

Learning and Development

Aston University Nursery & preschool aims to give all children the best possible start to their learning, development and education. We believe that during the early years children can be supported in gaining the fundamental skills needed for their future learning, as well as developing a love for learning.

“The earliest years in a child’s life are absolutely critical. There is overwhelming international evidence that foundations are laid in the first years of life which, if weak can have a permanent and detrimental impact on children’s longer term development. A child’s future choices, attainment, wellbeing, happiness and resilience are profoundly affected by the quality of guidance, love and care they receive during these first years.”

Dame Clare Tickell

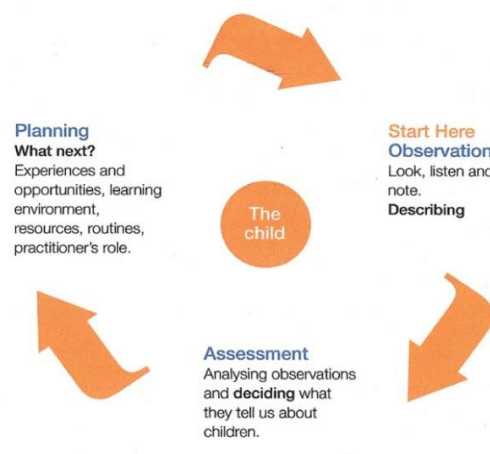
(The Early Years: Foundations for life health and learning. An Independent Report on the EYFS to Her Majesty’s Government)

Aston University Nursery & Preschool uses the EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage), Development Matters and Birth to Five Matters as a basis for monitoring, assessing and planning for children’s learning. It is also used to support us in forming an appropriate curriculum in which we identify what we believe is fundamental for children to learn and develop by the time that they reach school age. This curriculum follows the seven developmental areas set out in the EYFS Statutory Framework:

Prime Areas: Communication and language
 Physical
 Personal, social and emotional

Specific Areas: Literacy
 Mathematics
 Expressive arts and design
 Understanding the world

To support the children in each of these areas we follow a planning cycle



Observation

In order to accurately formulate assessments of children's development we continually observe their interactions with the environment, activities and resources, their peers and the adults around them. We make records of significant observations in the form of written notes, photographs and evidence of outcomes from activities, such as drawings, paintings, mark making and writing. We use these observations to identify what this signifies in a child's learning and development, what skill does it show that the child has mastered, what connections have they made or what new piece of information have they understood. Everything a child does and says tells us a little more about them, and so continually observing is a fundamental aspect of the planning cycle. Together, the observations create a picture of the child and their stages of development.

Observation is part of our daily routine. We are continually observing the children and Observations are added to our online recording system and linked to the appropriate areas of learning. This forms the Learning Journey and helps to build a picture of the children's stages of development. Observations can be recorded by any member of staff at any time, which ensures that children's achievements are not missed. We also gather information from parents that can be used as observations of children at home. This is vital as children are often very different at home from at nursery and are exposed to different learning and development opportunities.

Observations may take a range of forms. Spontaneous 'on the spot' observations are used where a practitioner observes a child do or say something for the first time or master a skill they have been practising. These may be recorded during child-initiated play or adult led activities, during both indoor and outdoor activities.

During adult led activities practitioners may choose to observe a particular aspect of a child's development. This may be to check to see whether they have secured this skill or knowledge, or to see what further support may help them gain it in the future. A child's key person may also carry out an longer observation for a variety of reasons, including to assess a range of developmental areas at the same time, to observe a child's characteristics of effective learning (how they learn best), to explore how the child moves throughout the environment, or their interactions with others. These types of observations often provide the key person with valuable information that they can use within their planning of activities and the environment to support the child further

Assessment

In order to accurately formulate assessments of children's development we use the observations that are made by staff and parents and that have been recorded on the online system. The key person will use this information to identify the progression between two dates, any areas where there are potential gaps in evidence, and the progress against the expected stages of development. This then supports the key person in being able to identify appropriate next steps for each individual child which can then be used to inform adult led activities. As well as observing children to identify their knowledge, understanding and skills, it is also used to identify their 'Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning' and in addition, their current interests. When using all three pieces of information the key person is able to plan an activity or opportunity that meets the child's developmental need, that will suit their learning style and that they will want to participate in. This in turn ensures that the child is more likely to develop the desired skill.

Our online system provides us with a range of tools to support us in assessing children's learning. This is used by key workers to plan for children's next steps, to identify any areas of strength or any areas which require additional support.

We also carry out baseline assessments when a child first starts the nursery and prior to them transitioning to the next room. These assessments capture a 'picture' of the child at that moment in time. They support us in ensuring that when a child first starts the nursery the key person has a good understanding of how best to plan for the child, and when a child moves to the next room it enables the new key person to gain a full understanding of the child's individual needs.

There may be occasions when assessments need to be made using different methods or for a different purpose. This may be as a result of potential concerns in particular areas and needing to gather more information. Such assessments can be used to explore situations in a little more detail, helping us to provide more intensive, direct support or in being able to identify whether external support from specialised professionals is required.

The EYFS Statutory Framework also requires us to carry out a progress Check at the age of 2yrs. Between the age of two and three years a child's key person will complete a short-written summary of development of the prime areas of learning. If appropriate the key person may also cover the specific areas of learning. This progress check must identify a child's strengths, and any areas where the child's progress is less than expected. If there are significant emerging concerns, or an identified special educational need or disability the key person will work with the setting SENCOs to develop a targeted plan to support the child's future learning and development, involving parents and carers and other professionals (please refer to SEND Policy).

