

Early Years Policy



This policy was reviewed in September 2018 by the EPA Early Years Partnership and adopted by the full governing body on _____

Signed: _____ (Headteacher)

Signed: _____ (Chair of Governors)

This policy is due for review in September 2021

Introduction

“Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their potential. A child’s experience in the Early Years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right and it provides a foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.”

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2012

Aims

In all our EPA EYFS settings we aim to:

- Provide safe, challenging, stimulating, caring and sharing environments which are sensitive to the needs of every child including children with additional needs.
- Provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for further learning and development in Key Stage 1 and beyond.
- Use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress.
- Enable choice and decision making, fostering independence and self-confidence.
- Work in partnership with parents and guardians and value their contributions.
- Ensure that all children, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability achieve their potential.
- Provide experiences for all children, whatever their needs, which are inclusive rather than parallel.

EYFS Principles

The EYFS principles which guide the work of all practitioners are grouped into four distinct but complementary themes:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

Effective practice in the EYFS is built on these four guiding themes. They provide a context for the requirements and describe how practitioners should support the development, learning and care of young children. This policy outlines how we meet each of the four themes.

1. A Unique Child

We recognise that every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways, at varying rates. Children’s attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from parents/carers and practitioners; we use appropriate levels of challenge, praise and encouragement and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

2. Positive Relationships

We recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

3. Enabling Environments

We recognise that the learning environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. We view the environment as an "extra teacher", as resources and areas of learning are set out in such a way which encourages children to make independent and considered choices during their play. Children learn and develop well in enabling environments because they respond to their individual need.

4. Learning and Development

We recognise that children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. We aim to cater for all children by providing an inclusive setting.

Teaching and Learning

The Areas of Learning

Individual children's progress will be at different rates and levels of achievement will vary. All children will follow a balanced curriculum that enables them to make progress towards the Learning Outcomes which are now divided into two areas.

Prime Areas

The prime areas begin to develop quickly in response to relationships and experiences, and run through and support learning in all other areas. The prime areas continue to be fundamental throughout the EYFS. Prime areas are fundamental to development in all other areas.

Specific Areas

The specific areas include essential skills and knowledge. They grow out of the prime areas, and provide important contexts for learning. Specific areas include essential skills and knowledge for children to participate successfully in society. These are divided up further into 17 learning Areas:

Prime Areas	
Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Making relationships Self-confidence and self-awareness Managing feelings and behaviour
Physical Development	Moving and handling Health and self-care
Communication and Language	Listening and attention Understanding Speaking
Specific areas	
Literacy	Reading Writing
Mathematics	Numbers Shape, space and measure
Understanding the World	People and communities The world Technology
Expressive Arts and Design	Exploring and using media and materials Being imaginative

Characteristics of Effective Learning

We recognise that children learn effectively when they are able to play, explore and think creatively and critically. This belief underpins the teaching and learning experiences we provide. The Characteristics of Effective Learning are:

Playing and exploring Engagement Finding out exploring Playing with what they know Being willing to 'have a go'
Active learning Motivation Being involved and concentrating Keeping trying Enjoying achieving what they set out to do
Creating and thinking critically Thinking Having their own ideas Making links Choosing ways to do things

Play

We recognise the importance of children's play. It is an essential part of their learning process, supporting them in all areas of development. Play is a powerful motivator, encouraging children to be creative and develop their ideas, understanding and language. Play is also flexible and able to suit the preferred learning style of the child. It can provide multiple ways for the children to learn a variety of different skills and concepts.

We organise the day to provide a balance between the following:

- Child initiated activities – children make choices from within the learning environment
- Adult initiated activities – practitioners provide the resources to stimulate and consolidate learning
- Adult Led activities – children engage in planned activities to meet specific learning outcomes

We recognise that young children learn best when they are active. We understand that active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustainable periods. Therefore, we believe that Early Years education should be as practical as possible and we have an ethos of learning through play.

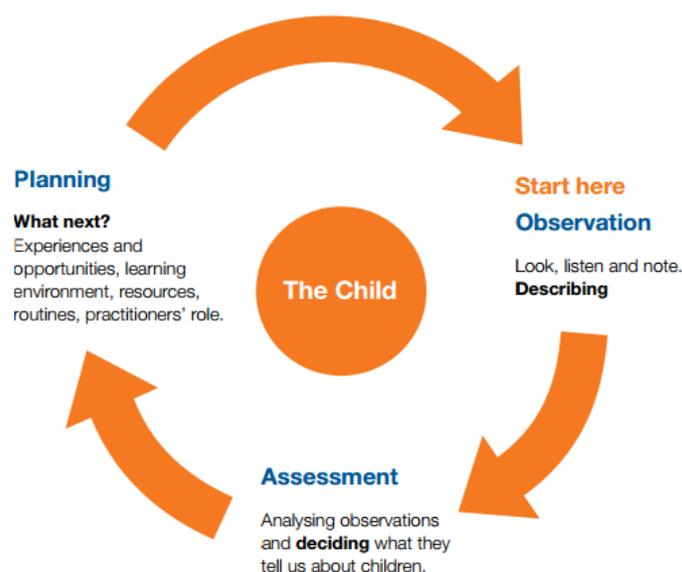
The Learning Environment

We strive to provide environments that:

- Are welcoming, stimulating and safe
- Are appropriate for young children's physical needs
- Ensure the use of indoor and outdoor learning environments
- Are organised so that children can access resources, make choices and be independent learners
- Use displays to reinforce the value of children's work and celebrate achievements
- Provide both quality and varied play experiences
- Have designated areas that facilitate learning in all areas of the curriculum.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

On-going formative assessment is at the heart of Early Years practice. We follow an observation, assessment and planning cycle, as shown here, all staff who work in the Foundation Stage are involved in this process:



Assessment in the EYFS takes the form of long and short recorded observations which involve the teacher and other practitioners. Observations are used to inform assessments. Regular assessments are made of children’s learning and this information informs future planning and reflects identified needs. These observations and assessments are recorded in each child’s online learning journey. Assessment judgements are recorded on Target Tracker four times a year. A baseline assessment is completed within the first six weeks of the children starting their reception year.

Good planning is the key to making children’s learning effective, exciting, varied and progressive. Effective learning builds on and extends what children know and can already do. Our planning shows how the principles of the EYFS are put into practice and is always informed by observations we have made of the children, in order to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning needs.

The parents and guardians are given the opportunities to meet with their child’s teacher twice a year and they receive an end of year written report in relation to their child’s progress, achievements and next steps.

Partnerships

We value the importance of working in partnerships with:

Parents – We recognise the importance of establishing positive relationships with parents and recognise their role as the child’s primary educator. We encourage regular sharing of information about the children with parents. Parents are actively encouraged to share their knowledge of their child, providing further insight into the child as an individual (e.g. interests, experiences, likes, dislikes). These may take the form of Focus Child consultations and wow slips. Workshops and meetings are organised to inform parents about different areas of the EYFS curriculum.

Other professionals – where necessary, referrals are made to the Hub and early assessments requested so that extra support for children and their families can be accessed.

Partnership Schools – meet regularly to share good practice and take part in moderation activities.

Equal Opportunities

All practitioners have a responsibility to maintain positive attitudes to diversity and difference, ensuring that inclusive practice is delivered in the EYFS setting. All children, irrespective of gender, ability, ethnicity, culture or religion, and social circumstances, have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development. *See Equal Opportunities Policy for more information.*

Monitoring and Review

There is a named governor for each EYFS setting who will discuss practice with practitioners. Head teachers will carry out monitoring of the EYFS settings as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.