



EYFS Pedagogy - Jack's Preschool.

Here at Barwick and Stoford Primary school we are committed to engaging children in their learning right from the moment they step into Jack's Pre-School right through to when they leave Year 6. That engagement and commitment not only to their learning but to the school, underpins current and all future learning possibilities.

Within Jack's Preschool we are committed to providing an engaging environment that supports and encourages curiosity and exploration. The children are encouraged to ask questions, explore their learning environment and grow as thinkers and problem solvers.

As the children progress through KS1 their learning will take on a more structured approach, however, the curiosity and engagement continues. With allocated for child led learning as well as more structured adult input.

As such, we have implemented a curiosity and explorative pedagogy across all learning in KS1 and EYFS. This pedagogy allows children to be in control of their learning with structured adult questioning to ensure that learning outcomes are met. The children have areas of exploration and curiosity within their classrooms and are encouraged to question, think, problem solve and discover.

This approach for KS1 , runs alongside a broad and balanced curriculum, provided by Cornerstones. This curriculum is based in explorative working, questioning and extending experiences. This approach and the new curriculum work hand in hand to ensure every child reached their full potential and every child owns their own learning.

What is a curious and explorative curriculum?

The clue is in the name – to ignite a child's natural curiosity to explore the world around them.

Instead of directing children, and telling them what to do, curiosity and exploration is based on child-led learning. Therefore, children make their own choices, and figure things out for themselves which leads to enhanced confidence, critical thinking, and problem solving skills. The approach draws ideas from other philosophies of early education including **Reggio Emilia, Montessori, Pikler, and Steiner**. It aims to create children who are 'thinkers and doers' instead of passive learners who simply follow the direction of an adult.

By creating active learners, children are more engaged in their environment and have a lot more fun. They are in charge of their own development and choose activities which play to their own interests.

Curiosity and exploration is a modern pedagogical approach and is exercised by over 4000 educators working in over 20 countries.

What Does this approach look like?

A preschool room implementing curiosity and exploration will look very different from a traditional setting. In contrast to the bright colours and paintings you would usually see at a nursery, these rooms are decorated in neutral tones. This creates a peaceful, tranquil environment which does not distract away from a child's learning but instead places full focus on the various loose items which children can play with.

These resources are easily accessible in the classroom and are placed at eye-level. They are made from natural materials such as wood to encourage children to think of their own ideas when it comes to play time.

Instead of giving them a plastic toy with an obvious identity, and therefore hindering a child's imagination, these natural toys give children full freedom to make up their own games. They are challenged to use all of their senses to discover how something feels, sounds, and how they can interact with it.

Children are essentially going back to basics and using their imagination to work out what the item is. As they are doing so without guidance, this increases their confidence and encourages them to think independently.

They can also follow their own schematic learning styles as items can be stacked, lined up, counted, and combined which shows how play can be incorporated into learning.

In this setting, the child is in control of play, rather than an object limiting their play.

Less Technology

Instead of children spending so much time online engaging in digital activities, this approach takes them back to basics. It encourages children to spend more time outside of the classroom, exploring the rich outdoors and learning about nature.

This is important for their health and wellbeing and provides them with new opportunities which the nursery setting can't fulfil. Furthermore, by spending less time online, children can also interact more with each other and expand their social and communication skills.

When your child is watching an iPad or the TV they are not collaborating with their classmates. Being able to interact with other people will not only put them in good stead for further education but also later life.

The approach is also centred on empowering young children and replacing the gratification of stickers and rewards. It aims to stop putting so much pressure on young children and instead encourage them to learn in their own way.

In turn this leads to a lifelong love of learning as children have more control and independence.

Peaceful Environment

As we've discussed, overstimulation can have a negative impact on a child in terms of their concentration, mental health, and wellbeing. As teachers and parents, it's natural to assume that your child needs to be busy for their brain to stay active.

However, in nursery settings adopting curiosity and exploration, the walls are covered in neutral tones with soft furnishings to create an environment which is safe and calming.

These comfy spaces allow children to relax and feel comfortable throughout the day.

A big part of this ethos is making the nursery feel like home. It's about creating a place of safety and somewhere that children want to be. This safe space also helps with separation anxiety which is something a lot of young children experience when they first leave their primary caregiver.

