

Whitegate Church of England Primary School

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

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 life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right, and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up. When parents choose to use early years services they want to know what provision will keep their children safe and help them to thrive. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is the framework that provides that assurance." (Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage).

At Whitegate C of E Primary School the term 'Foundation Stage' refers to children between the ages of four and five years old and describes their curriculum throughout the reception year. Entry into our school is at the beginning of the school year in which the children are five (although compulsory schooling does not begin until the start of the term after a child's fifth birthday). The school has one new intake per year and the children attend full-time almost immediately from when they start in September. For the first few days the children attend morning sessions to help their transition from Foundation Stage 1 to Foundation Stage 2.

Children joining our school have already learnt a great deal. Many have attended one of the various educational settings in our community. The early-years education we offer our children is based on the following principles:

- It builds on what the children already know and can do
- It ensures that no child is excluded or disadvantaged
- It offers a structure for learning that has a range of starting points, content that matches the needs of young children, and activities that provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors
- It provides a rich and stimulating learning environment

There is a pre-school in Whitegate. There is regular liaison between Reception and pre-school staff. In most cases, children who attend Whitegate Pre-school go on to full time education in our reception class.

Our Aims and Principles

We promote and support the characteristics of effective learning through playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically. We believe that children's experiences in the Foundation Stage are crucial in developing confidence, health and well being and a positive foundation for life long learning. Every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person. The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning. Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of learning and development are equally important and inter-connected.

We believe it is important to:

- Ensure that all children and their families feel safe, valued, included and respected.
- Promote parents as partners in their child's learning.
- Help children to feel secure and develop relationships.
- Promote a safe, challenging, rich and varied indoor and outdoor learning environment.
- Provide children with the opportunities to play, to engage in active learning and to think creatively and critically.
- Ensure all areas of the EYFS are given equal coverage and that planning is based on observations of children, their interests and their next steps in learning.

The Curriculum

The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum is divided into areas of learning. Within each area, children develop through different ages and stages. The Early Learning Goals, at approximately 60 months old, are the national expectations for children at the end of the Reception year (and Foundation Stage).

The curriculum of the Foundation Stage underpins all future learning by promoting and developing the **prime** and **specific** areas of learning from the EYFS. A summary of what each of them mean for the children are as follows:

The 3 Prime Areas of Learning:

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- For children, being special to someone and well cared for is vital for their physical, social and emotional health and well-being.
- Being acknowledged and affirmed by important people in their lives leads to children gaining confidence and inner strength through secure attachments with these people.
- Exploration within close relationships leads to the growth of self-assurance, promoting a sense of belonging which allows children to explore the world from a secure base.
- Children need adults to set a good example and to give them opportunities for interaction with others so that they can develop positive ideas about themselves and others.
- Children who are engaged to feel free to express their ideas and their feelings, such as joy, sadness, frustration and fear, can develop strategies to cope with new, challenging or stressful situations.

Communication and Language -

Speaking; Listening & Attention; Understanding

- Communicating and being with others helps children to build social relationships which provide opportunities for friendship, empathy and sharing emotions. The ability to communicate helps children to participate more fully in society.
- All children learn best through activities and experiences that engage all the senses. For example, music, dance, rhymes and songs play a key role in language development.
- As children develop speaking and listening skills they build the foundations for literacy, for making sense of visual and verbal signs and ultimately for reading and writing. Children need lots of opportunities to interact with others as they develop these skills, and to use a wide variety of resources for expressing their understanding, including mark-making, drawing, modelling, reading and writing.

Physical Development -

Moving and Handling; Health and Self-care

- Children learn by being active and physical development takes place across all areas of learning and development.
- Physical development helps children gain confidence in what they can do.
- Physical development helps children to feel the positive benefits of being healthy and active.
- Physical development helps children to develop a positive sense of well-being.

The 4 Specific Areas of Learning

Literacy -

Reading; Writing

- As children develop speaking and listening skills, they also develop their understanding which enables them to build the foundations for Literacy (reading and writing). Children need lots of opportunities to interact with others as they develop these skills, and to use a wide variety of resources for expressing their understanding, including mark-making, drawing, modelling, reading and writing.

Mathematics -

Numbers; Shape, Space and Measure.

