



## POLICY FOR UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD

This policy is a statement of the aims, principals and strategies for learning and teaching within the specific area of Understanding the World (UTW)

The policy was developed by the subject co-ordinator, in conjunction with the Head-teacher, staff-team and Governors, during the Summer Term 2018.

### What does "Understanding the World" mean in the Foundation Stage?

The EYFS 2012 states:

**"Children must be supported in developing the knowledge, skills and understanding that helps them to make sense of the world. Their learning must be supported through offering opportunities for them to use a range of tools safely; encounter people, plants and objects in their natural environments and in real-life situations; undertake practical "experiments" and work with a range of materials"**

In the Revised EYFS 2012 Understanding the World is identified as a "Specific Area" of learning, alongside Mathematics, Literacy and Expressive Arts and Design.

**"The specific areas include essential skills and knowledge. They grow out of the prime areas, and provide important contexts for learning". EYFS 2012**

This Specific Area of learning and development is broken down into 3 aspects:

#### **1. People and Communities**

As children learn about the world around them they find out about the past through talking to parents, grandparents and friends and they develop an interest in their own story as well as the stories in their family - this is the beginning of developing an understanding of the past and helps them to learn about how other people are different from them, yet share some of the same characteristics and ideas.

#### **2. The World**

Understanding of the world develops as children take notice of everything around them including places and all the things within them such as trees in the natural environment and

roads and traffic in the built environment. Finding out about places begins initially when a child learns about their own home and the things nearby, then later as children notice things on journeys to and from home - such as the sequence of the traffic lights or names on street signs. This awareness is extended by visiting places and finding out about different elements of environments in books, on TV and through using other technology. This aspect also focuses on learning about cause and effect and is developed through having conversations with adults and other children about the things they observe.

### **3. Technology**

Technology has become commonplace for many families and children often see and use it quite naturally when they activate a toy such as an ambulance or police car to make a siren sound. Recognising the role of technology at home or in the nursery is important because this helps children to identify the different types of technology and what they are useful for. (See Appendix 1)

The Revised EYFS states

**"Children are born ready, able and eager to learn. They actively reach out to interact with other people, and in the world around them. Development is not an automatic process, however. It depends on each unique child having opportunities to interact in positive relationships and enabling environments".**

To this end, At Hadfield Nursery School, we recognise;

#### **Each child is Unique**

**"Every child is a unique child who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured". EYFS 2012**

- We value each child as an individual, accepting their individual needs, interests, and rates of development
- We recognise each child as a competent learner
- We accept and recognise each child's ability, disability, gender, race, and cultural background, so enabling them to enjoy equality of opportunity and support to reach their full potential.
- We aim to support children in recognising that their views count and that their opinion is valued eg in following children's interests and ideas for topics.

#### **The Importance of Positive Relationships**

**"Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships." EYFS 2012**

- We aim to use parents and other carers knowledge and skills wherever possible (visits from parents who are paramedics, nurses, musicians etc) to extend the children's understanding and experiences of the world.
- We aim to help children to develop awareness, and to question differences in gender, ethnicity, language, religion, culture, additional needs and disability issues.

- We aim to support children to work together and begin to take account of ideas and preferences which differ from their own.
- We aim to support children with additional needs by providing supplementary experiences and information about the world around them in appropriate formats.

## The Provision of an Enabling Environment

**“Children learn and develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and carers.” EYFS 2012**

- We aim to provide challenging, flexible, motivating resources and opportunities which support and develop the skills, independence, creativity and imagination of each child.
- We aim to provide an environment where children can communicate their ideas and work collaboratively.
- We aim to provide a place where children are able to persevere, concentrate and pursue their own interests e.g. through Project Based Learning.
- We aim to create an environment where it is “safe” to make mistakes, to share thoughts and ideas and explore different options.
- We aim to provide resources which are accessible and organised in ways which encourage independence and responsibility (Continuous Provision/ Outdoor Classroom), and which challenge gender stereotypes. We aim to create a stimulating environment which offers a range of activities to develop interest and curiosity both indoors and outdoors.
- We aim to make effective use of our outdoor space and the local neighbourhood eg our Forest School group use an area of woodland which is part of the local park, groups of children visit local village shops, library and Railway station and larger (class-groups) have visited Manchester Airport.
- All staff aim to use the correct terminology and names to support development of the children's understanding and vocabulary eg satellite, fungi, meteorite etc.
- We aim to question children in a way which develops their thinking, extends their problem-solving opportunities and enhances their learning (see Appendix Questions to challenge Children to THINK and TALK about their own Learning Process).

