



Nursery Catkins Class 2-year-old Curriculum and Learning Themes 2025



Prime Area: Personal, social and emotional development: Making Relationships

Rationale:

Two years olds are learning how to build relationships. They are still at the centre of their own world and are not sure how to fit in. They need to see adults modelling how to be kind, take turns and share.

They easily become cross, frustrated, anxious or upset and often need a lot of support to re-regulate.

Young children need to experience empathy in order to express it themselves. They need safe adults to keep modelling what to do, to label their big feelings “I know you feel very cross”, calm them and make them feel safe.

In Catkins Class we help the children to:

- Say goodbye to their grown-up
- Build relationships with special people at nursery
- Play and interact with other children
- Invite other children to join them in their play
- Initiate play with others
- Enjoy being part of a shared experience
- Show consideration of other people’s feelings
- Begin to take steps to resolve conflict with other children
- Build the qualities they need to be a good friend such as being kind, able to share and take turns
- Begin to show empathy and concern
- Begin to understand that other people have perspectives, needs and ideas that are different to their own

Prime Area: Personal, social and emotional development: Sense of self

Rationale:

Young children need to build a strong attachment with safe adults in order to develop their sense of self and self-worth. They need adults to show a genuine interest and demonstrate that they hold them in mind even when they are not there in person. Our two-years olds need support to get to know themselves and what they like and dislike. They need support to try new things and love being given a job to do! They need adults who are playful and connected to them. They love being invited to join a group and gather round a safe adult to listen to stories or sing together.

In Catkins Class we help the children to:

- Look at us and smile when we say “hello” when they arrive
- Look at their friends and smile and say hello when they come into Nursery
- Join the group for snack / story time / singing
- Enjoy feeling a sense of belonging by helping with daily jobs and routines
- Make choices
- Try again when they make mistakes
- Have a clear idea about what they want to do and how to do it
- Be confident in choosing the resources they need
- Show perseverance in carrying out their chosen activity
- Notice similarities and differences between them, their friends and other people in the world
- Communicate their ideas and opinions
- Communicate freely about their home and community
- Communicate with others about their needs and wants and interests
- Describe or demonstrate their competencies: what they can do well and are getting better at
- Act out different roles and behaviours in their play
- Show vitality, excitement and energy

Prime Area: Personal, Social and Emotional Development: Understanding Emotions

Rationale:

Two-year olds may not have enough words to express their emotions which can make them feel out of control. They may name some of their feelings like “sad” or “cross” but they may need help in understanding what those feelings are trying to tell them.

We help the children by labelling their feeling for them:

“I’m wondering if you are feeling cross because you wanted the green cup?”

“I’m wondering if you are feeling worried because mummy isn’t here to pick you up. “

Our responses help the children to move from physical sensation to awareness and understanding, which in turn will help me to experience feelings of safety, security and trust.

In Catkins Class we help the children to:

- Ask for help
- Begin to adhere to routines and boundaries
- Recognise feelings of safety, security and trust
- Seek out support from a safe adult if they feel overwhelmed and need comfort
- Show resilience and perseverance in the face of challenge
- Begin to use words, signs or actions to describe your emotions such as feeling cross, happy, sad, tired, frustrated or proud.
- Move from physical sensation to awareness of feelings
- Begin to tolerate situations in which their wishes cannot be met
- Begin to seek ways to manage conflict through holding back, sharing, negotiating and compromising
- Notice that sometimes their words and actions can hurt others’ feelings
- Give comfort to others
- Begin to repair a relationship or situation where they have caused upset

Prime Area: Communication and Language: Listening and Attention

Rationale:

Two-year olds are starting to be able to maintain attentive listening when they are resented with something that really interests them. They can respond to what they have heard but need adults to use their name to catch their attention, get down to their level and be face to face. Often, they also need visuals, actions and gestures to maintain their listening.

They can find taking turns challenging and need very clear support: "Jack's turn now, your turn next." They also need adults to model good listening so they know what this looks like.

Two-year olds love to listen to stories and rhymes, especially in a cosy space snuggled up with a safe adult. They will often join in with familiar stories told in a rhythmical way. They also like to join in with songs and actions rhymes. Repetition is key which is why we read the same stories and sing the same songs over and over again.

