

Early Years at North West London Jewish Day School

Our prime objective at North West London Jewish Day School is to meet the individual needs of all the children to enable them to get the best possible start in life. We have a strong parental partnership and work with parents to support their children and ensure

That the Early Year's Foundation Stage Curriculum is delivered through play based activities, giving the children the opportunity to become independent learners

The emotional needs of each child are recognised and met in order to enable the child to develop social and interpersonal skills, positive relationships with the adults around them and with their peers. The parental partnership with school is paramount to support the children's learning. This combination lays the foundations for learning. The importance and value of play as a tool for all aspects of learning underpins these principles.

Aims of the Early Years Department

We want the children in our care to be happy, confident, caring and kind and to develop a positive self-image and confidence in their ability to do things in order that they can go forward, each achieving their individual potential. This is reinforced using examples from the Torah and thus reinforcing the relevance of Judaism in their day-to-day lives.

The activities and experiences on offer to the children are carefully planned in order to help them progress in their development and learning as individuals with their individual needs. This extends into different areas and in various ways:

- Personally, socially and emotionally helping the child to feel valued as part of the class so that a good self-image and strong self-esteem are built up which supports them in settling into the class and later moving on to the next stage.
- The promotion of positive attitudes and enthusiasm for learning so that they develop the confidence to be "successful and independent learners".
- The provision of opportunities for learning the skills of cooperating with and listening to each other in their day to day interaction.
- The development of their individual attention skills so that they are prepared to concentrate on their own individual play as well as group activities.
- Language and communication: The development of communication skills for all children in an increasingly wide variety of situations so that they are able to interact with adults and peers, extend their vocabulary and learn to listen carefully.

Reading and writing

It is also one of the strengths of the NWLJDS that the Foundation Stage Department is not only housed in the same building as the main school but considered an important part of it. Thus the children of the Foundation Stage regularly attend main assemblies as deemed suitable and other gatherings with the main school, sometimes for only part of the time but on occasion for the whole time. Obviously this is built up over the year and from Nursery to Reception. This fosters feelings of community and develops confidence and learning by example from the older children.

Nursery and Reception have monthly Kabbalat Shabbat (Sabbath) celebrations together and celebrate all the Chagim (Festivals) as an Early Year's Department where they sing songs and listen to stories related to the Chagim. Nursery have their own Kabbalat Shabbat celebrations each week and Reception attend Kabbalat Shabbat on Fridays with the Infant Department and share in the unique "Infant" atmosphere.

Equal Opportunities

The policy of the Early Years Department is that 'Every Child Matters.' In order to meet children's very diverse needs and also in order to help them make the best progress possible, the Nursery and Reception classes endeavour to "provide a safe and supportive learning environment free from harassment, in which the contribution of all children is valued and where racial, religious, disability and gender stereotypes are challenged." This is done within the parameters of the Modern Orthodox Jewish ethos of the school. We are inclusive school and have children with Special Educational Needs and believe that early intervention and support is important. We have many children with English as an Additional Language and have weekly early morning accelerated learning sessions and daily intervention to support them to learn English as well as embrace their Mother tongue.

Curriculum

The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum is for children from birth to the end of Reception and is dovetailed into the National Curriculum at Key Stage One. NWLJDS is an Orthodox Jewish school and therefore the Curriculum in the Early Years is delivered and tailored to these requirements whilst yet retaining a breadth and balance. The Kodesh and Chol Curricula are completely integrated in the Nursery and a Kodesh teacher spends time teaching Kodesh and Hebrew reading in Reception. Planning is integrated in Nursery. The Curriculum is divided into three Prime Areas-Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Communication and Language and Physical Development and four Specific Areas-Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding of the World and Expressive Arts and Design.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Children are provided with experiences and support which will help them to develop a positive sense of themselves and of others, respect for each other, social skills and a positive disposition to learn. Staff provide the children with support to help them develop emotional well-being. Each child is monitored to measure their progress and to see how they can be moved forward. Both in Nursery and Reception individual targets are set, some of which may be explained and negotiated with the individual child and others which are discussed and noted by staff and which will be achieved either by appropriately planned activities or else by careful adult supervision and attention. When one target is seen to be met the next one is set.

