

# Literacy at York Road Nursery School

**Intension:** Reading and writing are not only essential skills, but enrich all our lives so much. At York Road Nursery School we ensure that every child is given experiences to form excellent foundations in literacy.

## **Implementation:**

### **First Steps**

There are so many skills a child needs to learn before they read and write. Before they can read, they need to be able to use language effectively, understand how to communicate their needs, wants and feelings to adults and their peers. This builds to using language in imaginative play, story telling at the earliest level. They need to be able to spot symbols, signs and words in their environment and realise what they mean. They have to know what a book is, how to hold it, turn the pages and follow a story sequence in pictures. Before a child can write, they need to have the muscle strength and control to hold a writing tool and use it effectively. They need to climb, swing and stretch their arms, then build up finger muscles with fine motor experiences such as playing with dough, threading or stirring mud. Then they need to see the point of writing, see how adults do it and why they do it – not straightforward in an age of texting and computers. Staff model writing whenever possible.

### **Inclusion and the Unique Child:**

Every child is unique, with their own set of interests and needs. We work to find the very best way to help each child access learning, starting from where they are when they join us. Careful assessment and knowledge of our children is key. All members of staff are highly trained to enable children with Special Educational Needs to succeed and progress. We are always finding ways to capture children's curiosity for learning by involving their fascinations, whether it's dinosaurs, princesses, cars, puppies or wiggly worms.

When all that is in place for our small learners, then we can begin to teach the mechanics of reading and writing.

### **Reading (pre-reading):**

It all starts with a love of books. Every staff member has their favourite books, a passion for reading and a great interest in books for young people. Key teachers and support staff pass on their love of reading to our children – talking about books, sharing stories, using the language of books, enriching play when ever the opportunity arises. Story and

information books are part of our daily routine, from sharing books in a cozy book corner, to sitting with a big book for group sessions. Staff make York Road a stimulating and rich environment for reading. Books and texts are in every area for the children to access. Children learn how to handle books, respect them and understand how they work. We talk about authors and illustrators, words and details in pictures, the structure of stories, beginnings, endings and towards the end of the year, draw attention to elements like simple punctuation. The language of story is important, the children quickly learn to join in with “Once upon a time”, “And they all lived happily ever after!”, repeated phrases and the rhythm of text. We add actions and act out stories at every opportunity for active learning.

### **Phonics:**

At York Road we use a Government phonics programme called ‘Letters and Sounds’, combined with fun ideas gleaned from training or reading that we find through experience to be effective. Early work with phonics focuses on enabling children to differentiate between sounds in the environment – if they can do this they can understand the subtle difference between, for example, a ‘b’ and a ‘p’ phonetic sound. We play games to group words with the same sound (rhyming) or initial letter (alliteration), teach nursery rhymes and songs. We provide activities to hone children’s skills of observation, so that they will begin to see the different shapes of letters. We begin to help the children recognise letters and learn the sounds they make, starting with their the letters in their names. Daily phonics sessions are differentiated to children’s needs as the year progresses.

### **Core Books:**

We have introduced ‘Core Books’ in Nursery and Preschool. These are quality texts that key teacher know well. They link with the Characteristics of Effective Learning – eg; resilience, team work, critical thinking. Two books each half term add to the children’s reading rich experience.

All this paves the way for reading formally in school.

### **Writing (mark making):**

At York Road, we give the children lots of opportunities to practice the beginnings of writing, making marks. We work from big movements, to further build up muscles to write and refining the children’s activities towards the fine motor skills needed to control a pencil. They make marks using a vast variety of media, circles in sand, lines in paint, letters in play dough, finger prints in the mud. We give them reasons to write: their names when they are ‘the Helper’, marks on chalk boards, letters

to their family, cards for special occasions, notes in 'the office' role play area and home corner, tick lists on clip board outside.

When they are ready, we ask the children to look carefully at letters and try to form them more accurately, holding their pencil correctly and starting on the left working right. With all their listening and fine motor skills in place, we begin to link letters to the sounds in a word. Some children leave us writing words and short phrases, others are more than ready for the next stage of their literacy adventures in reception class.

### **The Whole Family:**

To support Literacy in our nursery sessions, we have a library for our families' use. Over the past year all staff have become familiar with using remote learning on Tapestry and zoom to keep children learning in their homes. Part of our work has been to work with parents and carers, helping to explain the steps in Early Years reading and writing education and to do what ever we can to support children's progress at home. We hold events such as World book day with children dressing as book characters and sharing favourite books. The children also receive free books, vouchers and information for parents on sharing stories and information books with their children.

### **Impact:**

By the time children leave York Road Nursery School, they have a solid foundation in literacy skills, they are confident budding mark makers and have a love of books, rhymes and stories. They are keen to listen and recognise sounds and talk about all aspects of the Literacy Early Years curriculum. They are becoming life-long literacy learners!

Ruth Cotterill, Literacy Lead  
Part of the York Road Team.