The progress check must describe the activities and strategies we intend to adopt in order to address any areas of concern. The key person will discuss with parents/carers how this progress check can be used to support learning at home. We encourage parents/carers to

share information with other relevant professionals including their health visitor and staff at any other provision the child may attend or move to. Wherever possible the progress check and the health Child Programme health and development review carried out by health visitors at the age of 2yrs should inform one another to support integrated working.

Transition Reports

When the children are due to move to another provision, whether this be another nursery, or when they are starting school, it is essential that we provide the other provision with sufficient information that will enable them to support the child's needs fully. Wherever possible we aim to make contact with the other setting to support the child's transition and this is also supported a transition document. This provides a summary of assessment of the child's learning and development including next steps, at that moment in time and any support we may think is required to support the child with the transition.

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP)

Although not may children will attend our setting when they are of 'school age', for those children that do we will complete the EYFS profile at the end of their foundation stage. The EYFSP will provide parents, carers, practitioners and teachers with a well-rounded picture of the child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels, and their readiness for Year One. Assessments will be made against the EYFS Early Learning Goals.

Alongside any written assessments practitioners will be making continual visual assessments throughout a child's time at the nursery and will be adapting their practice or the environment accordingly.

Planning

In line with the EYFS Statutory Framework, at Aston University Nursery practitioners will consider the individual needs, interests and stage of development of each child and will use this information to plan challenging experiences for each child in all areas of development. We will focus on the 3 Prime areas for the youngest children ensuring that they develop the skills and capabilities specified in these areas, which are fundamental in securing the success in the 4 specific areas. Each area of learning and development will be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-led activity. Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. We will make ongoing judgements as to the appropriate balance between adult-led/guided and child-led activities and it is likely that the individual needs of children may mean this could be different for each child.

At Aston University Nursery, planning takes on a variety of forms. The main formal planning is carried out as Individual Planning. This is where every child's key person will use the observations and consequent assessments to devise an activity or opportunity that will

support the child in working towards at least one of their next steps and targets. Whilst working towards the next steps the type of activity planned for will take into account the child's learning style so that we give the child as much opportunity to gain the full benefit of the activity. It will also be based around the child's current interests. This means that not only will it be more likely to attract and motivate the child to participate in the activity, but it is also more likely to maintain the child's interest for longer. We also take account of the fact that some children learn or maintain their attention better in different environments or situations. We therefore ensure that whenever possible activities are carried out with this in mind. Activities will take place both indoors and outdoors, in a one-to-one situation, small groups or in larger groups. Every child will have at least one individually planned activity every week. Some children may benefit from more than one activity a week and some may benefit from this activity being repeated throughout the week. The key person will ensure that the learning aim is integrated throughout the daily routine and introduced into other aspects of the child's learning and play and therefore planning is shared and available to all practitioners working with the child. Practitioners will have the children's learning and development and next steps in mind when planning group play opportunities and when interacting with children and supporting child-led play.

In addition to individual planning, practitioners also plan for the group in the form of Room Planning. Room planning is carried out by the Room Leader with input and support from the other practitioners within the room. The room planning aims to provide opportunities and experiences for all children in development areas where common learning and development gaps or next steps have been identified. The Room Leader will liaise with all members of the team to discuss common themes in learning and development, interests and learning styles to plan ongoing activities and opportunities for all children. Where needed activities will be differentiated to meet the needs of individual. If identified in advance of the room planning being completed, this will be documented on the plan itself, however staff will be prepared to make 'on the spot' changes to activities if required.

Following on from any type of planned activity practitioners will review the success of the activity in terms of whether it attracted and maintained the child's interest and attention, whether the child was able to suitably engage with the activity/opportunity and how effective it was in supporting the child in working towards the learning and development aims. This will support practitioners in adapting future activities to become more effective. This form of reflection supports the continual reviews and assessments staff make throughout the day, adapting their practice as and when required to meet the ever-changing needs of the children.

Monitoring

The Room Leader for each room oversees the observations, assessments and planning for each practitioner within their team. They ensure that there is a consistent high standard throughout, and as guide and support practitioners accordingly. The Room Leader will use the online recording system Family, to gain an overview of each child's stage of development, as well as an overview of the children as a whole group. They will look at the progress individual children are making as well as assessing the overall group progress. This will enable them to identify any learning and development areas that are consistently progressing well and those that may need to be prioritised as the progress is not as expected. The Room

Leader will support practitioners in identifying reasons for children not progressing as expected, and along with the setting SENCO's (if required) will provide additional advice and guidance to address the situation.

Parents

Wherever possible we aim to involve parents in their child's learning and development. We encourage parents to share their observations from home with their child's key person and to keep us up to date with things their child enjoys doing at home. Family also has a facility for parents to record an observation for the key person to review.

When we record observations using our online system, they instantly appear on the Family App for parents to view. Upon request we can email parents a copy of their child's learning journey, also breaking this down by date so that regular updates can be sent. A copy of the learning journey is also forwarded to parents ahead of our bi-annual parents evening. This accompanies a summary report which is written by the key person documenting the child's recent achievements and progress. Parents are invited to attend the parents evening for a chance to discuss their child's learning and development with the key person. This time is also used to discuss any concerns or worries the parent may have and also to plan for any forthcoming transitions.

Internal use only

This policy was adopted on	June 22
Signed on behalf of the nursery	
Date disseminated to staff	
Date for review	June 23