Grafton Primary
Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum

Justin Ward October 2026

First draft for consultation



Contents

1. Part One: Our Context, Values and Pedagogy....2
2. Our School and Community....
3. Families, Identity and Belonging....3
4. Diversity Throughout the Curriculum 3
5. Our Curriculum Intent....4
6. Play, Teaching and Progression....5
7. Part Two: The Grafton Early Years Journey....5
8. A Coherent Journey from Two Plus to Reception....6
9. Two Plus: Security, Exploration and Discovery....6
10. Nursery: Extending Language, Independence and Imagination....6
11. Reception: Increasing Knowledge, Skill and Independence....7
12. Personal Care, Independence and Emotional Development....7
13. Inclusion, SEND and Children Learning English as an Additional Language....7
14. Observation, Assessment and Responsive Planning....7
15. Part Three: Our Seven Areas of Learning and Development....7
16. Communication and Language....8
17. Personal, Social and Emotional Development....8
18. Physical Development....8
19. Literacy....8
20. Mathematics....8
21. Understanding the World....9
22. Expressive Arts and Design....9
23. Part Four: The Richness of Our Curriculum....
24. A Curriculum Enriched by Stories and Books....
25. Mathematical Thinking in Everyday Experiences....
26. Art, Materials, Construction and Making....
27. Music, Movement and Performance....
28. Nature, Animals and First-Hand Investigation....
29. Culture, Identity and Community....
30. Visits, Visitors and the Wider World....
31. Part Five: Curriculum Organisation, Progression and Continuity....
32. Topics as Contexts for Learning....
33. Our Annual Curriculum Overview....
34. Progression Across the Early Years....
35. Continuity into Year 1....
36. Working with Families....
37. Reviewing and Developing Our Curriculum....
38. Appendix A: The Seven EYFS Progression Grids....

Part One: Our Context, Values and Pedagogy

Our School and Community



Grafton Primary School serves a richly diverse community in Holloway, north London. Our children arrive with different experiences, languages, cultures, family histories, interests and developmental starting points. We recognise this diversity as one of our school's greatest strengths and an essential starting point for curriculum design.

Our Early Years provision encompasses the Two Plus Centre, Nursery and Reception. Although children enter these settings at different ages and stages of development, we regard their experiences as part of one coherent educational journey. Our curriculum provides continuity in relationships, environments, teaching approaches and expectations, while recognising the distinctive needs of two-, three-, four- and five-year-olds.

We want children to feel safe, valued, curious and confident. We want them to develop the knowledge, language, skills and dispositions that enable them to participate fully in school life and the wider world. We also want them to experience the pleasure of learning: the excitement of discovering something new, the satisfaction of making something themselves and the joy of sharing experiences with other people.

Our response to disadvantage is not to narrow the curriculum, but to make it richer. We recognise that children's access to books, cultural institutions, natural environments and extracurricular experiences may vary considerably. The curriculum therefore provides opportunities that broaden children's experiences without diminishing the value of what they already know.

Our aim is not to replace children's existing world with another one, but to make their world bigger.

Families, Identity and Belonging

Grafton recognises and celebrates the many forms that families take. Children may live with two parents, a single parent, same-gender parents, adoptive or foster parents, grandparents, other relatives or carers. Some belong to blended families or divide their time between different households.

Every child should feel that their family is recognised, respected and represented within our school community. Through carefully selected picture books, storytelling, photographs, discussion, imaginative play and everyday interactions, children encounter a wide range of family structures and relationships. These experiences help children recognise similarities and differences, develop empathy and understand that families are formed and sustained in many different ways.

Our approach is sensitive to individual circumstances. Experiences of separation, adoption, fostering, bereavement or changes in family arrangements may be complex. Children should never feel obliged to disclose or explain their personal histories.

Stories are especially valuable in this work. They allow children to encounter characters whose experiences resemble or differ from their own, providing opportunities to explore relationships, belonging, care and identity.
Our intention is that every child should recognise themselves somewhere within our curriculum, while also discovering that other people's lives and experiences may be different from their own.



Diversity Throughout the Curriculum

Diversity and inclusion are embedded in everyday curriculum experiences rather than confined to particular dates in the school calendar.

Our books, images, role-play resources, music, creative materials and classroom conversations reflect people from different cultural backgrounds, ethnicities, religions and family circumstances. Children encounter positive representations of Black lives and achievements, different family structures, and the languages and traditions of our community.

Black History Month provides an annual opportunity for focused exploration of Black history, literature, culture and achievement. Picture books by Black authors and illustrators are an important part of this work, alongside stories, music, art and discussion. These experiences complement the representation of Black voices and experiences throughout the year.

LGBTQ+ History Month provides opportunities to reinforce respect, belonging and the understanding that families come in different forms. In the Early Years, this learning is grounded in developmentally appropriate stories and conversations about family life, friendship, identity and kindness.

Throughout the year, children also participate in focused activities relating to significant religious and cultural festivals, including Ramadan, Eid, Christmas, Holi and Passover, alongside other celebrations relevant to our community. Books, artefacts, photographs, music, stories, creative activities and contributions from families help children develop an understanding of different beliefs and traditions.

We recognise that families observe festivals in different ways and that some families do not follow a religion. Our approach is respectful, informative and inclusive.

These experiences are not intended to reduce cultures to festivals, food or decorative activities. They form part of a broader curriculum through which children develop knowledge of their community and the wider world.

Our Curriculum Intent

Our Early Years curriculum is designed to help children become confident communicators, curious thinkers, imaginative creators, capable problem-solvers and considerate members of a community.

It is organised around the seven areas of learning and development set out in the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage framework. The three prime areas—Communication and Language; Personal, Social and Emotional Development; and Physical Development—provide essential foundations for learning. The four specific areas—Literacy; Mathematics; Understanding the World; and Expressive Arts and Design—extend and deepen children's knowledge and experiences.

We recognise that these areas are closely connected. A child building a bridge with wooden blocks may be developing mathematical understanding, physical coordination, communication, imagination and perseverance simultaneously.

Our curriculum identifies the knowledge, skills, vocabulary and experiences we want children to acquire over time. Practitioners use their professional judgement to determine how these are taught, taking account of children's development, interests, experiences and individual needs.

