



Curriculum and Assessment Policy



'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 puts 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

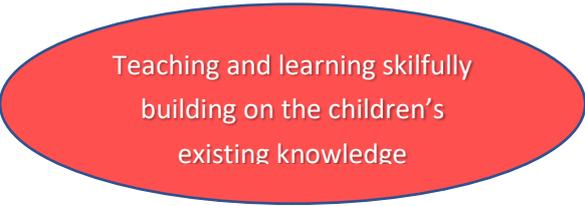
Principles

- All children are entitled to high quality learning and teaching. This will equip them with the skills, knowledge and understanding they need today, and prepare them well for tomorrow.
- Children learn at different rates and each child's development is unique.
- Children learn best when they are happy, secure and actively involved in their own learning.
- Effective teaching and learning in the EYFS meets children's identified needs and interests and helps children to learn and develop in all seven areas of learning and development.
- 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 in nursery prepares them well for school, so that they can confidently handle the transition and continue their learning journey.
- Every child can progress well in their learning, with the right support. Every child can thrive.

Curriculum Overview

We offer a high quality broad and balanced curriculum which has four main elements:

- ❖ Teaching and learning skilfully building on the children's existing knowledge.
- ❖ A regular cycle of learning related to:
 - Core books, rhymes and songs
 - Our current learning theme
 - A mixture of focused and child-initiated interactions
- ❖ Core experiences such as growing a bean, observing caterpillars change to butterflies.
- ❖ Our curricular goals for children.

	<p>All aspects of our curriculum require practitioners to have a deep knowledge of the children in order to skilfully plan for the next stage of their learning.</p>
	<p>All aspects of our curriculum have a 'progress model'. When we are building on children's knowledge, we are planning to broaden or deepen that knowledge.</p>
	<p>But the 'progress model' is especially true of the second, third and fourth elements. For example, our cycle of 'Core Books' begins with very simple, repetitive texts.</p>
	<p>Over time, children progress onto texts with more complex vocabulary and structures.</p>

Learning at Little Lambs Pre-School Centre

- Most learning is play-based and takes place indoors and outside.
- There is a balance between adult-initiated experiences (guided learning) and child-initiated experiences.
- Adults take children's interests and strengths as a starting point, seeing each child as a competent learner.
- 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.

At Little Lambs we have created our own curriculum statements that are pertinent to the particular strengths and needs of the children that attend our setting. We have drawn inspiration from Development Matters 2021 and Birth to Five Matters. We have focused on statements that are achievable yet challenging to the children at the different stages of the academic year. These statements and goals are adaptable to the particular group of children that we have on roll each year. However, we recognise that every child will not make the same progress through the curricular goals and adapt specific goals for specific children where appropriate.

Our aim, at Little Lambs, is to ensure that children are as prepared as possible for the next stage in their lives and focus strongly on ensuring that they are 'independent little people' ready and prepared to move on to school life. We believe that our curricular goals underpin this aim.

Our 8 curricular goals

Settle in	To settle in and become a confident learner.
Follow simple instruction	To follow simple instruction to perform a task.
Make a model	To create a model using a variety of resources from around nursery.
Independently put on your coat	To independently find and put on your own coat, managing your belongings.
Care for our environment	To have an understanding of the importance of treating the world and living things with care and respect.
Count and understand numbers to 10	To reliably count up to 10 objects and have an understanding of quantity.
Make up your own stories	To make up your own story or scenario during play.
Write the letters of your first name	To independently write the letters of your first name.

Curricular goals are shared with parents throughout the year. Their clarity helps parents to get involved and support their children's learning at home.

We regularly review our curriculum and the resources we use.

Planning and assessment

During the afternoon sessions with younger children and initially when all children start with us, the majority of our planning is focused on the three prime areas.

These are Communication and Language, Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Physical Development.

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 6 week initial assessment period.

Home Visits

Every child is offered a home visit or telephone call if the home visit is not possible. Parents share information about their child's interests, communication, confidence and physical health with staff. The key person will use the

information shared by parents note the child's interests and any relevant information to aid the child's transition to nursery.

