



## Early Years Policy

### Curriculum Statement

#### Intent

Our main aim, throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception), is to help children to progress towards, and achieve, the Early Learning Goals for all areas of learning. See 'Appendix 1; EYFS Early Learning Goals' for full details of each of these.

We believe in developing the 'whole child' and therefore recognise the importance of building skills, knowledge and confidence in each of the areas of learning. These are:

- ~ Communication and Language
- ~ Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- ~ Physical Development
- ~ Literacy
- ~ Mathematics
- ~ Understanding the World
- ~ Expressive Arts and Design

Although we recognise the importance of all of these areas, we understand that language and reading is of paramount importance in order for children to continue to progress in all subjects. Because of this, we aim to provide a language-rich environment where reading is promoted and available in all environment areas, wherever possible. We use the 'helicopter stories' format to promote story-telling and to develop language based around stories, while developing early speaking and listening skills.

We also understand that every child is unique and therefore we observe the different ways that children learn, and ensure that these are reflected in our practice to create an environment that caters for, and supports, the needs of all children. See 'Appendix 2; Characteristics of Effective Learning'.

Across our Early Years Foundation Stage, we promote, and hope to instill, a love of learning within children that will inspire and challenge them through a balance of child-initiated, adult-guided and adult-led activities. Many of these activities are play-based and practical, and children can access them across both indoor and outdoor environments. Allowing children the opportunity to pursue their own interests, and explore independently, ensures that they know that their own ideas are valued and helps them to become independent thinkers, problem-solvers and risk-assessors.

This should provide them with the best possible start to the rest of their journey through school, and beyond!

#### Implementation

#### Teaching and Learning

The Early Years Foundation Stage environment is play-based, with a variety of different areas that children access independently and which help to develop children's skills across the areas of learning. Continuous provision is provided which allows for open-ended learning opportunities. However, these areas are also adapted and enhanced to meet the changing needs of children within the class, or to provide a new exciting stimulus to engage and interest children. These types of activities are referred to as **child-initiated**, meaning that they are activities that the child chooses independently and are led by their own interests. E.g. a child accessing art materials to make a picture/model based on their own interests.

Other activities within the Early Years environment are referred to as **adult-guided** as these are activities, or games, that may have been introduced or modelled by an adult and have a more specific outcome. E.g. a number board game or a writing template.

Children will also work on **adult-led** activities. These are activities that have a specific learning objective and will involve the direction or support of an adult. As the children become more confident in developing their skills, they may be able to work on adult-led tasks independently but they are still classed as 'adult-led' because they have been set by an adult with a specific learning intention and outcome expected.

The number of adult-led tasks increases as the children progress from Nursery to Reception.

### **Organisation, Planning and Resources**

Each day, children are shown a visual timetable which sets out the plan, including daily routines and the learning focus for the morning/afternoon. There are specific directed-teaching sessions where the practitioner will deliver the appropriate content and then children will either be directed to work with an adult on an adult-led task, or engage in independent activity time through accessing the environment areas.

An adult will always be available to observe, support and enhance children's independent play, in order to assess embedded learning, provide further challenge and identify any gaps in learning which will inform future planning and next steps.

In Reception, children will also take part in discrete, daily phonics sessions which are split into differentiated groups, when needed. Phase 1 phonics sessions will begin in Nursery and will progress to Phase 2 when appropriate. This would normally be expected to begin at the start of the summer term.

Planning across the Early Years Foundation Stage involves different themes. In Nursery, there are usually two themes focused on across each half-term and in Reception there is one main theme for each half-term. Please see 'Appendix 3; EYFS Themes Curriculum Coverage' for more detail related to these.

The themes are based upon common popular interests and annual events, but are also broad and flexible to ensure there are opportunities to follow the children's interests. They are usually linked to a few key areas of learning but are planned in order to allow the development of skills across all of the different areas. Overviews of these themes are created to show clear progression across the Early Years Foundation Stage, are shared with parents and available to be viewed on the school website.

Staff plan in more detail on a weekly basis for all directed-teaching sessions and adult-led tasks, which usually relate to Literacy or Maths. Weekly plans are also produced for Phonics and PE. In Nursery, it is expected that children attending on a full time basis will complete two short adult-led tasks for both Literacy and Maths each week. The adult-led tasks are repeated during the week to enable those attending on a part-time basis to complete a higher percentage of the work. In Reception, two or three adult-led tasks are completed each week for Literacy and Maths, working on a fortnightly system, to ensure five Literacy and five Maths tasks are achieved. Weekly evidence will also be collected to show what the children have been working on in Phonics sessions.

Environment plans are produced on a fortnightly basis to show enhancements and changes to environment areas, alongside the continuous provision. They also show adult-led or adult-guided tasks within the environment with initials of the children expected to work on these. The environment is continuously monitored to ensure it is being used productively and observations are used for future planning.

## **Assessment**

On entry to Nursery and Reception, we have a baseline assessment period. This covers the first four weeks of Reception, and up to this amount, as needed, for Nursery. We use previous assessment data from other settings, alongside our own observations of children from child-initiated and adult-guided activities. We also have specific adult-led assessment tasks to allow us to pinpoint children's understanding in certain areas. In September 2019, we took part in the national pilot of the new government Reception baseline assessment. We will continue to follow guidance in using this assessment in future years.