The Early Learning Goals provide an assessment endpoint at the end of Reception. They do not constitute the curriculum itself, nor do they define everything children should learn and experience.

Play, Teaching and Progression

Play is central to learning throughout Grafton's Early Years provision. Through play, children explore ideas, practise skills, develop relationships, investigate materials, solve problems and make sense of their experiences.

Our approach combines child-initiated exploration with carefully planned adult-led teaching and skilled adult interaction. Practitioners observe children closely, introduce language and ideas, model techniques, ask questions, provide resources and extend learning.

Continuous provision is deliberately planned to support repeated encounters with important concepts and materials. Familiar resources such as playdough, wooden blocks, LEGO, paint, books and imaginative-play equipment remain available as children move through the Early Years. Progression does not necessarily mean replacing familiar materials with new ones. It may mean using the same materials with increasing control, independence, imagination and sophistication.

For example, children may initially explore the sensory qualities of playdough, later use it to represent familiar objects and eventually plan and create more detailed forms. Similarly, wooden blocks may first be stacked and transported, then used to construct enclosures, bridges or increasingly elaborate structures.

As children develop, practitioners also introduce additional materials and techniques, including clay, coloured pipe cleaners, Meccano and more complex construction resources.

Progression is evident in what children know, understand and can do—not simply in the resources they use.

Our curriculum values repetition and revisiting. Children benefit from returning to familiar stories, songs, materials and experiences, developing greater confidence and understanding each time.

We also recognise the importance of the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning: playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically. These describe how children engage with learning and help practitioners plan environments and interactions that encourage curiosity, concentration, independence and thoughtful problem-solving.



Part Two: The Grafton Early Years Journey

A Coherent Journey from Two Plus to Reception

Grafton's Early Years curriculum is designed as a continuous journey, rather than three separate programmes of learning. Children develop at different rates, and progression is neither uniform nor strictly linear. Nevertheless, practitioners share an understanding of the knowledge, skills and experiences that children should encounter as they move through the department.

The curriculum combines familiar experiences with new opportunities. Stories are revisited, materials are explored in increasingly sophisticated ways, and children gradually develop greater independence, language, physical control and understanding.

Transitions between Two Plus, Nursery and Reception are supported through professional dialogue, information shared with families and an understanding of each child's development. The intention is to preserve continuity while introducing appropriate new expectations and challenges.

Two Plus: Security, Exploration and Discovery

In Two Plus, our priority is to establish secure relationships and a welcoming environment in which children feel confident to explore.

Learning is rooted in sensory experiences, movement, language, familiar routines and play. Children encounter sand, water, playdough, paint, foam, natural materials and other sensory resources. They investigate wooden blocks, LEGO and other construction toys, explore books, join in with songs and rhymes, and participate in imaginative play.

Practitioners place particular emphasis on communication, emotional security, physical development and emerging independence. Everyday experiences such as eating, dressing, washing hands, tidying away and learning to use the toilet are recognised as important opportunities for development.

Familiar stories, including The Very Hungry Caterpillar, Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Dear Zoo and We're Going on a Bear Hunt, provide opportunities for repetition, language development, anticipation and shared enjoyment.

Children may encounter the same themes and stories more than once during their time in Two Plus. This is intentional: repetition helps children consolidate understanding and participate with increasing confidence.

Nursery: Extending Language, Independence and Imagination

Nursery builds upon the secure foundations established in Two Plus. Children are encouraged to communicate more confidently, develop friendships, sustain imaginative play and participate in increasingly complex learning experiences. Practitioners introduce richer vocabulary, encourage children to explain their thinking and support them in making choices, solving problems and managing everyday routines.

Construction and creative experiences become more purposeful. Alongside familiar resources such as playdough, wooden blocks and LEGO, children explore clay, collage materials, paint, drawing media and increasingly challenging opportunities to join, shape and construct.

Stories remain central. Children listen to repeated readings, retell familiar narratives using props and puppets, act out events and begin to create their own stories. Adults model language, support early mark-making and introduce opportunities for mathematical reasoning through play. Nursery topics provide broad contexts for learning, including ourselves, festivals, toys, favourite stories and animals. These themes are flexible vehicles for exploration, rather than a prescribed list of activities.



Reception: Increasing Knowledge, Skill and Independence

Reception extends children's experiences through a carefully balanced combination of direct teaching, guided learning, continuous provision and child-initiated exploration. Children develop their knowledge of phonics through Read Write Inc., deepen their understanding of stories through repeated reading and oral storytelling, and participate in increasingly purposeful reading and writing experiences.
Mathematics is taught through a mastery approach, supported by practical exploration and daily Maths Meetings. Children develop number sense, mathematical language, reasoning and an understanding of relationships, patterns and shape.

Creative and construction experiences become increasingly sophisticated. Children continue to use familiar materials while encountering more demanding techniques and resources, including clay, coloured pipe cleaners, Meccano and other construction materials. For example, children may create three-dimensional minibeasts, exploring shape, joining, balance and the properties of materials.

Role-play remains an important part of Reception provision. Our hairdressing and barber salon resources, including practice heads and appropriate styling equipment, offer opportunities for children to develop communication, fine motor control, imaginative thinking and an understanding of occupations within their community. This provision also supports positive representation of different hair types, textures and cultural traditions.

Reception topics include ourselves, festivals, favourite stories, transport, minibeasts, water and the sea. These provide meaningful contexts for investigation, discussion, storytelling and creative work.

Children are supported to become increasingly independent and prepared for the next stage of their education, without losing the benefits of play, exploration and practical learning.

Personal Care, Independence and Emotional Development

Personal care is an essential part of the Early Years curriculum. Across the department, children are supported to develop increasing independence in toileting, handwashing, dressing, eating, organising their belongings and managing daily routines.

Practitioners approach these experiences with patience, dignity and sensitivity, recognising that children develop at different rates and may require additional support.

Emotional development is equally important. Children learn to recognise feelings, communicate needs, manage frustration, develop friendships and seek help when necessary. Approaches including the Zones of Regulation support the development of emotional vocabulary and self-regulation.

We recognise that independence develops through repeated opportunities, appropriate encouragement and supportive relationships, rather than through expectations that are disconnected from a child's developmental readiness.