Communication and Language

Children's learning and competence in communicating, speaking and listening, being read to and learning to read and write is supported and extended. Children are provided with opportunities and encouragement to develop their skills in a range of situations and for a range of purposes and are supported to develop the confidence and dispositions to do so.

The children are continually reassured and encouraged so that they feel confident in themselves and their environment. This is vital to encouraging their skills of communication with their peers and the adults around them. Their environment is structured in such a way as to provide them with stimulating and challenging play resources which allow them to communicate ideas and feelings and develop relationships. There are signs, notices and books all around them and they are provided with opportunities for mark making in all the different areas.

Communication and Language is incorporated into all activities. Opportunities for stories, books fiction and non-fiction, songs, rhymes, poetry, role-play and practical experiences are all part of day-to-day planning.

There are also opportunities "...for children to become aware of languages and writing systems other than English." The most prominent language is Hebrew as part of their Jewish studies. As there are many children with English as an additional Language in the school, we encourage parents of those children to share their language and culture with the class on a regular basis.

Any difficulties in a child's language development are noted and there is a close link with the SENCO in the school to provide specialist input in consultation with the parents.

Physical Development

Physical development in the Foundation Stage is about improving skills of coordination, control, manipulation and movement. It helps children gain confidence and enables them to feel the positive benefits of being healthy and active.

Throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage equipment and resources are provided that offer physical challenges. Children are given time to use a range of equipment and practise and develop new skills to support their gross and fine motor development.

Observations are made and based on these further sessions are planned. Increased independence is encouraged. As well as physical development taking place through daily activities both indoors and outdoors, both classes use the Adventure playground daily and receive dedicated PE lessons and have access to our swimming pool for 'weekly fun in the pool' sessions.

Children learn about healthy eating and the effect that exercise has on their bodies.

Literacy

Children are exposed to rhyming and alliteration and listen to both Information and fiction books daily. They learn how to handle books and that print is read from top to bottom and left to right in English. They learn to segment and blend and the initial letter sounds and begin to read simple words and sentences. They give meaning to marks they make as they draw, paint and write and begin to break the flow of speech into words, linking sounds to letters and naming and sounding the letters of the alphabet. By the end of the Reception term children have an understanding of punctuation and are beginning to write simple sentences, lists and captions.

Mathematics

We encourage children's development in this area by using various approaches. Number is utilised and displayed throughout the indoor and outdoor classroom, using opportunities which match up with the outside world and where number would normally be incorporated e.g. numbers on houses outside. Stories, songs, games and imaginative play that incorporate number are all part of the planning of the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum. Opportunities for sorting, matching, shape recognition, following patterns, sequencing, counting integrated into their play, measuring and activities which encourage spatial awareness combine to offer all the children in our care the best way forward in concrete mathematical development which is built on and developed in Reception, where they are encouraged to carry out mathematical investigations.

Understanding of the World

In this area of learning, children are developing the crucial knowledge, skills and understanding that help them to make sense of the world.

The focused activities which are planned to afford children the best opportunities of gaining an Understanding of the World offer them hands on experience which, encourage exploration, observation, problem solving, prediction, critical thinking, decision making and discussion. These opportunities are offered both inside the classroom and outside. Beside the focused opportunities there are also the incidental ones which occur through the resources which are available and which the children are able to access freely.

Children have access to computers, iPads, programmable toys, cameras and story phones as well as a large range of technology in the classrooms.

The opportunities for Understanding of the World are integrated into the Jewish Studies Curriculum so that this area is fully developed and relevant to the children.

Expressive Arts and Design

Creativity is fundamental to successful learning. Being creative enables children to make connections between one area of learning and another and so extend their understanding. Creativity involves children in initiating their own learning and making choices and decisions. This area of learning includes art, music, dance, role play and imaginative play.

The children in the Foundation Stage at North West are provided with a stimulating environment in which all their creative efforts are valued. A variety of tools and creative resources are available to them and their efforts are encouraged and valued. There are role play areas set up both in the Indoor and Outdoor Classrooms.

Children learn about their Jewish heritage and culture through role play, songs and stories using their senses and a variety of media and materials.