By making the classroom feel familiar and homely, it will be less traumatic for the child when they have to leave their parents. In addition, when children feel relaxed they are more likely to engage in deep learning which allows them to reach their full potential.

Natural Resources

Using resources made from natural materials is good for both the child and the planet. Firstly in terms of sustainability as you're not using plastic toys. Instead you're using materials which are readily available from the environment.

Furthermore, these commercial toys are becoming more intelligent and are doing more thinking than our children. They flash, beep, make noises, and ultimately entertain children instead of educating them. This means our children are becoming passive learners rather than active learners as the thinking is already done for them.

Young infants need to grow and develop independently without relying on these digital devices to skip over important stages. For example, to aid physical development, the approach takes inspiration from Pikler. It believes in allowing children to unfold and move freely without the constraints of a baby bouncer.

This enables children to develop at their own pace instead of jumping over key developmental milestones which could be detrimental to their balance and coordination in later life.

More Respect

Another reason why curiosity and exploration uses loose toys is to encourage children to have more respect for different objects.

Think about a typical nursery environment and how many objects get flung through the air with little or no thought. When objects are plastic, children don't consider the consequences when they launch a plastic teapot or a plastic plate across the room!

However, by using natural materials, children learn to handle the items with care. They are also encouraged to manipulate larger items into different shapes to fine tune their motor skills. Furthermore, using authentic resources reduces the gender divide as children can play with objects without feeling restricted.

It opens up a whole world of possibilities for play instead of children subconsciously being influenced by their gender. For example, girls might feel like they should play with a doll whereas boys might feel as though they should play with cars. However, by using loose items which do not have a set identity, these preconceptions are removed.

This ensures **each child is treated equally** and is able to freely express their interests.

Outdoor Play

Curiosity and exploration helps children reconnect with the outdoors. Instead of viewing the classroom and the outdoors as two separate spaces, learning flows seamlessly between them.

Nature is also brought inside, whether this is using natural resources at the playdough or water station, or plants throughout the classroom setting. It's important for a child's mental health that they are exposed to natural surroundings. This creates a positive environment and also adds to the sense of peace and tranquility.

Curiosity approach settings inspire children to have a genuine love for the outdoors and to feel excited about discovering more. This pedagogy is centred on children having respect for the outside world and for those who share it.

This concept is also supported by using natural resources by using items which would otherwise have been discarded. There is no need to keep buying more plastic toys when there are endless opportunities to be had using existing materials.

In turn, this teaches children about the need to upcycle which is an important life lesson outside of an educational setting.

Imaginative Play

As children are using objects with no fixed identity, they have the freedom to use their creativity and engage in imaginative play.

They can choose what they want the object to do and what it means to them. This might differ from one child to the next, but the main thing is that children are having fun and making decisions for themselves. They are free to make up their own mind without being judged.

This reinforces their innate curiosity and gives children the confidence to develop their own theories of the world. By using their imagination, anything is possible, and their ideas are not restricted by an adult.

It is the responsibility of nursery practitioners to provide these opportunities and create an environment which brings happiness and soul back into the classroom. By doing so, it leads to the development of a child physically, spiritually, and mentally.

Why Is curiosity and exploration Important?

It's important we put the joy back into the classroom. This approach encourages both teachers and children to take a step back and simplify education.

This doesn't mean the approach is any less effective than other teaching methods, but rather that it goes back to basics. Instead of relying on technology it believes children should be free to explore their environment and think for themselves.

This is a hugely important life skill as the experiences children have in early years shape their perception of learning in the future. By exciting and engaging children in the learning process from an early stage, this increases their participation in future learning.

Curiosity is something in all of us – it just needs to be ignited. Curiosity is what sparks our thinking process and makes us ask those all important 'why' questions. Instead of just being passive and accepting of situations, curiosity encourages us to delve deeper.

As a result, it's crucial the nursery environment instils this desire from a young age.

What Is Curiosity and exploration and Why Is It Important?

Children need to be free to explore their environment and engage in activities that genuinely play to their interests.

During nursery, the classroom needs to serve this purpose and should let children be themselves rather than influencing what activities they should and shouldn't do.

Curiosity and exploration aims to give children back their freedom by igniting their natural curiosity and imagination. When adopting this teaching method, children are able to think for themselves, make their own choices, and direct their own learning.

