

CURRICULUM STATEMENT

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Policy is maintained by	Inwoods Coordinator
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At Inwoods Small School there is an innovative, practical approach to the acquisition of basic and complex skills. This includes the academic subjects such as numeracy, literacy and science, as well as social/emotional growth, relationship to learning, physical and artistic development, taking on responsibilities and listening and communication. Above all, each child's whole being is nurtured, including their innate desire to learn. Learning is seen as a continuous, natural, and indeed inevitable process, that is however vulnerable to interference. When there is desire to learn, there is receptiveness to what is needed, at the time that is right for them. We often think of this as the flame of learning, which is looked after through child-led activities and teacher-led lessons, as well as in continual interactions throughout the day and through links with home. Included in this, all community members are encouraged to respect each other, staff and other adults. Children are encouraged to participate in the offered activities, as well as make their own choices about how they would like to engage in their learning and so become more self-directed in their life and learning. At Inwoods, the classes are divided by Key Stages and currently Inwoods has one class of students in EYFS and Key Stage 1.

General Purpose and Approach of the Curriculum

The very small class sizes at Inwoods allow for an informal, friendly atmosphere in the classroom and for close personal relationships between each teacher and child, and between the children themselves. To do this, class group sizes have a maximum of 14, though as the school grows there will also be opportunities to work in larger groups for certain activities such as singing, sports, drama, nature walks,

etc.

The curriculum is not target driven, although the expectations of the National Curriculum are taken into consideration and used to help provide an awareness of the academic challenges the children will need. In practice, the academic work is explored and adapted continually to meet the needs of the student groups and the individual children. Many local and practical factors affect the curriculum, including the seasons. The class work overlaps with all the other school activities: indoors or outdoors, within the school grounds or in the surrounding woods and fields. Learning arises from the activities made available and from the freshness of learning about the world that emerges in the children. At Inwoods we see education as a shared activity, between all involved in the school and the world around us. This is the general approach in which the teaching of specifics is grounded.

Relationship to Learning

Great emphasis is placed on creating an atmosphere at Inwoods in which children can retain/develop a positive attitude to learning. Bearing this in mind, the curriculum is meant to engage children, but not to entertain them. Children are expected to participate in the activities offered and to respect the teachers but also feel safe to question and express how they feel about what they are being requested to engage in. Our aim is to create a spirit of enquiry and enthusiasm for learning. This is supported by helping the children to develop their academic competence within the whole context of their social, emotional and motor development; and this within the particular setting of a natural and largely open-air environment.

Key to the positive learning atmosphere is the intention to have no coercion, which means no rewards or punishments. This doesn't mean there is no encouragement or guidance from teachers to the children. But praise can create dependence (praise has also been shown to discourage actual joy) and is actually similar to using threats and sanctions to manipulate behaviour. We feel that children don't gain confidence and positive life experiences by being praised for their attributes and successes, but instead by tackling obstacles and overcoming them.

Teachers aim to create an atmosphere in which children feel safe and able to contribute to the activities in the best way they can. Comparisons are discouraged and 'shy' and 'retiring' children are gently guided to participate and develop in their own manner, as are 'outgoing' and 'active' children. Children's individual needs may 'rub up against' another child's needs, and the aim is to support this as a learning opportunity for all, while guiding and supporting the development of positive ways of being and interacting with each other and the world.

Maths

Children are helped to understand that maths is not just numbers and algorithms but it is shapes, patterns, problem solving and much more. Thus, they are encouraged to see what important role it plays in everyday life. Integrating maths into art and craft, cooking, gardening and nature comes about sometimes through conscious efforts but many times simply arises spontaneously. Geometry lends itself

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to be integrated with art and craft; fractions with cooking and sharing; measurement with time and shop keeping; and measuring any number of objects in terms of length, width, height, weight, area, perimeter and volume.

When teaching any aspect of maths, great emphasis is laid on the child understanding the underlying concept in a concrete way. This is brought about by introducing a new concept when the child is ready, first through concrete materials, then moving on to pictorial representation and finally abstraction. While, alongside other teaching mediums, Montessori materials play an important role in bringing about this conceptual understanding, inspiration is also drawn from other materials including natural objects, origami, body movements and clay.