## Learning and Teaching within Understanding The World

### Learning and Development

At Hadfield Nursery School we aim to give each child the opportunity to:

- **Explore and investigate** in order to gain first-hand experience.
- **Observe and manipulate** a wide variety of objects and materials
- **Test and question** through being involved in problem solving activities and thereby develop enquiring minds.
- **Design and build** simple projects and to make decisions about the materials and techniques used.
- **Develop ICT skills** and to identify the uses of ICT in everyday situations.
- **Communicate their findings** through language, paintings, 3D models, photos, digital video etc.

- **Develop a sense of time** in their own lives and in the lives of others.
- **Develop a sense of place** by exploring the natural and built environment around them. Develop their awareness of the local community and a sense of belonging to it through local walks and outings.

## Teaching

At Hadfield Nursery School Practitioners;

- Observe and listen to children to better understand their interests and provide opportunities/resources for child-led learning. They aim to maintain children's enthusiasm and confidence by responding to the children's interests and lines of enquiry as well as planning practical and appealing activities which are appropriate for the children's level of development, and which take account of different learning styles. We aim to support children who need practice in developing basic skills (e.g. some children in receipt of Pupil Premium) and to challenge more able children to use and apply their knowledge/skills.
- Support the development of positive attitudes in this area of learning by being knowledgeable, confident and enthusiastic, responding to the children's sense of awe and wonder in equal measure! Staff model research and enquiry skills and use correct language and terminology.
- Maintain the children's interest by planning practical, appealing activities appropriate to the level of development and understanding, and which also take account of preferred learning styles.
- Carefully plan activities (focused group-time activities) to include direct teaching of skills and knowledge when appropriate, but which also allow children the space and time to experience, experiment and revisit, leading to deeper learning and better understanding.
- Use open-ended questions, which will encourage children to speculate, hypothesise, question, test and interpret findings, and motivate them to talk about their thinking independently or as a group. (see Questions to challenge Children to THINK and TALK about their own Learning Process).
- Consider the equality of opportunity of the activities provided. All children, regardless of gender or ability, are encouraged to undertake investigations, design and build, use ICT etc. Children with additional needs are supported by the use of adapted equipment or resources where needed.
- Make effective use of the outdoor space and the local neighbourhood. Walks and outings in the local area and beyond are organised and well-supported by parents/carers. These enable the children to have first-hand experience of the natural and man-made environment.

- Consider the provision of stimulating and challenging resources which encourage children to investigate and make discoveries. They ensure that a variety of reference materials are available and model research skills so children begin to learn how to find information, e.g. using a search engine on the iPad to research Volcanoes or Hot-air Balloons.
- Recognise the diversity of experience, knowledge and skill which parents and other significant adults can provide, and take steps to involve them in enriching learning experiences for the children e.g. a Grandparent who is a retired CDT Teacher supporting wood-work projects.

## Learning

At explicitly UTW activities i.e. planned, "focused" activities that are organised and led by the adult

- Adults recognising and responding to children's interests and fascinations through "Responsive Planning". Staff make planned and casual observations of children and note any particular interests. Resources, space and time can then be offered to support these individual fascinations, thereby facilitating learning.
- Using all their senses as appropriate, reflecting on and sharing their discoveries with others, speculating on future findings, and by practicing using new vocabulary. Children are given the chance to revisit and consolidate learning through Continuous and Enhanced provision of resources e.g. "Bankswood Badgers" see Appendix 4
- Having access to a variety of tools, equipment and resources which they are shown how to use safely and appropriately.
- Interacting with a diverse range of multi-sensory, motivational resources which appeal to young children, takes account of those who for whom English is a second language or who may need to use alternative communication systems, and which promote independent learning, thereby enhancing their understanding, experience and enjoyment of finding out about the world they live in.
- Being given opportunities to satisfy their curiosity in ways which best suit them, eg by asking questions, having thinking time, looking at books, using computers, handling artefacts, making visits etc.

## Planning for Understanding the World

Planning for UTW at Hadfield Nursery School is devised in line with the EYFS Statutory Framework and Guidance ("Development Matters" 2012) and from observation and assessment of children's needs. It includes;

- The Nursery's 2-year rolling programme of 12 termly topics. Topics titled "Spring & Weather" and "Animal Babies" have an UTW emphasis.
- Medium Term Planning for UTW - linked to each term's topic to ensure coverage of steps toward Early Learning Goals (ELG's)
- Medium Term Planning for the Technology aspect of UTW to ensure that children develop skills and understanding which will enable them to interact with technology in everyday life (use of computers, digital cameras, video, programmable toys etc)
- Weekly Provision for Exploration and Investigation.
- Short-Term "Focussed" planning - weekly a "Target-List" for both general Understanding of the World and Technology skills in which children requiring challenge or support are clearly identified. Staff can easily differentiate the activity to offer challenge or smaller steps as necessary.
- Children also access specific/topic based UTW skills development as part of the 2-week rolling programme for a group-time UTW activity. Within this session Key-workers observe, target and support "target" children. See Weekly Planning.
- Families are invited to join staff and children in a bi-annual science themed Family Fun-day - "Let's Play Science".