Initial 6 week assessments

Practitioners meet with parents after their child has attended nursery for approximately 6 weeks, normally after the first half term.

They discuss how the child has settled in and what they have observed. The practitioner will refer to the checkpoints in *Development Matters*, checking children's development in the Prime areas. These assessments will inform a discussion with parents about how well their child is settling and will be used to help notice children who may need extra help.

Next steps from children's starting points are usually linked to how the children have settled into nursery or anything of significance e.g. toilet training.

Once children have settled and can access the nursery environment we begin thinking with more detail about how they will access the curriculum and we support learning around their interests. For the children who settle quickly and are confident, we can move into using the wider curricular goals quickly.

If we notice that a child might be having difficulties with their development, we will take action quickly. It is important that we get to know and understand these 'vulnerable starters' so we will spend time observing them closely and reflecting on what we notice. We will continue to develop a strong relationship with their parents, supporting them to also give their child the extra help they need. The curriculum for these children will remain ambitious and inclusive. It is important that we focus on support, scaffolding and helping children overcome barriers to their learning.

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

For children with SEND, precise assessment needs to focus on what the child can do, and what the barriers to their learning are. If a child has specific difficulties with their communication, for example, they may need to have aids like a simple vocabulary board so that they can make choices and share their ideas. All children are entitled to the whole of the early years curriculum. Of course, they won't all manage to do and know everything that's mapped out: but some who appear vulnerable at first may thrive later in the year.

Rather than 'differentiating down', we believe that 'scaffolding up' is a more suitable approach in our commitment to inclusion. By 'scaffolding up', children with SEND are exposed to the concepts and skills in our wider curriculum in a suitable breadth and depth. Whereas 'differentiating down' suggests that children with SEND have limited access to the curriculum. Our commitment to 'scaffolding up' means that children are included in the wider curriculum and are not segregated from their peers.

Assessment and tracking overview

Assessment ensures that staff can skilfully plan for the needs of each individual child to enable them to move through our curriculum.

Most assessment is formative, so that it quickly helps us to make a difference to children's learning. However, we also need to have an overview of children's progress, so that we can take further actions where needed, and so we can monitor equalities. Our aim is for the system to be proportionate, and to ensure it is not overly burdensome.

This information is collated on the Tapestry online system. Key workers have discussions with colleagues and senior practitioners to analyse the information in order to take action for individual children, or groups of children, as needed.

Our objectives:

- Dialogue with parents, so that we can work in a respectful partnership to support children's learning at home and in the nursery
- 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 as the child leaves our setting, so that children can continue their learning journey through the EYFS as seamlessly as possible.

Assessment and planning

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 – we might:

- stand back and be encouraging;
- get 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;
- reflect afterwards and bring in new resources or plan something special in response to what we noticed.

This type of assessment work is not written down. It often focuses on the key milestones on the way to the curricular goals. It shows how we can assess what children know and can do, and help them to progress, through our minute-by-minute interactions.

The focus of our assessment is on clear and specific things that a child needs to be able to do or needs to know. In order to do this practitioners need to understand how the different elements of the curriculum fit together to help children build their learning over time. Reflective discussions about practitioners key children after session and during planning meetings support this understanding.

Practitioners also need to have a secure understanding of child development, as well as the features of effective pedagogy. This will help with judging when to get involved and when to encourage and knowing how to scaffold children's learning so we support them to keep trying without over-helping them.

Some children will need a lot more help and scaffolding to access that curriculum. This is a strength of the practitioners at Little Lambs Pre-School. We will notice what children can and can't do. We are good at deciding when it will be helpful to step in and support, and when it's best to be encouraging but hang back. It is important that we are certain that children are secure in what they know and can do, before introducing them to something new.

Practitioners record significant observations on the Tapestry online system. The aim of these records is to 'bring the child's learning to life'. The child's struggle or perseverance will be made clear. It will include characteristics of effective learning and the child's voice. The teaching input will also be documented. The entry will describe what the practitioner did to support or extend the child's learning and how the child responded.

