



Curriculum Policy

The Purpose of the policy

This policy sets out our intention for the Wildwood Nature School curriculum. It describes which subject areas will be included in the curriculum and outlines the resources, tools and teaching approaches that will be used to facilitate learning in those areas.

See also our *Assessment Policy* which describes how we measure the impact of our curriculum on children's learning and development.

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1. Curriculum intent

Our intention for our curriculum is that it offers a broad, balanced and rich learning experience for the children attending Wildwood Nature School. We know that learning does not happen in a vacuum, which is why our school places such an emphasis on prioritising each child's well-being. Our curriculum has been designed in such a way that each child's needs can be met. High adult:child ratios and learning in nature support the implementation of our curriculum goals. Our curriculum also focuses on skills, creativity and collaborative learning because these will best support our children for their future. We believe that each child, regardless of background, can achieve exceptionally when they have a team of compassionate teachers committed to helping them to learn about themselves as well as the world around them.

2. Our key values and implementation

Learning outdoors and the Forest School approach

We believe children learn best when they are able to move and be outdoors in nature. There has been a lot of research to show how effective outdoor learning is across all ages and stages of learning and we have seen this first-hand through teaching outdoors over many years. Forest School's holistic approach develops children's self esteem, builds independence, and has the relationship with the natural world at its heart.

Project-based

Our core approach is learner-led, collaborative, project-based learning – we believe this is the approach that not only gives learners the most agency, but also is the closest to how many of them will work when they leave school, and is the best for developing the key attributes that they will need to succeed in life – creativity, independent thinking and resilience.

Play

Play is essential to healthy development in all children. It contributes to their cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being. We will provide time for uninterrupted play where children can explore, test ideas and deepen their creativity.

Curriculum content

To ensure that all of our learners leave prepared for secondary school, our curriculum has been designed to meet the KS1 and KS2 National Curriculum learning objectives that we feel are most vital for success.

Literacy, phonics and maths will be taught as discrete subjects, with teaching and learning progressing through carefully planned sequences of work.

In other subject areas, learner-led, collaborative, project-based work will be how children learn. This approach will be supported by more traditional resources and teaching tools.

3. EYFS

As Early Years specialists, the characteristics of effective learning and teaching in the Early Years - playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically - have informed our approach and are woven into everything we do throughout the school.

Reception age children will follow the EYFS Development Matters framework within the 7 areas of learning:

- communication and language
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development
- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design

We will follow the same approach of child-led, project-based, outdoor learning at an appropriate level and with an even greater emphasis on play. They will also learn phonics and maths through structured discrete sessions as well as through meaningful application of skills. Our reception children will be assessed using the Development Matters framework - see our *Assessment Policy*. We will ensure we meet all the welfare requirements stated in the EYFS.

4. Literacy

Phonics and early reading

We understand how important mastering phonics is and how this empowers young children in enabling them to decode text. For this reason, phonics is taught as a discrete subject. This means that we can accurately assess all children and ensure their progress. There will be daily phonics sessions for all Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 children and they are taught in small groups according to their stage of learning. Beyond Year 2, we ensure 1-1 phonics interventions are provided to children who need it to support their reading and writing.

We will use *Little Wandle - Letters and Sounds Revised* as our scheme of work for phonics. This scheme will ensure we follow a systematic approach to teaching children to read and will be supported by using decodable books linked to each child's appropriate stage within the scheme.

Little Wandle - Letters and Sounds Revised is a complete systematic synthetic phonics programme developed for schools by schools. Based on the original Letters and Sounds, but extensively revised to provide a complete teaching programme meeting all the expectations of the National Curriculum, the Ofsted Deep Dive Into Reading and preparing children to go beyond the expectations of the Phonics Screening Check. ([Little Wandle](#))

Oracy

We believe that good oracy is fundamental to children's success beyond school. We support children to build the necessary skills and confidence to talk fluently and explain their ideas articulately. We use story scribing and '[Helicopter stories](#)' as an engaging approach to the development of children's oracy. Also through regular small discussion circles, building to larger audiences, children have the opportunities to explain their thoughts and observations in a range of environments.