Inclusion, SEND and Children Learning English as an Additional Language

Our curriculum is ambitious and inclusive. Children with special educational needs and disabilities are entitled to meaningful participation in the full range of curriculum experiences. Practitioners adapt teaching, environments, communication and resources to remove barriers to learning while maintaining appropriately high expectations.

Children learning English as an additional language are supported through rich spoken-language experiences, visual resources, modelling, repetition, stories, songs and meaningful interaction. Their home languages are valued as an important part of their identity and linguistic development.

We recognise that children's language proficiency, prior experiences and developmental needs vary considerably. Practitioners therefore use observation and professional judgement to identify the support and challenge each child requires. Inclusion is not achieved by providing every child with an identical experience. It is achieved by ensuring that every child can participate, belong and make progress.

Observation, Assessment and Responsive Planning

Assessment in the Early Years is rooted in knowing children well. Practitioners gather information through observation, conversation, children's work, play, interactions with families and planned learning experiences. This information informs teaching, identifies emerging needs and helps practitioners recognise progress.

Statutory assessment requirements, including the progress check at age two and the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile at the end of Reception, are undertaken as required. We do not regard assessment as an exercise in producing excessive documentation. Its purpose is to improve children's learning and development. Planning combines clear curriculum intentions with responsiveness to children's interests, questions and emerging understanding. Practitioners retain flexibility over how learning happens while maintaining a shared understanding of what children should learn.



Part Three: Our Seven Areas of Learning and Development

Communication and Language

Communication and Language is fundamental to learning throughout the Early Years. Children need opportunities to listen, understand, express ideas, ask questions, develop vocabulary and participate in increasingly sustained conversations.

In Two Plus, practitioners model language through play, routines, songs, rhymes, familiar stories and responsive interactions. Children are encouraged to communicate through words, gestures, expressions and other appropriate means.

In Nursery, children develop longer utterances, extend their vocabulary and begin to explain ideas and experiences. Repeated storytelling, imaginative play, puppets and small-group conversations provide meaningful opportunities to practise language.

In Reception, children increasingly listen attentively, respond to questions, explain their thinking, retell stories and participate in discussions. Adults introduce subject-specific vocabulary and encourage children to use language for reasoning, planning and problem-solving.

Across the department, our approach is influenced by Pie Corbett's work on storytelling and Talk for Writing. Children experience stories repeatedly, learn their patterns and language, and use oral rehearsal, drama and imaginative play to develop confidence as communicators. This learning provides essential foundations for the more sustained speaking, listening, reading and writing expected in Year 1.



Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Personal, Social and Emotional Development underpins children's wellbeing, relationships and readiness to learn. In Two Plus, children establish trusting relationships, begin to recognise and express feelings, develop confidence in routines and learn to play alongside others.

In Nursery, children become increasingly able to share resources, negotiate, form friendships, manage disappointment and participate in group activities. Practitioners support children in recognising emotions and developing strategies for regulation.

In Reception, children are encouraged to manage everyday responsibilities, develop resilience, cooperate with others and understand the importance of respect, kindness and fairness.

Our inclusive books and discussions support children's understanding of different family structures, identities and experiences. Children learn that families may include single parents, same-gender parents, adoptive or foster parents, grandparents and other carers.

Children are supported to understand that people may have different experiences and needs, and that everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.

These foundations support children's growing independence and participation in the wider school community.

Physical Development

Physical Development encompasses gross motor skills, fine motor control, coordination, strength, balance and increasing independence in personal care.

In Two Plus, children develop physical confidence through climbing, running, balancing, riding, carrying, pushing and pulling. They strengthen their hands through sensory play, playdough, painting, stacking and manipulating objects.

In Nursery, children refine movement, coordination and control through outdoor play, construction, drawing, painting, cutting, threading and modelling. They begin to use a wider range of tools with increasing precision.

In Reception, children develop greater fluency and control in movement and increasingly accurate manipulation of tools and materials. Clay, pipe cleaners, construction resources, drawing implements, scissors and other equipment provide opportunities to strengthen the hands and develop dexterity.

Purposeful role-play, including the barber and hairdressing salon, offers further opportunities to practise controlled hand movements and coordinated actions. Our approach recognises that physical development is closely connected to creativity, independence, confidence and children's ability to participate in learning.

Literacy

Literacy develops through a rich culture of books, stories, conversation, songs, rhymes, reading and writing. In Two Plus, children develop enjoyment of books, recognise familiar characters and stories, join in with repeated phrases and begin to understand that pictures and print carry meaning.

In Nursery, children become increasingly confident storytellers. They use props, puppets, drama and imaginative play to retell familiar narratives, develop phonological awareness and experiment with marks and early writing.

In Reception, systematic phonics teaching through Read Write Inc. supports children in learning to read and write. Alongside this, repeated readings, oral storytelling and Talk for Writing approaches help children develop comprehension, vocabulary, narrative understanding and confidence in composition.

Our reading provision includes traditional tales, contemporary picture books, poetry, rhymes and non-fiction. We deliberately select books that represent a wide range of cultures, identities, families and experiences.

Black History Month and LGBTQ+ History Month provide additional opportunities to foreground particular authors, illustrators, characters and stories, while inclusive representation remains a year-round commitment. We distinguish between teaching children the mechanics of reading and writing and developing their broader identity as readers, storytellers and writers. Both are essential.

Mathematics

Our mathematics curriculum develops children's understanding of number, numerical relationships, pattern, shape, space and measure.

In Two Plus, mathematical learning emerges through counting songs, sorting, filling and emptying, stacking, matching, comparing and exploring quantities in everyday play.

In Nursery, children develop increasing confidence with counting, recognising small quantities, comparing groups, identifying patterns and exploring shapes and spatial relationships. Mathematical vocabulary is introduced through practical experiences and purposeful interaction.

In Reception, Mathematics Mastery and daily Maths Meetings provide structured opportunities to develop number sense, mathematical reasoning, fluency and secure understanding. Practical resources, stories, games and discussion support children in exploring mathematical ideas.

Construction materials such as wooden blocks, LEGO and Meccano offer particularly valuable contexts for exploring shape, position, balance, pattern and spatial reasoning. We value children's ability to explain mathematical thinking, notice relationships and apply understanding in different contexts, rather than simply perform procedures.