The materials and methods used in teaching maths enables a child to gain a deeper conceptual understanding, providing the foundations to securely move towards abstraction. The concrete sensorial aspect of the materials used helps with this journey, providing opportunity for practice to help children gain mastery. Internalisation of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division facts are brought about through practice and playing oral games, and varies very much with each individual child. The importance of reviewing concepts learnt is gently emphasised.

Mathematical reasoning is seen as the bridge between fluency and problem solving. There is an invitation for the children at Inwoods to use and develop fluency skills to explore, reason and challenge thinking in order to embed mathematical facts. In this way, children approach new concepts from a variety of angles, practiced in different ways and applied in a range of contexts, including the use of verbal reasoning. Problem solving and investigations form an important part of this process, and are undertaken individually, with teacher guidance, in groups or as part of another activity or topic.

Literacy

The approach to Literacy is varied and rich. This is carried out through topic-study, listening to and reading text, writing and editing stories and facts, handwriting practice, bookmaking and interdisciplinary enrichment. Our experience shows how important stories are to the children's understanding of literacy and of culture, and of the value of combining art with language. A wide variety of reading materials are available in all learning spaces, along with reading schemes, and stories are told in many aspects of the curriculum.

Inwoods has a positive culture of reading, in which learning reading is not pressured, but supported and encouraged, and where a love of reading can grow. Reading is promoted for both knowledge acquisition and pleasure and children are provided with a varied array of reading choices, including picture books, non-fiction books, poems, and stories from the library as well as an ORT (Oxford Reading Tree) Scheme. Children are regularly read to and told stories, read to teachers and share reading time with each other. Parents are encouraged to read with their children and explore a wide array of different reading materials. Early reading is taught using phonics in discrete, daily sessions, based on the Letters and Sounds scheme. Children learn to confidently recognise letter shape and sound combinations and

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use this to blend and segment in order to read words and sentences successfully. These skills are taught in a multi-sensory way so that individual learning styles are respected.

Children are encouraged to write from early on and consider themselves as authors. They write their own stories, lists, diaries, recipe books, etc. They write reports on individual topics, which emphasise descriptive and informational writing, as well as research and composition. During the creative writing process, spelling isn't emphasised, but is augmented to create subsequent drafts through editing and improving sessions. Spelling is taught sequentially, moving on to more complex spelling structures, word groups and rules when the children are ready. As children become more competent readers and writers, specific spelling lessons are given to familiarise children with word groups and rules. The time spent on spelling increases in relation to the children's capacity.

Various appropriate dexterity and handwriting exercises are offered. Attention is given to the neat and correct formation of letters, in alignment with the child's development, increasing the precision as proficiency develops. The correct pencil grip is encouraged - we often use the term 'froggy grip' - with pencil writing aid grips used as support when necessary. Regular practice enables early writers to understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'family' (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways). As children become more competent writers, letter joins, size, spacing and horizontal and diagonal strokes are taught in order for children to ultimately write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed.

Punctuation skills are taught, especially in the context of the children's own writing, with exercises provided to expand and reinforce their knowledge. Grammar is gradually introduced with more specific lessons as the children are ready for it. Care is taken that grammar doesn't impede literal creativity, but that the tools of grammar are used to communicate clearly.

Cross-Curricular Topics

Through the year, there are opportunities for the children to carry out cross-curricular projects based on their personal interests. Aside from many spontaneous investigations, personal projects are a great way for children to spend time researching and presenting their findings. Topics, which can be initiated by teachers or stem from a personal project of a child, allow for many activities across the disciplines, often touching upon the humanities, geography, science, maths, literacy and the arts. They can offer opportunities for the children to work together, as well as to focus on particular individual interests. Both personal projects and group topics may determine outings, guest workshop leaders, and even performances.

