

Artisans

kindergarten



How we discover the world in the nursery year at Artisans.

The purpose

This document has been developed to support you with your child's preparation for their Reception year and beyond. It illustrates curriculum areas, highlighting the extensive opportunities available for your child, translating the lingo, explaining how track your child's development and giving you a flavour of the ways Artisans will be nourishing your child's development in these areas.



However the most important things to remember are

All children are different and this should be celebrated.

That your child is happy, has a positive outlook and a curious approach to learning: this will impact their future education more profoundly, and for longer, than anything else.

Also, that a few months, whilst short to adults, is a very long proportion of your child's life and the changes a child can make in two or three months are phenomenal.

Finally your child will learn when they are ready. Children have very clear sensitive periods in which certain concepts will suddenly fall into place easily and quickly. These are opportunities to watch for and build upon.

What is the external opinion?

Several of the Artisans teachers have previously taught Reception classes and beyond. We have regular visits from Reception Year teachers and Head teachers from both private and state schools. They unanimously state that the greatest preparation a child can have is to be confident and enthusiastic with a large measure of independence. Being well mannered and having good social skills also help tremendously. No-one places most emphasis on traditional academic knowledge at this point in your child's learning journey.

The Lingo

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is a legal framework compiled by the Government which covers children's learning from birth to five years. We follow this framework and assess against it, and it will be continued in Reception, whichever school they attend.

The EYFS is divided into three prime areas: Personal and Social Education (PSE), Communication and Language (CL) and Physical. There are four specific areas of learning: Maths, Literacy, Expressive arts and Design (EAD) and Understanding of the World (KUW). Each area is sub divided into overlapping age bands with a range of learning objectives assigned to each band.

How does Artisans assess my child's learning?

Keeping track of your child's development is of paramount importance. We do this in a variety of ways.

Planning.....every day your child is invited to participate in a variety of circle times and activities that are developed using EYFS learning objectives as a stimulus as well as individual and small group work.

Observations.....your child's key workers, and other teachers, constantly observe your child's development. They record these observations through written form, photographs and work samples. This evidence is compiled and used as proof that particular learning objectives from the EYFS framework have been achieved.

Montessori Extension work - Artisans is resourced in terms of teaching expertise and resources to teach children up to the age of 8years. We will target the individual developmental stage of each child in their transition year and use our resources to stretch that development as far as possible.

EYFS Extension Work.....all children in their nursery year participate in skill based small group activities specifically aimed to support their preparation for Reception; to give them the smoothest transition possible.





Prima Area: Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSE)

This is the most important area of development for your child at this age. When they start school your child will begin to spend more time away from home than at home. This is a momentous step for everyone. The nursery year is the time to prepare for that step, going toe by toe for a firm footing. The Montessori Grace and Courtesy curriculum enriches this delivery by explicitly teaching skills for happy and successful social interactions. Confident children with optimistic attitudes to school and a love for discovering the pleasure in life is what we seek to create for every child.

Montessori Grace and Courtesy

At Artisans from the very early beginnings we have developed respect for self and others. By now you can be confident that your child will have an ever growing understanding of how they fit into the busy world of everybody. We stretch this by explicitly teaching children how to accept a compliment, how to stand in a queue, how to make your way into a game that is already begun, how to be a friend, how to share food and how to take pleasure from shared experience through interactions and conversations, how to put feelings into perspective and so, so much more.

EYFS PSE

Making relationships

This is about knowing how to build relationships. We will deliberately begin to ask children to work with different adults and groups and to take on different roles in these situations. It's about knowing how to assert your view gracefully, negotiate and compromise.

Dispositions and Attitudes:

We are building a desire to learn and providing opportunities so enticing that learning is irresistible. This will be different for every child following their passions and building new ones. The richness of the environment allows the children to experiment, explore and become increasingly fascinated and deeply involved. We teach how to ask questions and how to find answers.

Self confidence and self awareness

This is about learning to be in control of one's feelings and needs -a real life skill. At Artisans we will role play different situations to explore emotions but we will also maximise all opportunities; new siblings and new children in Artisans; making dens and exploring feelings and spaces; learning to compliment others and ourselves; making things with others; vocabulary extension



Physical

Being outside allows children to be active on a larger scale. By the time your child reaches the early years they will be able to move around a large area with control, co-ordination and confidence. At Artisans there is lots of equipment and a range of surfaces and landscaping to promote this - a tarmac area for riding scooters and bikes, a bumpy turfed area for balancing and rolling and a wooden pirate ship climbing on. Our aim is to allow the children to learn to become experienced risk takers, mindful of their own limitations and challenges, and have the confidence to make good choices about which risks to take - a skill that will develop throughout their lives in a myriad of different scenarios. The children at Artisans are encouraged to take pride in their environment, and they all enjoy helping with the gardening - digging, planting, watering, carefully picking herbs for the kitchen. Their fine motor skills are developed as they use clamps and pegs to build dens or use twine to make a bamboo wigwam for beans.

