

PARENTS AS PARTNERS



**How we create a
brighter future for your
child, together**

UNICORN
Nursery

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Getting to know us...

In our setting we use the Curiosity and the Reggio Emilia Approaches to learning.

Being Reggio Inspired, we believe in a child-centred approach to learning. The founder of the Reggio Emilia approach, Loris Malaguzzi, believed that children are powerful and capable individuals, with the ability and desire to construct their own knowledge, and influenced schools to have a student-teacher relationship that was collaborative rather than instructive. He described the infinite ways that children can express, explore, and connect their thoughts, feelings and imaginings, and called it "The 100 Languages". These languages he refers to are symbolic, and are open to the endless potentials in children, the belief in a child's ability to wonder, and that there are multiple ways of seeing and multiple ways of being.

We too, believe that children should be able to freely express their thoughts, feelings and ideas in a way that is unique to them, and which helps them learn and progress most suited to their stage of development.

We are led by the children, and we will sensitively explore and discover alongside them, encouraging and guiding their learning by stepping in at just the right moment, so as not to take over their learning or misdirect their development.

This can present some difficulties around special days, such as Mother's Day/Father's Day, Christmas etc, as we move away from creating the generic handprint cards and pictures that require adult instruction and input where the majority of the class's artwork they look identical - instead we provide the children with a wealth of materials and resources and encourage them to create something more unique and meaningful to you and them. If they want their snowman to have 3 eyes, 6 legs and no body, then that is perfectly fine! Who are we to say what a snowman should look like, when the only limit to a child's creativity is their imagination?

Our goal is not to expect something tangible as the end result – learning takes place in the process, skills are learnt by practice, and development moves forward when children are free to wallow in experiences without the pressure to create something identifiable at the end. We therefore avoid questions such as "what have you made" and replace them with queries such as "tell me more about your painting/drawing/building" – allowing the child to be proud of *how* they created it, not *what* they created.

It is from this experimenting and discovering that children are freely able to practise over time, that they come to realise which approach will work best in order to reach their overall desired effect, such as making a more widely recognisable snowman picture.

For more information, please visit:

www.daynurseryseries.co.uk/advice/the-reggio-emilia-approach-to-early-years-education
www.thecuriosityapproach.com

Group Observations

During the weeks your child is not Focus, they will continue working on the areas of development identified in their previous Focus Week through group activities, supported by all practitioners in the room.

As you will have been informed of these at the end of Focus Week, we encourage you to share how they have been getting on at home on the App, through photos, videos, and short observations. This helps us keep track of their progress and adjust our daily interactions with them to better suit their most current needs.

Six-week Assessment

Every 6 weeks, you will receive a 'mini report' on your child's overall progress so far. This will also include their future areas of development, meaning you can help your child at home too. By assessing your child regularly, we can identify any areas they may need extra support in and provide more opportunities for them to develop the skills needed to ensure they are always on track.

Two-year Progress Check

Around the age of 24 months, your child's Health Visitor will contact you regarding their 2-year development check. To support this, we also complete a 2 Year Progress Check which can be shared with your Health Visitor at your appointment. Please let us know as soon as you have an appointment, so we can ensure our report is ready for you to take along with you.

We are also ask if you could share any feedback given by the Health Visitor, particularly if it involves any areas for development, so that we can support you and your child as much as we can.

"Parents are the first teachers & teachers are the second parents"

– Maruthi N



We hope you have found this information useful. Working together in partnership will ensure your child has the best start in life, and whenever you have any questions, please do ask. We are more than happy to help.

Learning and Development

Since September 2021, it is no longer a requirement of Ofsted that practitioners gather large amounts of written, photographic, or video evidence of a child's development. Instead, we are now encouraged to be with the children, playing, discovering, and exploring alongside them as a collaborator in their learning, and get to know them on a much more personal level than ever before, just as you, the parent does.

We therefore will not be spending our day posting lots of photos/videos to our App, as we will be having far too much fun enjoying your child's company, and doing what we do best, playing!

However, we will be using the App for important documentation as part of your child's Learning Journey...