Science

Children are natural and curious learners and they are drawn to observing nature and exploring the inherent scientific phenomena all around them through play and more directed activities. This interest

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invariably comes into the learning environment. Through natural activities and focused experiments, the children learn about scientific methods and processes. As the children grow, many of the current scientific theories are revealed. In most instances, the answers aren't given to the children, but explored in a process that can reveal more than any intended outcome.

While performing experiments, children are encouraged to observe closely and explain their observations in their own words when young and with appropriate scientific vocabulary as they mature. They are also helped to draw scientific diagrams and graphs. Children learn how to make hypotheses and test them, how much information it takes to prove a theory, and how to document experiments. In these ways, the children gain an important basis in how scientific understandings have been changed and revised over time. Integrating science into gardening, cooking and maths helps children understand the interconnectedness of science with other disciplines.

In the class, the children might explore the natural world, the forces, and biology with emphasis on animal and human biology. These often come up in relation to imaginative play, interests of individuals, and stories or topics brought in to the children by the teacher.

Social/Emotional

Learning to cooperate during group activities, resolve conflicts and accept differences are all skills we value highly at Inwoods. The importance of respectful relationships are key to the staff interactions with each other, the parents, and the children whilst also offering positive modelling. We take time in circles, when an issue has arisen, and in our class sessions - both planned and unplanned - to look at the guidelines and ways we humans can learn to look after each other and the wider world.

Inwoods doesn't consider itself a 'free-school' or 'democratic school', however, we aim to and practice ways in which the children can take responsibility not just for their own learning, but for the fabric of the whole school. Children are given a real responsibility for decision-making and contributing to actions in the school, from adjusting and coming up with the Agreements, to Celebration Days and Fairs.

Punishment and reward are increasingly shown to be ineffective in the long-term and tend to have differing results than the ones intended. Children at Inwoods are not punished for inappropriate behaviour but are made aware of their actions, and are given, often with the help of an adult, the space to reflect and make suggestions for right action in the future.

When conflicts arise during playtime or lessons, we attempt to address them immediately and sensitively by allowing both sides to be heard using non-aggressive language. We encourage children to put themselves in the shoes of others and to recognise their own mistakes. We feel the ability to admit to incorrect behaviour is a sign of emotional maturity. Problem solving is not only used as a way to navigate disagreements between children in a particular moment, but as a way of looking at issues and decisions in the whole environment. This can encompass ways that the play equipment is used; procedures for apologising; timings and guidelines for spontaneous ideas of activities such as water

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games; rules for how to behave on an outing; etc. As a result, the children feel confident about the ways things are done, that they are heard, and thus feel free to be themselves and to support others to be themselves.

Observation and awareness are key elements to emotional health. The teachers carefully observe children, supporting them to see themselves and others in each moment without judgement. In the conversations with the children, the staff do not attempt to get the children to see what the adult sees, but to look truly at the child's own emotions, assumptions and conclusions.

General politeness is expected and children are guided in the use of appropriate verbal and body language in order to develop relationships: eye contact, facial expressions, non-judgmental use of words and means of expressing oneself, etc. Turn-taking, care of others, sharing, and generosity are all expected. It is understood that all people, teachers included, make mistakes. If a guideline is broken, the inappropriateness of the behaviour is made clear, and the issues are dealt with in various ways. Sometimes it is appropriate for a whole class group or the school to engage in the issue. Often, a teacher will talk with the child/ren about the situation and a natural consequence may arise out of this.

It is essential that children feel they have friends and can relate with a wide number of other children and adults. This is nurtured by observation of children who may need help in this area, and the careful creation of opportunities to increase special bonds, and, conversely, variety in relationships. Responses to children vary in response to their age and capacity.

Ongoing feedback between parents and teachers regarding social/emotional issues is considered important. There are a range of ways that parents and staff can communicate, including the opportunity for weekly meetings with individual parents. These are important links between home and school, and help create the culture of Inwoods.

PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education)

Inwoods' ethos supports PSHE on a daily basis in the curriculum. Hygiene is covered daily before snack and lunch, in groups and individually, as well as with regular attention to fingernails and overall cleanliness. It is the responsibility of the children to help keep the classrooms clean and tidy, they learn about how to keep a place free of germs and about contributing to the care of community space. The emphasis on children in a disagreement facing the problem(s) together with or without adult guidance teaches non-violent communication, empathy and how one's actions affect others. Regular Inquiry Sessions looking into various dilemmas give each child practice in expressing their opinion, listening to differing opinions, seeing how people grow and undertake to understand the world better. Care is taken to give body awareness lessons each school year to each group.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Inclusion

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At Inwoods, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is paramount to our intentions. We offer a broad range of artistic, cultural and environmental opportunities and challenges. We plan our personal, social and health education and citizenship through topic, circle time and assemblies, and ‘enquiries’ to help our pupils acquire values and skills to enable them to develop responsibility, resilience and independence, and choose their path in life. Regular discussion of rules, enquiries into life, and problem-solving responses to conflict create an atmosphere that effectively nurtures children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. All pupils are encouraged to strive for academic excellence and a spirit of open and shared enquiry, whilst developing their individual potential and qualities of character so they can make a positive contribution to the world. When developmentally appropriate, we emphasise not only a broad understanding of cultures, religions, laws and politics, but awareness of the influences of the above, to help pupils stay clear and true in the decisions each makes in each moment. Citizenship and morality are not considered in just the local and national context, but includes environmental and worldly connectivity, from our influence on the smallest microbe to the largest biome. Spirituality, associated with the search for meaning and purpose in life, relates to connection and awareness, and to being truly present in life.

At Inwoods, we find it essential to guide children toward facing and understanding their fears. Moral development is concerned with pupils’ ability to make decisions about how they should behave and act, and the reasons for such behaviour. Pupils are encouraged to understand the need for understanding and empathy and to cooperate with rules from conviction rather than because of sanctions or consequences. We offer continual opportunities within the curriculum, in social interactions and through taking on responsibilities to contribute to the student’s spiritual, cultural and social development.

Listening/Communication

Part of the intention behind our curriculum and atmosphere that respects children, is that it encourages them to participate in their environment and to offer input. This naturally encourages children’s articulation and listening to others.

Children are given opportunities to develop their confidence in speaking in a group and to learn the importance of good listening. This is done in class as well as in circle and enquiry time, and through philosophy lessons. In all situations, the children are encouraged to listen carefully, and, taking careful turns, then share appropriate comments and questions. Many other activities for listening are offered in various lessons throughout the week.

We aim to create an affectionate and non-judgmental environment in which children feel safe to express their anxieties, thoughts and needs. A small student-teacher ratio ensures that each teacher can understand the individual personalities and thus offer the most appropriate challenges and support for each child. We recognise that resilience and facing disappointment are key in developing a confident, generous human being, and try to support the children in this.

Physical

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The Inwoods grounds offer two acres of beautiful playing area. Children have plenty of space to run, play games, build dens, work in the vegetable garden, make environmental art, play in sand and play areas, and climb small trees.

A minimum of one and half hours a day is offered for outdoor playtime; plus, three hours a week for gardening and nature exploration and two hours a week for organised sports and games. Dance and drama are offered regularly, both in discrete and cross-curricular learning settings. Children learn to skip, develop ball catching and throwing skills, work on balance and coordination, and participate in games. Emphasis is placed on becoming a cooperative team member and developing a positive attitude to physical tasks outdoors. Each term, an all-school hike is planned, usually in a nearby setting, with an emphasis on building stamina as well as appreciation of nature.

Contact with Nature

As we feel the stewardship and a loving relationship with our world is key to all people's lives, nature is given great emphasis at Inwoods. We have daily connection with nature, starting with 10 minutes of quiet 'sit-spots'. This is simply an opportunity for us all to be present and still in a beautiful natural setting away from any human activity. It is not a meditation practice. It is an opportunity to experience a moment of being 'alone' and to observe what is going on during that time both internally and externally. Lunch is often eaten outdoors, and in general, the grounds are considered as much a part of the school as the indoor areas. We have play fields, swings, a sandpit, a Wendy house, as well as many areas which are left wild to encourage flora and fauna. Our Wildlife Garden has a pond, a habitat wall and several unkempt areas and is used sporadically to encourage wildlife over human use.