Reading

We nurture the joy of reading through creating engaging reading experiences and providing a range of interesting texts including fiction, non fiction and poetry. The children have stories read to them and have plenty of opportunities to retell and act out stories. They read information texts linked to their topics and anything that sparks their interest. We focus on high-quality books in the core literacy curriculum and topic-based work. We visit the local library regularly and encourage the children to find books that inspire and entertain them. Reading and storytelling take place outside in nature, by the fire or in a hammock, as well as in the various cosy reading areas at school, to ensure that reading is always a nourishing experience.

In Phases 2 & 3, we use the [Collins Big Cat](#) reading scheme to support children's progression in reading. This follows on from the *Little Wandle* phonics and early reading scheme used in Phase 1.

English

We want all our children to leave us with the reading and writing skills they need to succeed in all areas of life. We also want to expose them to as many real books as possible, to engender a love of reading that will stay with them throughout their lives.

Therefore, we teach English as a discrete subject, drawing from a scheme based around high-quality books, called *Literary Curriculum*:

The award-winning Literary Curriculum is a complete, book-based approach designed to help teachers access high quality resources and network through training. The Teach Through a Text approach was created so that there was a consistent, cohesive pedagogy used across a school. ([Literary Curriculum](#))

We have an English long term plan created by choosing books from the scheme that are relevant to our topic work, whilst at the same time ensuring we have the range of writing and reading outcomes necessary to cover the relevant National Curriculum learning objectives each year. Teachers use the scheme planning sequences as a support to create their own planning with learning objectives appropriate to the writing and reading outcomes and based on the needs of the children.

Writing

Through linking topic-based work and book-based planning sequences from the *Literary Curriculum* we provide engaging writing opportunities throughout the curriculum, with learners motivated to write for a purpose within a meaningful context. From a young age we help them apply their phonic knowledge in their emergent writing. We emphasise that the purpose of writing is to convey meaning to the reader and offer many opportunities for the children to share their writing with others (e.g. other children, their parents, members of the local community).

Spelling

The *Literary Curriculum* has a spelling component that we use to ensure that all children meet the National Curriculum objectives for spelling. The spelling objectives and words match the *Literary Curriculum* text being taught. We believe that learning to spell within a meaningful and purposeful context supports children's progress.

5. Maths

Maths is becoming increasingly important in today's world. To empower our children, we need to give them the mathematical understanding and skills they need to become climate scientists, data analysts or computing engineers.

We teach maths as a discrete subject to ensure this development of understanding and skills in all our learners. We then look for opportunities to apply their learning throughout our days in real-life, meaningful contexts.

We use the schemes published by *White Rose Maths* to ensure high-quality teaching and learning outcomes, and ensure curriculum coverage.

White Rose Maths brings together a team of highly experienced and passionate maths teaching experts to train, guide, help and support all those who want to make change happen. ([White Rose](#))

6. Well-being (PSHE)

We have expanded upon the Statutory Guidance for PSHE to include the most current research into emotions, neuroscience, trauma, well-being and spirituality. Our well-being curriculum is a core component of our provision and as well as being taught during discrete circle times at the beginning and end of each day, will be woven into every aspect of the school day, including how our teachers interact with the children and the cross-curricular topic projects. We believe that children's emotional needs and well-being come first and are the foundation for learning.

Our well-being curriculum is closely linked to our *Behaviour Policy*, which details how we are putting our children's emotional needs at the forefront of how we operate. Our well-being curriculum is also closely linked to our *Relationships Policy*, which describes our approach to Protected Characteristics. Our curriculum actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. As with the other elements of our well-being curriculum, these values help to form the foundation of how we operate as a school and are woven into all of our interactions and teaching.

