



Our Curriculum journey

Little Lambs is a setting which strives for passion, creativity and innovation within the childcare sector. We have been part of the focus groups co-constructing and planning the curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings which has been an amazing opportunity to really support what the early years is all about. We have seen these developments as a new and exciting chapter for the non-maintained sector.

What did we do?

We wanted to intertwine the curriculum and our values and ethos of our settings, so the work and staff engagement was authentic. We began with the four purposes. We helped staff understand new terminology and what a new curriculum would look like in practice. We found the introduction and consistent use of the language has further supported the preparation for the new curriculum.

We felt that the four purposes are the roots of the tree, they are what hold it altogether and need to be considered with any thinking. For us to really embrace these changes we had to see what we already did within the four purposes and how to move forward.

We considered the following:

- ❖ What strengths do we have now?
- ❖ What do we want to improve?
- ❖ What are the needs and interests of our children?
- ❖ What are the teams dreams or ideas for the space?
- ❖ How will we improve our setting and ensure rich environments



Professional development

We commissioned a variety of speakers to help support staff in making positive changes and provide them with some inspiration. By investing in developing our team to become inspired and believe in themselves, we have supported the team to become engaged and excited about the new curriculum.



We invested in training such as:

- Shonette Bason-Wood – ‘Dough Disco’, positive well-being and early literacy
- Elizabeth Jarman – Communication friendly spaces
- Conwy Play Team – Loose parts and risky play
- Alice Sharp – Educational theory, cutting edge thinking and inspiring practice

These training opportunities have supported staff to feel inspired, excited, and pulled into a world full of possibilities. It also supported them to see that others have similar barriers and doubts. Each training opportunity gave staff more confidence in pursuing changes or continuing with strong practice which places the child at the centre.

We had also invested in a small extension to the property which then developed into a complete renovation of the setting. We looked at the spaces we had available around the property and how



to maximise each room and outdoor space to allow each child to access much more within their learning environments. This has been a great addition to our setting and has supported the environments to become richer, more innovative and even more exciting. We involved all Team Leaders to support and design their own spaces. This allowed staff to feel a sense of belonging to their setting and rooms. This saw the team work together to support the changes to the environment; we considered quiet spaces, spaces for large movement, open and creative spaces, outdoor spaces, accessible spaces and resources as well as spaces for staff to complete their work.

Collaborating with others

We have been invited to numerous settings across the North Wales coast to educate and support their teams in understanding and embedding the four purposes within practice and prepare for the curriculum. Managers from other

settings felt the sessions were relatable, engaging and detailed, offering practitioners inspirational and motivational ideas to strengthen and improve practices within their settings.

We will continue to support settings across Wales developing their vision for the curriculum.

Planning for learning

We developed our own internal training package to help inform our team of the fundamentals of the curriculum and to really unpick the four purposes together. We used this time to develop our own planning methods and support practitioners to understand the need to support the children's drives which will, in turn, inform and support planning. We discussed how to listen and tune in to each child to ensure all their voices were heard.

We moved away from topics/themes with no purpose and really developed the idea of following children's interests or ideas and what this would look like. In one of our settings, we were led by the children to learn about dinosaurs, three times in that year because the children were so engrossed. Each time we thought of different experiences to expand children's learning and knowledge. Purposeful learning is about giving purpose for what you are doing, and children are much more connected with experiences that bring them joy.



Documenting learning

We have so much to think about when it comes to documenting learning that sometimes it can be overwhelming, and it can be easy to miss the real learning opportunities.



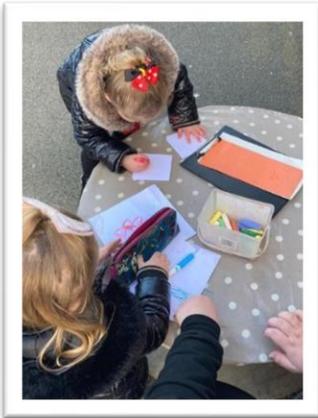
Displays in our setting document children's thinking, opportunities, and experiences. Each child has their own learning journey from when they started in the setting which holds work they have made to be proud of or "wow" moments.

We also record digitally via an app which records moments in time to share with parents. There are no set times to observe or pressure on staff to gain specific information, instead observations are meaningful and record moments which are purposeful to each individual child.

Each child has their own personal mid-term journey review, which allows staff to engage with parents and inform them about their child's personal journey through the setting. We felt this gave a more personal touch to assessment rather than a generic approach. This review allows practitioners to record things the child has done throughout the term, including skills they have been developing and also includes information on how families can support their child's development further. We felt this was a more personal approach and also engages families in the journey of their child.



Summary



Staff have felt supported and involved during the process of change and this has led to a stronger team dynamic. The whole team has a clear vision for the setting. By supporting the principles throughout the setting, children are becoming more confident, resilient, powerful and informed which provides them with a solid foundation as they begin their education journey.

We offer purposeful and authentic learning experiences for all children, based around their needs and interests, which empowers children within the setting. We foster a strong family dynamic within the setting which supports children to feel safe and secure.

Our method gives staff the freedom to be innovative, follow children's interests and supports the five developmental pathways in a holistic way.

Professional learning is crucial to support practitioner development and to spark their creativity and inspiration.

Being flexible and spontaneous with planning allows practitioners to plan based on what children are interested in. It empowers practitioners to observe and interact with children as they pursue their own interests and assess and move the learning on in that moment.

So, what next?

We are excited for the changes that are ahead and ready to embrace the curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings.

Learning through play and child-led learning remains, and the principles and pedagogy derive from what we already know. Embrace the change – think about how it will impact your setting and how you will improve opportunities for your children.

We got this!

Sam Maitland-Price, Little Lambs Day Nursery, Kinmel Bay, North Wales