To give a focused time to actively be in nature, look after our grounds and look into our inner nature we have allocated one morning a week to Nature Study and Forest School. The format for these days will vary from week to week, but will be based upon three themes of Garden Time, Nature Explorations and 'Re-wilding' sessions.

Re-wilding includes walks, flora and fauna identification, ecology and various Forest School and bush-craft activities. The activities relate to and depend upon the seasons. The children may be involved in a project, such as preparing an outside area, or in a craft, such as whittling butter knives. They learn how to make fires, prepare weatherproof survival structures, make wreaths and much more. The sessions include valuable facts as well as activities.

Garden Time is a time to learn about the processes of plants and growing food, as well as a time to get hands and shoes muddy as the whole group (staff and children) dig, weed, sow, and maintain not just our large vegetable garden, but the beds and borders. The sessions can start with a story, which may include one from an indigenous culture, explaining or exploring a natural process or act of stewardship. Throughout the year, various topics are explored including photosynthesis, the life cycle of plants, harvesting, gardening practices and making plant choices. Whenever available, our produce is included in our cooked lunches.

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Nature Explorations is a time for children to explore, play and find questions arising out of the natural environment of the Wildlife Garden. Equipment such as magnifying glasses, nets, bug- and pond-viewers and clipboards with paper and pencils are provided to facilitate the children making the most of this time.

Arts and Crafts

Drawing and painting are encouraged in all areas of the curriculum, right down to labels of hooks, cubbies and workbooks as well as illustrations in personal notebooks and projects. Mandalas, drawing and arts and crafts are favourite activities for the Solo and free choice sessions. Various styles of art and craft are explored in-depth: wet-on-wet painting, detailed crayon illustration, nature sketching, bookbinding, sewing, watercolour, ink, wax modelling, woodwork, junk modelling and nature crafts. As children get older, the use of the Pottery Studio at Brockwood Park will become available to learn about ceramics and getting to do both hand-and wheel-work. Other opportunities are given throughout the year such as: photography, felt-making, withy work, origami, lantern making, seasonal crafts, puppet-making, gift-making, glass-painting, etc.

The Play of Painting, which is offered as part of our art curriculum, is an introspective time using paint along the lines of the practice devised by Arno Stern. In the Painting Studio, the children and staff explore the formulations that inform our markings and drawings, in a teacher-less, calm space without judgement or comment. It isn't just a time to make art, but for the inner nature to be expressed and heard.

Drama, Music and Movement

Aside from the many opportunities for natural movement and play in our long breaks, dance, yoga and movement games are aspects of the physical education offered at Inwoods. Music is offered weekly, alongside singing circle time at least once a week with the whole school, whilst opportunities for playing of instruments is available to the children at different times in the Oak house. Additionally, during most terms, the children will be involved in drama games, role-play, miming and body percussion. At different points in the year, there are performance opportunities for the children. These may take the form of seasonal celebrations, presentations about work and class assemblies. Children are encouraged to participate, whilst being sensitive to individuals who are more naturally shy or haven't had the opportunity to express themselves in front of an audience. Teachers allow for individual styles and in drama encourage children to act out their own stories. In many sessions, improvisation is explored and emotional and social topics delved into.

Languages

Spanish is the modern foreign language taught at Inwoods. The intention is to create an interest in and awareness of modern foreign languages and cultures. Our approach involves the children in speaking, listening and role-playing. The classes encourage children to listen and engage with Spanish, learn new

vocabulary, speak in sentences using familiar vocabulary with appropriate pronunciation and show an understanding of basic vocabulary.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

At Inwoods, our SEND provision starts immediately, as we believe all children are individual, learn at their own pace, have different capacities and challenges, and are meant to be sensitive. We feel that a lively spark of learning in life will take a person far, whatever their capacities, and accept children as they are, whilst also supporting them to thrive and excel.

