

# OPERATIONAL PLANNING STATEMENTS

(This statement forms part of our Operational Planning/Policies & Procedures file)

UPDATED February 2004

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

As a pre-school environment we believe that all children are individual. We strive to provide a welcoming, calm and caring environment where children are able to play and learn at their own pace, make discoveries and choices for themselves along the way and have exposure to the ELGs as well as a wide range of holistic activities through a variety of different materials and resources.

In doing this, it is our aim to provide a nurturing environment that facilitates children's' learning and development, encouraging parents to participate should they wish to do so. These things combined, we hope to enable children to grow in confidence self-esteem, and to develop their own personality within a framework of good discipline.

Their environment will be rich in opportunities as well as being appropriately stimulating and safe; so as to encourage fun and experimentation.

## PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

It is important that there is a good partnership between parents and Discovery; communication is everything. Emphasis is always placed on Discovery having an 'open door policy', **encouraging parents to feel welcome anytime**. Parents are also welcome to attend Open Forum Meetings, a Parents' Evening every term as well as a variety of talks and social occasions throughout the school year; sports days, Christmas concerts, art exhibitions, farm visits, a 'Firework and Sausage Sizzle' evening as well as encouraging parents, when appropriate, to take part in 'making the school a better place to be' e.g. gardening projects, painting, suggestions etc.

Parents are also welcome to make comments/suggestions in the 'comments book' (which can be found in the reception of the school); complete a 'comments card' (which can be found in the reception of the school); complete questionnaires and encouraged to freely approach the staff/Principal at **ANY** time.

Parents may also volunteer to help with lunches, social events or bring their skills into school.

We always work hard to maintain communication with parents and provide opportunities for informal and formal time.

Discovery provides parents with regular newsletters (at least 2 each half term) to ensure that they are always kept up to date with things going on. This ensures that parents are informed, involved and are aware of the choices available for both themselves and their children.

Planning and what we're doing is up on either the window of your child's class or outside the classroom door. This clearly displays what your child has been doing and is followed up at going home time and during parents' meetings. Parents are welcome to arrange a mutually convenient time to speak with their child's teacher or the Principal. Each parent also has the telephone number of the school, the Principal's mobile telephone number and the email address, so that communication can be made as easily as possible. We value contributions made by parents as we constantly strive for excellent practice.

## PREMISES AND EQUIPMENT

We have a large variety of resources and equipment at Discovery, combining Montessori equipment and 'traditional' nursery toys/equipment.

This enables all of the children to have exposure to a wide range of opportunities and

experiences, whilst developing all-round skills.

We have an on-going 'equipment list' and feel that we constantly work towards providing more equipment/materials and opportunities to meet the needs of all the children.

Our premises is large and purpose built with a fantastic open, but secure garden, where children are able to explore and utilise the space, either through their own ideas/imagination or through some adult directed activities.

Activities are carefully \*planned for to enable all of the children to take part in a variety of learning experiences. Planning is in line with the Early Years and Ofsted's EARLY LEARNING GOALS. All children are encouraged to naturally progress through the 'Stepping Stones' and develop at a healthy, appropriate pace with gentle encouragement and positive re-enforcement along the way. Children, whatever session they attend will have exposure to all areas of the curriculum.

\*Sometimes activities change. This could be due to a sudden snowstorm!; A beautiful sunny day that we weren't expecting, or a need to change an activity due to staff sickness for example. If this is the case, the children are still provided with a worthwhile and enriching experience e.g. making a snowman together and discussing this; taking an activity outside to enjoy the weather.

Although curriculum planning is in place to ensure that the children are receiving a broad-based learning experiences, there is a need sometimes for it to be flexible – which can be good! This still means however, that changes to activities and routines etc are documented.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PREMISES, MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT**

Children have access to **all** of the equipment within the classroom at **all** times. The equipment (where appropriate) is freely available on shelving that is child height, enabling children to make choices for themselves; safely and effectively.

Children have access throughout the whole session (except on occasion during a specific group activity) to painting, art materials sand/water etc., role-play equipment, ICT, Mathematical equipment, Communication, Language and Literacy equipment, Construction activities, books, the environment outside, the Montessori Curriculum plus a project related group activity that 'runs' throughout the session.

