

October 2023

Revised March 2024



Teaching & Learning & Observation Policy

Our approach to Teaching & Learning, Observing & Scaffolding young children's learning

Within Mossley Nursery School, our planning techniques and recording are based on a mix of seasonal events, loose overarching themes and also incorporating 'Planning in the Moment' also known as 'In the moment planning'.

'In the moment planning' in our setting allows child-led rather than all adult-led learning. As a staff, we value the previous knowledge, interests and experiences that the children are bringing with them into the setting from their home and family. We also value their curiosity and questions and through this approach, it allows children to explore freely, relax into their play and ensure high engagement and display high levels of well being. Children who are highly engaged and are settled are able to learn.

Our classroom environment is organised to ensure children can self-select from a range of resources available and be independent. This promotes an enabling environment and allows the children to have choices and investigate through their play. Some of the areas of play and resources are continuous provision and they remain available on a daily basis. Some play experiences are provided by the staff as a provocation to spark interest and to follow on from themes of learning. Some are planned from observations of the children and other play experiences are chosen by the children. Some lines of learning are also taken from working closely with the children and following their line of interest as we are working with them.

We also invite our parents and carers to contribute to our learning and observation cycle which allows a more in-depth insight into their child's personality and life at home.

This policy provides more information about the approach and the reasoning behind it. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

Planning for Learning

Traditionally, planning in education is usually carried out ahead of the teaching. Following the teaching, the adults would evaluate whether the children had learnt the desired skill or gained the knowledge. Activities traditionally would have been planned, led and based on the adult leading the learning. With very young children, when the activities are led in this way, the direction often changes due to the age and interests of the children. With adults leading the activities, it means that the interest and pitch of the activity are often on an adult level and young children can lose interest or



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engagement when it is not their chosen topic or idea. The adults can often plan for the learning they think may take place and often, whilst working alongside children, they can change the outcome.

Children learn most when they are highly engaged and when they are highly interested in something and also when they can have a choice and take the learning in their chosen direction.

During the 'Planning in the Moment' approach, the environment and the resources available are planned for but the learning has more potential. The resources provided are often based on the children's requests or interests and sometimes spontaneous provocations from the adults or the environment can add to this. The learning comes from the children's interest and engagement with the resources and the flexibility to adapt and change with their ideas. The possibilities are endless as all children have different ideas, imagination and experiences. The direct teaching happens when the adults engage with the children and enhance the learning through their involvement, conversations and input. The learning is then recorded following the interaction or learning opportunity. This cycle is play, interact, teach and then record learning that actually took place. It is highly effective for the child.

The parents/carer's role

You, as parents and carers, are your child's first educator. We value the learning that they have been engaged in at home and we wish you to be involved in their nursery experience. The knowledge and understanding you have of your child is a key to unlocking your child's personality. We will make contact first and second term to invite you to complete a home school questionnaire prior to the focus week. We would really appreciate it if you would be involved and share with us anything significant happening in your child's life at that moment at that time and tell us about who the special people are in their lives and anything that you feel will help us to get to know your child's world outside school. We can then build on this information and plan learning experiences to meet your child's needs and interests. This will contribute greatly to their future learning and development. It is also really helpful to spark conversations with your child and we also ask for you to share some recent photos sent from home to add to this process. Following your child's focus week, the class teacher will feedback the significant information and learning observed during the week. In term 1 this will be a feedback meeting, either face to face or by telephone, whichever suits you. In term 2 feedback will be feedback via seesaw and a few photos of your child engaging in learning during their focus week. In term 3, staff will be compiling a transition report to share with you at the end of the year. This report is compiled to record your child's interests, progress and learning. This is done in readiness for your child moving onto the next stage of their educational journey.

We work in this way because ...

Young children are experiencing and learning in the here and now, not able to save up their questions until tomorrow or next week. It is in that immediate moment of curiosity, puzzlement, effort, or interest – *the 'teachable moment'* – where the skilful adult can make a difference. By using this cycle on a moment-by-moment basis, the adult will be always alert to individual children (observation),



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always thinking about what it tells us about the child's thinking or doing (assessment), and always ready to respond by using appropriate strategies at the right moment to support children's well-being and learning (planning for the next moment).

- *We have focus children **NOT** focus activities.*
- The adult works with the child and not the child working for the adult.
- We work this way because high-level involvement occurs in child-initiated activity
- We work in this way because it focuses on promoting a high level of well being
- Children learn when they are highly relaxed & highly engaged

Progress and Development

When children show high levels of involvement, that is when there is progress and development occurring – when the brain is at its most active. High level involvement occurs most often when children can pursue their own interests in an enabling environment supported by skilled staff. Flexibility to change forward plans made and to 'Plan in the moment' helps to make this possible.

Enabling Environment & Play Areas

The classroom is organised into learning areas where a range of materials and resources are available for each play area. They are planned to provide a balance following our curriculum in the '6 areas of Learning' as outlined in the 'Curricular Guidance for PreSchool Education' (CCEA). Adults do not set up the play, instead, the adults plan for the resources available in each area. The children have access to the range of resources, they choose their play and create their own play scenarios. The children select what they want to do in each area. They are also responsible for their learning environment and all contribute to tidying and organising their classroom environment after the play session. The children are allocated a tidy up job and work as a team to be responsible for their learning environment both indoors and outdoors.