However, if children have any specific or differing needs, we meet these both within and outside of the classroom setting. Our many materials, including Montessori, cater to people with learning challenges by being concrete and sequential, and were in fact developed to meet learning challenges. When a child shows lack of understanding, difficulty in manifesting self-control or other learning difficulty, we begin by increased observation and eventually put strategies in place. These vary from introduction to particular materials and strategies, increased learning support in the classroom, increased time at certain activities, time with our support worker and other one-to-one tutoring.

Eventually, outside specialists may be called upon. Parents are communicated with throughout this process. If any particular provision including one-to-one tutoring is deemed needed, then ILP's are drawn up and discussed termly with staff and parents. Students also look at their learning needs and help to decide their goals in an age-appropriate manner.

We have made provision for wheelchair access and have many features that cater to people with physical and sensory disabilities as well as learning needs.

Assessment and planning

Formative rather than summative assessment is emphasised at Inwoods. The withdrawal from the National Curriculum tests and exams is deliberate. We feel children do not benefit from these exams and comparisons. Instead, we rely on communication with the children, amongst the staff and between staff and parents to inform decisions about how the child is doing and what, if any, special considerations need to be made in their learning programs.

Teachers come together before the start of each term to share ideas for activities, discuss cross-curricular possibilities and plan directional themes for the coming term. Any important changes to the school/curriculum and outlines are announced at the beginning of each term in either a curriculum meeting or via email. Parents have the opportunity to raise questions and concerns.

A progress report is written on each child and a copy is handed to parents near the end of the last term. Throughout the year teachers meet with parents to discuss all areas of their child's development. Notes

are taken during this discussion regarding feedback from teachers and parents.

Teachers meet weekly to share observations of children's progress and behaviour, and to make practical changes and plans. To create the safe and open atmosphere of Inwoods, it is essential for the staff to have in-depth communication about the children and issues that occur at school. Because of this careful attention, Inwoods may change more than many other educational settings, and flexibility from parents and staff is needed. All-school trips, theatre visits, themed days and other opportunities are arranged in as long-term a time-frame as possible, but many are inspired by the current discoveries of the children, and are thus made within a minimum of planning time of 24 hours.

Structure of the week

The children can begin arriving at Inwoods at 8:45 am for a 9 am start to the school day and find a spot to sit quietly in for 10 minutes ('quiet sit-spots'). After, we will gather as a class for circle time, where we share thoughts, offer enquiries and discuss what the day ahead will hold. This will take place either outside or in the Big Barn.

Morning sessions take place until 12:30 pm, with a mid-morning 25-minute snack break at 10:15 am when they will have a snack of fruit, nuts, and rice cakes or corn cakes and playtime outside. Lunch starts at 12:30 pm followed by free play outside until 1:45 pm. On Mondays and Fridays, a healthy, home cooked vegetarian lunch is served in the Big Barn and the whole school will eat together. Children are encouraged to try food each time rather than follow habits of dislikes, and to eat a range of fresh and cooked vegetables. On the packed-lunch days (Tuesday - Thursday), children have a choice whether to eat in the Big Barn, outside on picnic blankets or on the Oak House deck. Lunch break lasts until 1:45 pm, and each child takes responsibility for clearing up after themselves and helping with washing dishes.

After lunch, the children participate in either singing sessions or circle time before afternoon activities.

End of school is scheduled at 3:15 pm, and parents are expected to arrive by this time so as to be waiting to greet and collect their children. Parents are responsible for the behaviour of the children in their care, and school rules are followed even when staff are no longer in charge.

Wednesdays are dedicated Nature Day and Forest School activities which take place in the morning. Through the week, the children will engage with dedicated PE games and movement time, Spanish, arts and crafts, PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) and music sessions alongside core curriculum subjects of maths, English and Science.

The range of activities offered will vary from discrete subject lessons to topic based cross-curricular project sessions. There will be space for children to plan their own learning tasks and to choose how to respond to different activities presented. There will also be opportunities through the week for free choice and Solo Time (a calm, silent 'down-time' wherein children are encouraged to focus or relax on their own).