Feedback

The majority of our assessment of children's learning is done through feedback in the here-and-now. Practitioners are skilled in modelling metacognitive thinking for children and this in turn helps children to develop a growth mindset.

Metacognitive thinking enables children to talk more specifically about thinking in different contexts. It enables children to use a plan do review approach in their learning. They become independent and more powerful learners. This in turn supports their approach to managing their own learning later in their school years.

A practical example of this is:

- Child A is trying to build a tower using the blocks. The tower is wobbly and keeps falling down.
- Practitioner comments by saying "Oh no, it has fallen down. I wonder why that happened?" This enables the child to think about why the tower has fallen rather than continuing with the same strategy.
- Child comments by saying "It is too wobbly."
- Practitioner responds by saying "I wonder why it is wobbly. Let's have a look at the shape of the blocks you have used."
- Child looks closely at the shape of the blocks whilst the practitioner talks to the child about this. The practitioner asks "What do you think you need to do differently?"
- If the child doesn't know then the practitioner could model this by building their own tower alongside the child using the blocks. Practitioner thinks aloud to model this process. Practitioner says "I need to make sure I balance these blocks one on top of the other to make my tower sturdy."
- The child manages to build a tower that is sturdy. The practitioner provides instant feedback by saying "That is amazing. You took your time to look at the way you were placing the blocks and worked out that you needed similar shapes and kept trying until you built the tower."

When giving instant feedback to children it is important to give appropriate but honest comments about their work. Specific praise is helpful, but supporting children to look carefully at their work and see if it can be improved, is even better. This feedback needs to be age appropriate and tailored specifically to the child. It is important to ensure that the feedback is kind, specific, helpful and related to the work, not the child.

This type of feedback is descriptive and includes elements of critique. Supporting children to give and receive feedback teaches them that effort and revision are valuable and that the things they do can be improved. This develops the mindset of continuous improvement.

Our 8 Curricular Goals

1 – Settle in and become a confident learner	
<p>First milestone: children make a strong relationship with their key person. Increasingly, they separate confidently from their parent at the start of the session and become involved in their play. They use their key person as a 'secure base' throughout the session, 'touching base' as/when needed.</p>	<p>Where children need individualised and additional help, this will be offered promptly. Help includes individual meetings with parents to map a way forward, referrals to other professionals for support, Early Help support for parenting.</p> <p>As children grow in confidence, their involvement in nursery activities deepens. They explore a wider range of activities. They play for longer periods of time. They play alongside friends. They play collaboratively. They develop their 'pretend play'.</p>
<p>Second milestone: children take part in pretend play, communicating and negotiating with their friends.</p>	<p>As children's engagement and perseverance grows, they either challenge themselves with more difficult activities, or they respond positively to adults challenging them.</p>
<p>Third milestone: children persevere with difficulties. They make comments about their learning and play and show pleasure/pride.</p>	<p>As children play and learn more collaboratively, over longer time periods, and taking part in more challenging activities, they talk about and reflect on their learning.</p>
<p>Final milestone: Children reflect on their learning. They comment on their 'thinking' and the ways they go about their learning. They reflect on what helps them to persevere through difficulties and what helps them when they find things hard.</p>	

2 – To follow simple instruction to perform a task

First milestone: Children will pay attention to the dominant stimulus, i.e., the person speaking to them. They may still be easily distracted by what is happening around them but will focus for short periods and are developing the ability to follow others' body language.

If they are busy in their play, children may not be able to switch their attention and listen to what others say. Staff will support children to switch their attention from what they are doing to what is being said to them. Staff will give them a clear prompt, such as say the child's name and then: "Please stop and listen" or use Makaton or other visual supports.

Second milestone: Children's listening skills develop to enable them to understand and act on longer sentences, such as: "Make teddy jump". They are able to understand simple questions and are beginning to pay attention to more than one thing at a time.

As children's listening skills develop, staff will use longer sentences as they interact with them. They will gain their attention before issuing instruction or engaging in conversation to ensure that the child is focused. Staff will continue to use visual supports.

