

The importance of early childhood education cannot be overstated.

A child's early years are the foundation for their future development, providing a strong base for lifelong learning, including cognitive and social development. Well-established research continues to emphasise the importance of early childhood education as an essential building block of a child's future success, with 90% of a child's brain being developed by the age of 5.

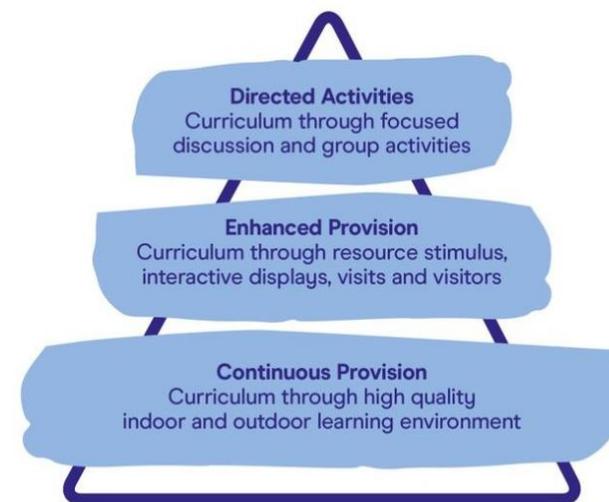
Our job as practitioners has never been more important as we prepare children for a future in an ever evolving and progressive world, for jobs and careers that to this day do not yet exist. It is therefore fundamental that we offer our learners the best start to their education, and lives, as possible.

We have designed a curriculum with our children at the heart, with their experiences, their interests, and their needs at the root of every decision we make.

### Learning Through Play

At Springdale First School, we recognise that young children learn best when they are active. Therefore, we believe that Early Years education should be as practical as possible, and so our Foundation Stage has an ethos of learning through play. It is an essential and rich part of their learning process, supporting them in all areas of development. Play is a powerful motivator, encouraging children to be creative and to develop their ideas, understanding and language. Play is also flexible and able to suit the preferred learning style of the child. It can provide multiple ways for children to learn a variety of different skills and concepts. Play opportunities are also set up to provide children with opportunities to apply newly acquired knowledge, demonstrating their skills and level of understanding. Play helps our learners to make sense of the world around them as they begin to understand specific concepts.

We provide both structured and unstructured play opportunities inside and outside. We value a play-based approach but know that our children need elements of more formalised teaching to ensure they have a broad and progressive curriculum, which prepares them for their later school journey. Over the year, we introduce more directed activities to help support our learners through their transition to year 1. The directed activities are designed to engage children in practical,





first-hand experiences. They encourage them to discover, explore, investigate and to develop their personal interests and areas of curiosity.

We provide stimulating and safe learning environments both indoors and outdoors. Children are encouraged to actively explore the world around them, developing their creativity, independence, thinking skills and ability to solve problems across the curriculum. There is free-flow between the indoor and outdoor areas during child-initiated activities. Both areas are also used for adult directed and adult initiated teaching. Resources used aim to stimulate, challenge and inspire children to engage in learning and provide for both the planned and unplanned curriculum.

In Reception, we empower the children to become independent learners and plan opportunities to allow the children to exercise this independence through their Let's Explore time – child-initiated learning. Every day we plan a whole year group session of Let's Explore. During this time, all adults are free to facilitate the children's learning as they are not assigned to a directed task. We plan this for the morning session as this is when the children have demonstrated their highest level of engagement and involvement. Children are highly motivated during these sessions and learning is purposeful. Assessment notes in learning journals reflect this.

A key part of learning in Reception is creating opportunities for pupils to reflect on the progress they have made and enable them to set individual targets to significantly develop their performance. During Let's Explore sessions, adults provide running commentaries as they work alongside learners and think aloud to what the child is doing, they ask questions and wonder about alternative routes they could take. We also plan for a more formalised review session – 'Feedback and Chat', where the children can reflect on the learning that they, and others, have been doing. We provide opportunities for them to share their outcomes and discuss the process they went through in order to create their final product. Self-reflection and evaluation are key components of these discussions, with the children coming up with how they can improve their learning further.

