



Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School

Learning Ambitions – Mainstream

“Nurturing curiosity and inspiring imagination”

Alongside children making progress and developing through our carefully planned activities, their own directed play and continuous provision, following their interests and meeting their learning needs, we have some specific Learning Ambitions that we want our children to develop before they leave us for Reception.

The learning goals outlined below are not an exhaustive list of everything a child will learn during their time with us. They celebrate the knowledge, skills, attitudes and experiences that we believe provide a strong foundation for children as they continue their learning journey in Primary School.

Communication and Language

Communication and Language is central to everything we do at Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School. From their different starting points, children interact with our highly skilled staff who help them develop strong communication and language skills which underpin all of our learning aspirations. We provide rich opportunities for children to listen, understand, speak, ask questions, express their ideas and take part in conversations. Where children need additional support, we use appropriate communication strategies and interventions to help them build their skills.



1. Embracing Cultures and Traditions

Children develop a strong sense of their own family and the people who are important to them. They talk about familiar family experiences, celebrations and traditions and begin to recognise that families may be different. Children have opportunities to learn about and show respect for cultures, traditions and celebrations that are different from their own.

2. Solving Problems

Children develop curiosity and perseverance as they explore, investigate and solve simple problems. They use trial and error, make predictions and try different approaches during experiences such as mixing paint, construction, exploring materials and investigating nature. They begin to explain what they have done and work alongside others to find solutions.

3. Love of Reading and Books

Children develop a love of books, stories, poems and rhymes. They choose books, listen attentively and talk about stories they enjoy. Children become familiar with a range of stories and begin to recall key events, characters and repeated phrases. They may retell familiar stories through talk, role play, small world play, drawing or other forms of representation.



4. Sense of Self and Identity as a Confident Learner

Children develop confidence in themselves as learners. They talk about their experiences, review photographs and examples of their work and, with adult support, reflect on what they have done. Children identify things they are proud of, recognise when something has been challenging and celebrate their achievements. They increasingly show independence, curiosity and willingness to have a go, both individually and as part of a group.

5. Be a Confident Mark Maker

Children develop increasing control and confidence when using a range of tools and materials. They explore mark making for different purposes through drawing, painting, writing, modelling and creative play. They develop the fine-motor skills needed to use pencils, crayons, paintbrushes, scissors and other tools. Children begin to give meaning to their marks and may write some recognisable letters, particularly those from their name.

6. Self-Regulation and Keeping Safe

Children increasingly recognise and talk about a range of emotions and begin to understand that feelings can change. They learn and practise strategies that help them manage strong feelings, such as talking to an adult, taking time in a quiet space, breathing, movement or choosing an appropriate activity. Children understand simple safety rules and begin to recognise how to keep themselves and others safe in nursery, outdoors and in Forest School. They know they can tell a trusted adult if something makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe.



7. Use Maths in Real Life Situations

Children use mathematical ideas and vocabulary in meaningful, everyday situations. They explore number, quantity, size, length, weight, shape, space and pattern through play and routines. Children develop a secure understanding of numbers to 5, including counting, recognising and representing small quantities, subitising and ordering amounts. They begin to compare quantities and use mathematical language to describe what they notice and solve simple problems.



8. Being Physical and Keeping Healthy

Children develop confidence, coordination and control as they move in a range of ways and negotiate space. They practise jumping, climbing, running, balancing, dancing, throwing, catching and kicking. Children develop increasing awareness of how their bodies move and begin to manage their own physical challenges. They understand some of the things that help them stay healthy, including eating a varied diet, drinking water, being active, resting, sleeping and maintaining good hygiene.

9. Be a Confident Communicator

Children become confident communicators who use language to express their needs, share ideas, describe experiences and take part in conversations with adults and other children. They listen to others, respond appropriately, ask and answer questions and begin to adapt their communication for different situations. Children develop the confidence to initiate interactions, join in with group experiences and communicate their thoughts and feelings.



Our approach to achieving the Learning Ambitions

- Provide a language-rich, engaging environment where children can talk, listen, explore and ask questions.
- Follow children's interests while providing carefully planned experiences that broaden their knowledge and skills.
- Use continuous provision to give children repeated opportunities to practise and apply learning independently.
- Model rich vocabulary and extend children's thinking through sensitive interactions and open-ended questions.
- Encourage independence, resilience, curiosity and a positive attitude towards learning.
- Use observations, photographs and examples of children's work to celebrate progress and identify next steps.
- Work in partnership with families to understand children's experiences, interests and individual starting points.

Important note

These Learning Ambitions are broad aspirations rather than a checklist. Children develop at different rates and may demonstrate their learning in different ways. Our assessment and planning will reflect each child's starting point, interests, strengths and individual needs, while ensuring that all children have high-quality opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence they need for their next stage of learning.