In addition to all the aspects included in the PSHE Statutory Guidance (physical health, mental health, relationships and living in the wider world), our curriculum will also teach children:

- how to recognise and feel sensations and emotions in their bodies
- how to name and describe different emotions and experiences
- how to communicate their needs and emotions effectively
- how to understand emotions in others and practise compassion
- how to resolve conflicts using Giraffe language (Nonviolent Communication)
- an understanding of the different parts of the brain and how emotions, mindfulness, well-being and learning are linked with brain activity
- various movement, mindfulness and breathing techniques to support them to become aware of their emotions, bodies and reactions
- self-awareness, motivation and how we learn
- secular ethics, problem-solving and democracy
- to understand how spirituality has been expressed in world religions and other ways, and to help them understand their own relationship to spirituality

These components will be taught using a variety of techniques including storytelling, drama activities, movement, role-play, yoga, dance, mindfulness, play, sharing through partner and group work, rhythm, music, singing and journalling, mostly while outdoors in nature.

We also use the [MindUp](#) curriculum as a resource to support the teaching of mindfulness, emotions and the brain. *Based firmly in neuroscience, MindUP teaches the skills and knowledge children need to regulate their stress and emotion, form positive relationships, and act with kindness and compassion.*

A range of books have been used to design the well-being curriculum and are used as a resource for activities linked to the curriculum objectives (see our *Well-being Curriculum* for a list of these books).

7. Our spiral curriculum – topic based work

The following subjects are covered by a topic-based, spiral curriculum.

- Science
- Geography
- History
- Art

- DT
- Computing
- Music

The school curriculum map includes twelve topics, one per half term, covering a two year duration. Each topic applies to all age groups across the school – all children work on the same topic at the same time at differing levels of skill and depth.

The curriculum long term plan links each topic to learning objectives from the National Curriculum, which are different depending on the stage of the child:

- Phase 1 objectives: Years 1 and 2
- Phase 2 objectives: Years 3 and 4
- Phase 3 objectives: Years 5 and 6
- *(Reception children follow the EYFS and are free to choose their own activities or join in with the topic work if they choose to)*

While the objectives have been planned according to the year groups defined above, children will be able to learn and progress at their own pace. For example, a child who is 7 years old (in Year 3) might be working at a Phase 1 level in one subject but at a Phase 3 level in a different subject. Because we have a high staff ratio, and place a great emphasis on children's emotional well-being and knowing each child's individual needs very well, there will be more support available for each child to work at a depth of understanding and challenge that is suitable to them. For our topic work, we will also work in mixed-age groups to allow for this flexibility.

With the spiral curriculum approach, children revisit the same topic every two years, meaning that they deepen their understanding of a topic while progressing through more challenging learning objectives. Upon returning to each topic, prior knowledge is utilised so pupils can build on previous foundations, rather than starting again. It also ensures coverage of National Curriculum learning objectives.

A primary focus within our school is that learning is child-led. Therefore, the specific half-termly topics may change based on children's interests. In such cases, we will adapt our planning to ensure that most National Curriculum objectives are still met. Furthermore, if within a topic, a child demonstrates a keen interest in a tangential or a slightly different topic, they will be supported to follow their interests and passions. The high staff ratios affords this flexibility, and as with the Early Years approach, the teachers will facilitate challenge and meeting of objectives through skillful interaction while ensuring that children's curiosity and excitement for learning is maintained and stimulated.

Planning in the moment

To support our topic-based, child-led learning approach, we're using a model called 'Planning in the Moment', developed by Anna Ephgrave. This is an approach that is based on the principle that children learn best when they are following their own interests.

This method of planning helps to ensure that the children's learning and interests are at the heart of what we do. Our aim is to support the children in becoming more confident, independent and engaged in their learning. We will plan and teach, treating each child as an individual and allowing them to achieve their best.

WHAT IS PLANNING 'IN THE MOMENT'?

- A model that allows child-initiated learning through play, based on capturing the interests of the children through personalised learning.
- Teachers will take into consideration the children's interests to create meaningful educational experiences through providing an enabling environment, using quality interactions and 'teachable moments'.

WHAT ARE TEACHABLE MOMENTS?

Teachable moments are about recognising that, naturally, children often learn in a more informal and creative way. Within this style of teaching, we are looking for opportunities to allow learning to take place through child-initiated play alongside providing challenge and open-ended questioning when needed. During this time, we will look for opportunities to model language, explore ideas, explain, suggest etc.

