

Understanding the World

Understanding the World is about how children get to know about other people, the place where they live and about all aspects of the environment. It gives them the understanding, knowledge and skills needed to make sense of the world around them. It encourages children to explore, experiment and be creative thinkers. It forms a foundation for later work in science, design technology, history, geography and information and communication technology.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, Understanding the World is broken down into three aspects:

- **People and Communities** - As children learn about the world around them they find out about the past by talking to parents, grandparents and friends and they develop an interest in their own lives as well as their family – this is the beginning of developing an understanding of the past and helps them to learn about how other people are different from them, yet share some of the same characteristics and ideas.
- **The World** - Understanding of the world develops as children take notice of everything around them including different places and things within them such as trees in the natural environment and roads and traffic in the built environment. Finding out about places begins initially when a child learns about their own home and the things nearby, then later as children notice things on journeys to and from home – such as the sequence of the traffic lights or names on street signs. This awareness is extended by visiting places and finding out about different elements of environments in books, on TV and through using other technology. This aspect also focuses on learning about cause and effect and is developed through having conversations with adults and other children about the things they observe.
- **Technology** - Technology is an important feature of all our lives and children often see and use it quite naturally when they activate a toy eg pressing a button to make an ambulance or police car siren sound. Recognising the role of technology at home or at Nursery is important because this helps children to understand how technology can help them.

At Warrington Road Nursery we offer a wide variety of activities and experiences in play, to support the children to begin to develop a range of skills and concepts such as observation and experimentation.

Young children learn and develop through:

- using their senses to explore their immediate indoor and outdoor environments; and
- freely exploring their immediate surroundings through play-based learning, both indoors and outdoors.

To help children develop skills and concepts related to the world around them, we offer them opportunities to engage in interesting activities that provide them with first-hand experiences to explore through their senses.

These may include opportunities to:

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- observe water, discussing and experimenting with how different objects behave in water, what happens when colour is added to water, the uses of water and importance of not wasting it, and water in the environment such as raindrops on windows and puddles;
- explore the properties of wet, damp and dry sand, using sand to build and make models;
- discuss changes in materials in real contexts such as cooking, freezing and making dough; and
- show respect for living things and discuss the importance of handling them with care and sensitivity, for example by helping to look after indoor and outdoor plants or caterpillars
- planting and growing throughout the year, for example growing seeds and plants or bulbs in soil and water;
- the life cycle of, for example butterflies or frogs;
- a range of natural and man-made materials and sounds, using their senses to explore foliage, fruit and vegetables, foods made in the setting, metal objects, magnets, and environmental sounds such as birds singing or traffic;
- creating stimulating areas of interest, which may include photographs, magnets, magnifiers, mirrors, the insides of clocks, light boxes, plants at different stages of development, shells, and representations of seashore, jungle or ice landscapes;
- the properties of different materials and their appropriate uses, putting things together in a variety of ways, for example making models with natural and man-made materials
- Opportunities for children to talk about: relevant topics or festivals that are a natural part of their own experiences and those of the wider community, for example holidays, celebrations, birthdays or the arrival of a new baby, using photographs, drawing or making models to record events, if appropriate;
- the weather and the seasons at appropriate times during the year;
- themselves and their body parts, for example by talking with adults, engaging in role-play and
- listening to appropriate stories, rhymes and songs;
- where they live, the members of their extended family and events in their lives (both past and present);
- playing with simple floor maps and small vehicles
- Discussing road safety, by keeping safe in the home and community, and by discussing how to keep safe in the sun and the importance of wearing appropriate clothing;
- the local environment and visitors;
- the work of some people in the local community, eg fire officer, shop assistant and/or doctor, through role-play or arranging visits to or from the Nursery; and
- Taking some responsibility for caring for their own environment, becoming aware of environmental issues like litter and the use of paper and bottle banks.
- Using technology to support their learning – computers, iPads, Listening stations, Bee Bot, remote controlled cars etc