Outside

The outside area allows for a much larger range of movements and experiences that simply cannot be accessed from inside even the most extensively resourced classroom. The free flow system at Artisans ensures that the outside space is available almost all the time to the children. It is not seen as an extension of their learning, but rather an integral part of it. It provides a wonderful sensory environment, different challenges and often a place to be louder, faster, braver and freer!



Nature Walks

At Artisans groups of children are invited to go on a nature walk in the local woodland every week. The children are given hands on opportunities to collect fallen treasures, feel the weather and seasons, take photographs of special things, follow woodland trails, climb over branches, run in wide open spaces and scramble up and down hills.



Understanding the World

Being outside gives your child immediate and direct connection to the natural world. They are able to explore it first hand, touching and feeling different textures and temperatures, listening to and learning to discriminate different sounds, smelling herbs and plants, and watching the colours and shapes that change with the seasons. They will get the chance to finely tune their observation skills and learn to notice and describe changes, patterns, similarities and differences which all build on their classification and observation skills necessary for school and later years. Being outside will help a child build their own identity as they discover for themselves the pleasures of being outside as a grounding for good health.



Communication and Language (CL)

Communication, primarily through language, is our gateway to the awe inspiring richness of the world beyond ourselves. It is quite often also a tool for self understanding. It is important to appreciate the diversity of this area of development - it is far greater than learning to read and write - it is about having a structure by which to organise and make sense of experiences and a way to engage with the world around. Children absorb language and communication styles from conception; the phenomenal number of skills they have acquired before they reach their nursery year is mind boggling. Developing CL is largely about the quality and authenticity of interactions. It is for that reason, among others, that all teachers at Artisans have high level qualifications in child development. Almost every member of teaching staff at Artisans has a qualification adequate to make them the leader in an Early Years setting.



The Montessori Approach

CL is developed in all areas of Artisans. As examples: Practical Life develops the focus needed to decode and the fine motor co ordination of the hand muscles necessary to control a writing implement; the Sensorial Area develops auditory and spatial discrimination so that learning which squiggle makes what sound comes more easily. For over 100 years Montessori techniques have used multi sensory and phonetic learning resources and activities for children.

In the nursery year children will be introduced to a magnitude of conversations and explorations. We will play games with language, nonsense and real. We will have fun with words. We will see how much you can communicate with no words. We will enjoy silence and sounds. Listening is just as valuable as expressing.

We will, when each child is ready and has the essential foundations of focus and a true fascination and desire, look at reading and writing. The two will be modelled as reflections of each other but taught discreetly.

To be able to compose a word is not the same as being able to spell. When you write you only have to order your own thoughts. When you read you have to order your own processes and understand the thoughts of someone else. There is a dynamic array of CL opportunities for the children to access and the most important elements are pleasure and successful communications. You cannot tell when you meet an adult the age they learnt to read and write.





Listening and Attention

The greatest gift we can give your child at Artisans is our time. Unlike busy Mum and Dad we are here for the sole purpose of spending time with your children. There are no phones to answer or washing to do, we have other times for that. If we spend the entire morning reading stories and talking about them, discussing the characters, predicting the plot, relating it to the children's own experiences, experimenting with intonation, acting it out, spotting letters, interpreting illustrations, making comparisons, talking nonsense and seeing what happens to the story - all of that is fine. We have the time. The learning from this is vital and huge. At Artisans we also have CD's to listen to, tape recorders to talk to, Role Play, small world, the wonders of the garden, birds to listen for, silence, turn taking, younger children, older children, adults speaking foreign languages, water dripping, beads falling, plates clanking, music groups. All of these build up experiences to listen and attend and we are there to prompt a thought, ask or answer a question.



Understanding

As children develop their receptive language (what they understand) exceeds their expressive language (what they can articulate) by a significant margin. By being constant Role Models to the children, another reason for the high qualification level and ratios, we are able to build both their receptive and expressive language. We model how to ask questions and the children then have manifold opportunities to ask. Why? Is one of Artisans' favourite words. Equally we recognise there is always a lot more inside than the children usually like to let on. We will talk to them about isosceles, scalene and equilateral triangles; about the continents and countries of the world; about the technical words for computer work; the names of species of birds and flower; about nouns, adverbs, adjectives, prepositions, pronouns. We are not expecting the children to come back and tell you but we know that when the concepts re-emerge in years to come the grounding and mental images will all be accurately present and your child will be ready to fly.

