

Rathmore Primary School and Nursery



Curriculum Policy

Date Ratified:	May 2026
Date of Review:	May 2027

This policy has been written following a consultation process, ratified by the Board of Governors and communicated to the school community as required. It will be monitored and reviewed as part of the school's policy review schedule.

Curriculum Policy

Article 28

Every child has the right to an education.

Article 29

Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full.

The Aims of the Pre-School Curriculum

Most young children come to Pre-School as active, experienced, and enthusiastic learners. To build on the learning that has taken place in the home and its immediate environment, Nursery staff provide children with a rich variety of challenging play activities and other experiences in a stimulating environment. The focus is on enabling children to learn at their own pace and to have a breadth of learning experiences.

As all children are different and develop at different rates, pre-school education aims to develop the whole child by:

- Promoting emotional, social, physical, creative, and intellectual development.
- Developing self-esteem, self-control, and positive attitudes towards others.
- Developing language and communication skills to encourage the sharing of thoughts and feelings.
- Creating confident, eager, enthusiastic, independent, curious learners with a positive and problem-solving attitude to learning.

(Curricular Guidance for Pre-School Education, CCEA, 2018)

Our Ethos

At Rathmore, we strive to create a safe and inclusive community where everyone is treated with respect and kindness and where each individual feels valued, accepted, and encouraged to be themselves.

We celebrate diversity and promote teamwork, nurturing positive relationships and a strong sense of belonging.

Through meaningful learning experiences, we inspire curiosity, resilience, and personal growth, empowering our pupils to grow with confidence, embrace challenges, and contribute positively to the world around them.

Planning for the curriculum

All Nursery staff are involved in the planning and evaluation cycle. Plans are evolving, working documents that build on the children's natural interests and previous experiences. They are flexible and take account of the children's responses and the outcomes of play. Planning ensures the learning experiences for each child are broad and balanced and promote continuity and steady progression in the child's overall development. (Pre-School Curriculum Guidance, CCEA; 2018).

The Pre-School Guidance sets out six areas of learning:

1. Personal, Social and Emotional Development
2. Language Development
3. Early Mathematical Experiences
4. The Arts
5. Physical Development and Movement
6. The World Around Us

Staff at Rathmore Nursery ensure that the six areas of the pre-school curriculum are available both inside and outside. The staff team meet regularly to plan and evaluate curriculum plans, working with long-term, medium term and short-term planning documents.

Long Term Plans

Sets out the learning for a whole group of children in broad terms over the year.

Medium Term Plans

Sets out the learning for a shorter, more specific period; usually for each half term.

Short Term Plans

Takes account of children's individual needs and responds to their ideas and spontaneous play. Evaluations of children's responses to the provision and their experiences form the basis of the next set of plans.

In The Moment Planning

Rathmore Nursery uses In the Moment Planning; observing and interacting with children as they pursue their own interests, while also assessing and moving the learning on in the moment. This child-led learning opens a greater range of possibilities and learning opportunities.

There are three key stages to In the Moment Planning:

1. The child's spark – when the child first shows an interest in something
2. The teachable moment – staff will wait for the right time to engage and respond to the individual needs of the child.
3. The documentation – later staff document the spark and the teachable moment.

Learning takes place through child-initiated play by:

- Providing opportunities and environments that stimulate curiosity.
- Observing and listening closely to follow the child's lead.
- Picking up on the thing / place / person / idea that has sparked the child's interest.
- Using open ended questions that ask for a description.

The Adult's Role

- Provide a high-quality environment which supports children's emotional well-being and helps them to be motivated to learn.
- Evaluate observations to determine how the environment can be enhanced.
- Observe children at play and respond to the individual needs of the child.
- Respect children and create a safe environment.
- Establish rules, boundaries, and behaviour expectations.
- Spend time supporting children in accessing equipment and learning routines.
- Play alongside children.
- Listen and respond to children.
- Model ideas and language.
- Ask questions and make suggestions.
- Offer additional resources to enable children to extend ideas further.

Continuous Provision

Children experience the Pre-School Curriculum through play in a rich and stimulating learning environment. Each area in the classroom is set up with continuous provision; a variety of resources which are available throughout the year and provide children with opportunities to develop skills in each of the six areas of the Pre-School Curriculum. Enhancements (additional resources) are added to areas to cater for children's interest, to explore a theme, to add challenge or to teach a specific skill.

Loose parts are incorporated into the provision. Loose parts are open ended resources which can be used by the children; they can be moved, carried, combined, redesigned, lined up, taken apart and put back together in different ways. There is no specific set of instructions or way of using loose parts, they can be used in anyway the children choose. The use of loose parts empowers creativity and imagination and promotes open ended learning. It encourages risk taking and trial and error learning. In using loose parts, children are enabled to take control of their learning and play.