In Catkins Class we help the children to:

- Behave like a listener
- Respond when an adult uses their name, gets down at their level, speaks to them face to face
- Take turns and listen to others
- Listen to stories and rhymes in a relaxed and safe space
- Join in with repeated refrains in familiar stories: "Run, run as fast as you can..."
- Sustain attentive listening when presented with something that really interests them

Prime Area: Communication and Language: Understanding

Rationale:

Two-year olds can understand *who, what* and *where* in simple questions. They can follow and understand stories, especially if they have heard them before. Stories for such young children need to be repetitive and predictable. They can understand *now* and *next* if this is reinforced with visuals.

Two-year olds can select objects by name if they are familiar with them. They can understand prepositions such as *in, on* and *next to* when they are presented to me in a tangible and meaningful way.

The children can understand and explore concepts in the learning environment and through their play. They need to hear adults using appropriate vocabulary to describe new concepts.

In Catkins Class we help the children to:

- Begin to follow and understand stories
- Select familiar objects by name and identify from a group
- Understand simple commands: “throw the ball”
- Follow and understand simple instructions: “now and next”, “put your toys away and then sit on the carpet”.
- Understand who, what and where in simple questions: “what’s that?”, “who’s that?”, “where is?”
- Begin to understand concepts such as fast / slow, big / small
- Begin to understand prepositions such as “on top”, “under”, “behind”, “next to”

Prime Area: Communication and Language: Speaking: Expressive Language and Social Communication

Rationale:

Two-year olds can usually put two words together and will want to use more. They can become frustrated and dysregulated when they cannot convey what they want to. They love joining in stories and rhymes especially if they include lots of repetition. They are only just beginning to make the link between thinking and speaking and need adults to model “thinking out loud”, using language for learning, to label their emotions and to narrate when you are playing with them.

Two-year olds are beginning to enjoy role play and enjoy it when an adult plays with them and model language that is just one step beyond their own. They can remember, recall and retell stories once they have heard them lots of times, especially if they have objects and props to support them.

They can often start a conversation with a question: “what’s that?”, use about 50 words but understand many more. They need a lot of support through pointing, mirroring and modelling.

In Catkins Class we help the children to:

- Feel confident to speak to others once they have built firm attachments with them
- Show awareness of the listener when they are down at their level and making eye contact with them or using visuals to focus their attention
- Begin to use “what”, “where” and “who” questions
- Begin to use pronouns “he” and “she”
- Begin to use plurals
- Begin to join in with “serve and return” / “your turn / my turn” and help you learn the rules of conversation
- Begin to talk in short sentences putting two or sometimes more words together: “Mummy work”
- Join in with, remember, recall and retell stories they have heard lots of times when supported by visuals, props, actions and an adult
- Initiate a conversation when they have something important to communicate or a question they need answering

Prime Area: Physical Development: Gross Motor Skills

Rationale:

Two-year olds enjoy lifting and carrying heavy objects and this often becomes part of their schematic play. They love a job that involves carrying and may want to do it again and again.

They are still developing their core strength so can only sit on the carpet for very short periods of time and need to get up and move around. They love action rhymes and songs. Sitting on a chair also helps to develop their core balance and strength. They may struggle to sit up from lying down and need lots of physical activity to build up their core strength.

Two-year olds love to climb. Climbing is a whole body “big body” movement which supports their overall muscular strength, endurance, balance and coordination. They need to be able to make mistakes and work out solutions without being told to “be careful” all the time.

They need to experience lots of big body movements to develop their core and upper body strength including jumping which also develops their balance and agility

In Catkins Class we give the children opportunities to:

- Lift big, heavy objects
- Begin to sit up from lying down
- From squatting, rise to their feet without using their hands
- Sit on the carpet for short periods of time
- Stand up and sit down from a chair
- Learn to run around safely without bumping into others, speed up, slow down
- Jump forwards and jump down from a step, landing on two feet with bent knees
- Use arms to pull forwards when climbing
- Ride scooters and trikes
- Develop object control by throwing, rolling, catching and kicking large balls
- Dance, clap and turn to music
- Find other ways to travel and move: crawling, rolling, digging.
- Sweeping

Prime Area: Physical Development: Fine Motor Skills

Rationale:

The development of good fine motor skills is built on the foundation of gross motor skills so our youngest children need many opportunities to develop their core strength, balance and coordination. We prioritise play using big body movements like climbing, running, jumping, balancing, lifting, rolling, pushing and pulling.

