

Intent: why do we teach what we teach?

At Holmer Academy we place great value on the development of children as individuals and providing them with the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to prepare them for the challenges in Key Stage One and beyond. Our aim in the EYFS is to build strong foundations rooted in academic success as well as moral and spiritual development, so that ultimately our pupils can be successful at university, go on to be active citizens of society and happy, curious life-long learners.

Our curriculum is therefore the cultural capital we know our pupils need so that they can gain the knowledge, skills and understanding they require for success. They can only do that if we embed the right habits for learning through the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning – Play and Exploration, Active Learning and Creative and Critical Thinking.

We have identified that Communication, Language and Literacy Skills are a key area that our children need more support in. We have to teach them how to listen, speak and meet the high expectations for behaviour by working together and being kind. As such, we prioritise personal, social and emotional development and communication and language in the curriculum. Our enabling environment and warm, skilful adult interactions support the children as they begin to link learning to their play and exploration. As the pupils come into Reception, we invest time and energy into helping pupils set and reflect on their own goals by aiming high and developing a love of reading, writing and number. This is delivered through a holistic curriculum which maximises opportunities for meaningful cross-curricular links and learning experiences as well as promoting the unique child by offering extended periods of play and sustained thinking following children's interests and ideas. We value imagination and creativity and seek to create a sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning through a vibrant continuous indoor and outdoor provision, alongside trips and visits.

Implementation: how do we teach what we teach?

Pupils learn through a balance of child-initiated and adult-directed activities. The timetable is carefully structured so that children have rigorous directed teaching in English, maths and phonics everyday with regular circle time sessions to focus on PSED. These sessions are followed by group work where children work with a member of staff to develop their individual skills. This focused group time means the teacher can systematically check for understanding, identify and respond to misconceptions quickly and provide real-time verbal feedback which results in a strong impact on the acquisition of new learning.

Children are provided with plenty of time to engage in 'exploration' throughout the variety of experiences carefully planned to engage and challenge them in the provision. The curriculum is planned for the inside and outside classrooms and equal importance is given to learning in both areas. The curriculum is planned in a cross-curricular way to enable all aspects of the children's development including understanding the world and expressive art and design as well as to promote sustained thinking and active learning. Intellectual preparation and co-planning is led by the phase leader every week.

Reading is at the heart of our curriculum. Children follow the rigorous and highly successful Read, Write Inc program faithfully so that they meet good outcomes for reading with almost all children passing the Year One phonics screening.

We follow the Maths Mastery approach in Reception with an emphasis on studying key skills of number, calculation and shape so that pupils develop deep understanding and the acquisition of mathematical language. Pupils learn through games and tasks using concrete manipulatives which are then rehearsed and applied to their own learning during exploration. These early

mathematical experiences are carefully designed to help pupils remember the content they have been taught and to support them with integrating their new knowledge across the breadth of their experiences and into larger concepts.

Our inclusive approach means that all children learn together but we have a range of additional intervention and support to enhance and scaffold children who may not be reaching their potential or moving on children who are doing very well. This includes, for example, NELI; our nurture group with some of our vulnerable children or additional ‘catch-up’ provision in Maths. Staff also use ‘pinny time’ which is a quick, on the spot intervention focused on sight words, blending and number retention with target individuals. The characteristics of effective learning are viewed as an integral part of all areas of learning and are reflected in our observations of children.

Our regular monitoring of teaching and learning includes coaching and feedback from the phase leader. We tailor our staff CPD to be early years specific and are focused on moderating outcomes across the year group so that every member of our team feels confident in making accurate judgements about where individual pupils are and their next steps for learning. This is alongside sessions with our Speech and Language specialist who helps to build subject knowledge of working with children who have communication and language difficulties.

Impact: how do we know what pupils have learnt and how well they have learnt it?

Our curriculum needs to meet the needs of our children, including our disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, so we spend time looking at and evaluating how children are learning. This is achieved through talking to children, looking at their work, observing their learning experiences and analysing data and progress by year group, class, groups and individuals. Every member of staff uses ongoing observational assessment to identify children’s starting points and plan experiences which ensure progress. This information is tracked on on track and not on track system in a progression note file. We use this information on a weekly basis to plan learning experiences and next steps so that knowledge and skills are built cumulatively. During each assessment window, three times a year, teachers update the progress children have made onto ON track and |Not on track form which allows us to assess the impact of teaching and evaluate whether it has been enough. Evidence of children’s learning including observations, work samples, photographs and contributions from parents are added and logged on Tapestry.

Our curriculum and its delivery ensure that children make good progress. Children in our early years, on average, arrive with much lower starting points than national. During their time in our EYFS, children make rapid progress so that we meet the national expectation for GLD at the end of the year. Pupils also make good progress toward their age-related expectations before transitioning into Year One. We believe our high standards are due to the enriched play-based exploration alongside the rigour of assessment and teaching the children have as they move through the early years – a rich diet of balanced learning experiences is undoubtedly the best way to develop happy, curious children.