Planning for UTW takes account of;

- Individual stages of development within development bands (EYFS 2012) with an understanding that children develop at different rates and in different ways.
- Observations made of the children.
- Individual Support Plans (I.S.P's) for children with additional needs.
- Preferred learning styles (Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic)
- Monitoring and Evaluation.

## Observation, Assessment, Monitoring and Record-Keeping

Children's skills and stages of development are observed and monitored by key-workers and the whole teaching team. Observations may be long or short and supported by evidence such as annotated photographs using "2 Build-a-Profile" software on school iPads, or pieces of work when possible. These observations may also include Levels of Well-being and Involvement (Laevers) Parents and Carers are encouraged to post their own observations of significant development or learning experiences to their child's Learning Journey.

Records of individual children's progress and achievement are kept electronically as part of each child's electronic profile. These observations and records inform planning, identify specific targets for each child, may identify a learning difficulty or talent, and provide the school with the means to monitor cohort progress and collect data on the effectiveness of the provision.

Data collected each half-term will identify children requiring additional support of challenging in the three strands of this specific area of learning.

Children's Progress in UTW is shared with parents/carers during the child's Curriculum Consultation at the mid-point of their time at Nursery. This enables two-way sharing of information and the planning of "next steps".

### Supporting All our Children's Needs

- Provision will be made to meet the individual requirements of children with any additional needs, to enable them to make progress in this area of learning and achieve their full potential, e.g. through specific targets as part of an Individual Support Plan.
- Staff will liaise and work closely with other professionals involved with the child and respond to the advice they offer.
- Where necessary, resources and equipment (e.g. a computer touch-screen) to support children with additional needs will be procured from other agencies.
- Data collected each half-term will identify children requiring additional support or challenging in each of the three strands of this specific area of learning.

### Equal Opportunities

At Hadfield Nursery School we aim to offer children and their families a safe environment, free from harassment and discrimination, in which children's contributions are valued and where racial and religious beliefs are respected.

We aim to challenge discrimination on the grounds of gender or disability.

All children will be treated as individuals and they will have full access to all elements of provision and opportunities in this area of learning, regardless of gender, ability/disability, race or cultural background.

### Health & Safety - Managing Risk

At Hadfield Nursery School we believe that well- managed risk-taking is part of exploring and investigating.

**"It is counter-productive to focus on keeping children away from every risk, however slight. We are likely to create a boring environment for them, without challenge or excitement. We also project an image of ourselves as people who block children's interests and curiosity"**

**"Too Safe for Their Own Good", Jennie Lindon, 2011**

- The Health and Safety of the children is paramount. Staff check resources and areas on a daily basis and remove or report anything which may present a danger or health-risk. Children are encouraged to consider their own and others safety both indoors and outdoors.
- Children are taught to use resources appropriately and safely. Where necessary, children are closely supervised by the adult leading the activity eg using an electric whisk or microwave, using spades and other gardening tools.
- Resources and equipment is maintained in line with DCC Health & Safety Guidelines (e.g. regular P.A.T testing of all electrical equipment).
- The Subject Co-ordinator has responsibility for checking, maintaining and ordering resources. They also complete Risk Assessments at the direction of the Head-Teacher.

### **The Role of the Subject- Co-ordinator**

The Subject Co-ordinator is responsible for

- the writing and reviewing of the Policy for Understanding the World
- the development and auditing of this area of learning
- ensuring that all children receive their entitlement to all the elements of this area of learning
- monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning in this area and the children's progress towards ELG's
- monitoring, maintaining and ordering resources
- supporting colleagues in their understanding and delivery of this area of learning
- identifying and attending relevant courses to promote continued professional development (CPD) and to feed-back to the Head-teacher and staff.
- ensure equality of opportunity and access to all aspects of this area of learning
- liaising with the Governor who has curriculum responsibility for Understanding the World, in order to support their monitoring role.

### **APPENDICES**

**Questions to challenge Children to THINK and TALK about their own Learning Process.**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Policy for Teaching & Learning
- Policy for SMSC (including Modern British Values)
- Policy for Equalities, Differences and Cohesion
- Policy for Health & Safety
- Policy for Assessment