Reception learning provides the conceptual foundations for the mathematics curriculum in Year 1.

Understanding the World

Understanding the World develops children's curiosity about people, communities, places, the past, the natural world and technology.

In Two Plus, children explore familiar environments, notice changes, encounter animals and plants through stories and first-hand experiences, and begin to recognise people and places that are important to them.

In Nursery, children develop greater awareness of their community, family histories, cultural traditions, seasons, habitats and living things. They investigate natural materials, observe changes and ask questions about their surroundings.

In Reception, children extend their understanding through more detailed observations, comparisons, investigations, stories, visits and discussions. They explore life cycles, seasonal change, materials, local environments, occupations and different ways of living.

Our duck-hatching experience gives children the opportunity to observe eggs and the emergence and early development of ducklings before the birds are returned safely to the farm. Our annual ZooLab visit enables children to encounter a wider variety of animals and learn about their characteristics, habitats and needs. These experiences are planned with appropriate attention to hygiene, animal welfare and children's individual needs.

Religious and cultural learning includes focused activities around Ramadan, Eid, Christmas, Holi, Passover and other traditions represented within the school community.

Children also learn about different occupations through visits, visitors and imaginative play. The Reception barber and hairdressing salon provides one example of how role-play can connect children's everyday experiences with knowledge of their community. This area of learning provides foundations for later study in science, geography, history, religious education and computing, without attempting to reproduce those subjects prematurely.



Expressive Arts and Design

Expressive Arts and Design provides opportunities for children to explore materials, develop ideas, create, perform and respond to the work of others.

At Grafton, creativity is an important part of our educational identity. We value experimentation, imagination, technical development and children's ownership of their work.

In Two Plus, children explore the sensory and expressive possibilities of paint, playdough, drawing materials, collage, music, movement and construction. Their early experiences focus on discovery, enjoyment and developing physical control.

In Nursery, children begin to make more intentional choices about materials, colours, shapes and techniques. They develop imaginative play, explore three-dimensional forms and experiment with joining, shaping and representing ideas.

In Reception, children encounter increasingly sophisticated creative challenges and materials, including clay, coloured pipe cleaners, Meccano and other construction resources. They may investigate ways of creating three-dimensional minibeasts, combining materials and solving problems of shape, stability and attachment. Familiar resources remain available throughout the Early Years. Children are encouraged to revisit materials with increasing skill, imagination and independence. Woodwork, influenced by the expertise of Pete Moorhouse, forms part of our broader commitment to purposeful making and the safe, progressive use of tools.

Music is woven throughout the curriculum through singing, listening, rhythm, movement, instruments and performance. Children also benefit from specialist musical expertise, including the contribution of Juwon Ogungbe, a professional singer, composer and pianist.

Our approach is informed by the belief that children should encounter artists, musicians and makers as people who actively create. Opportunities to work with visiting artists and creative professionals, including our artist-in-residence Reza Ben Gajra, enrich children's experiences and broaden their understanding of creative practice. We avoid an overreliance on adult-designed templates or activities in which every child's finished work looks the same. Instead, we encourage children to experiment, make decisions, encounter difficulties and develop their own ideas. The aim is not simply to produce attractive work, but to develop children who are confident, curious and capable of expressing themselves creatively.





Part Four: The Richness of Our Curriculum

A Curriculum Enriched by Stories and Books

Books are central to the educational experience of children at Grafton. We believe that a rich literary environment should begin long before children are able to read independently.

Across Two Plus, Nursery and Reception, children encounter carefully selected picture books, traditional tales, poetry, nursery rhymes and non-fiction. These texts introduce vocabulary, ideas, characters, places and experiences that children might not otherwise encounter.

Our approach draws upon the work of Pie Corbett, whose influence on the teaching of reading and writing has been significant across Grafton. His work on oral storytelling, repeated readings and Talk for Writing has helped shape our understanding of how children acquire the language and structures of stories. Pie Corbett has also contributed to whole-school professional development at Grafton.

Children return to familiar stories repeatedly. Through listening, joining in with repeated phrases, using puppets and props, acting out narratives and eventually retelling stories independently, they develop increasing confidence and understanding.

Repetition is purposeful. A child who initially enjoys the rhythm of a familiar story may later recognise its sequence, anticipate events, describe characters, explain motivations and draw upon its language when inventing a story of their own.

Our literary provision is both carefully planned and responsive. Practitioners introduce books that support curriculum knowledge and vocabulary while also following children's interests and questions.

Representation in Children's Literature

The books children encounter should reflect the diversity of the world in which they live. Our reading provision includes stories by Black authors and illustrators, books featuring characters from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and texts representing a wide variety of families and relationships. We deliberately include books depicting single-parent families, families with same-gender parents, adoptive and foster families, blended families, and children living with grandparents, relatives or other carers.

These stories help children recognise their own experiences and understand those of others. They also provide opportunities to discuss kindness, fairness, friendship, difference and belonging.

Black History Month and LGBTQ+ History Month offer opportunities for more focused literary exploration, but inclusive books remain part of everyday provision throughout the year. Our curriculum reading spine will identify the principal texts used across the three stages, including the picture books selected for these celebrations.

Mathematical Thinking in Everyday Experiences

Mathematics is encountered throughout the Early Years environment, not only during planned teaching sessions. Children develop mathematical understanding when they construct towers, share resources, compare quantities, notice patterns, organise objects, explore containers, follow recipes and describe positions.

Practitioners draw attention to mathematical relationships through purposeful interaction. They introduce precise vocabulary, model reasoning and encourage children to explain what they notice. Familiar resources provide particularly valuable opportunities for progression.

Wooden blocks and LEGO are used throughout Two Plus, Nursery and Reception. Younger children may explore stacking, fitting, sorting and comparing. Older children may plan increasingly elaborate structures, investigate symmetry, measure, estimate, explore stability and solve construction problems. More sophisticated resources, including Meccano, extend opportunities to explore spatial relationships, joining, design and mathematical reasoning.

In Reception, our mastery approach is supported by daily Maths Meetings, practical activities, mathematical discussion and carefully sequenced teaching. We aim to develop children who are curious about mathematics and confident in using it to understand and solve problems.