We understand that these young children will probably not yet be able to hold and use tools for their proper purpose. However, they will enjoy opportunities to twist, hammer, chop and pinch.

In Catkins Class we give the children opportunities to:

- Twist: for example, by turning on a tap
- Chop: for example, use a safety knife to cut up food at snack time
- Hammer objects with a larger surface area
- Pinch and sprinkle
- Show increasing control in holding, using and manipulating mark making tools such as paintbrushes and pencils
- Manipulate scissors, recognising what can be done with them and that we need to use them safely
- Manipulate hole punches, glue sticks and tape
- Experience using cutlery to eat their food

Prime Area: Physical Development: Health and Self Care

Rationale:

Two-year olds are just beginning to be aware of themselves and to develop independence. They need a lot of support and for their basic needs to be noticed, attended to and explained to them. These very young children may not always know themselves whether they are feeling hungry, thirsty, hot, cold or tired and that need an emotionally available adult to do this for them.

Most of them will still need to wear a nappy but will be beginning to notice the toilet and be curious about it. They can wash their hands independently with adult supervision.

Two years olds can often put on some of their clothes independently but will need help finding their arm hole in their coats and cannot cope with buttons and zips. We understand that they need a lot of practice and that they may become frustrated or cross when trying to get dressed.

Two-year olds love to help and complete little jobs, so they will want to join in at “tidy up time”. But they are too little to be expected to put everything away and will quickly become overwhelmed if this is the expectation.

In Catkins Class we help the children to:

- Notice when they need to have their nappies changed
- Notice the toilets and be interested in them
- Notice when they need to use the toilet
- Wash and dry their hands independently
- Find their coats on their pegs, try to put them on independently and accept help when they need some support
- Put on other items of clothing _ hats, boots, waterproof trousers - independently
- Hold a cup and drink from it independently
- Try new foods, using all their senses to explore them
- Know their likes and dislikes
- Notice when they feel hot / cold / hungry / thirsty / tired
- Seek out adult support when they need it

Literacy: Reading and Story Telling

In Catkins Class we help the children to:

Behave like a reader

- Handle books – open a book, hold it the right way up, turn the pages, close the book when they have finished
 - Choose a favourite story
 - Listen to a story and enjoy the shared experience
 - Show an interest in the pictures
 - Pay attention and respond to the story and words
 - Repeat and use actions and words from familiar stories
 - Join in with repeated refrains
 - Fill in the missing word or phrase in a well-known story or rhyme
 - Anticipate key events in familiar stories
 - Begin to use story telling vocabulary *"Once Upon a Time"*
 - Begin to use vocabulary to describe the characters and settings: *"big bad wolf"* ...*"he blew the house down"*
- Begin to retell parts of the story and build this into their play

1st Milestone

- Focus attention on visual stimuli such as objects of reference
- Show interest in looking and reaching towards visual stimuli e.g. tactile books
- Enjoy sharing books with an adult
- Track a visual stimulus
- Copy finger movements and other gestures
- Wave, clap, tap, stamp along to simple rhymes, stories and songs
- Join in with songs and rhymes, tune in and pay attention, respond, smile, making eye contact
- Say some of the words in songs, rhymes and stories
- Sing songs and say rhymes independently, for example singing whilst playing.