Through these review times, children verbalise the characteristics of learning that they have demonstrated eg. perseverance, independence, resilience. Adults and children use the class iPad to take images of their learning and cast these onto the promethean board as a stimulus for the learners to reflect on what they were doing and the learning processes that took place.

To ensure that our provision is purposeful, we audit our environment and reflect more critically on what the children are choosing to engage with, what interests are emerging from them and how can we move that learning on. This has led to a more fluid approach to planning, with some activities and resources rolling on from week to week depending on the level of engagement from the children. Our planning document follows a 'what and why' approach. 'What' area of development are we enhancing and 'why' have we chosen that as a focus, eg. in response to data, following on from a child's interest, to embed a concept etc.



### Building Cultural Capital through Provision

#### **Cooking**

Life is busy for our families and the pressures of work and childcare logistics has meant that time spent for traditional experiences like cooking are limited. We feel passionately that cooking is not only a great life skill for the children to acquire but it also an incredible tool for developing a wide range of skills. The benefits of learning to cook and prepare food alongside an adult are significant;

**Health** - When children are involved in preparing food, they are more likely to try out new tastes and flavours. Children can become carrot converts or falafel fans, and so improve their chances of eating a more varied diet.

**Language development** - Through cooking, children can learn new vocabulary spontaneously as they will often want to talk about what they are seeing and doing.

**Physical skills** - Cooking helps children to practise a range of physical skills, particularly their hand-eye co-ordination. Movements such as peeling and grating also strengthen the hands.

**Emotional development** - Children can develop a sense of pride and also feelings of competence when they cook. Time spent with the adult can also help to develop relationships.

**Mathematics** - Cooking provides genuine opportunities for children to count, measure and calculate.

**Early science** - Cooking is rooted in science. Children can observe how different ingredients mix together, and also the effect of heat, including freezing on mixtures.

**Understanding the world** - Cooking provides opportunities to talk about food production – for example, how fruit and vegetables are grown and where spices come from.

**Independence** – Children can make decisions for themselves and thrive on the sense of autonomy at being involved in a typically ‘adult’ activity.

**Risk Taking** – Children are trained and trusted to use tools that involve sharp blades. They are encouraged to assess risk and make decisions to keep themselves and others safe.



Whilst we plan time for cooking as an enhancement to our curriculum, we also offer rolling snack across the morning as part of our continuous provision. We understand that children need their physiological needs (Maslow, 1954) to be met in order to be motivated and successful. Children's hunger is not linear and does not always fall into the designated snack times of the day. We therefore have access to fruit snack throughout the morning. Children are trained to recognise when they are hungry and to be independent in managing preparing fruit safely and tidying up after themselves. This is another opportunity which develops our children's physical development and communication and language skills, as they will openly engage in discourse with their peers as they share a snack.

### Story Scribing

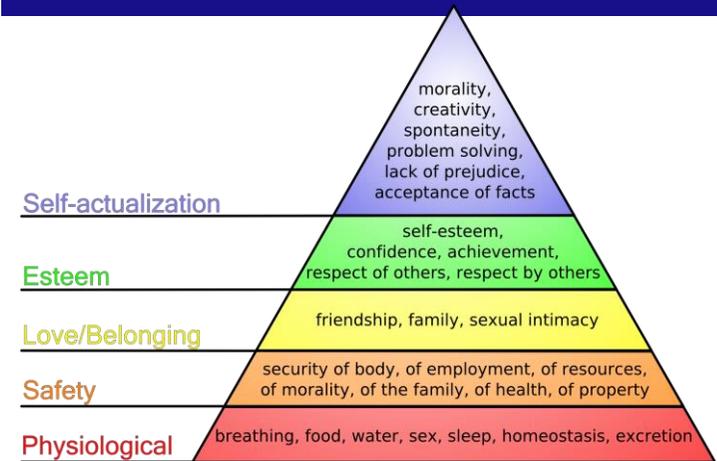
Story Scribing is in theory a simple approach. An adult will sit with a child, listen to their story, and write it down word for word. Once all the stories have been scribed, the class gather around a stage, ready to act them out. Story Scribing values children's creativity and imaginative play, whilst supporting language development, storytelling, and emergent literacy.