Art, Materials, Construction and Making

Creative exploration is a distinctive strength of Grafton's curriculum. Children encounter a wide range of materials, including playdough, paint, drawing media, collage resources, wooden blocks, LEGO, clay, textiles, wire, coloured pipe cleaners and increasingly sophisticated construction equipment.

We recognise that different materials offer different possibilities. Children learn through discovering how materials feel, move, respond, join, bend, stretch, balance and hold their shape.

Progression is not defined simply by introducing more difficult materials. It is also evident in children's increasing knowledge of familiar resources and their ability to use them with intention.

Playdough, for example, remains valuable throughout the Early Years. Younger children may squeeze, flatten and roll it; older children may use it to represent objects, construct more complex forms and explore ways of joining parts.

Similarly, children may move from stacking wooden blocks to designing structures for a particular purpose, considering balance, stability and spatial relationships.

As children develop, practitioners introduce new challenges and techniques. Coloured pipe cleaners may be used to construct three-dimensional minibeasts, while clay offers opportunities to explore modelling, shaping, texture and form. Meccano provides further possibilities for assembling and adapting structures.

Our approach to art and design encourages experimentation, observation, imagination and independent decision-making. We value the creative process as well as the finished outcome.

Children should have opportunities to investigate artists' work, develop their own responses and explore materials without being expected to reproduce identical adult-designed examples.

Woodwork and the Use of Tools

Woodwork provides opportunities for children to develop practical skills, coordination, problem-solving, persistence and an understanding of materials.

Our approach has benefited from the expertise of Pete Moorhouse, whose work has influenced our understanding of the educational value of woodwork in the Early Years.

Children encounter tools and techniques progressively, with appropriate teaching, supervision and safety arrangements. They learn that tools have particular purposes and that successful making often requires planning, patience and adaptation. Woodwork is part of a broader commitment to enabling children to become capable, resourceful and confident makers.

Artists and Creative Professionals

We believe children benefit from encountering people who work creatively beyond the classroom. Our artist-in-residence, Reza Ben Gajra, contributes to the school's wider creative culture. Visiting artists and other professionals provide opportunities for children to encounter different approaches to making and expressing ideas. These experiences reinforce the understanding that art is not simply a school activity, but a living form of human expression.

Music, Movement and Performance

Music is an important part of daily life throughout Grafton's Early Years provision. Children sing familiar songs, learn nursery rhymes, explore rhythm, listen to different musical traditions, move expressively and experiment with instruments and sounds.

In Two Plus, musical experiences support language, memory, coordination, social interaction and enjoyment. Children respond physically to sound, join in with repeated phrases and begin to anticipate familiar musical patterns. In Nursery, children develop increasing confidence in singing, rhythmic movement and musical exploration. They begin to notice differences in tempo, volume and pitch, and participate in group performances and musical games. In Reception, children extend their listening, singing and performance skills. They explore musical patterns, experiment with sound and develop increasing confidence in expressing ideas through music and movement.

Specialist Music Teaching

Children at Grafton benefit from the expertise of specialist music teacher Juwon Ogungbe, a professional opera singer, composer and pianist. His contribution provides opportunities for children to learn from a practising musician and encounter musical expertise beyond that ordinarily available within the classroom. This reflects our wider commitment to introducing children to artists, musicians, writers and other creative professionals.

Music is also connected to storytelling, drama and imaginative play. Children use songs, movement, sound and performance to communicate feelings, represent characters and explore ideas. We recognise music as both an area of learning in its own right and a powerful means of developing confidence, language, creativity and belonging.

Nature, Animals and First-Hand Investigation

Although Grafton is situated in a densely populated part of London, we believe that children should have regular opportunities to encounter the natural world. Our curriculum includes planting, growing, observing seasonal changes, investigating materials, exploring water and discovering living things. Children use the outdoor environment to notice changes in weather, plants and animal life. Visits to parks, woodland and other natural spaces extend these opportunities. We recognise that first-hand experiences are particularly valuable for developing curiosity, scientific vocabulary and an understanding of the world.

Duck-Hatching

Our duck-hatching experience provides children with a memorable opportunity to observe the development of living creatures. Duck eggs are brought into the department, allowing children to observe the hatching process and the ducklings' early development before they are returned safely to the farm.

Practitioners use this experience to introduce and reinforce vocabulary relating to eggs, hatching, growth, life cycles and the needs of living things.

Children are encouraged to observe carefully, ask questions, make predictions and discuss changes over time. The experience also supports learning about responsibility, gentleness and animal welfare. Appropriate hygiene, supervision and animal-care arrangements are integral to its planning.



ZooLab

Our annual visit from ZooLab gives children opportunities to encounter animals that may be unfamiliar to them. Through close observation and age-appropriate discussion, children learn about animals' appearances, characteristics, movements, habitats and needs.

The experience extends learning introduced through books, stories, photographs and classroom investigations. It also encourages curiosity, respect for living creatures and confidence in asking questions.

These encounters are not isolated entertainment activities. Practitioners connect them to curriculum knowledge through preparation, discussion, vocabulary development, creative responses and opportunities to revisit what children have learned.

Culture, Identity and Community

Our curriculum is rooted in the belief that children should develop a strong sense of belonging while becoming increasingly aware of the wider world. Grafton's community encompasses a wide range of cultures, languages, beliefs and family experiences. These are reflected in our books, resources, displays, role-play provision and everyday interactions.

We encourage children to share their knowledge and experiences, while ensuring that no child is expected to act as a representative of a particular culture, religion or family circumstance.

Black History Month

Black History Month is an established part of our annual curriculum. Through picture books, stories, art, music and discussion, children encounter Black authors, illustrators, historical figures and contemporary achievements.

Our approach emphasises positive representation and meaningful knowledge rather than tokenistic activities. The books used during Black History Month are selected to enrich children's understanding and enjoyment of literature, and to introduce them to a wider range of voices and experiences. Black history, culture and literature are also represented throughout the year.

LGBTQ+ History Month and Family Diversity

LGBTQ+ History Month provides an opportunity to celebrate diversity and reinforce children's understanding that families come in many forms.

