UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD POLICY

Understanding the World is the curriculum area which helps children to make sense of the physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, living things and the environment. Children’s development in this area is supported with reference to Early Years Foundation Stage statutory and non-statutory materials and the areas of learning described within them, i.e. People, Culture & Communities; The Natural World and Past & Present.

*Educational Programme 2020 (from the Statutory Framework for the EYFS): Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community. The frequency and range of children’s personal experiences increases their knowledge and sense of the world around them – from visiting parks, libraries and museums to meeting important members of society such as police officers, nurses and firefighters. In addition, listening to a broad selection of stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems will foster their understanding of our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world. As well as building important knowledge, this extends their familiarity with words that support understanding across domains. Enriching and widening children’s vocabulary will support later reading comprehension.*

Homerton Curriculum Goal 9 particularly relates to this policy.

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| CHILDRENIn the course of developing their Understanding of the World children will encounter concepts across the curriculum, through role play, songs, creative activities, physical activities etc. For example, a song about the life cycle of a caterpillar, having a go at painting Chinese numerals, making a Diva to celebrate Diwali or drawing chicks that have hatched at Homerton.By following the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum, and the Characteristics of Effective Learning, children are supported and encouraged to develop their full potential in the following areas:PAST & PRESENT This area of Understanding the World includes (but is not restricted to) children’s understanding of* The lives of those around them and their roles in society
* Similarities and differences between things in the past and now

Children will* Listen to stories or non-fiction texts or watch programmes which build an awareness of peoples’ occupations and ways of life, e.g. BBC’s Come Outside or Me Too.
* Where possible, meet people with a range of different roles in society – starting with the Homerton community, i.e. meeting the people who prepare lunch, work in the office, look after the buildings etc.
* Find about past and present events in their own lives and in those of their families and other people they know, e.g. through noticing changes in their own lives while looking at their All About Me books, through looking at their Special Books at Homerton throughout the year, or having parents visit with young babies.
* Find out about some features of the past through e.g. playing with and learning about dinosaurs or using old ICT equipment in their role play.

PEOPLE, CULTURE AND COMMUNITIESThis area of Understanding the World includes (but is not restricted to) children’s awareness of* Their own environment
* Similarities and differences between different religious and cultural communities
* Similarities and differences between life in this country and life in other countries

Children will* See portrayals around them which are representative of the world around them and of the Homerton community, for example, our display of our Homerton families or having a diverse range of baby dolls to play with.
* Celebrate differences and similarities between themselves and others, for example through drawing self-portraits and discussions at circle times.
* Listen to stories and non-fiction texts or watch programmes which build an awareness of this country and other countries and as well as a range of cultures, and encounter relevant language and concepts through these texts. For example, our core book **My Granny Went to Market** andbooks about the religious and cultural festivals we encounter through the year (e.g. Diwali, Christmas, Lunar New Year).
* Hear and have opportunities to use language related to customs and traditions both in English and in their (and other children’s) home languages. For example, focusing on a different language every half term.
* Explore and become familiar with aspects of their local environment, through local visits to the park, the allotment, the library, and other local trips.
* Begin to develop an awareness of other countries through use of e.g. a world map depicting where children have visited or families have come from.
* Share stories about themselves and their friends and families, for example their All About Me books, their accounts of having an Owl visit them at home or conversations about their experiences during school holidays.

THE NATURAL WORLDThis area of Understanding of the World includes (but is not restricted to) children’s awareness of* The natural world around them
* Similarities and differences between the world around them and contrasting environments.
* Processes and changes in the natural world such as seasons and changing states of matter

Children will* Use their senses to explore the world around them, through going on sound walks or making observations of what they see at the allotment or in the Old Orchard, smelling, touching and ultimately tasting produce from the allotment.
* Examine the natural world in the garden, the Old Orchard, at the allotment and in the classroom with e.g. chicks and caterpillars or natural materials such as conkers or autumn leaves
* Experience weather changes first-hand (when safe to do so) and learn about appropriate safety measures e.g. sun hats & sun cream
* Be supported to record their developing scientific understanding, by using mark making or other methods, for example, making leaf rubbings or using a digital camera
* Encounter contrasting environments through stories and non-fiction texts as well as first hand experiences such as trips to a local park, playing with penguins and ice, exploring different landscapes through our core book, **We’re Going on a Bear Hunt**
* Engage in playful, open-ended opportunities so they can develop enquiring minds e.g. exploring textures of different substances, playing with ice etc.
* Explore a wide range of practical, meaningful activities to develop their understanding of pattern, changes, differences and similarities, e.g. cooking and planting.
* make comparisons, e.g. between different life cycles or between the properties of different materials.
* investigate how and why things work, for example, exploring floating and sinking, rolling different objects down guttering, making marble runs, using the pulley in the garden or testing magnets in different situations
* experiment by testing out their ideas and repeat their explorations to check the validity of their conclusions
 | ADULTS We value the diverse, multicultural, multilingual and religious heritage of the families at Homerton as well as the individual characteristics of each member of the Homerton family. We recognise the links with other areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage as well as our Equality and Diversity Policy. In order to implement this curriculum area we will: * Provide representations and experiences of a range of occupations and ways of life as well as of the world around them and the diverse community at Homerton.
* Provide access to a wide range of texts and other media (music and audio visual) which develop children’s experience of and understanding of the world.
* Support children to develop a record of their time at Homerton in their Special Books to facilitate discussion of how they have grown and developed over the year.
* Celebrate families’ cultural and religious practices by inviting families to share these with us and providing children with opportunities to share their experiences with their friends.
* Celebrate each individual and their own background, interests and family life.
* Celebrate the languages spoken by children at Homerton and learn some words and phrases together through Homerton’s “Language of the Half-term”.
* Model positive attitudes about the differences between people and differences in race, religion, culture, language, gender etc.
* Talk openly with children and be prepared to confront stereotypes regarding e.g. gender or special needs, e.g. “only boys can do…” or “only girls wear…”
* Organise visits out of Homerton to encounter the local environment.
* Invite visitors into Homerton to enhance and develop children’s understanding of ways of life and of the world around them, e.g. parents reading stories in other languages, parents visiting with a new baby or having a nurse or doctor come to visit.
* Provide planned first-hand, child-centred experiences that encourage exploration, experimentation, observation, problem solving, prediction, critical thinking, decision making and discussion.
* Facilitate incidental learning experiences, which may arise from children’s interests or day-to-day occurrences, alongside planned activities.
* Provide environments both inside and outside which support the development of children’s scientific understanding.
* Use carefully framed open-ended questions, such as “how can we ...?” or “why do you think ...?”
* Extend children’s language skills by supplying and reinforcing correct scientific vocabulary, e.g. “chrysalis” when studying life cycles.
* Foster care and concern for living creatures and their environment.
* Encourage children’s natural curiosity and desire to explore the world around them.
* Build an understanding of the importance of care for our environment and the world in general and model habits of recycling, reducing waste and re-using objects and materials e.g. empty boxes for making models.
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Reviewed by Mitali Peckham and Alex Pearson February 2025

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