We believe that if children grow up in a language rich environment and regularly engage in conversations that are meaningful to them, then their language will grow. For those children who have not been immersed in language since an early age, Story Scribing offers endless opportunities to hear and engage in speaking as they listen and act in each other's stories. In this way they share their experiences, their cultural references, and the vividness of their imagination with their peers. Over time, children create their own language rich environment. They share each other's experiences, their ways of acting out different characters, and their philosophies on how they see the world, and they do this in an almost effortless way. Over the year, there is a significant shift in the amount the adult is scribing and the amount the children are. The children are initially encouraged to help write known graphemes and tricky words and then move on to writing their own sentences and eventually their own stories.

### Woodwork Area

*"It is more important than ever that our new generation are able to think creatively and develop problem-solving skills." Pete Moorhouse*

In a world where we are constantly being reminded of the dangers around us and the need to stay safe, it is easy to see why children are becoming more risk averse. Children aren't born afraid; they develop aversions through adult response. We want to encourage our learners to make measured risks in a safe and controlled environment, so they can see the benefit of working outside their comfort zone and challenging themselves beyond their initial limits. Risk is a part of life, and it's our responsibility to support risk-taking in a measured way.



We feel the benefits of woodwork are core to early development, as it:

- \*Encourages children to make informed choices
- \*Supports learning through trial and error
- \*Allows children to assess risk in a purposeful and authentic way
- \*Develops independence
- \*Increases pride in their accomplishments
- \*Makes links across all areas of their learning from language development to developing mathematical awareness



### Deconstructed Role Play

Traditional role play is very adult directed and over-themed. We might set up a cafe, Goldilock's house or the vet in our role play area. When there is an adult leading the play, using the language, acting out scenarios then the children can easily access the experience – the adult facilitates their play. But when there is no adult, the children have to rely on their own life experience to provide them with the tools that they need to be able to play in that particular environment. We know that as adults we have a lot of experience and knowledge to draw on when it comes to using our imagination, whereas younger children have not acquired this yet.

Deconstructed role play is based around a space, that changes and evolves with the children. Open ended resources are provided eg. fabrics, bungee ropes, blankets, boxes, tubes, crates etc. which the children can manipulate and develop in accordance with their interests. Enhancements are added in response to the children's interests eg. costumes, hairdresser's resources, vets etc. Home corner role play resources are also continually available as this is a consistent source of familiarity and comfort for the children in their role play scenarios.

Deconstructed role play is a brilliant tool in developing children's confidence, language, social skills, creativity and so much more.



### Phonics

At Springdale First School, we value reading as a key life skill, and are dedicated to enabling our pupils to become lifelong readers. To best prepare them for their reading journeys we give a high priority to the teaching of phonics. In Reception and Year 1 we deliver daily, discrete sessions and ensure our learners understand why it is important to learn their letters and sounds. Reading is the key to our young learner's future and so we are relentless in ensuring they receive high quality phonics teaching.

We advocate phonics as the most important part of our learning day and so prioritise this by making it the first thing we do. We start each session by discussing the importance of phonics and how it supports us to read and write. The children can then verbalise that with these powerful skills they can do any future job they want. Reading and writing are the key to their future success.

We follow the progression of sounds outlined in 'Springdale Phonics' and have mapped out how long we will spend teaching each phase. We continually reflect on our phonics practice and are always looking for ways to improve. Over the years, we have seen children continually battling with their ability to blend. As a result, when the children have been exposed to all their phase 2 and 3 graphemes, we slow the pace to allow for a day on teaching blending and a day on teaching segmenting. To ensure all the children are exposed to the new phoneme, we teach whole class phonics instead of streaming based on attainment. We **revisit** the learning we want to bring to the forefront of the children's memory, **teach** the new phoneme, **practise** blending/segmenting the phoneme in words/sentences and then independently **apply** the phoneme.