The resources are accessible to the children and they are varied, open-ended and high quality. This gives children ownership over their choices and more scope for their imagination and creativity.

The Role of The Adult

The adults are there to facilitate learning. They do this through observations and interactions. The adults get to know the children very well and have a sound understanding of child development. This ensures that the adults enhance and extend the learning at the appropriate level for individual children.

Teaching in this approach involves communicating and modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling, and providing a narrative for what they are doing, facilitating and setting challenges. It takes account of the equipment they provide and the attention to the physical environment as well as the structure and routines of the day that establish expectations and teach self help skills. Integral to teaching is how practitioners assess what



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children know, what they understand and what they can do as well as take account of their interests. The adults then use this information to plan children's next steps in learning and monitor their progress.

Planning in the moment

We use the observation cycle on a moment by moment basis. Each week there are allocated 'focus children'. The focus children have more focus time from the adults for this week, but all the children are engaged along with these children and with adults and their friends. All are busy and learning all the time.

The learning journeys record the learning for each child and are a record of their play interests and learning experiences that have occurred during their focus week. The adults record what the children were engaged in (the play), what the adult's involvement was (the teaching) and what the outcome was (the learning). The adults then record any learning that has taken place and any next steps or follow up learning experiences or resources to introduce or continue for the next week.

Planning for Class & Group Learning

Some forward planning is compiled by staff based on the learning that has taken place previously and a loose 'theme' for the month, ensuring that learning is varied and a breadth and balance of learning is taking place. Where children have impacted on any resources or learning focus, these are recorded in our forward planning and evaluated the following week. We also have a long term planner, month by month, that maps planning for progression through areas such as following rules & routines, self help & independence skills and communication and social skills.

The group learning is recorded each week, recording the group interests, play experiences that have emerged, any visits or visitors that the class have been involved in and the development of that play and learning that has taken place. All learning is measured based on the Curricular Guidance for Preschool education (CCEA). Where appropriate and possible, photos are added to these journals of learning. At no point should recording or taking photos get in the way of the adults role with the children in their learning.

In addition, "Wow" moments are recorded for children as and when they occur and are added to their journals.

Many of these play experiences, learning and wow moments are shared with families as they occur during the feedback for the focus week, either verbally or through Seesaw.

With a system of 3-4 focus children each week, the learning environment and records that are kept on spontaneous planning sheets and learning journeys, it shows that the children are learning effectively all the time!!

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Child's full name

Short answer text

Who are the special people in your child's life at the minute? Include names of family and friends and tell us a little bit about who they are and why. Share any experiences your child has enjoyed. *

Long answer text

Are there any special occasions or events that have happened recently or are coming up? Any trips, holidays, family birthdays or days out? Anything that you think your child would like to share with us? *

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Long answer text

Share anything else that you think your child would like us to know- pets, favourite tv programmes, movies and characters etc *

Long answer text

Do you have any questions or concerns that you'd like to share? *

Long answer text

Example of parent home/school questionnaire sent via google form.

Staff ask parents to send photos via Seesaw or email.



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All learning in nursery education takes place through play.

Learning through play is one of the key principles of Early Years education, which is supported by a wealth of research. Play and playfulness are shared across all cultural groups, but with some variations according to the beliefs and customs that influence child-rearing practices. Family and adults working with children typically play with them and they devote a great deal of time to helping children to learn by teaching them:

- How to play, through structured games such as peek-a-boo, and open-ended activities such as sand and water play;
- How to pretend, by being imaginative, acting different roles and characters, using resources and objects to represent real life or the child's imagination
- how to be playful, by demonstrating playful ways of interacting with others through humour, jokes, riddles and rhymes, singing and chanting, clapping games, and using materials and resources in imaginative ways.

Play engages children's bodies, minds and emotions. In playing children can learn to interact with others and be part of a community, to experience and manage feelings, and to be in control and confident about themselves and their abilities.

Play can help children to develop these positive dispositions for learning:

- displaying interests and curiosity
- a willingness to explore, experiment and try things out
- to know how and where to seek help
- being creative and inventive – encountering problems and finding solutions
- being flexible – testing and refining solutions being engaged and involved – concentrating, sustaining interest, persevering with a task, even when it is challenging
- making choices and decisions
- making plans and knowing how to carry them out
- playing and working collaboratively with peers and adults
- managing self, managing others
- developing 'can-do' orientations to learning
- being resilient – finding alternative strategies if things don't always go as planned
- understanding the perspectives and emotions of other people
- taking measured risks and not being afraid to ask for help
- showing care and consideration for others and developing empathy

In addition to our records of learning, learning journals and group learning records, we follow our Progression in Learning Planner, continuous provision overviews (for resources) and Curricular Guidance for Preschool Education CCEA 2019