During times when we play outside, the children have access to outside equipment and can choose from these. Outside playtime is important for small children. They have an opportunity to run, play freely and develop their own games as well as using the equipment that we take outside and plan for, in order to offer them something different e.g. balancing skills, hand-eye co-ordination etc..

### **Within Discovery there are four classrooms:**

- **Cubs (2yr olds – 3yr olds)**  
**Registered for up to 12 children : staff ratio 1:4** This area provides a welcoming and spacious environment where children can move freely, choosing from a variety of activities.  
As it is generally the first time that children have left 'mummy/daddy' or a primary carer. Emphasis is placed on love, cuddles and nurturing, whilst creating and planning for a wide range of activities.
- **Tigers (3yr olds – 3.9yr olds approx)**  
**Registered for up to 16 children : staff ratio 1:8**  
This room is large and open, with a variety of areas for the children to explore, namely: role-play area, 'messy'/art area, book corner, language & literacy area, cultural area, mathematical area, sensorial and practical life area. In this classroom the children build confidence to explore

different activities, whilst they are encouraged (with support) to become that little bit more independent. Children work and play either in small groups, large groups or on a 1-2-1 basis with a teacher or their peers. Emphasis is placed on free choice and discovery, with children encouraged to make decisions for themselves where practicable. Planning is available for parents to see and is usually displayed in the window.

- **Lions & Top Cats (3.9yr olds – rising 5's/Pre-school)**  
**Registered for up to 32 children - over two classrooms -**  
**Up to 16 children per class : staff ratio 1:8**

This room is the same in structure and 'set-up' as the Tigers' classroom as it is important for children to be able to build on what they already know. However, the children, by the time they reach Lions' & Top Cats' are usually well on the way to becoming quite independent. The children enjoy a varied and exciting curriculum whilst having FUN!. They are aware of the boundaries /ground rules within the classroom and are very ready to explore.

There will be things on the shelves that are familiar and some that are very different – it is important to encourage the children gently and provide them with opportunities to progress and thrive as well as preparing the children for 'big school'.

It is very important to build on what the children already know. When they move classrooms, it is important that they feel safe and secure and that there are things within that environment that are familiar to them. Once they feel comfortable, different equipment/toys/learning experiences can be introduced and higher expectations can be set. However, it is important to realise that this needs to be done gently and when the child is 'ready'.

**ATIVITIES OFFERD:** We offer a wide range of activities at Discovery that combine the Montessori curriculum alongside 'traditional nursery teaching methods'. We feel that we should not be 'blinkered' as there are many ways of teaching that benefit children and their development. Therefore, you will find a child quite happily, using a piece of Montessori equipment alongside a child who is freely painting or sticking. This works because the children care about their environment. they enjoy building their own strategies and self-esteem/confidence, which mean that ultimately, the children are happy and learning. We also provide peripatetic staff as well as in-house staff who teach French on a Monday, Music & Art on a Tuesday, 'Fun Fit' on a Wednesday, Cooking on a Thursday and Dance/Drama on a Friday at no extra cost.

**OUTSIDE AREA:** We have a large covered porch area at Discovery, where the children can play or perhaps they may choose to take an activity outside. We also have our own playground and lovely large garden. All of these areas are used and explored, whilst a wide range of equipment and activities are provided to develop their physical movement and co-ordination as well as general development.

We also have a garden area where the children can plant and tend to vegetables and flowers, as well as a wildlife area.

**STAFF DEPLOYMENT:** Discovery is 'manned' by a team of ten staff (four of which are part time). With the exception of two members of staff, everyone holds a childcare qualifications - with 7 members of staff being qualified to level 3 standard and one to level 2. The two members of staff who are not qualified are currently training and working towards their level 3 qualifications. These staff are teamed with experienced, qualified staff and are supported and mentored. 'In house' training is carried out as well as external training, to ensure that staff continue to update their knowledge regarding childcare, as well as fulfil their own interests.

Discussion always takes place with staff as to 'where they'd like to be teaching', so as to provide

them with an opportunity for change and self-development.

Parents are informed of staff changes/movement as soon as possible.

## **HELPERS/VOLUNTEERS/OTHER TEACHERS**

We always welcome parent helpers/volunteers\* and encourage parents to let us know if they have any particular skills. Parents are offered support, guidance and orientation!

We also run a French club, Music/Art club, Fun Fit club and Dance/Drama club. All of the teachers who come into teach peripatetically are qualified and experienced in their field.