Throughout the session, adults make use of their formative assessments to check for those who are not secure in the new learning. These children are then selected to work with an adult during the application part of the lesson, to give them a further opportunity to practise the new phoneme in a scaffolded way. Children are not grouped during phonics, as we feel this can cap their opportunities to access learning tasks and ultimately prevent them from achieving their potential. To ensure we still plan for support and challenge, a tiered progression of tasks are available through our 'Chilli Challenges'. The initial task (Red Pepper Challenge) focuses on the recognition of the new GPC, to encourage children to see it in isolation amongst other previously taught graphemes. The next challenge (Boiling Hot Challenge) develops fluency and looks at applying the GPC (grapheme phoneme correspondence) within a phase appropriate word, focusing on developing the skill of blending or segmenting. The final challenge (On Fire Challenge) looks at deepening the children's phonics' knowledge by incorporating the use of all their reading skills, by applying the new GPC within a phase appropriate sentence. Children need to apply all their GPC and tricky word knowledge to decode this sentence.

From our summative assessments, we identify areas of improvement for our individual learners. To best meet their emerging needs, we offer additional phonics sessions based on their attainment. As all children learn the new sounds within the phonics lesson, there is less opportunity to revisit and practise the previous phase phonemes. The children identified as having significant gaps from previous phases work in daily targeted groups during our Writer's Workshop.

We teach our tricky words on a Monday. We then consolidate the new learning by practising reading the word during our blending sessions across the week. This gives our children the opportunity to apply the new tricky words at sentence level.

### **VIPERS**

VIPERS is our whole school approach to teaching comprehension skills in reading. Whilst it is important that children develop the mechanics for reading through their acquisition of phonics, it is also crucial that they have good understanding of what they are reading.

We plan our reading comprehension questions for guided groups and shared reading using VIPERS. Each letter stands for an area of focus which directly links to the National Curriculum.

**V** – Vocabulary

**I** – Infer

**P** – Predict

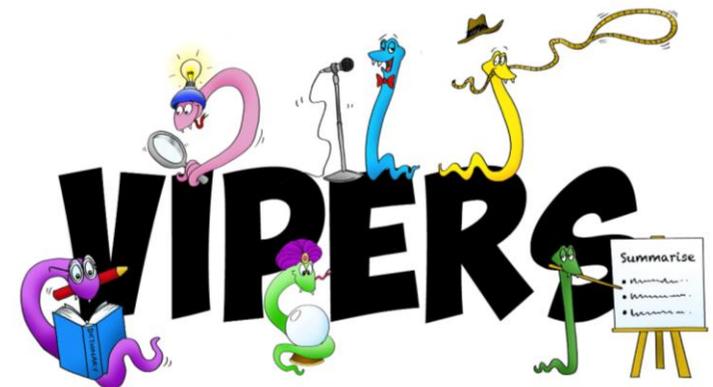
**E** – Explain

**R** – Retrieve

**S** – Sequence (KS1) Summarise (KS2)

VIPERS looks different across the school and is not restricted to reading sessions. VIPERS skills are applicable to all areas of the curriculum and we are quick to make explicit links to them, where appropriate.

In Reception, VIPERS is a daily whole class read. A high-quality text is chosen to link in with the current knowledge being taught and is then read in instalments across the week. We focus primarily on one VIPERS skill for the week and plan questions and discussion points around this. The sessions consist of rich discussion and plenty of speaking and listening opportunities. Support staff make assessment notes throughout, which capture the children's understanding of the text and in many cases, the world. The sessions allow all learners to develop their comprehensions skills without being inhibited by their decoding skills.





### Learn to Read, Love to Read

To support our children in developing the skills to read whilst promoting a love of literature we advocate our 'Learn to Read, Love to Read' scheme. Our "Learn to Read" books match our children's phonic attainment and our "Love to Read" books foster a love of reading.

