

# Early Years Policy



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# Early Years Policy

## Our Aims

1. To provide a secure, safe, caring and stimulating environment.
2. To value every child, embracing diversity, culture, religion and languages in partnership with their families and community.
3. To celebrate and build on what children already know, aiming to develop a positive attitude and enjoyment for learning through incorporating children's own specific areas of knowledge, talents and interests.
4. To provide a range of opportunities to learn through direct experiences, enquiry and active exploration, both in the classroom and outdoors.
5. To encourage and promote independence, confidence and personal values.
6. To value and involve parents and carers in children's learning and development, working together in partnership.

## Our Foundation Stage Focus and Work

We believe that all children learn best when they feel comfortable, happy, valued and able. We endeavour to nurture our foundation stage children by providing enjoyable and active opportunities. We focus on developing children's self-esteem, social skills, language and communication, physical development and ability to begin to become independent; in addition to teaching basic skills of literacy, mathematics and understanding of the world. We start at what the child already knows and aim to move this forward using creativity and explorative learning. We understand that play forms the fundamental groundwork for all children's learning, and we use play and play-based learning to tend to our children's personal and academic needs. We recognise the importance of supporting the whole child.

## Planning and the Early Years Curriculum

The Early Years Foundation Stage is based around Key Themes and Seven Areas of Learning. The Characteristics of Effective Learning describe behaviours children use in order to learn. To learn well, children must approach opportunities with **curiosity, energy and enthusiasm**. Effective learning must be meaningful to a child, so that they are able to use what they have learned and apply it in new situations.

### The Themes

1. Unique Child - Every child is a unique child who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
2. Positive Relationships - Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.
3. Enabling Environments - Children learn and develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and carers.
4. Learning and Development - Children develop and learn in different ways.

## **The Areas of Learning**

The Prime Areas begin to develop quickly in response to a child's relationships and experiences. They run through and support learning in all other areas and continue to be fundamental throughout the reception year at school.

### **1. Communication and Language Development**

It is vital that children are given time to have their own conversations and build up a wide vocabulary of words. By showing children how to talk and when to listen, they are helped in other areas of the curriculum. This area also considers children's interactions with one another and their skills in expressing themselves.

### **2. Personal, Social and Emotional Development**

This involves helping build children's confidence in their own abilities and encouraging them to develop healthy relationships with others. Supporting children to manage their feelings, develop their social skills and respond to rules are important steps which lead to them doing them independently.

### **3. Physical Development**

Physical development looks at children's coordination skills and movement on different apparatus as well as their fine motor skills. Children are also helped to identify healthy choices in relation to foods and exercise and understand the importance of a balanced lifestyle. This area also encompasses teaching children to take risks.

The Specific Areas include essential knowledge and skills such as writing, reading, number, shape, understanding of the world and creativity. They grow out of the prime areas and provide important contexts for learning, providing the basic skills that a child will use throughout their primary schooling and beyond.

#### **1. Literacy**

Children are taught the links between sounds and letters using a range of methods to support their reading and writing development. This is supported through phonics teaching. By encouraging a love and interest of reading and writing, by immersing children in books, stories and playful writing opportunities they are motivated to learn.

#### **2. Mathematics**

Maths in Reception introduces the idea of number to children, helping them to understand what numbers are and then moving onto basic counting, addition and subtraction problems. Children are also encouraged to build and describe shapes through construction activities, explore basic measures through things such as water play and subsequently build up their mathematical vocabulary.

#### **3. Understanding the World**

This area of the Early Years Foundation Stage familiarises children with a variety of people, places, communities, animals, plants and experiences so they can begin to understand the world around

them. Through exploring, visiting and investigating these different aspects they are able to make links and begin to comprehend their world further.

#### 4. Expressive Arts and Design

Young children's minds are the most creative of all and so this area provides children with resources to create, make and design. They also share their ideas through role-play, music, movement and dance.

### **The Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning**

The ways in which a child engages with other people and their environment underpin learning and development across all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage. These are said to be the Characteristics of Effective Learning.

#### 1. Playing and Exploring

- Realising their actions have an effect on the world.
- Think ahead about how they will play/explore with objects.
- Guide their own thinking and actions by referring to visual aids or talking to themselves when playing.
- Make independent choices
- Bring their own interests and fascinations into EYFS settings.
- Respond to new experiences.

#### 2. Active Learning

- Participate in routines
- Begin to predict sequences because they know routines
- Show goal led behaviour
- Begin to correct their mistakes themselves
- Keep on trying when things are difficult

#### 3. Creating and Thinking Critically

- Take part in pretend play
- Sort materials
- Review their progress as they try to achieve a goal
- Solve real problems
- Use pretend play to think beyond the here and now and to understand another perspective
- Know more, so feel confident about coming up with their own ideas
- Make more links between those ideas
- Concentrate on achieving something important to them. They are able to control their attention and ignore distractions.

### Topic Planning

Encompassing the above national requirements, we plan learning experiences and opportunities that stem from planned topics. We then work to tailor these around the required curriculum content in order to ensure that our children remain engaged, focussed and develop a real sense of thrill towards learning. These topics are broad and may change direction when best for the children, following their interest. We work flexibly to alter and change plans if we feel this is appropriate/beneficial to the children's learning and development.

### How the Early Years Environment is planned for

Within the classroom (both indoor and outdoor) are areas which invite children to explore, create, test, practise, question, investigate and socialise. Each area is carefully set up to generate the best possible outcomes for all children and offer opportunities to cater for all abilities. Adults working within this environment are fully trained in supporting learning within these provisions through playing alongside the children, talking, questioning, modelling whilst also allowing for a certain degree of independence.

### Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage is built primarily around children's play and their own ideas. The children have three formal, planned, whole class sessions a day for literacy/topic, phonics and maths. There are also sometimes afternoon activities taking place such as PE. The staff work alongside the children to develop both planned and unplanned learning experiences, which help make sense of the world around them by accessing all areas of the curriculum. Structured play means that the children are able to have hands-on opportunities and imaginative experiences. Through approaching learning in this way, children simultaneously develop a sense of self, an ability to control their emotions and an understanding of rules and the need for these. Play-based learning means that children communicate, talk, plan, investigate and solve problems, share, challenge, practise, think and make connections both within the inside and outside environments. The children make their own choices around the activities on offer, as this encourages independence, challenge and ownership of their own self and learning. The adults are trained in extending these choices through parallel play, questioning, conversation, modelling and suggestion.

### Assessment

Assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage takes place mainly through noted observations and photographs/videos which are ongoing throughout the year. These contribute to each child's online learning journey called Tapestry. Paper activities and crafts are put into a sketchbook also.

The teacher analyses these observations often which involves assessing each child against the seven areas of learning and tracking this onto a grid 'On Track' or 'Not On Track', to ensure that each child is making good progress. By regularly carrying out this process, any gaps or areas for development can be clearly identified. It also provides both teachers and parents with an overview of how each child is growing and developing. By assessing young children in this way, the children are aware of the monitoring of their progress through positive challenge setting and celebration. At the end of the Reception year, children are assessed against the Early Learning Goals and this data is logged onto Pupil Asset.

At the end of the academic year, the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile is completed in line with statutory requirements. This information is reported to parents as well as the Local Authority (Norfolk County Council)

### Transition to Nursery/School

We recognise that the transition process from home or a preschool setting to Nursery/Primary school can be daunting for both parents and children. We have a number of strategies in place that we have found to be successful in order to make this transition as easy and comfortable as possible for all involved.

1. Links with preschools - If children did not attend our Nursery setting or already attended a pre school, we have good links with the local preschools. The class teacher visits preschools to meet the

children and communicate with staff to provide knowledge of the child before they start school. Preschools should also provide transition reports to schools.

2. Continuous open days - We have open days throughout the year to allow parents to look around our setting and learn about our class.
3. Home Visits - We visit the homes of any new Nursery children joining our setting. We have a home visit information booklet that we fill out with any necessary information needed before the child starts.
4. Summer term taster sessions- New Reception children are invited for two play-based taster sessions in the summer term. These aim to give the children the opportunity to become familiar with the school environment, classroom and the staff before starting in September if they have not already attended our Nursery.
5. Staggered transition arrangements - Children starting reception will be given the choice to attend school for the morning only for approximately the first week (12pm). The next week, children can stay for the morning and lunch (1pm). Following this, full time schooling commences for those who have opted for this, or who are of statutory school age.

#### Parents/Carers

We hugely value and encourage the role of parents/carers in children's education and upbringing. We recognise that parents are the most important people in children's lives and are the people whom children learn the most from and aspire to, particularly in their early years. We know that children's development is a continuous, complex interaction of environmental and genetic factors in which the body, brain and behaviour become more complex. For this reason, the role of parents and carers is crucial in ensuring children are successful and happy. We welcome and value contributions from parents who can provide a deeper insight or knowledge into specific areas such as their career area of expertise, their culture or interests, as this broadens the opportunities for our children at school whilst at the same time celebrates diversity.

We aim to form positive working relationships with all our families at school so as to ensure that both parties feel supported by the other, and the best outcomes for all children can be met.

Some of the routinely annual events, which include families, are:

1. Stay and play mornings for parents to spend time in class with their children
2. Autumn term parent consultations – during the first week to mainly discuss the settling in and transition process any initial learning and behavioural needs and to discuss any queries from either or both parties (if they did not attend Nursery)
3. Parent consultation - discussing progress, achievements and targets at the end of the Autumn and Spring Term

4. Yearly report - highlighting and celebrating the child's successes and identifying areas to work on. The final report outlines progress against the Early Learning Goals.
5. Regular written communication via Tapestry and ClassDojo.
6. Opportunities which fit into current learning topics as and when appropriate e.g. parent workshops, school trips, church carol service, remembrance day and sports day.

Parents and carers are warmly welcomed throughout the year to discuss any questions or queries they may have. Informal drop in sessions can be arranged with the class teacher in advance and will usually take place after school. In some cases, the school may request a meeting with the parents/carers to discuss concerns in school which may include behavioural issues, barriers to learning or other matters. In this case, the school will work with parents to solve any issues that may have arisen through various techniques such as writing a behavioural support plan, intimate care plan or contacting outside agencies such as educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, parent support advisors or other professionals as appropriate.

#### Admissions Policy

Applications to our Nursery provision can be made anytime from the child's second birthday. Further information can be found in our Nursery Admissions Policy. Attendance at our nursery provision does not guarantee a child a place in our reception class.

Admissions to our Reception provision are dealt with by Norfolk County Council, the deadline is usually January 15th. Therefore, parents who would like their child to be admitted to our school during the year their child is five should ensure that they complete the necessary application form by the primary school applications national closing date. Our Admissions Policy is available on our website.

#### Equal Opportunities

In line with the school's Equal Opportunities Policy, no child in school will be discriminated against or disadvantaged because of their ethnicity, culture, religion, language, family background, special educational need, disability, gender or ability.