- Children's mathematical development occurs as they seek patterns, make connections and recognise relationships through finding out about and working with numbers and counting, with sorting and matching and with shape, space and measures.
- Children use their knowledge and skills in these areas to solve problems, generate new questions and make connections across other areas of learning and development.

Understanding the World -

People and communities; the world; technology

- Children find out about the world through exploration and from a variety of sources, including their families and friends, the media, and through what they see and hear.
- Children need regular opportunities to learn about different ways of life, to be given accurate information and to develop positive and caring attitudes towards others.
- Children should be helped to learn to respect and value all people and learn to avoid misapprehensions and negative attitudes towards

others when they develop their knowledge and understanding of the world.

- Children should be involved in the practical applications of their knowledge and skills which promote self esteem through allowing them to make decisions about what to investigate and how to do it.

Expressive Arts and Design -

Exploring and Using Media and Materials; Being Imaginative.

- Creativity is about taking risks and making connections and is strongly linked to play.
- Creativity emerges as children become absorbed in action and explorations of their own ideas, expressing them through movement, making and transforming things using media and materials such as crayons, paints, scissors, words, sounds, movement, props and make-believe.
- Creativity involves children initiating their own learning and making choices and decisions.
- Children's responses to what they see, hear and experience through their senses are individual and the way they represent their experiences is unique and valuable.
- Being creative enables children to explore many processes, media and materials and to make new things as a result.

The Role of Play and Child Initiated Activities

Through child initiated activities and play, the children explore and develop their learning experiences that help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up their ideas, learn how to control themselves, and begin to understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively both alongside other children and on their own. They learn to communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. They express fears, or re-live anxious experiences, in controlled and safe situations.

Resources

We plan a learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, that encourages a positive attitude to learning. We use materials and equipment that reflect both the community that the children come from and the wider world. We encourage the children to make their own selection of activities on offer, as we believe this encourages independent learning.

Staying Healthy

Good health in the early years helps to safeguard health and well-being throughout life. It is important that children develop healthy habits when they first learn about food and activity.

On starting school the parents are informed that the school recommends the children bring a healthy snack to school each day to eat mid-morning. Fruit is available in class for children who have not brought a snack.

The children are encouraged to have a drink of milk during the morning when they have their snack. Mid-afternoon the children are encouraged to eat the fruit provided by the school or to bring a piece of fruit from home if preferred. The children are also encouraged (and parents advised) to bring a water bottle each day so that they can have a drink throughout the day. This is for water only. Children are allowed juice at lunchtime. Fizzy drinks are not allowed at school.

Outdoor play provides the children with the freedom to explore, to be physically active, to work on a large scale and to experience the natural world. Children are given the opportunity to learn outdoors every day. They have access to a securely fenced safe play space. The children are taught why and how to look after each other, their things and their surroundings. A safety assessment is carried out before the beginning of each child initiated session throughout the day including lunchtime. A copy of the outdoor risk assessment is displayed on the classroom door and relevant staff are aware of its contents. Occasionally the outdoor area has to be closed, for example, when icy.

Behaviour Management Strategies

Children in Foundation Stage adhere to the following whole school rules:

- We do as we are told straight away
- We keep our hands, feet and unkind words to ourselves
- We look after each other, our things and our surroundings
- We listen in class
- We put up our hand to ask or answer a question
- We walk in a calm quiet way

Foundation Stage staff encourage a problem solving approach to social conflict and use the following procedure to help children manage their feelings and resolve disagreements:

1. Approach social conflict calmly and acknowledge all the children's feelings.

2. Gather information and restate the problem to the children.
3. Ask the children for ideas and choose a solution together. Then give appropriate follow up support.

Children are reminded regularly about behaviour expectations and staff use encouragement and praise to support self-confident active learners who are intrinsically motivated. Stickers are awarded regularly for behaviour that adheres to the school rules and when the children have tried their best. For exceptional behaviour, in addition to stickers, the children earn gems for the whole class. Once ten gems have been earned the class choose a whole class 'treat'. Stickers and gems are also used as an incentive for children who require more than encouragement and praise. The good behaviour of these children is celebrated in class by the teacher/HLTA telling the whole class how well they have done and reminding the child how happy that makes us all feel, and the children clap to show their appreciation.