**Learn to Read** - Our 'Learn to Read' books are a collection of fiction and non-fiction books that closely match the phonic attainment of our learners. They are sorted into coloured bands which follow the phonic phases outlined in Springdale Phonics. Staff choose a book for individual learners based on their phonic attainment. The book is then read in school with an adult and then taken home to be read again for consolidation and to develop fluency. Learners are therefore only taking home books that they are confident reading. In Reception and KS1, these books are largely made up of 'Big Cat Phonics' books.

**Love to Read** – Our 'Love to Read' books are stored in our book corners and are freely accessible to all children throughout the day. They are sorted into categories chosen by the class eg. fiction, non-fiction, magazines, traditional tales, poems etc. The learners access the books like a library system and can change them as frequently as they wish. They choose ones that appeal to them and take them home to either share with their family or read independently, depending on the age and stage of the child.



### 1:1/Small Group Reads

As children begin their reading journey, we aim to listen to them read individually or in very small groups. This gives them an adult's undivided attention and helps build their confidence, encouraging them to discuss the book. Reading 1:1 is beneficial for all children, but particularly for our less confident children who can find group reading a daunting task.

During these sessions, adults focus on developing the children's fluency and confidence. They model reading extracts from the text, so children have an example of what fluent reading sounds like. Together, the child and adult look to build fluency by initially spotting tricky words within a sentence, looking for any known digraphs/trigraphs hiding within words and finally piecing it altogether to read uninterrupted. Adults encourage children to identify any repeated words and make a point of not needing to sound these out. Constant praise is given, specifically focusing on the fluency in which the children are reading.

When children start applying their phonic knowledge to blend short words, they are encouraged to sound out each phoneme aloud to ensure they are being accurate in their decoding. As the children move through their phonics journey, they are encouraged to recognise words that reappear within a text and to move to sounding out in their heads. This supports the children to develop their fluency, leading to better comprehension of what has been read.



### **Writer's Workshop**

Whilst phonics teaches children the knowledge they need to be readers and writers, Writer's Workshop offers children an opportunity to apply their phonic knowledge in a more guided and scaffolded way. During these sessions, children work in small groups with an adult. The focus is on segmenting and learning to write. We feel these skills need further undivided teaching time with an adult which whole class phonics teaching cannot accommodate.

During these short sessions a different group of children will work with the teacher each day, by the end of the week every child will have worked in a focus group with the teacher. A second group of children will work on more targeted phonic work, using the Springdale Phonics summative assessments to plan phonic catch-up sessions for those who are not keeping up. Support staff work with the bottom 20% each day, the focus for the sessions is determined by the children's phonic assessments. In the Autumn term the focus is on getting the children ready to write and therefore there is a strong emphasis on developing language and gross and fine motor skills.

Teaching focuses on developing fluency and accuracy in writing. Children start the year working on hearing phonemes in words and writing initial sounds. They then progress to writing CVC words and eventually move on to captions and sentences. The children are taught the importance of good writing posture and pencil grip.

Explicit modelling from the teacher is instrumental in the teaching of early writing. The children need to see adults writing to embed the processes that will support them in becoming writers. The 'I do, we do, you do' approach is adopted within the group sessions, whereby the adult models writing the required objective, the adult and the children rehearse together and then the children are ready to attempt the task independently.

### **Love To Write**

Whilst our Writer's Workshop sessions focus on developing the children's writing skills, we also want to develop the children's passion for writing. Our Love to Write session is a time where the whole class comes together to create a narrative in an inclusive and engaging way. Everybody's ideas are shared, valued and developed to collaboratively write a class text. The sessions begin by revealing the contents of our mystery writer's chest. Inside are 3 curious objects that inspire our setting, our characters, and our problem! Together, the children generate ideas and dictate them to the teacher who models writing in sentences using taught story telling language and actions (inspired by Pie Corbett.) Adults model using taught strategies to write unfamiliar words, using their phonic knowledge and phoneme fingers and applying their spelling knowledge of tricky words. When the narrative is complete, the teacher narrates the text and the class act it out.