We use the Development Matters document (See 'Appendix 4; Development Matters') to track children's progress throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage and record this at the end of each term. We use individual paper tracking documents to highlight progress across all areas of learning and input Literacy and Mathematics assessments onto the electronic system: iTrack. This means assessments are recorded four times; for Baseline (end of week 4), end of autumn term, end of spring term and finally end of summer term. In Reception, the summer term assessment involves determining whether children are 'emerging', 'expected' or 'exceeding' against all areas of the EYFS profile and this data is submitted to the local authority and shared with parents in their child's end of year report.

To ensure we have evidence of each child's progress, work is recorded into their Learning Journal or Maths book, alongside observations, photos and 'Wow learning moments' sheets collected from parents/guardians.

## **Impact**

The success of our Early Years Foundation Stage can be seen through the enjoyment and enthusiasm of our pupils. They are happy coming to school and develop positive relationships with both their peers and staff. Children make good progress across all areas of learning. This results in a big increase of children working at the expected level by the end of Reception and therefore ready to move onto the next stage of their journey through school.

Those children with gaps in their learning or difficulties in some areas, are identified quickly and supported in school to address their needs. Where further intervention or support is needed this is acted upon before they leave the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure support plans are in place to help their transition into Key Stage One.

## **Equal Opportunities**

Equality means giving everyone the opportunity to reach their full potential and an equal chance to live their life as they choose. In young children, this means giving equal chances right from the very start of life and ensuring they are not denied opportunities because of their ethnicity, cultural background, social background, gender, religion or physical or emotional circumstances.

Our Early Years Foundation Stage is well placed to provide a safe environment where children can learn about each other's differences and similarities, and understand the importance of respect from an early stage in life.

## **Inclusion**

Inclusive Early Years practice is the development of positive attitudes, clear strategies and constructive approaches to ensure all children are catered for within our environments.

To develop positive attitudes, children with significant disabilities, or special educational needs, are nurtured in our settings and provision is adapted where needed to ensure it is accessible for all. The differing needs of individuals is discussed with other children openly in a manner that is suitable for them to understand. This ensures that they can also play an active part in supporting their peers and develop a positive attitude and understanding of differences between people.

Clear strategies are implemented through creating support plans for children with special educational needs, in line with our SEN policy. These are updated half-termly with small, achievable targets to develop children's knowledge and skills at a level that is appropriate for them.

We have a constructive approach through aiming to resource our environment in a way which provides open-ended opportunities for play and exploration. This means all children can be supported, or challenged, at a level appropriate for them.

Staff work together as a team and discuss the ongoing progress of children daily to ensure that all staff have a good understanding of every child's needs. During child-initiated play, staff consider the best time to intervene, support and challenge children through imaginative questioning and language modelling.

Resources are used, where needed, to support the learning of children with additional needs. This includes Makaton signs, pictures (including PECS symbols), 'See and Learn' programme and resources to encompass all different learning styles; visual, auditory and kinaesthetic.

We also involve parents in discussions about their child's development and create targets based upon this information.

### **Role of the Subject Leader**

The EYFS Lead must ensure that all aspects of this policy are being met. This means regularly assessing how the environment is being used and making changes where needed. Planning is ongoing and can be adapted and added to every year to meet the needs of each cohort.

The EYFS Lead meets with Nursery and Reception staff each half-term to discuss medium-term plans and to ensure that Reception are building on the skills started in Nursery. Data is also discussed at the end of the baseline period and each term, to identify any gaps in learning or areas that need to be focused on. This then informs planning and the environment for the next half-term in order to address these issues.

The EYFS Lead should attend relevant training annually to stay informed of current trends and changes in Early Years and to address any targets detailed in action plans. They should then disseminate the information to all EYFS staff and make any changes needed as a result.

At the end of every school year, the EYFS Lead should analyse the main areas for improvement and detail these in an 'Action Plan'. These targets, for the next year, should come from observing in the Early Years Foundation Stage, responding to data and discussion with all EYFS staff members.

The EYFS Lead will meet with governors annually to ensure they have a clear picture of what is happening across the Early Years Foundation stage and to share progress in relation to targets from the current action plan.

### **Working with Parents/Carers**

In line with the rest of the school, we have a 'new class' meeting at the start of every year to provide the chance for parents/carers to chat with the class teacher and find out general information. We also have parent's evenings in the autumn and spring terms to update parents/carers about their child's progress.

However, because the Early Years Foundation Stage is the start of each child's journey through our school, we also have an additional meeting in the summer term before their child is due to start school. This allows both parents/carers and children the chance to familiarise themselves with the Early Years environment, to meet staff members and to find out key information about our school.

In Reception, an 'Early Reading and Maths' workshop is held at the end of the first half-term to provide additional information about what the children are learning in school, what the expectations are for the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the kinds of activities that are used in school. Parents/Carers then have the opportunity to explore some of these activities with their child in school.

Staff are available on the door each morning to speak to parents/carers and again at the end of every school day. We also use the 'Class Dojo' app to update parents about some of the activities and learning focuses that have been happening in school each week. Parents/Carers can send direct messages to the teacher, through this app, when needed and the teacher will always reply as soon as possible.

Reports are shared at the end of the school year to report on each child's attainment across all of the areas of learning.

**Policy Review Date:** May 2021