At Grafton, this is particularly relevant because our school community includes families with same-gender parents. Through developmentally appropriate picture books and conversations, children encounter different family structures and learn that people may live, care for one another and experience family life in different ways.

Our wider provision also represents single-parent families, adoptive and foster families, blended families and children living with relatives or other carers.

These experiences support empathy, respect and belonging. They are presented as ordinary features of the world children inhabit, rather than as unusual circumstances requiring special explanation.

Religious and Cultural Celebrations

Throughout the year, children participate in focused learning experiences connected with significant religious and cultural festivals. These include Ramadan, Eid, Christmas, Holi and Passover, alongside other celebrations represented within our school community. Practitioners use stories, artefacts, photographs, music, creative activities and contributions from families to introduce children to different traditions and beliefs. Children learn that celebrations may have particular meanings for different people, and that families may observe the same festival in different ways. Our intention is to develop curiosity, knowledge and respect. We avoid reducing religious and cultural understanding to a series of decorative activities or isolated celebrations.

Visits, Visitors and the Wider World

London offers extraordinary cultural, historical and natural resources. However, we recognise that living close to these opportunities does not mean every child has equal access to them. Our curriculum therefore seeks to provide meaningful experiences beyond the classroom. Visits to libraries, parks, woodland, museums, galleries and other places of interest introduce children to environments, objects, people and ideas that extend their knowledge. We also welcome visitors whose expertise and experiences enrich learning. The school's relationships with writers and artists, including visits from authors such as Julia Donaldson, contribute to a wider culture in which literature and creativity are valued.

Such experiences are planned with clear educational purposes. Practitioners prepare children through stories, discussion and vocabulary development, and revisit experiences afterwards through conversation, play, drawing, writing and other activities. **Cultural capital in the Early Years should be lived rather than collected.** We do not regard enrichment as a checklist of places visited or visitors encountered. Its value lies in the knowledge, language, confidence and curiosity children develop as a result.

Part Five: Curriculum Organisation, Progression and Continuity

Topics as Contexts for Learning

Topics provide a useful way of organising experiences, introducing vocabulary, connecting areas of learning and creating shared interests. However, the topic is not the curriculum. It is a vehicle through which the curriculum may be explored.

Our curriculum is defined by the knowledge, skills, language and experiences children should develop over time. Topics help practitioners bring these elements together in meaningful ways. The same topic may therefore provide different learning opportunities for children at different developmental stages.

For example, a topic about animals might involve Two Plus children naming familiar creatures and imitating their movements. Nursery children might describe animals' characteristics, compare them and explore where they live. Reception children might investigate habitats, life cycles and similarities and differences between living things. Practitioners retain flexibility to respond to children's interests, significant events and emerging questions while ensuring that important curriculum content is revisited and developed.

Our Annual Curriculum Overview

The following overview identifies the principal themes used across Grafton's Early Years provision, organised into six half-termly periods. These themes provide meaningful contexts for learning, allowing practitioners to introduce and revisit important knowledge, vocabulary, stories and experiences. They are not intended to prescribe identical activities each year or restrict opportunities to respond to children's interests.

Our Annual Curriculum Overview across EYFS

Period	Two Plus	Nursery	Reception
Autumn Term One	Numbers, autumn, early letters and name recognition. The Very Hungry Caterpillar	Ourselves	Ourselves
Autumn Term Two	Animals, colours, celebrations and winter. Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?	Festivals	Festivals
Spring Term One	Food, numbers, early letters and name recognition. Goldilocks and the Three Bears	Toys	Favourite Stories
Spring Term Two	Spring, colours, transport and technology. Dear Zoo and We're Going on a Bear Hunt	Favourite Stories	Transport
Summer Term One	Shapes, weather, nature, early letters and name recognition. We're Going on a Bear Hunt	Animals	Minibeasts
Summer Term Two	Farm animals, numbers, colours, summer and sea life. The Three Little Pigs and Commotion in the Ocean	Animals	Water

Progression and continuity

Although the themes differ between Two Plus, Nursery and Reception, important areas of learning are revisited throughout the Early Years journey. For example, children encounter animals through stories, sensory experiences and imaginative play in Two Plus. In Nursery, they develop a greater understanding of animal characteristics, habitats and life cycles. By Reception, they are ready to undertake more detailed investigations into minibeasts and living things, drawing upon their earlier experiences. Similarly, familiar stories, mathematical concepts, construction materials and creative techniques are revisited with increasing sophistication. Across all six half-terms, children continue to experience a rich curriculum encompassing storytelling, phonics and early literacy, mathematics, physical development, imaginative play, creative arts, music, outdoor learning and personal development. Black History Month, LGBTQ+ History Month, religious and cultural celebrations, visits, visitors and other enrichment opportunities are incorporated into the curriculum at appropriate points throughout the year.

The half-termly themes provide a framework for learning, not a limit on children's experiences.

Progression Across the Early Years

Progression is understood as the gradual development of children's knowledge, understanding, skills, language, independence and capacity to apply learning.

It is not always linear. Children may demonstrate sophisticated understanding in one context while continuing to require support in another.

Practitioners therefore plan for progression while remaining responsive to individual developmental pathways.

Across Two Plus, Nursery and Reception, progression is supported through:

- Revisiting: returning to familiar stories, ideas, materials and experiences.
- Extending: introducing richer vocabulary, additional knowledge and new challenges.
- Refining: developing increasing control, accuracy, fluency and independence.
- Connecting: helping children apply learning across different activities and contexts.
- Deepening: encouraging children to explain, investigate, create, adapt and reflect.

These principles are reflected in the seven progression grids that follow.

Continuity into Year 1

The transition from Reception to Year 1 should preserve the foundations established in the Early Years while preparing children for the increasingly subject-specific demands of the National Curriculum. We seek continuity rather than equivalence.

Reception is not a simplified version of Year 1 science, history, geography, art or other subjects. It provides the experiences, vocabulary, knowledge and dispositions upon which later subject learning can build.

For example, observing ducklings hatch provides early knowledge of growth and living things that supports later science learning. Exploring the local neighbourhood develops familiarity with places, routes and environments that contributes to geographical understanding. Investigating clay, construction materials and joining techniques provides foundations for art and design and design and technology.

