

York Road Nursery School, Pre-School & Yorkies Daycare 2019-2020

Influences and Principles

Mission Statement: 'Holding Hands, Nurturing Minds'

Our belief is that all what we do is carried out with kindness and gratitude. In our provisions, we do this through the following key practices, along side implementing the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Mindfulness

In 2018-2019, many of the staff took part in a Mindfulness training experience. This took place over 6 months and trained the staff how to use Mindfulness techniques on themselves. The training then focussed on how to implement this with children. The impact was recognised; the changes in staff well-being were significant and this energised them for teaching and learning. New staff are trained as part of their induction so that the ethos can continue even if there are staff changes and annual parent workshops are offered so parents and carers can benefit from the experience.

How this is implemented with the children: Yoga, Pilates, Emotion Dolls, Worry Monsters, Mindful Walking, Forest School experiences, using the Sensory Room, Mindful breathing, Mindful 'Body Scan', to name but a few!

Our Mindfulness philosophies:

- Non-judgmental attitude
Making value judgments is part of being human. We rate our experiences and behaviour as "good " or "bad" and strive to maximise the good and minimise the bad. We move from the joy and optimism created by good experiences to the disappointment created by bad experiences. Mindfulness teaches us not to judge experiences, but to observe them with a detached attitude.
- Beginner's mind
This refers to having a state of openness to different ways of looking at our experiences. Many of us have a fairly rigid view of our world: we often filter our experiences to reinforce this view, rather than seeing things as they really are. Mindfulness encourages the practitioner to experience every experience without any preconceptions, as if for the first time. In doing so, the practitioner becomes more open to new experiences and new perspectives.

- Letting go
We have a tendency to attach emotional significance to certain places, people, thoughts and behaviours. A memory of a night out with a loved one becomes so precious, so pleasurable, that it is replayed again and again in our heads, allowing us to relive the pleasure we felt at the time. In the same way, an unpleasant experience can haunt us for many years, interrupting our daily lives and reminding us of the anxiety we experienced.
Mindfulness teaches a greater awareness of the experiences, thoughts and behaviour that we have become attached to, and allows us to let go of these experiences and the emotions attached to them.
- Compassion: Mindfulness: one of the foundation attributes and attitudes we bring in mindfulness practice is compassion. We cultivate compassion towards ourselves and others. In all our experiences, be they pleasant or unpleasant, in the present moment.
- Resilience: There is clinical evidence that the practice of mindful enhances resilience.
- Learning about our amazing brain; amygdala, hippocampus, prefrontal cortex and insula. It is the hippocampus & insula neurons that strengthen and are implicated in increasing compassion and resilience.

Forest School

In 2017, York Road introduced 'Woodland Wednesdays' to the children. This was originally put in place to develop the children's resilience to outdoor learning and to learn how to problem solve through experiences such as den building, mark making using natural materials, weaving, creating art with natural resources and learning how to work together. York Road then paid for sessions from a trained Forest School Leader to run some of the sessions and the staff were impressed how much 'deeper' the knowledge of forest school principles allowed the experiences to become. A new member of the team joined with a Level 3 Certificate in Forest School Programme Leadership completed in 2018 who now runs each session and we are now able to call all our weekly experiences 'Forest School' and really embed this as part of our whole school ethos. The impact has been significant; staff have more energy when they are teaching in the outdoors. The children learn new skills and learn how to take risks safely, they participate in mindful walking. For many children with Autism, Forest School gives them the break from sensory overloads at school such as artificial lighting and noise. For all children, they feel liberated and close to nature.

Principles of Forest School:

Principle 1: Forest School is a long-term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.

Principle 2: Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.

Principle 3: Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.

Principle 4: Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

5. Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

6. Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning.

Resilience Reaps Rewards

In 2019, the Headteacher was introduced to Urban Strides, a British Dance Company that had begun to use some of their principles in schools to enable children to have more energy and focus through music and movement. The teaching staff took part in a whole day training session in September 2019 and the results were powerful. Staff have learned a wide range of strategies to support them in their daily teaching and learning. This includes, energising through music and movement, developing skills to become more resilient, problem solving, team games, learning 'gratitudes', among many more. The support staff and Yorkies Daycare team will receive training during 2020 so that all the staff become embedded in this culture that creates fun, focussed learning, energy, a wholly positive attitude and good mental health and well-being.

Urban Strides/RRR Principles:

- 1. Peak States for Learning: Using music, movement, mind, body and soul to get staff and students into a peak state for learning and make every class two and a half times more effective.**
- 2. Narratives: Telling ourselves new, positively framed stories to overcome challenge.**
- 3. When Failure Hits: When things hit rock bottom, how to build yourself back up.**
- 4. Rituals Create Results: Putting techniques into daily practice to embed and ensure longevity**