Focus Child

Every few weeks, your child will become their Key Person's 'Focus Child'. This is where your child's development needs will be focused on more closely and in more detail, spending more one-to-one time with their Key Person taking part in activities that will help them develop the skills required.

All practitioners in the room will contribute to your child's Focus Week. The week before this occurs, practitioners will hand out a Parent Information Sheet, and ask you to fill in anything that your child is/has been doing at home in the days prior to their Focus Week. This helps us build a picture of what they enjoy doing, new things they have been practicing or learnt, and acts as a starting point for conversations which builds upon their language development.

Please don't feel as though you must make special arrangements to do things with your child just so you can add details to the sheet; it is the everyday, normal things we wish to hear about as this is what we build upon at Nursery. Something as simple as helping you load the washing machine at home can have so many opportunities for learning – for example sorting colours/type of clothing is mathematics, setting the machines cycle is Technology – all of which are skills that can be developed further at Nursery if we know what your child enjoys doing with you at home. They may seem like boring chores to us, but to a child, every opportunity is a chance for learning to take place!

You are encouraged to upload any pictures and photos to support the sheet onto our App, which are then shared with your child in Nursery.

Once Focus Week is over, the observation will be uploaded for you to see. These observations will be short, snapshot type notes about the 'teachable moments' practitioners have had with your child (i.e., moments of learning where practitioners have sensitivity stepped in and encouraged/facilitated further learning and discovery for your child, without 'taking over'.)

You will also be informed of what they now need to work on, with ideas of what you can do at home to help them develop further. Practitioners will also continue working on these areas and monitor your child progress until their next Focus Week, so any input from home about their progress will be extremely helpful and much appreciated.

Open ended materials and 'loose parts'

We're sure many of you have noticed that your child loves nothing more to play with 'real world' items rather than the child friendly, plastic alternatives the toys shops have created (think about your mobile phones, television remotes, keys, pots and pans etc). And how many times have you found your child finding just as much curiosity in the packaging than the actual toy?

This is because everyday objects can offer a variety of sensory stimuli, usually better than any one particular toy because there are so many options around the home, and it is what they see you play with all day, every day – they want to know why it is so interesting and they want to be like you!

Young children love to explore different textures, and with most toys being made of plastic they all offer a singular texture, sound and smell which children will become accustomed to very quickly. All plastic toys will feel the same, smell and taste the same, and make the same sound when they are hit, whereas a wooden spoon/metal saucepan offer something different, even when a child interacts with them in the same way as a plastic toy. They may notice how a wooden spoon feels rough, and that it doesn't taste the same as a plastic spoon, or how the metal saucepan clangs as it falls to the floor, or when they drop in some curtain rings to mimic how you cook in the kitchen at home.

Therefore, the majority of our resources are authentic, 'loose parts' – open ended materials that do not have a singular use, thus allowing them to be whatever the child wants and needs them to be, whenever they need them. A plastic toy phone can only ever be a plastic toy phone, but a rectangular piece of wood can be so much more – a phone, a ramp, a piece of food, a bed for a dolls house; the list is endless! Opened ended loose parts not only help feed children's curiosity and imagination, but also means our rooms are not overloaded with too many resources that will, for the most part, only have one use. In turn, this creates much more space for the children to move around freely, meaning they can configure it as they see fit during their play, in a way that *supports* their play.

For more information about loose parts, please follow the links below:

www.communityplaythings.com/resources/articles/2015/loose-parts
<http://littleworldsbigadventures.com/loose-parts-play-at-home>



A warm Welcome

Settling-in Sessions

Your registration fee covers 5 hours' worth of settling in sessions, which are broken down into short stays for your child to experience at Nursery before they begin their official place with us. During these sessions they will get to meet the practitioners in their room, some of their friends, and start to familiarise themselves with our day-to-day routine. It's also an opportunity for parents to have a few hours to themselves knowing their children are in safe hands (and possibly enjoy a nice hot cup of tea!)