\* All permanent employees, students and peripatetic staff are required to submit a full set of personal details. It is also essential that they are checked by the Criminal Records Bureau to Enhanced standard. Discovery Montessori School then ensures that Ofsted's DC2 form is completed (which enables Ofsted to check for themselves that the person is suitable to work with children under 8yrs) as well as checking against List 99 and the Department of Health register. NO member of staff is left unattended with children until ALL checks have cleared. ALL staff understand that their employment with Discovery depends not only on their suitability as a teacher, but on these checks coming back clear.

**STUDENTS:** We enjoy having students at Discovery. It enables us to offer them a happy safe environment in which to learn, as well as allowing the children to experience other adults. Our students are not generally counted in our ratios, unless they are with us for a long period of time (as stated in Ofsted's National Standards) Even then, they are still supervised by the classroom teachers and strict guidance from the Principal/Manager and are counted as 'additional help'. All students come with references from their college and are checked with the CRB.

**MANAGEMENT OF STAFF & HELPERS ETC.** We hold staff meetings every Tuesday morning, where staff are able to question, offer ideas, generally discuss issues that have arisen, or talk through ideas that they might have. It is also a time for ordering materials and equipment, read through any new information from Ofsted/Early Years, for the Principal to disseminate information and a time for generally getting together.

The staff are able to approach the Principal or Deputy at **any** time to discuss any matter, and are actively encouraged to openly discuss ideas/thoughts or openly and constructively 'challenge'.

Appraisals are carried out annually, whilst interim appraisals are carried out for new staff.

Training is on going – either in-house or externally. The training co-ordinator has access to all training materials and there is not upper limit on financial resources for training. Each training request is dealt with individually – everything is worthy of discussion!

**THE PRINCIPAL** is responsible for overall supervision, visiting classes on a regular basis to observe, evaluate and play with the children as well as observe and evaluate the general 'running' of the classrooms and school. The principal will also read, make comment and evaluate plans and general activities. Ensuring that the school's needs are met on a day-to-day basis is very important; this includes everything from complying with H & S procedures to knowing how many children there are in school at any one time!

It is important for staff to have 'non-contact time' with children. Therefore they are paid for and extra 1.25 hours per day, where they have time to prepare activities, evaluate, plan, maintain their classrooms, carry out H & S checks etc. This means that when the children are within the school, staff can be totally prepared and committed and the children's' environment safe.

## **HOW DO WE OBTAIN AND RESPOND TO FEEDBACK FROM PARENTS AND OTHERS?**

It is **very** important to the team at Discovery that there are excellent channels of communication between parents/professionals etc and staff. Without communication – the system does not

work.

Therefore, we provide the following for parents:

- **An 'open door' policy**, where parents are able to come into the school **ANY TIME** at all.
- **Comments cards** that parents can complete
- **A Comments Book**, where parents/visitors can make comments/suggestions etc
- **Open Forum meetings** are held every term. This is where parents can come along in an informal manner to meeting with the Principal and staff to discuss ANY issues at all regarding the general 'running' of the school
- **A parents evening** every term
- **A variety of talks and demonstrations** throughout the term
- **Parents** are able to email the Principal
- **Parents** are able to telephone the Principal on her mobile 'phone or at school
- **Parents** are able to access the school's website for information or to feedback.
- **Parents** are able to freely approach the Principal who will often circulate amongst parents at 'pick-up' and 'drop-off' times.

Comments, suggestions and complaints are all taken very seriously. Parents who approach the Principal for a chat are always offered a confidential area and given time – *listening is important*.

A letter and a home visit always follow up more serious concerns.

## **CHILDREN'S WELFARE**

### **Supporting childrens' personal development**

- We provide a safe environment for children
- We provide an environment that is rich in experience and opportunity
- We constantly work towards the ELGs and monitor/evaluate these.
- We make time to talk with and listen to parents.
- We find out what views the parents have
- We listen to children and allow them the time and space to 'be' children
- We encourage 'all round' development
- We encourage 'teaching' experiences from all 'walks of life'
- We observe, monitor and evaluate the progress of each child and record it.
- We extend training to parents.
- We work as a team
- We develop and plan for play opportunities and learning experiences

## **POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

**There is a clear set of policies, procedures and forms set out within our Operational Planning file.**