sensory circuits are active, physical and always lots of fun! The learning environment comprises different levels, spaces and zones to provide for and challenge children differently.

A separate sensory room provides a chill-out space with twinkling lights, soothing scents, bubble tubes and sensory resources to touch feel and hear.



Communication and language is developed with the use of many strategies and approaches, which include Makaton, the use of PECS, visuals and specific language interventions such as 'Early Talk Boost' 'Look, listen & learn.' and 'chattering chimps.' These approaches are highly engaging and create awe and wonder as they promote engagement, turn-taking, understanding and, most importantly, a love of learning!

We know and respect that the journey of parents of children with additional needs can be complex, and we go above and beyond as we listen to parents, take their concerns seriously and support them when communicating with other professionals.

We take great pride in making a real difference for some of the most disadvantaged children and know this is a strength of our federation.

### [A unique approach for children who are two years old.](#)

Many children begin their learning journey with us at two and receive two-year-old funding. Children have space to explore, be inquisitive, and develop their physical skills inside and outside. We understand just how important these early years are in shaping a child's future and their love for learning; this is the optimum growing time for their brains and for connections to be made.



We appreciate that for many of our children, this is their first experience away from their primary carers. This can be an emotional time of transition for not only the child but also for parents and carers. All of our practitioners who support our two-year-olds have specific training and offer lots of professional love so that secure attachments are formed as we understand just how crucial early attachment is.

We work with Health Visitors to discuss two-year checks, and each keyworker will complete their two-year assessment for each child. We share this information with parents and carers to identify early any additional support that may be needed.

The development of language skills is a big focus for our two-year-olds. Practitioners play with children and model language, using a range of strategies from the Hanen approach to support speaking and understanding. Singing and nursery rhymes play a big part in this, and we sing whenever the opportunity arises! Children also enjoy Chattering Chimps and Look, Listen and Learn fun and interactive sessions while promoting listening, attention, and social communication skills.