Other opportunities are planned throughout the continuous provision to endorse a love of writing. Engaging resources are openly accessible to learners (eg. gel pens, highlighters, post its, notepads etc.), adults are continually available during Let's Explore time to scribe children's stories,



stories are then acted out during review time. Authentic opportunities are planned (eg. letters to topic visitors, wish lists for new resources etc.). Writing resources are available across the base to encourage purposeful writing in all areas of the environment.

### **Handwriting**

From our assessments and previous data, handwriting is a significant barrier to our learner's writing success. Many children start school already having developed inaccuracies with their letter formation and difficulties with their pencil grip. Letter formation is explicitly taught within phonics, but further consolidation is needed to primarily focus on the skill of formation. Handwriting lessons look at letter families eg curly caterpillar letters, ladder letters etc to support children in seeing that some letters are formed in similar ways. Time is spent looking at starting position of letters and where they sit on the line or hang below. Children are also taught the importance of sitting like a writer; with their chairs tucked under the table, their feet flat on the floor and their backs straight. Pencil grip is continually picked up on by adults throughout our provision and alternate pencil grips are available for those children requiring additional support.

### **Number Fun**

The first few years of a child's life are especially important for mathematics development. Research shows that early mathematical knowledge predicts later reading ability and general education and social progress. Conversely, children who start behind in mathematics tend to stay behind throughout their whole educational journey.

At Springdale First School, we follow the NCETM Mastering Number Approach from Reception to Year 2. The programme is coherently planned to secure firm foundations in the development of good number sense for all children. It teaches the key mathematical concepts; Counting, Subitising,

Composition of Number and Comparison. We want children to leave KS1 with fluency in calculation and a confidence and flexibility with number. Attention is given to key knowledge and understanding needed in the Early Years, and progression through KS1 to support success in the future.

Four Mastering Number sessions are planned, delivered and assessed a week. Each session lasts 10-15 minutes and exposes all children to key mathematical concepts so that they can be explored together, as a class. During each session, adults assess which children need further opportunity to consolidate the new learning. These children then work in a small focus group to ensure they are ready for the next session. Enrichment opportunities are planned to enhance the children's continuous provision and are also built into their daily routines.

The fifth maths session of the week focuses on teaching Shape, Space and Measure. The outlined progression is informed by the research conducted by the NCETM <https://www.ncetm.org.uk/in-the-classroom/early-years/>. We cover 3 areas of early mathematics learning (Pattern, Shape and



Space, Measures) which collectively provide a platform for everything children will encounter as they progress through their maths learning at primary school, and beyond.

### **Interventions**

We know that children's interests are in the moment and so we aim to deliver specific interventions through play, as we feel this has the most impact on a child's learning and is when they are at their most engaged. Taking them away from their purposeful play to work on skills that they already find challenging is not always the most effective way of supporting the child.

Through our 'focus child' work we can identify children that need to be a focus for more observation, attention and support. We use our formative and summative assessments to identify the children who are attaining below their age-related expectation and those that are classified as disadvantaged. The adults across the base then observe these children carefully and look for opportunities to discuss, extend or elaborate their learning.

The focus children have identified areas of development to work on and the adults aim to incorporate these within their play. These targets are then reviewed to see what progress the children are making and what further support is needed.

Whilst we value learning through play and see the impact of purposeful intervention through this, we recognise that there are some knowledge and skills that need to be explicitly planned, taught and rehearsed in small, focused, adult led groups.

From our formative and summative assessments, it is clear there are two areas of learning that have significantly less children working at their age-related expectations – physical development and literacy. For this reason, our timetable is heavily weighted around the explicit teaching and rehearsal of these skills. Our interventions focus on catching children up in phonics and physical development. We have a number of children who need further development of their fine motor skills in order to support them in developing a comfortable pencil grip, resulting in a fluid handwriting style. Every afternoon, a small group of children work on developing their fine and gross motor skills in a variety of engaging and purposeful ways. Phonics interventions take place within our Writer's Workshop session and focus on revisiting gaps from the individual's summative assessments. These take place 3 times a week. Interventions are continually reviewed, and next steps reassessed in light of ongoing progress.