Similarly, repeated storytelling and systematic phonics establish foundations for reading and writing, while practical mathematical exploration supports the more formal mathematics curriculum.
Information about children's learning is shared with Year 1 colleagues to support appropriate continuity, challenge and inclusion.

Working with Families

Families are children's first educators and important partners in their learning. We seek to establish trusting relationships through everyday communication, meetings, shared experiences and opportunities for parents and carers to understand how learning develops.

Practitioners recognise the knowledge families bring about their children's interests, languages, experiences, development and individual needs. We also encourage families to support learning through ordinary activities: talking, reading, singing, cooking, playing, exploring, dressing, shopping and spending time together.

Our approach to partnership is inclusive and respectful. We recognise that families have different circumstances, resources, responsibilities and opportunities. We aim to communicate clearly, avoid unnecessary educational jargon and make expectations accessible to parents and carers.

Reviewing and Developing Our Curriculum

Our Early Years curriculum is a living document. It provides a shared understanding of educational intentions while remaining open to review and refinement. Curriculum development is informed by practitioners' observations, children's experiences, assessment information, professional dialogue, research, statutory guidance and the views of families. We also draw upon the expertise of professionals who have contributed to Grafton's educational development, including Pie Corbett, Ruth Miskin and her colleagues, Pete Moorhouse, visiting artists and specialist teachers. Our intention is to preserve the strengths of our provision while identifying opportunities to improve coherence, progression, inclusion and educational impact.

The following progression grids are intended to support this work.



Appendix A: The Seven EYFS Progression Grids

These grids describe curriculum progression, rather than assessment checklists.

The Early Learning Goals are summarised as statutory assessment endpoints; their full wording should be consulted in the current EYFS framework.

Grid 1. Communication and Language

Strand	Two Plus	Nursery	Reception	ELG endpoint	Where learning leads in Year 1
Listening and attention	Respond to familiar voices, songs, rhymes and short stories.	Listen to increasingly extended stories and group conversations.	Listen attentively, respond appropriately and maintain attention during discussions.	Listening, Attention and Understanding	Listening to teaching, instructions, stories and classmates.
Understanding language	Follow familiar routines and simple instructions supported by context.	Understand increasingly complex questions, explanations and instructions.	Understand and respond to questions, explanations and new vocabulary.	Listening, Attention and Understanding	Understanding subject vocabulary and increasingly complex instructions.
Speaking and vocabulary	Name familiar people, objects and actions; communicate needs and interests.	Use longer sentences, describe experiences and extend vocabulary.	Explain ideas, use new vocabulary and express thoughts in connected sentences.	Speaking	Explaining, describing, recounting and discussing learning.
Conversation	Engage in responsive exchanges with familiar adults and children.	Participate in conversations, take turns and ask questions.	Sustain conversations, respond to others and clarify ideas.	Speaking	Collaborative discussion and spoken reasoning.
Storytelling	Join in with repeated phrases and familiar narratives.	Retell stories using props, puppets and drama.	Retell, sequence, adapt and invent narratives using increasingly rich language.	Speaking	Oral composition, reading comprehension and writing.

Grid 2. Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Strand	Two Plus	Nursery	Reception	ELG endpoint	Where learning leads in Year 1
Emotional awareness	Recognise familiar feelings and seek comfort or support.	Name feelings and begin to use supported regulation strategies.	Explain feelings and increasingly manage responses to challenges.	Self-Regulation	Managing emotions and participating in classroom learning.
Independence	Participate in personal care and familiar routines with support.	Manage an increasing range of routines and responsibilities.	Demonstrate greater independence, confidence and perseverance.	Managing Self	Organisation, self-care and responsibility for learning.
Relationships	Develop secure relationships and begin to play alongside others.	Form friendships, share resources and negotiate during play.	Cooperate, resolve disagreements and develop respectful relationships.	Building Relationships	Working collaboratively and participating in school life.
Identity and belonging	Recognise familiar people, relationships and routines.	Talk about family, friendships and similarities and differences.	Understand and respect different family structures, experiences and needs.	Building Relationships; Managing Self	Respectful relationships, PSHE and citizenship.
Healthy choices	Participate in handwashing, eating, dressing and physical activity.	Develop greater awareness of hygiene, wellbeing and safety.	Explain and practise important routines for health and wellbeing.	Managing Self	Healthy habits, safety and increasing independence.

Grid 3. Physical Development

Strand	Two Plus	Nursery	Reception	ELG endpoint	Where learning leads in Year 1
Movement and coordination	Run, climb, balance, push, pull and explore movement.	Develop coordination, agility and control through varied physical activities.	Move confidently and negotiate space, direction and obstacles.	Gross Motor Skills	PE, games, dance and coordinated movement.
Balance and strength	Explore climbing equipment, wheeled toys and outdoor play.	Develop balance, core strength and controlled movement.	Demonstrate increasing strength, stability and coordination.	Gross Motor Skills	Physical competence and participation in sport.
Manipulation and hand strength	Squeeze playdough, stack blocks and use chunky tools.	Use scissors, brushes, drawing tools, construction toys and modelling materials.	Manipulate smaller tools and materials with increasing precision, including clay, pipe cleaners and Meccano.	Fine Motor Skills	Handwriting, art, DT and practical classroom tasks.
Mark-making and pencil control	Explore large-scale marks using fingers, chalk, paint and crayons.	Develop controlled marks, shapes and early letter formation.	Use an increasingly effective pencil grip and form letters with greater control.	Fine Motor Skills	Fluent handwriting and written composition.
Personal care	Participate in toileting, dressing and hygiene routines.	Manage more routines with decreasing support.	Demonstrate increasing independence in dressing, hygiene and self-care.	Managing Self	Independent management of school routines.

