

Footprints

Step by step together

THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Norwich

Your newsletter from the Diocesan Board of Education

June 2023

Nursery & Pre-School Provision



Paul Dunning
Diocesan Director of Education

I hope you get as much joy and encouragement reading this edition of Footprints as I have! Seeing the varied examples of nursery and pre-school provision is inspiring and a true demonstration of church schools living out their Christian vision. I'm aware

there are many such examples across our Diocese, and we are currently producing some case studies to publish to give staff and governors ideas about what might work for you.

It is common sense to ensure children are nurtured, loved, and supported in their early life. Research evidence backs this up – a child's future life outcomes can be predicted quite accurately at 1,000 days old, a point when they haven't even started school.

In the pages that follow you see schools speaking of the importance of relationships, family, community, providing a quality physical space and taking those first steps of academic learning.

Acknowledging the practical development of spirituality, encouraging children's awe and wonder, is also fundamental as 'Children remind adults of the magic to be found even in the most mundane.'

The words in one article capture the holistic blend of quality provision that we aspire to showing developmental success socially and academically: "The children (and adults!) are far more engaged in their play, skilful and higher-level thinking is happening, enhanced speaking and listening, concentration, self-regulation and outcomes for children in all areas of the EYFS have increased."

All ages and stages of education have something to learn from this!



Ben Powley
EYFS and Environment leader
Heartwood VC Primary

In 2020 during the school's partial closure due to the pandemic, we were drawn to the concept of 'Hygge', which is the Danish approach to living well and in the moment.

Some of the resources in our Nursery class were dated and looking tired. However, rather than replacing them with new, which we felt was not environmentally sustainable and did not reflect the school's vision and Christian values of responsibility and respect, we got to work replacing them with natural objects and loose parts to encourage

deeper level thinking. We removed the clutter in the classrooms, reducing cognitive overload, and painted the walls a calming grey. Instantly the space felt more cosy, home like, and ready for children who had been 'locked down' in their homes for almost half of their lives.

This had such a huge impact on the children in Nursery that we rolled out the 'Hygge' approach across the whole school! It has resulted in a calmer, better used, respected space where children feel safe and loved. Our Early Years (and year 1) classrooms are continuous provision based, meaning the resources available to children don't change day to day or even week to week, they are always available, and enhancements are put in place based on learning themes or children's interests.

This promotes open ended learning with no ceilings attached!

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Our beautiful and sustainable environment was further enhanced after some staff members went on a study trip to Rome to see the Italian Montessori and Reggio schools in practice! Inspired by the trip and our school vision, we have increased learning opportunities outside for the children.

We welcome any visitors to the school to see our 'third teacher'!

Julie Church
Executive Headteacher
Salhouse Primary VC Primary

We are blessed to have a nursery offering childcare for children from two years of age.

Our nursery is known as Fledglings and is housed in a purpose built building on the school site. Fledglings is also the base for our breakfast and after school clubs.

Fledglings is fully integrated into the life of the school, sharing its vision and values. When our children join reception, they are ready to flourish in a Church school.

One example of how Fledglings contributes to children flourishing at school is through the early development of spirituality.

Since early childhood is a foundational period in children's health, behaviour and learning, the development of spirituality is imperative.

Family values affect children's perspective and experiences. Meeting our children and their families early is seen as a positive thing enabling us to support



children as they explore, question and reflect upon their place in family, school and the wider community. We are able to foster positive relationships through knowing, understanding and caring; evidence of spirituality in action.

Although we have a relatively small garden space, it successfully acts as a space where children and adults can talk, play, imagine together, experience connections and develop relationships with each other and nature, further

evidence of spirituality in action.

Then there is joy, a building block for wellbeing and healthy development. Talented staff inject joy through play, nurture and inclusive practice. Children remind adults of the magic to be found even in the most mundane. Spirituality in action.

These quiet examples alone demonstrate how early years settings are of value to our communities and must be protected.

Natalie Butcher

Executive Head
Swallowtail Federation of Church Schools

Being three very small schools, we always have to think creatively about our class organisation, ensuring we meet the needs of our local communities.

In each of our schools we have an Early Years class where pre-school children are taught alongside Reception children. Like any new venture, there was some anxiety from staff and parents about how it would work. We had no need to worry! In fact, it has now become a strength in all of our schools. The children are taught both by a qualified teacher and pre-school manager, allowing them access to the highest quality teaching. Early years staff plan clear progression for the year groups meaning children make excellent progress from their starting points. This is then fed into future progression. How wonderful that children in Year 6 can recall their early years learning and understand how it laid the foundations



for their learning today.