Speaking

We have the time to listen so that your child has the time to talk. We will model all types of speech and explicitly teach them how to ask to join a game or refill their drink. Understanding the structures and etiquette of conversations is very important and we do not leave this skill to chance. With all this grounding in place it is our turn to be single focused, listen, be attentive and be fascinated by your child.





Expressive Arts and Design

As such an integral aspect many of the key parts of this learning are referenced elsewhere. Here we will look at art in the more traditional sense, messy play, music, role play, cooking and media and materials. We also offer Dance and Yoga.

Throughout this learning area the theme of imagination is strong. The emphasis is on the child's ideas, spontaneity and original thought; it is about celebrating that children are far more open to possibility than adults and we can learn from them. When we asked the children what pets they would like at school the answers included dinosaurs and crocodiles - just imagine how much learning was involved in the discussion that followed!!

In the Nursery Year at Artisans this learning area is about self awareness and self confidence. Building within each child an understanding of their own contribution to the world and their place alongside others.

Art

Art is about creation and not always about the creation of something permanent or necessarily beautiful. At Artisans children will use ready mix paint, pastels, pencils, pens, powder paint, watercolour, all sorts of papers, natural objects, clay, playdough, beads, ribbons, straw, charcoal, glues, food colouring and so much more.

When it rains we will paint in the rain and see what the raindrops do or drop powder paint into puddles. When it snows we spray coloured water in the snow. In the wind we make ribbon sculptures. British weather is great for art. The children will do observational small scale drawing and huge group works.

The nursery year at Artisans is the time we encourage the children to try our new things and experiment. We are able to make Art on a scale which is impossible at home.



Messy Play

Anything goes here, with one exception, we will not play with food as it gives a very confusing message when it gets to lunch time. We paint with feet, make shaving foam towers, spin pictures on a lazy susan, make concoctions of different density fluids and drop objects through them, clay is great, cornflour is fascinating, mud is marvellous We push the boundaries and play.

Even the rain is a chance for art.



Cooking

Cooking is amazing, we could teach the entire curriculum through cooking. It involves hygiene, health and safety, geography (where the ingredients come from), history (the story of the food), science (chemical reactions and physical changes of state), creativity (the making), maths (weighing, measuring and shapes), language (instructions, conversations and vocabulary), physical (fine and gross motor movements), PSE (group work, turn taking and pride). The children are invited to join cooking every few weeks, but usually request to more often. In their nursery year children start to help prepare the daily meals where appropriate which builds their sense of identity and value as well as real practical life skill. As cooking is such an boundless opportunity many other learning needs will also be met through cooking



Music

Music and singing are wonderful ways to build concentration, energy and laughter. As the children's confidence and musical repertoire grows they will often lead singing and music sessions or perform to their peers. This is a huge step in creative and personal development. On Fridays we are lucky enough to welcome Bernie a fully qualified music, drama and Montessori teacher who introduces a rich a variety of tuned and percussion instruments and builds a special Artisans song collection with the children.



Role Play

This is one of our most popular areas of the classroom and outside. Not strictly Montessori this is one of the aspects of Artisans developed for its own inherent value and also as direct preparation for school life. The Role Play area is always linked to our topic and is an area where the older children particularly are able to make real purposeful decisions which affect what they and others do. The Role Play allows them an opportunity to exert personality and also to experiment with the reactions of others when taking on other personalities. It is about identity and feelings.



Yoga

All the teachers are Artisans have been professionally trained to teach yoga at pre school level. As part of the experiences we offer nursery year children we have more challenging yoga poses and sequences which help build physical skills, focus and give the children space to allow their creativity to blossom. It is fascinating seeing how intense their work is after a yoga session.



Knowledge and Understanding of The World (KUW)

This area follows your child's natural instinct to ask questions about the world around him. broadly, this area encompasses humanities and science.

It is vast. It's not purely about learning lists of facts but about learning the process of discovery. As they move into the nursery year they will become more curious about the wider world. This area of learning will give your child the tools to discover things for themselves and a chance to stretch and use their learning in other areas. It is about the joy of learning.