2nd Milestone

- Have favourite books and seek them out to share with an adult, with another child or to look at alone
- Pay attention and respond to the pictures or the words
- Repeat words and phrases from familiar stories
- Join in with repeated refrains
- Show anticipation of a repeated refrain of key moment in a familiar story or rhyme
- Ask questions about books, make comments and share their ideas
- Develop play around favourite stories using props
- Use imagination when playing with resources, for example *"roaring tiger"*
- Notice symbols and pictures in books

Characteristics of Effective Learning

In Catkins we create opportunities for the children to:

Find out and explore

- Use their senses to explore
- Follow their interests
- Show Curiosity
- Engage in an open-ended activity

Have a go

- Initiate activities
- Seek challenge
- Show a “can do” attitude
- Engage in new experiences
- Learn by trial and error
- Try new things
- Take risks

Play with what they know

Represent their own experience in play

- Take on a role in their play
- Act out experiences with other children
- Pretend objects are thing from their own experience

Become involved and concentrate

- Show an interest in other people and their different worlds
- Maintain focus on an activity for a period of time
- Be fascinated, become involved and high levels of energy
- Stay focussed and not become distracted
- Pay attention to details

Keep on trying

- Be resilient and bounce back after difficulties
- Persist with an activity and achieve their goal, even when challenges occur
- Learn that skills grow and develop and that they can get better at doing things
- Put in more effort or use a different approach

Enjoy achieving what they set out to do

- Show satisfaction in meeting the goals they set themselves
- Feel proud when they accomplish something or achieve a new skill
- Appreciate the intrinsic reward of achieving something new

Have their own ideas (creative thinking)

- Think of new ideas
- Play with possibilities: “what if?”, “what else?”
- Visualise and imagine
- Find new ways of doing things

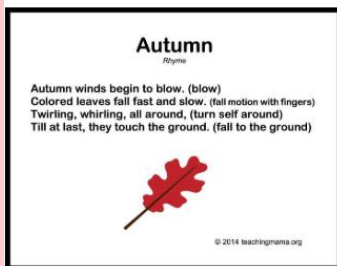
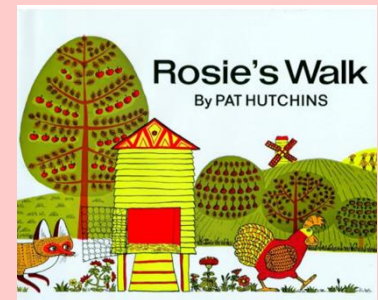
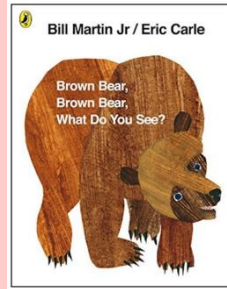
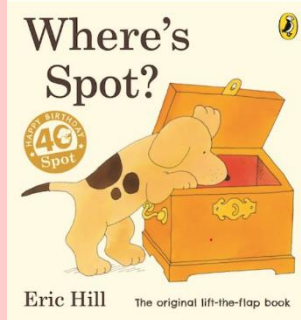
Make links (make theories)

- Make predictions
- Test their ideas
- Pay attention to their learning environment and notice grouping, sequencing and cause and effect

Work with ideas (critical thinking)

- Plan
- Make decisions about how to approach a task
- Solve a problem to reach a goal
- Check how well things are going
- Be flexible and be prepared to change strategy
- Review whether their approach has worked

Theme 1: Colours of Autumn: Colours and Seasonal Changes.



Communication and Language

- Names of primary and secondary colours
- Respond to instructions using colour names: "Find the red brick"
- Use colour words in statements and short sentences: "Red brick"
- Colour Hunts
- Respond to and use autumn vocabulary: **crunchy / squirrel / pumpkin / colour**
- Start to describe autumn objects: **smooth conker / spiky conker / red leaf / yellow leaf**
- Observe and describe changes outside (wet/dry)
- Listen to sounds outside

Physical Development

- Manipulate natural autumn objects: picking up leaves / sorting conkers
- Outdoor play: kicking leaves / jumping in puddles
- Simple colour mixing
- Finger painting
- Two colours of playdough to mix (red + yellow / yellow + blue / red + blue)
- Leaf collecting outdoors / collages / rubbings
- Gluing – nature collages
- Pinecone painting
- Pumpkin decorating
- Dressing up in scarfs, hats etc

Autumn Term 2: Journeys and Celebrations:



