

## Continuous Provision Policy at Grace Mary

### Nursery – Year 1.

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*'Children are born with a natural desire to explore and learn and we, the adults, support them by creating an enabling environment and through the relationships and interactions that the children experience.'*

*Anna Ephgrave, 2017, Year One in Action: A Month-by-Month Guide to Taking Early Years Pedagogy into KS1*

### What is Continuous Provision?

Continuous Provision (CP) refers to the resources and areas laid out in a classroom and outdoor space to encourage and provoke learning through play and exploration. The resources should be freely accessible to children to enhance child-initiated play and should be open-ended, meaning children can develop their innovative skills in order to utilise and exhaust all possibilities of a piece of equipment in an imaginative way. Resources provided should be engaging and relevant to children's interests and promote challenge, critical thinking and problem solving.

### Isn't Continuous Provision just a fancy phrase for playing?

When you hear the phrase 'Continuous Provision', many people just think, 'That means they're playing all day!' and you would be right! However, 'play' can mean a multitude of things...

Play can be whatever a child needs to do in order to satisfy their desire and ability to learn, retain and use information, new skills and develop in more ways than one. We will be using the phrase 'play' a lot and are not afraid of using this word, as this is exactly what children will be doing to enable themselves for deep, meaningful learning. This includes allowing time for children to engage in '**Meaningful play.**' In meaningful play, children are active participants.

For example, instead of passively taking in a lesson, children take on roles alongside their peers and respond to the other children according to the rules of play that they've created.

Meaningful play has five characteristics:

1. It gives the child a choice about what he or she wants to do
2. It feels fun and enjoyable for the child
3. It evolves spontaneously, rather than giving children a script to follow
4. It is driven by intrinsic motivation about what the child wants to do
5. It creates an environment where children can experiment and try new idea

### Why are the children going to be learning in this way?

There are so many studies and research projects that delve deeper into the reasons *why* play and exploration is the best approach for young children's learning and development. Murray (2018), Taylor and Boyer (2019), UNICEF (2018) and Vogt (2018), to name just a few of the research projects that found such positive outcomes within their findings and make such a strong case for *why* we should be teaching our young children in this way. A continuous provision approach to learning also enables and encourages children to take their learning outdoors, and again, with so much research suggesting children learn best when they are outside, there is no question as to why we would/should use a different approach.

### Why have we extended Continuous Provision beyond the EYFS?

Year One is renowned as a difficult transition year group, due to the change in curriculum from Early Years to the National Curriculum, hence such a big jump in expectations, level of difficulty and learning environment/structure. Here at Grace Mary, we passionately believe that children learn best through play and exploring their interests. This is why, and to help make this transition as smooth as possible, in Year One, we are continuing the amazing provision that our Early Years Practitioners provide and will be reflecting this in our Year One classroom. We will be enabling a learning through play environment every afternoon to ensure children can satisfy their personal learning needs and all aspects of their personal development are catered to.

### What are the benefits of Continuous Provision in Year One?

Allowing children to learn through play, will not only allow them to consolidate learning that has taken place elsewhere, e.g. at home, at swimming club etc., but also enables children to explore new concepts before they have been formally taught. Even though the approach to learning and environment set up reflects that of the Early Years, the big difference in Year One is *how* the children will naturally access and use the resources due to their advanced maturity and developed understanding. The way in which adults will support and scaffold their learning is different to that of the Early Years due to a deeper, broader response from the children and the way they will interact with the adult as they play.

### **A balanced approach.**

Alongside 'child led' learning, precise teaching in small groups is carefully planned for and delivered throughout the school day, in order to deliver a knowledge rich curriculum. We aim to expand children's knowledge and skills range in specific areas such as Reading, Writing, Mathematics and Science. We carefully consider the curriculum expectations and how we can weave these in to our and around our environment and teacher focused tasks. We meticulously plan the key knowledge we expect them to acquire in order to broaden their horizons.

### **Approaches combined include:**

- Whole class teaching inputs
- Focus group workshops
- 'Rainbow' challenges
- Child initiated learning facilitated by an adult supporting provision using the sustained shared thinking approach.

### **Rainbow Challenges:**

Each week, children will be encouraged to complete up to 5 'Rainbow' tasks which will embed, challenge and extend learning to ensure that children have a well-rounded knowledge of a specific topic. Children will be encouraged to take ownership over completion of Rainbow challenges and will be given the autonomy to choose when they do so. Midweek, an adult will give a gentle reminder to some children and will also provide a higher level of support to those that still need this. Subsequently, all children complete and achieve the challenges set.

### **How we track and assess what children have learnt.**

Throughout their play, children will be observed by an adult, who may record their observations, question, teach, and play along with, support and challenge children to get the best possible outcome from their learning. From this continuous assessment, children are able to be appropriately supported or challenged further and next steps can be planned for to ensure learning that naturally leads on. In Year 1, each child will have their own Learning Journal to independently record the tasks they undertake throughout the day. In the Early Years, individual Learning Journals are organised and regularly updated by key adults whereby observations, pictures and key records of learning are kept for assessment purposes. Alongside this, Nursery and Reception classes produce whole class Learning Journals for Maths, Talk for Writing and Understanding the World.

To end this document, below is a definition of teaching from Ofsted, which we hope gives you further insight into Continuous Provision at Grace Mary.

*'Teaching should not be taken to imply a 'top down' or formal way of working. It is a broad term which covers the many different ways in which adults help young children learn. It includes their interactions with children during planned and child-initiated play and activities: communicating and modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling, providing a narrative for what they are doing, facilitating and setting challenges.'* Ofsted.