Children's minds are curious and are open to absorbing new information. However, society is overloading them with information rather than letting them choose for themselves. Early child educators have a responsibility to support young children and give them the confidence to develop their own incredible theories about the world.

So, it's time to take a step back and put children in the driving seat. This enables them to develop independent thinking, stronger communication skills, and become lifelong learners.

As a result, this approach puts them in good stead for further development and gives them the skills they need in an ever-changing world.

Cornerstones Pedagogy

The Cornerstones approach to teaching and learning

The Cornerstones pedagogy is based on four distinct stages and built on a variety of different aspects of educational and cognitive research.

These stages are Engage, Develop, Innovate and Express, also known as the Four Cornerstones. These four distinct stages give clear direction for both teaching and learning. However, while the Four Cornerstones provide schools with a basis on which to deliver the curriculum, the beauty is that the finer details of content can be adapted to meet a school's context and any research they have undertaken.

Engage

Engage is a short stage in which children take part in a memorable experience to stimulate their curiosity, ask questions and make links to their prior learning. It provides an opportunity for cultural and real-world experiences and promotes discussion about the concepts introduced in each lesson or project. This stage also includes an introductory knowledge session where children are taught new knowledge or are asked to recall prior knowledge.

Develop

Develop is a longer stage of learning, where children delve more deeply into the knowledge and skills required to understand and build their conceptual understanding. Learning is well-sequenced and interconnected.

Innovate

The Innovate stage provides crucial opportunities for children to retrieve previous knowledge and skills in order to apply them in new contexts.

Express

Express gives children a structured opportunity to reflect on their learning, test their knowledge and celebrate their achievements.

Asking Questions

Asking the right questions is a vital part of the pedagogical process. Listed below are just some of the question types you may find in lesson and project plans as a result of the Cornerstones pedagogy.

EYFS projects

Cornerstones have carefully designed EYFS projects to help us to meet the requirements of the early years reforms, while still prioritising a play-based ethos and a broad and balanced provision across all seven areas of learning. The new projects for Nursery and Reception are all matched to the revised Early Learning Goals (ELGs) from 2023, and follow the Cornerstones pedagogy. This structure provides a tried and tested, consistent approach to learning, and is followed in all Cornerstones projects from Nursery to Year 6.

The projects allow practitioners to track children's progress towards the Early Learning Goals through Cornerstones unique skills and knowledge framework. The framework breaks children's learning into the small steps they need to progress through, so they are on track to attain the Early Learning Goals at the end of Reception. The framework also enables schools to track progression from Nursery to Year 6. We have included content from the Development Matters guidance for the ages 3-4 (identified as Nursery in their skills) and Reception.

The curriculum has been written with an intended progression sequence in mind to help children develop skills and knowledge over time. However, there is flexibility for you to respond to your children's needs and interests.

Every half term, there are two main and two mini projects to choose from. All learning is linked to the key skills and knowledge that children need to explore to build strong foundations for learning and prepare them for their next steps as they progress through school.

The main projects immerse children in a cross-curricular topic. Themes include Me and my Community, Once Upon a Time, Dangerous Dinosaurs and Ready, Steady Grow. These exciting projects teach children fundamental skills and knowledge that will support them to understand the world around them and become life long, curious learners.

The mini projects have a specific theme for children to explore linked to the seasons, weather and celebrations. Practitioners can choose the projects that best suit the interests of their children or run a two-year sequenced cycle with mixed aged classes.

Child-focused learning

There are lots of ideas for creating 'enabling environments' and 'planned, purposeful play' for all children in your setting. Every child is unique, so the projects give you the opportunity to adapt, simplify or extend activities to suit the needs of your children. A mixture of child-led and adult-directed activities ensure opportunities for effective learning through playing and exploring, creating, and thinking critically. The activities are flexible, and you can adapt the content using Maestro to suit your setting. We understand how busy life in nursery and reception is, so we've designed activities that can run alongside your other day to day routines.

Supporting provision

Each activity includes an enhanced continuous provision idea and gives examples of prompts and questions to support, challenge and extend children's thinking and learning. There are also extra enhanced provision ideas for all areas of the provision. Every project has a wide range of resources and a list of practical resources, carefully designed to support practitioners to bring the projects to life. Each project also comes with a fact sheet, vocabulary list, parent information, display banner, and a book list.