Starting Points Booklet

As part of your Parent Induction Pack, you will receive a Starting Points Booklet. This details the 3 'prime areas' of development from the curriculum guidance we use here at Unicorn Day Nursery, Personal, Social and Emotional, Communication & Language, and Physical. We ask parents to complete this booklet before their child begins their first settling in session, so that we can get a greater understanding of what your child is capable of. This will also form part of their Baseline Assessment (which your child's key person will complete around 4 weeks after your child's start date) helping them plan for future areas of development.

Key Person

Each practitioner in your child's room will work hard to form a positive, warm and trusting relationship with you and your child, but there will be that one special practitioner that will work more closely with them (and you!), known as a Key Person. They will be responsible for forming that first Nursery relationship with you and your child to help them build a bond of trust and support their transition into Nursery life. There are a few factors that will be considered before deciding on your child's key person:

- *The days that your child attends*
- *The days the practitioner's work*
- *Who your child forms a close bond with*

The Key Person is also responsible for keeping track of your child's learning and development and will speak to you regarding this as and when required or requested. Each time your child moves rooms, they will be allocated a new Key Person who will be based in their new room. When your child's key person is absent from Nursery (such as on holiday) then the other practitioners in the room will continue to record their learning and development and share their progress with you.

Tapestry

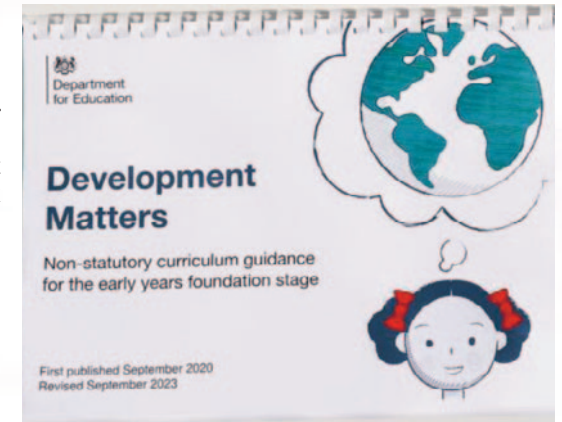
Each parent is registered to our [Tapestry app](#). We use this to inform you about your child's day, and to upload photos, videos and observations relevant to their learning and development. You are also able to share information about what they get up to at home – we love seeing photos and videos of your children in their own surroundings as this is where they feel most comfortable, and therefore confident! A lot can be learnt about your child just from a little insight from home, and it goes a long way to helping us plan for their development.



Curriculum

Development Matters

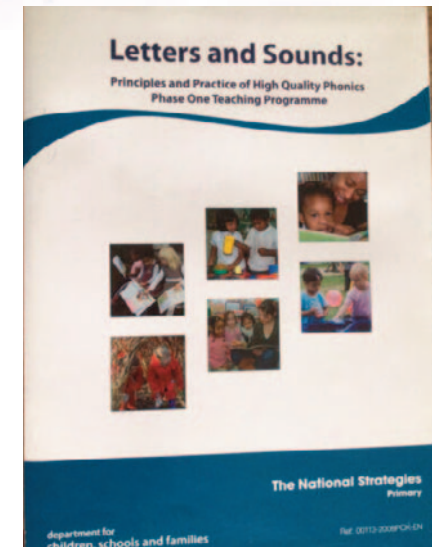
Here at Unicorn Nursery we use the Development Matters guidance to help ensure your child is developing to their full potential. It is a curriculum that can work alongside the more widely known Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)



Letters and Sounds

We often get asked how we 'teach' the alphabet to our children and the simple answer is, we don't! Learning to read and write is a complex ability and requires lots of practice and careful planning to develop the skills that underpin the more formal teaching of that occurs during the latter part of the foundation stage in Reception class at school.

Children are best placed to learn phonics and reading once they have the knowledge and expertise in the core basis of distinguishing between sounds and knowing how these sounds are made. The Letters and Sound programme (phase one) is what most Early Years settings will follow, which comprises different activities that help develop a child's listening and attention skills. These are all fundamental in the art of phonics.



<https://letters-and-sounds.com> also has some fun interactive games you can try at home!