Grid 4. Literacy

Strand	Two Plus	Nursery	Reception	ELG endpoint	Where learning leads in Year 1
Enjoyment of books	Explore books and recognise familiar characters and stories.	Listen to and discuss a wider range of picture books and narratives.	Enjoy, discuss and respond to stories, poetry and non-fiction.	Comprehension	Reading widely and developing literary understanding.
Story comprehension	Anticipate familiar events and join in with repeated phrases.	Sequence and retell familiar stories using props and drama.	Explain events, describe characters and retell narratives using story language.	Comprehension	Reading comprehension and narrative writing.
Phonological awareness and phonics	Enjoy rhymes, songs and sounds in language.	Develop awareness of rhyme, syllables and sounds in words.	Learn and apply systematic phonics through Read Write Inc.	Word Reading	Continued phonics, decoding and reading fluency.
Early writing	Make marks and explore their meaning.	Use drawing, symbols, name writing and early letter formation to communicate.	Write recognisable letters, words, phrases and simple sentences.	Writing	Spelling, sentence construction and composition.
Representation and diversity	Encounter books reflecting familiar people and families.	Discuss stories representing different experiences and identities.	Explore a wider range of authors, characters, families and cultural experiences.	Comprehension	Broadening literary knowledge and empathy.

Grid 5. Mathematics

Strand	Two Plus	Nursery	Reception	ELG endpoint	Where learning leads in Year 1
Counting and number	Explore counting songs, small quantities and number language.	Count objects, recognise numerals and compare quantities.	Develop secure number understanding and relationships within 10.	Number	Number, place value and calculation.
Numerical patterns	Notice more, fewer, same and simple repeated patterns.	Compare quantities, recognise patterns and explore number relationships.	Recall and use number bonds and explore patterns and relationships.	Numerical Patterns	Number patterns, calculation and mathematical reasoning.
Shape and space	Explore fitting, stacking, sorting and positioning objects.	Identify and compare shapes; describe position and movement.	Investigate shape, spatial relationships, construction and composition.	Supports wider mathematical learning; not a separate ELG	Geometry and spatial reasoning.
Measure	Explore full, empty, big, small, heavy and light.	Compare length, height, mass, capacity and time using practical experiences.	Use comparative language and investigate measurement in meaningful contexts.	Supports wider mathematical learning; not a separate ELG	Measurement and problem-solving.
Reasoning	Experiment with blocks, containers and simple problems.	Explain choices and try different solutions during play.	Describe mathematical thinking, make predictions and solve practical problems.	Number; Numerical Patterns	Mathematical reasoning and problem-solving.

Grid 6. Understanding the World

Strand	Two Plus	Nursery	Reception	ELG endpoint	Where learning leads in Year 1
Families and communities	Recognise familiar people, places and routines.	Discuss family experiences, occupations and community life.	Compare experiences, traditions and ways of living with respect.	People, Culture and Communities	Geography, history, RE and PSHE.
Past and present	Notice familiar routines and changes.	Discuss personal experiences and events from the recent past.	Compare past and present through stories, photographs, objects and conversation.	Past and Present	History, chronology and changes over time.
Places and environments	Explore familiar indoor and outdoor spaces.	Notice features of the local area and natural environments.	Describe and compare environments, places and features of the world.	People, Culture and Communities	Local-area geography, mapping and place knowledge.
Living things	Encounter plants and animals through stories and observation.	Explore growth, habitats, seasons and animal characteristics.	Investigate life cycles and living things through planting, duck-hatching, ZooLab and other experiences.	The Natural World	Science: plants, animals, habitats and seasonal changes.
Materials and change	Explore water, sand, mud and other sensory materials.	Investigate properties, changes and everyday materials.	Observe, compare, predict and discuss materials and processes.	The Natural World	Science: materials and practical enquiry.

Grid 7. Expressive Arts and Design

Strand	Two Plus	Nursery	Reception	ELG endpoint	Where learning leads in Year 1
Drawing and painting	Explore marks, colour, texture and movement.	Represent ideas with increasing intention and control.	Develop observational, expressive and imaginative work using varied media.	Creating with Materials	Art and Design: drawing, painting and visual exploration.
Modelling and construction	Investigate playdough, wooden blocks, LEGO and simple joining.	Construct purposefully using familiar resources, clay and collage materials.	Plan, build and refine forms using clay, pipe cleaners, Meccano and other materials.	Creating with Materials	Art, sculpture and Design and Technology.
Creative decision-making	Choose and explore materials through sensory play.	Experiment with techniques and describe creative choices.	Select, combine, adapt and refine materials and ideas independently.	Creating with Materials	Creative problem-solving and evaluation.
Music and movement	Join in with songs, rhymes, movement and sound exploration.	Explore rhythm, singing, instruments and expressive movement.	Develop musical expression, listening and performance, enriched by specialist teaching.	Being Imaginative and Expressive	Music: pulse, rhythm, singing, listening and performance.
Imagination and role-play	Imitate familiar actions and explore simple pretend play.	Develop characters, stories and shared imaginative scenarios.	Sustain complex role-play, negotiate roles and develop narratives, including through the barber salon.	Being Imaginative and Expressive	Drama, spoken language, storytelling and creative expression.

Appendix B: Consultation and Review

This first draft is intended to support professional discussion and refinement before the school improvement consultation on 25 November 2026.

The following questions should guide that discussion:

1. Does the curriculum accurately represent the educational experiences currently provided across Two Plus, Nursery and Reception?
2. Is progression sufficiently clear without becoming an inflexible checklist?
3. Are the distinctive strengths of Grafton's provision appropriately represented?
4. Does the curriculum establish an appropriate balance between planned teaching, continuous provision and child-initiated learning?
5. Are the expectations for language, literacy and mathematics sufficiently ambitious and developmentally appropriate?
6. Does the curriculum provide a coherent foundation for learning in Year 1?
7. Are inclusion, family diversity and cultural representation embedded meaningfully throughout?
8. What aspects of the curriculum require further development, additional resources or professional learning?

Items to confirm before publication

The curriculum now includes the experiences and resources that I have collated, but a few details still need checking before we treat it as a finished school document. The reading lists need to be checked against the actual Grafton lists of picture books used for Black History Month and LGBTQ+ History Month. These should be included by title and author rather than replaced with a generic selection.

The progression grids are working curriculum summaries. Their Early Learning Goal columns deliberately use abbreviated descriptions, not the complete statutory wording. Before publication, we should check the grids against the current EYFS framework and decide whether to include the full ELGs in a separate appendix.

The Year 1 connections should be checked against the school's subject progression documents, particularly Design and Technology, for which we have not yet established the complete progression. Consult with Roz here.

Finally, the annual overview should be checked against current planning to ensure that the themes, timing and enrichment experiences accurately reflect practice.