WHAT WILL WE DO?

- We will provide an environment and opportunities that stimulate curiosity and challenge thinking.
- We will observe and listen closely to the children's play.
- We will work alongside parents to create environments that will spark the children's interest.
- We will reinforce positive learning experiences.

HOW DO WE RECORD THIS LEARNING?

Every week, we will select two 'focus children'. These children will be observed, assessed and planned for, to meet their needs and interests. Each child will be a 'focus child' for one week each term. Teachers will observe and record in detail their learning experiences throughout the week in a learning journey. This will be shared with the parents the following week.

Trips

We will take full advantage of being located so close to central London and will organise at least one trip per term linked to the cross-curricular topic. We recognise how much trips can enrich a child's understanding of a topic and provide a lived experience that can serve as a stimulus for future learning. We also recognise that school trips can help to provide equity from children with differing backgrounds and differing levels of cultural capital.

Resources to support topic-based teaching and learning

Since learning in nature is one of the key values of the school, and much of the topic-based curriculum will take place outdoors, we use *The National Curriculum Outdoors*. This scheme is used as a resource to support lesson planning and coverage of National Curriculum learning objectives, rather than as a scheme to be followed lesson by lesson.

Science is best learnt through investigation and practical work. To ensure a focus on practical work, in addition to the National Curriculum objectives, science planning will be supported through use of the [Engaging Science](#) scheme. Through the use of this scheme as a planning resource we offer frequent opportunities for engaging, high-quality practical science.

We use the *Design Thinking* structure to support our topic project work. Children will be encouraged to think about how the work they are planning to produce will be useful for a target audience.

Design thinking is a non-linear, iterative process that teams use to understand needs, challenge assumptions, redefine problems and create solutions to prototype and test. Involving five phases—Empathise, Define, Ideate, Prototype and Test—it is most useful to tackle problems that are ill-defined or unknown.

All of the resources that we have chosen to support teaching and learning at Wildwood Nature School have been vetted to ensure that there is a balanced representation of opposing views. This is so that our resources encourage critical thinking, as well as ensuring impartiality and to avoid cultural bias as much as possible.

Progression

The mapping of National Curriculum objectives within each subject against the 12 topics has been carefully selected to ensure that progression happens across an academic year, over the 2-year cycle and across the 3 phases. Within each discipline, the necessary building blocks for larger concepts will have been taught first - either within that topic or in an earlier topic.

For example, 5 topics that demonstrate this progressive expansion of perspective and building of knowledge over time are:

- ***My place in the world*** - evolution, national history, personal history, family history, making own maps of school/local area (*Autumn 2 of Year 1 of the cycle*)
- ***Who do we share the woods with?*** - looking at the animals and wildlife in local habitats and beyond (*Spring 2 of Year 1 of the cycle*)
- ***How can we protect our planet?*** - changing weather patterns, animal extinctions, conservation efforts and activism (*Summer 2 of Year 1 of the cycle*)
- ***Living Together*** - Ancient civilisations, society and democracy (*Spring 1 of Year 2 of the cycle*)

- ***Our place in the universe*** - how the universe and space has inspired art, music, and science (*Summer 2 of Year 2 of the cycle*)

An example of how skills build within a particular discipline over the course of an academic year is shown below for geography:

Please note: The table below shows when National Curriculum objectives are first introduced. They are all revisited again in later topics so that they can be consolidated and built upon.

Topic	Locational & place knowledge		Human & physical geography		Geographical skills & fieldwork	
	Phase 1	Phases 2+3	Phase 1	Phases 2+3	Phase 1	Phases 2+3
Magical worlds (Autumn 1)			Basic geographical vocabulary related to physical features	Describe & understand key aspects of physical features		
My place in the world (Autumn 2)	Name & locate 7 continents, 5 oceans & UK countries & capital cities	Locate world's countries on maps, name UK countries & cities & physical characteristics			Map skills, compass directions, features of maps, plan perspectives, simple fieldwork, making simple maps	More refined map skills to locate countries & identify features, more complex presentation of fieldwork & observation through maps & plans
Who do we share the woods with? (Spring 2)	Geographical similarities & differences between a UK area & non-European country	Similarities & differences between UK, European & non-European regions	Seasonal & daily weather patterns, Equator, Poles Expanding geographical vocabulary of physical features	Latitudes, hemispheres, tropics, time zones, climate zones, biomes, vegetation belts More detail on topographical features & land-use patterns & change over time		