Communication and Language	Physical Development
Continue to read stories, say rhymes and sing songs from previous terms plus: - Using words and sounds to describe movement: "vroom", "choo-choo", "run" ... - Singing rhymes and songs as above - Vocabulary linked to birthdays and Christmas: <i>Cake / Party / Tree / Presents / lights / food / music</i>	As in previous terms plus: - Explore different ways to move their bodies: walking, running, crawling, jumping - Push and pull toys / ride on toys - Developing balance and coordination - Use materials to make pathways and roads for vehicles - Mimic movements of vehicles or people - Make decorations or cards - Singing and dancing

Spring Term 1: My Busy Body



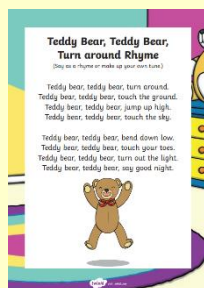
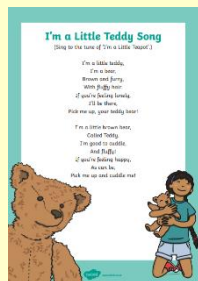
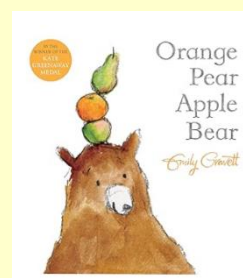
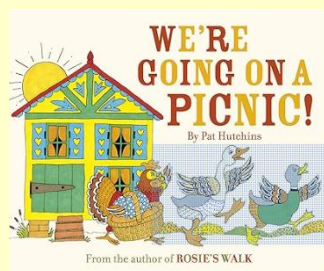
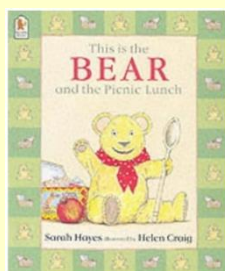
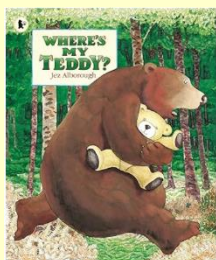
Communication and Language	Physical Development
Continue to read stories, say rhymes and sing songs from previous terms plus: - Naming body parts - Simon says; "touch your nose" - Songs as above: "Heads, shoulders, knees and toes", "If you're happy and you know it" - Stories as above	As in previous terms plus: - Exploring different ways to move: walking, running, jumping, crawling, climbing - Develop balance - Throwing and catching - Stacking blocks, pegs in holes etc - Hand strengthening - Use simple tools: large crayons, chunky paintbrushes, child-safe scissors - Bubble play - Dancing - Bead threading - Tearing paper

Spring Term 2: Get Ready to Grow



Communication and Language	Physical Development
Continue to read stories, say rhymes and sing songs from previous terms plus: - Language linked to plant growth: seed/ water/ soil/leaf/ flower - Questions: “What happens next” / “What can you see?” - Observe caterpillars / bird-cams / - Songs and rhymes as above	As in previous terms plus: - Watering - Planting - Digging - Egg Hunt

Summer Term 1: Teddy Bear's Picnic



Communication and Language	Physical Development
Continue to read stories, say rhymes and sing songs from previous terms plus: - Language linked to preparing food: cut / roll / slice - Describing their teddy bears: soft / cuddly / pink / blue - Songs and rhymes as above	As in previous terms plus: - Art gallery – pictures of teddys - Packing bags for a picnic - Making simple food – spreading jam / cutting fruit - Playdough food – cutting, rolling, slicing, shaping - Invitations: cutting and sticking / mark making - Teddy bear games: hide and seek / Teddy Bear Parade

Summer Term 2: Amazing Animals



Communication and Language	Physical Development
Continue to read stories, say rhymes and sing songs from previous terms plus: - Animal names and sounds, play sound game - Descriptions of animals - Songs and rhymes as above - Sorting and matching toy animals – <i>“Can you find another zebra?”</i> - Copying animal patterns: <i>“What comes next?”</i>	As in previous terms plus: - Copy animal movements - Make animal masks - Animal patterns – tearing and cutting paper to make zebra and tiger stripes / leopard spots etc