The other significant strength is the opportunity for social development. The mixed aged class allows the older children to develop empathy for their younger peers and the younger children learn from fantastic role models.

If that doesn't say enough, here is what our parents say:

"Children feel involved with the whole school from an early age. They learn routines and expectations of the school from the beginning of their education adventure. Not only does this aid their development, but it also makes the transition into full time school much smoother for the children with no anxiety about "starting big school."



Debbie Marjoram

EYFS Leader
Thomas Bullock Primary & Nursery Academy, DNEAT

Having only opened our doors to nursery pupils since January 2021, it has been an exciting and wondrous journey.

Our bespoke, ambitious, and inclusive curriculum begins right at the beginning of our pupils' journey in education, starting in the Ark Nursery at Thomas Bullock CE Primary & Nursery Academy with our qualified teacher-led provision. This uniquely designed curriculum provides provocation for effective,

inquisitive and curious learners which influences their wider thinking across all areas of learning.

A typical day in Ark class will see our pupils welcomed by our buoyant EYFS team who welcome them into their brand-new classroom with outdoor free-flow access, to begin their morning jobs and registration. After this together time, the children take part in their lessons as well as leading their own learning through child-initiated independent learning.

Whilst making use of our extensive school grounds and resources, our nursery pupils undertake daily sessions of RWI phonics, Literacy [inc. Talk for Writing], early Mathematical skills and theme-

based workshops. Additionally, our pupils participate in Forest school, music and PE sessions led by our qualified specialist teachers. The benefits of our bespoke learning package are being widely seen already, with 100% of our 2021 nursery cohort, on track to achieve GLD at the end of their reception year 2022.

Following our recent RE curriculum design development, built alongside Chris Allen, RE Advisor our pupils have been undertaking first hand experiences of their own and other cultures. Our pupils' thirst for learning was summarised by Matilda as she could be heard shouting "it's hot cross bun day!" as she skipped into the school gates!

Governor focus



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In many of the pieces I write for Footprints I come back to the Church of England vision for education “deeply Christian, with Jesus’ promise of ‘life in all its fullness’ at its heart”.

When I started to reflect on how school governors might work with nurseries and pre-schools that vision for education made me think of what qualifies as “life in all its fullness” at each stage of a child’s development and how we play our part in enabling the children in our care to experience that “fullness” at every opportunity.

Where a nursery or pre-school is part of the primary school, I expect governors are already governing in some way, even though it is not part of the compulsory school responsibility of governors. In many cases nurseries and pre-schools are separate to the primary school and governed by their own committee, so I’ll focus most of my attention here.

To benefit from the “fullness” of their early education in primary school, it really helps if the school and the child’s nursery and pre-school provision have worked closely together. If they don’t have shared aims and values, they at least understand each other. Governors can play a valuable role by creating cross working opportunities. Could one of your governors become a member of the nursery or pre-school committee,

in exchange for one of their committee members becoming a governor? I’m always encouraging governors to create these kinds of reciprocal arrangements between Primary and Secondary schools, but it would be equally valuable with your nursery colleagues.

It can be hard for Headteachers, when they are managing their own schools, to give as much time to their relationships with other schools and nurseries as they might like, but I encourage governors to ask about those relationships. If there are barriers to your school having a good relationship with the nearby nurseries, can you identify any potential solutions that governors could support with. Can you start to build those bonds if they are lacking, thus improving the relationship, and taking some of the heavy load from the Headteacher.

Welcome

Executive Headteachers starting

Mark Carlyle – Tacolneston & Morley federation (interim)

Rebecca Clarke – Little Plumstead VA Primary (interim)

Nick Read – The Belfry VA Primary, Overstrand (interim)

Rebekah Woodrow – St Mary federation (interim)

John Neenan – Blue Sky federation (interim)

SIAMS congratulations

Congratulations to the following schools that have had their SIAMS inspections this term.

Good

All Saints VA Primary, Winfarthing

Excellent

Acle VA Primary

Partnerships

Blue Sky federation / St Michael’s Aylsham

Acle VC Primary / Little Plumstead VA Primary

Worstead VA Primary / The Belfry VA Primary, Overstrand

Federations

Thomas Bullock Primary academy with Lyng Primary Academy

Farewell

Headteachers leaving

Helen Laflin – Blundeston VC Primary

Helen Watson – Lyng VC Primary

DNEAT conversions

1 June 2023

Yaxham VA Primary

Global Neighbours

Bronze award

St Nicholas VA Primary