8. Inclusion and challenge – ensuring all learners make progress

As a small school we have a unique opportunity to really know our children and understand their strengths and challenges. We always start from where the child is and support them to make their best progress. We are ambitious for the children and ensure through our child-centred approach that children learn to set their own challenges. We recognise that individuals have strengths and challenges in different areas and will never label children as generally 'more able' or 'less able' than those around them. Rather, we teach them to celebrate and build on their own strengths and see their challenges as opportunities to learn, rather than something to feel ashamed of. The schemes we have chosen to use have challenge built in and, coupled with our Forest School and 'Design Thinking' approach, we focus on strengths and challenges in terms of the characteristics of learning: critical thinking, problem-solving and resilience, and always value the process over the product.

We make sure we identify any barriers to learning the children may have and put a system of support in place to remove or ease those barriers. We identify parts of the curriculum that may cause difficulties for some learners and break these down into smaller, more manageable steps.

Our School SEND Lead works with other professionals in the borough and beyond, making referrals for assessments where necessary and accessing any support required.

9. Forest School

We believe the elements of Forest School and its ethos to be vital components for children's healthy development, and so we have prioritised being in nature, learning the skills of our ancestors, taking risks and building community.

We deliver our Forest School curriculum using the [WILD Passport](#), which is a resource accredited by the Institute for Outdoor Learning and is a fully realised progressive skills curriculum to evidence learner progression. All our Forest School delivery is based upon the 6 Forest School principles (see [FSA website](#)), along with current research into the benefits of Forest School activities, and the wisdom and knowledge of experienced Forest School practitioners. The Forest School curriculum will be delivered for 1-2 hours a day, but often more, as many elements will be incorporated into our main cross-curricular learning time. The Forest School curriculum will be delivered by qualified Level 3 Forest School Leaders.

The skills and areas of learning covered by the Forest School curriculum are:

- safe tool use
- wood craft
- fire skills
- ropes & knots
- putting up shelters (tarps and natural shelters)
- plant & tree identification, foraging, uses & folklore of plants & trees
- seasonality
- animals & habitats

- environmental conservation
- storytelling
- rituals & festivals related to nature
- cooking over the fire
- risk-taking during free play including climbing trees, rope swings etc.

10. Physical Education

At Wildwood Nature School we are so aware of the importance of physical activity for the physical, cognitive, creative, social, moral and personal development of our children, that we consider it in all aspects of what we do. Rather than having restricted times of day when children are free to move, we have set up our school so that children *always* have the opportunity to be physically active. Much of the school day takes place outside where children can move, run, climb, roll, lift, swing and do whatever they need to feel good in their bodies. We know how important this is not only for their well-being but also for their ability to learn. Even when children are inside our school premises, the space has been designed to allow children to learn and move in ways that suit them - there are tables for sitting or standing at, various different seating areas, and spaces to climb on.

We also value teaching PE explicitly and have 1 afternoon a week dedicated to this. Children will learn specific skills e.g. gymnastics, dance, yoga, swimming, ball skills, and certain sports games that encourage collaborative teamwork rather than competition. PE provides opportunities for all pupils to become physically literate and confident in a way which also supports their health and fitness. Children will acquire not only physical skills, knowledge and understanding, but also the awareness and importance of leading healthy, active lives as well as the values of sportsmanship, fairness and respect through the sports and activities they undertake. We use [peplanning](#) as a resource to help with our PE planning across the school.

The way that we operate means that we easily meet and even surpass the national guidelines for physical activity. We ensure safe practice at all times when teaching PE by following the guidelines in [Safe Practice in PE, School Sport and Physical Activity](#).

Policy review

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