Third milestone: Children will understand a question or instruction that has two parts, such as: "Get your coat and wait at the door". They will sometimes need reminding to focus but are easily 'brought back' to the instruction.

Staff will use more complex language as they interact with them. Again, they will ensure the child is focused and if necessary, use prompts or reminders, such as actual objects or picture cards, to ensure the child can recall the more complex instruction.

Final milestone: Children can focus their attention on what an adult/carer is saying to them, even if they are engaged in another activity. They are able to complete the task asked of them, ask appropriate questions to ensure they fully understand the task, and are able to take on board instruction involving several ideas or actions.

3 – To make a model

First milestone: Children engage in construction activities, stacking blocks to build vertically or horizontally. Children are able to use their fine motor skills to pick up items using tweezers and thread cotton reels.

Staff will support children with block play skills, offering alongside a variety of small world opportunities inspired by children's interests to ensure children choose to engage in activity. Staff will model using tweezers and threading skills, again used in a context inspired by children's interests.

Second milestone: Children begin to create enclosures and bridges between blocks to form simple planned structures. Children will now be able to use scissors effectively to make snips in paper.

Children will now begin to experiment with balance and play becomes more symbolic, blocks are used to explore and represent ideas. Children are developing spatial awareness and developing a concept of perimeter.

Third milestone: Children explore a variety of materials and one-handed tools to fix items together to create a planned model.

Children will now begin to think more purposefully about their designs and will master a variety of one-handed tools and skills. Staff will listen and understand what children want to create before offering suggestions. Children will be encouraged to reflect upon their structures, learning through a trial-and-error approach.

Final milestone: Children are able to safely use a variety of tools and techniques, to source the materials they need and to experiment with colour, design, texture, form and function as they build to a plan they have created. They are confident to collaborate with others, monitoring risk and safety issues as they work.

4 – Independently put on your coat

First milestone: Children grow in independence, rejecting help ('me do it'). This can sometimes lead to feelings of frustration or tantrums.

Staff show warmth and affection, combined with clear and appropriate boundaries and routines. They help develop a spirit of friendly co-operation amongst children and adults, actively encouraging children to strive to be independent in self-care.

Second milestone: Children develop their sense of responsibility and their membership of a community by carrying out appropriate tasks, such as putting away plates and cups after café and actively helping to tidy up toys.

Children are given specific tasks by adults. Familiar routines and boundaries exist that children will begin to take ownership of as they strive for independence.

Third milestone: Children become independent in a variety of self-care tasks, such as hand washing at appropriate times. They take responsibility of their own self-care at these times and understand the importance of taking care of themselves.

Staff model practices that support good hygiene and activities are planned to enable children to understand the need for looking after themselves and to begin to make positive informed choices.

Final milestone: Children are able to independently dress themselves and are aware of their own belongings, will take care of their own belongings and ensure that they are stored appropriately.

5 – To care for our environment

First milestone: Children will begin to notice detailed features of objects in their environment.

Children will enjoy experiencing splashing in puddles wearing wellies, seeing seasonal flowers and blossom or noticing autumn leaves falling. Staff will ensure that all children will have a wealth of opportunities to experience nature and the world around them.

Second milestone: Children will talk about some of the things that they observe when engaged in exploration of plants, animals, natural and found objects. They will begin to notice changes over time as they use their senses in hands-on exploration of the natural world.

Staff will sensitively increase children's vocabulary to ensure that they have the words to describe what they observe and continue to offer a variety of opportunities and experiences, using child's interests and fascinations as a springboard for learning.

Third milestone: Children will plant seeds and care for growing plants as they develop an understanding of growth, decay and changes over time. They will begin to understand the features of a life cycle of a plant or an animal.

Throughout the year, children will be taken outside in our nursery environment and that of our local community to observe the changing seasons, the natural world and to learn how plants and animals behave as time passes and the seasons change.

Final milestone: Children are aware of the need to care for all living things and have an understanding of the importance of treating the world and living things with care and respect.