The Montessori Cultural curriculum allows the children to make choices about what topics they pursue, making it valuable and relevant to them as individuals. The shelves are full of enticing equipment for the children to explore themselves, such as: using a light box, making volcanoes, observing fatty acids with food colouring, building working electrical circuits, bird puzzles, flower press, animal families, transport, maps, globes and the chance to handle artefacts from different continents.





Literacy - Reading

Reading is a very advanced skill. Before your child reaches their Nursery year they will have learnt a whole host of pre reading skills that will prove vital for reading. Before we even get to letters and words we need to look at physiology. The visual system is dependent on the nervous system, the nervous system is dependent on strong posture. Lying on your tummy and lifting up your shoulders (like we do in yoga), carrying heavy buckets of sand around the garden, using our eyes to follow a bird or plane across the sky; all of these skills contribute reading success by building up the physiological strength of the visual system we use to read.

At Artisans the high qualification level allows for this knowledge and expertise as a natural part of our interactions. We move onto letters when the child is ready so that they want to learn, we start with their name. We will build a knowledge of the sound of the letters - the building blocks - using multisensory techniques. The Sandpaper Letters and Large Moveable Alphabet are key pieces of extremely versatile equipment that allow a child to progress into fluent reading with a constant point of reference.



Writing

As with reading, writing starts with physiology; with a strong shoulder girdle that allows you to move your arm independently of your shoulder, then with strong wrists that allow your hand to move independently of your arm, then with strong fingers that allow you to move a writing tool with precision. It involves proprioceptor skills that allow you to control the pressure with which you hold your pen and with which you press it to the page. Writing requires the ability to sit still, to have strong enough core muscles to hold a posture. It requires the ability to stream out the distracting information around you. This essential foundation is an enduring Montessori concept throughout all the Practical Life and Sensorial work that build up to this point and support it.

We have countless writing opportunities in many guises and in all areas of Artisans. Most importantly we value the marks and writing that goes on and we give them a purpose.

The children help record our activities, they write lists for the teachers and cards for each other. In a Montessori classroom you can write without reading which is important for progressing individual learning.





Maths

All children come to Artisans with some knowledge of number and counting, shapes, spaces, measuring and patterns. Maths is about making this knowledge explicit, and giving the children the chance to explore mathematical concepts with all their senses, so that they can organise their thoughts and ideas logically and precisely.

Montessori Sensorial

The Sensorial equipment is precise and exact. It is designed to be tactile and intriguing, inviting the children to explore ways to use it. Children are naturally drawn to the sensorial shelves and soon begin to finely tune their ordering and grading skills - they will explore differences in height, weight, length, colour, sound and texture. As your child progresses into the nursery year they will be exposed to more complex activities and problem solving exercises. We will use the Pink Tower and Broad Stair in conjunction and grade 40 sizes instead of 10. The equipment builds up spatial knowledge of variations in size and quantity in preparation for the complexities, patterns and the interplay of numbers and symbols. It makes concrete the concepts they will need to understand abstractly at school and so forms a point of reference for many years.



In this area your child will be introduced to number symbols and quantities, moving from 0 to 9, through the teen numbers and beyond. The precision and accuracy, and the step by step approach to learning practiced in the sensorial area is repeated here. We progress with the children as they are ready showing them number as a quantity and how to manipulate it, building up to the concepts of multiplication and division if the children are interested.

At Artisans your child will be exposed to numbers and counting explicitly and as part of real life situations. There are many opportunities to use numbers and count objects; the children love to count how many spoons are needed for dessert after lunch or to use the golden beads to count units, tens hundreds and even thousands! From early on the children will

know that a block of a thousand golden beads is much heavier and takes up more space on the work mat than a single bead - a visual knowledge that will be vital to manipulating numbers and place value later. They will move through each unit number up to 10 at their own pace, understanding the increasing quantity and the associated symbol, before learning the pattern of teen numbers and often beyond.

We continue exploring the magic of maths outside using the rich opportunities of rain for measuring capacity, plants for heights, construction for weight and shape. Games will involve times and ordinal numbering. Shapes are a key part of the creative curriculum outside. Our nature walks provide rich experience of pattern in spiders webs and flower structures. Minibeast hunts are a great chance to count, add and subtract.



To enrich the environment and learning further we also introduce dance with Tess who is a qualified dance teacher, foreign languages with our teachers fluent in other languages, extra nature walks, lots of external visitors, we create nursery planners in the summer term helping the children take responsibility for their own learning.

Finally we arrange transition visits with their next school and host a leavers lunch where the children have a chance to say fare well, receive a book of Artisans memories and a gift from us.

