

Thomas Jones School

Early Years Foundation Stage

Ethos and Values

At Thomas Jones, we strongly believe that the foundations for a child's future success begin in the Nursery. In line with our school ethos and values, we promote an inclusive and warm environment, in which all children are ably supported to develop as young learners. Our Nursery setting is small and intimate, which lends itself well to the development of strong, positive, relationships between pupils, family and staff members. This in turn brings real benefits for our pupils, with children feeling as if they are part of one 'large school family'.

An integral part of the school, Nursery pupils are celebrated at every opportunity, with the children known well by staff and their older peers. Being a school based Nursery, pupils wear the same immaculate garb as older pupils and attend whole school assemblies. This plays an important part in developing a child's 'school-readiness' in preparation for the transition to Reception. It also sends a clear visual validation that whilst nursery may learn in a different way their progress and achievements are as important as every other year group. Every year, Thomas Jones Reception staff comment consistently upon the readiness of pupils who have attended our Nursery, with these pupils settling quickly, with a wide range of knowledge and learning experiences that support them to achieve the best they can at the end of the EYFS. However, these 'school readiness' skills are beneficial for every child, whether or not they attend our Reception. Core areas such as communication and language, and personal, social and emotional development are prioritised, with staff from other schools commenting on how well pupils from our Nursery have settled within their Reception class.

Given its status within the school, our strongest teachers are employed to work in the Nursery, with highly experienced staff forming the nucleus of the team. Children are afforded attention, and are supported by a carefully planned and reflective curriculum, designed to meet children's needs in a stimulating and age-appropriate way, balanced with plenty of self-directed learning where children can explore their own interests skilfully extended through meaningful conversations which develop new related vocabulary and develop early conceptual understanding. The environment is inventive, aesthetically stimulating and provides children with opportunities to explore and engage with every aspect of learning. For an inner city school, we are blessed with ample outside green space, including a pond with resident frogs and areas for planting and sowing seeds. Pupils are encouraged to explore the outside, and become active participants in their own learning.

Children learn using the four principles of the EYFS:

1. The Unique Child - Every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
2. Positive Relationships - Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of secure and loving parents/carers and/or key person.
3. Enabling Environments - The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning.
4. Learning and Development – Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. There are seven Areas of Learning and Development. All areas are important and interconnected. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. These three areas are: *communication and language; physical development, and personal, social and emotional development*. In addition there are four specific areas through which the three prime areas are

strengthened and applied. The specific areas are: literacy; *mathematics*; *understanding the world* and *expressive arts and design*.

Reception class continues these exacting set of values. It is not uncommon to enter the Reception class and see industry and focus, all made possible by a well-planned and delivered stimulating learning environment. Families are encouraged to work with teachers and EYFS staff to enable their child to achieve to the best of their abilities - this tripartite relationship is prioritised. Systematic phonics is taught daily alongside the promotion of quality books to ensure a lifelong love of reading. Language and communication is prioritised, adults model use of standard English and have high expectations when it comes to language acquisition and use of vocabulary. Interventions are common place if a child finds themselves struggling with literacy or communication and language. This also extends to fine motor skills and control – all bedrocks for learning. As a result, children make much progress during their EYFS years at Thomas Jones.

In a similar way to the rest of the school a love of books and reading is a priority too. Fiction and non-fiction books are available and reading materials that reflect a child's interests or class topics are also readily available. Cosy and inviting book corners appear in both the Nursery and Reception classes.

Wellbeing and emotional development are prioritised and children are nurtured in a way such to enable them to feel secure, valued and positive. This underlying warmth is sacrosanct, and modelled by school leaders who are frequent faces to EYFS pupils. The staff team remain ever reflective, collegiate and responsive to the needs of their cohorts. As a result, children love coming to school to learn alongside their peers.