6 – To count and understand numbers to 10

First milestone: Children will begin to compare amounts, using language like ‘lots’, ‘more’, or ‘same’. They will display counting like behaviour, such as making sounds, pointing or saying some numbers in sequence.

Staff will draw children’s attention to changes in amounts, such as by adding more bricks to a tower or commenting how the plate empties as they eat up their café. Children will have repeated experiences with counting in meaningful and varied contexts, indoors and outdoors.

Second milestone: Children will count in everyday context, reciting numbers but sometimes skipping numbers, such as ‘1,2 – 3,5’.

Staff will support children to match their counting words to objects, such as moving an object to one side when it has been counted. Repeated experiences will continue to be offered, using children’s interests and fascinations where possible.

Third milestone: Children will be able to recite numbers past 5 and will say one number for each item in order to 5, beginning to link numerals to amounts. Children will be able to subitise up to 3 objects.

Children are encouraged to regularly say the counting sequence in a variety of playful contexts, such as hide and seek or counting down for a rocket launch. Staff will ensure that children understand that the last number reached when counting is the total (cardinal principle).

Final milestone: Children will be able to count objects, actions and sounds to 10, they will link the number symbol with its cardinal number value and subitise.

7 – To make up your own stories

First milestone: Children take part in pretend play, making up or developing a story.

Children may begin by pretend-playing on their own with toys like farm animals, wild animals or dinosaurs. They may put on a costume to become a superhero or another character. Over time, their play becomes more complex. They are able to play with other children, developing the play together (e.g., deciding who will play what role in home corner or telling a story with small world characters).

Second milestone: Children engage in story time, having favourite stories and entering into discussions about aspects of the story.

Staff will use weekly focus stories, to ensure that children become familiar with the language, structure and characters in each story. The book will be developed as the week progresses, activities will be planned around the story and a variety of props used to aid children's engagement.

Third milestone: Children become more focused on familiar stories and are able to retell sections of the story, discuss the characters and are aware of what happens in the beginning, middle and end. They are able to predict what might happen.

Children will now be familiar with a variety of stories. Role play and small world will be focused to enable the children to retell the stories, having the opportunity to take on a variety of characters, repeat refrains during play and extend the characters using their own ideas.

Final milestone: Children can use familiar ideas and scenarios to create their own story, developing the setting, characters and structure of their story. They will tell their story to others using a variety of props, such as costumes or puppets.

8 – To write the letters of your first name

First milestone: Children can use the muscles in their hands and arms to make big movements and bring together hand and eye movements to fix on and make contact with objects.
Children will become increasingly confident in engaging in activities such as: throwing and catching balls, pushing cars and other large vehicles, exploring a musical instrument, playdough and paint.

As children build up their large and fine motor skills they engage in activities for a longer period of time. They can grasp objects and can focus on what they are doing, e.g., hold arms out and wait to catch a ball, thread beads on to a piece of string or build a stable tower of up to 10 blocks. Where children need individualised and additional help, this will be offered promptly. Help includes individualised support from key person; small group work; individual meetings with parents to map a way forward.

Second milestone: Children can make some random marks with their fingers and some tools. Children will engage in a variety of ways to make marks in dough/clay/sand, holding a paintbrush to make marks or using chalk on the ground outdoors.

As children become more confident in making marks they begin to talk about their marks with others and give meaning to these, e.g., “That’s Mummy”, or “It’s a dinosaur.”

Third milestone: As children’s mark making develops, they make more small, controlled movements and can draw lines and circles. They can distinguish between these marks, e.g., ‘line, circle and zig zag’, etc. They begin to use anticlockwise movements and retrace vertical lines. Children are familiar with language of directionality, such as ‘up, down, round and round.’
Children can find their name card and look at it when attempting to write their name.

As children use their name cards independently to self-register, for café and other tasks, they become more confident in attempting to form letters. Some children will begin to form recognisable letters.

Final milestone: Children hold their pen or pencil with a comfortable grip. They write their first name clearly and with correct directionality.