At the beginning of the year Nursery staff spend time supporting children in accessing and using the resources and in making choices in their play. The Nursery staff follow the children's lead, they observe children at play, they may model ideas and language, ask questions, and offer suggestions, or offer additional resources to enable children to extend their ideas. They plan in the moment, picking up on the thing / place / person / idea that has sparked the child's interest, and they know when to intervene to support or extend learning in that moment.

This type of provision provides an environment which allows children the freedom to explore, experiment, plan and make decisions for themselves. It gives children time to

thoroughly explore learning experiences across all areas of learning; to build on what they did previously and to fully explore their ideas and concepts. Children become active learners who can deepen and further their learning and thinking.

Forest School

'Forest school is an inspirational process, that offers all learners regular opportunities to achieve, develop confidence and self-esteem, through hands on learning experiences in a local woodland or natural environment with trees'

E. Wellings, Forest School Development Officer)

'Outdoor learning is an integral part of the overall educational programme'
Curricular Guidance for Pre-School Education

At Rathmore we recognise the benefits of learning outdoors as it gives all children regular opportunities to achieve; increases physical and mental health and promotes an overall sense of wellbeing; enhances personal and social skills; supports the development of healthy and active lifestyles; gives children access to the natural world and offers experiences which are unique to the outdoors; helps children to understand and respect nature; supports problem solving skills; provides rich opportunities for children's developing imaginations, allows children to experience risky play and develops confidence.

We are aware there is a decline in children having access to the outdoors. BBC News (July 2016) stated children have fewer opportunities to explore their surrounding natural environment due to a combination of busier family lives and an increased sense of fear in society. This hampers children's social skills as well as 'risking stifling their long-term physical, emotional development and wellbeing.' Therefore, at Rathmore we aim to bridge this gap and provide regular opportunities for children to experience their natural environment. We hope this has a rippling effect and the children will share their experiences with home, inspiring families to visit their local woodlands more frequently.

We at Rathmore Nursery embrace the following Forest School ethos:

- Outdoor learning is as equally valid as Indoor learning.
- 'There is no such thing as bad clothing, only inappropriate clothing,' (Explorer Sir R. Fiennes), and we aim to allow children to experience the outdoors in all weather.
- Children will have access to the field area during their year at Nursery, we will utilise this area the best we can.
- Children will have access to the Outdoor Learning Pods based in the Primary School. The Nursery staff and children will respect and care for these shared spaces.
- Children will have visits to Clandeboy Nature Rangers.
- Learning outdoors will be linked to the curriculum and will aim to promote the holistic development of all those involved.
- Children will have opportunities to take 'supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves' (FSA Website).
- Risk assessment will be carried out and signed by the Senior Management Team.
- The Rights Respecting School Charter will be utilised when outdoors to support children in making good choices and in keeping themselves safe.

- Play and choice are an integral part of Forest School learning, the children will be offered an activity to do but are free to express their own interests and direct their own play.
- Adults will enable children to direct their own learning; they will observe how children are in the outdoors and evaluate / plan according to the needs and interests of the children.
- When new resources are introduced it may be necessary to teach children the knowledge and skills to use them. There may therefore be periods of adult-led activities until children are able to use resources independently.
- Each session will have rituals at the beginning and end to signify the difference and specialness of Forest School.
- A reflection will take place at the end of each session to enable the adults and children to share their experiences / learning and to plan for the future.

‘Open ended play is at the heart of forest school and it serves to connect children with themselves, each other and their environment (S. Knight).’

Parents/Carers as Partners

It is the policy of Rathmore Nursery to encourage parents as partners in their child’s education and to draw attention to the importance of their role in helping them.

The Nursery teacher holds meetings with parents to review curriculum progress and highlight any areas for development. Parents will receive a written report at the end of the Nursery year.

Newsletters are shared on a regular basis with parents, outlining the learning taking place and any rhymes/songs which can be enjoyed at home.

Rathmore Nursery is part of the Getting Ready to Learn Scheme. Parents can access a book and toy library throughout the year. There are also regular posts on Seesaw to support parents in understanding the curriculum and how they can support their child at home.

Links

Curricular Guidance for Pre-School Education

<https://ccea.org.uk/downloads/docs/ccea-asset/Curriculum/Curricular%20Guidance%20for%20Pre-School%20Education.pdf>

This Policy should be read in conjunction with our suite of Nursery Policies.