In instances where a child continues to misbehave, s/he sits alone on the 'Thinking Spot' for a maximum time of five minutes. Then the member of staff dealing with the child's behaviour returns to the child and checks that s/he understands why they have been sitting on the 'Thinking Spot' and what unacceptable behaviour they have displayed that led to this. Children who are violent or aggressive towards another child or adult are placed on the 'Thinking Spot' immediately without a warning.

When necessary an individual behaviour plan is drawn up in agreement with parents, the SENCo and headteacher, and relevant staff are informed of procedures in place.

Planning for EYFS

Throughout our Foundation Stage, the curriculum is organised to enable children of all abilities to participate in a range of carefully planned adult led, adult initiated and child initiated activities. These take place every day in both indoor and outdoor areas.

Long Term Planning

Based on Long Term Key Learning opportunities and how these can support the areas of learning using permanent resources and resource enhancements throughout the year. Adults supporting children in a particular area are shown how to use the section 'Adult's Role & Links to EYFS'.

Medium Term planning

This is based on the children's ideas and interests from planning sessions with the children and observations of their interests when observing and assessing their learning through child initiated activities.

Short term planning

A weekly plan of activities linked to the areas of the curriculum giving details of shared group work, adult led and adult initiated activities is displayed in class. This is derived from planning with the children and discussed with the H.L.T.A. and other relevant staff such as L.S.A.s

Each week the initial stage of the short term planning is done with the children so that their ideas and interests can be used to plan from.

Inclusion within Foundation Stage

We set realistic and challenging expectations keyed to the needs of the children, so that most achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the reception year and Foundation Stage. Some children progress beyond this point. We help all children achieve to their potential by planning to meet the needs of both boys and girls, of children with special educational needs, of children who are more able, of children with disabilities, of children from all social and cultural backgrounds, of children from different ethnic groups, and of those from different linguistic backgrounds.

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- Planning opportunities based on the children's ideas and what they want to learn about, that build on and extend their knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence
- Using a variety of teaching strategies that are based on children's learning needs
- Providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children, and to help them to learn effectively
- Offering a safe and supportive learning environment, in which the contribution of all children is valued
- Employing resources that reflect diversity, and that avoid discrimination and stereotyping
- Planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills

- Monitoring children's progress, and providing support as necessary

The children's learning experiences enable them to develop competency and skill across a number of learning areas.

Planning for Special Educational Needs

All children are unique and learn at different rates. Planning ensures we provide activities that meet the needs of all children and that enable everyone to succeed and make progress. Children with additional needs are placed on the Special Educational Needs register when appropriate. Then an Individual Education Plan is written with specific targets that are reviewed each term with the child's parents, the SENCo and relevant staff.

Assessment and Record Keeping

Before the children's pre-school visits in June and July the class teacher visits the pre-schools and nurseries to observe and interact with the children in their learning environments, and also to discuss the children with their key workers.

On entry a baseline is completed taking into account Pre-school/Nursery assessments and assessments carried out by the class teacher.

Throughout the Reception year assessment is used to track children's progress. During the first term in reception classes, the class teacher assesses the ability of each child mainly through child initiated activities and challenges set up in the learning environment. These assessments allow us to identify patterns of attainment within the cohort, in order to adjust the teaching programme for individual children and groups of children. Data is collated at the end of each term and sent to county in June in accordance with EYFS regulations. Data is used to analyse the progress of individuals, particular groups of children or the whole cohort. It enables staff to see trends, to identify areas of the curriculum children are succeeding in or need more support with and to set targets.

Evidence (observations, children's work, photographs) is collected throughout the year from child initiated activities and is dated and annotated in the children's individual Learning Journeys. These are for the children to keep at the end of the academic year. In addition tracking sheets are completed based on this evidence in the Learning Journeys.

Formative assessment is ongoing. This is used to inform summative assessment throughout the year which is reported on in the summer term in the form of a written report for parents.

Targets are set in the Spring Term and children and parents are informed. Targets must be attainable for the child for whom they are set and are reviewed regularly and renewed when met. Parent consultations are held twice a year. Parents are informed of their child's progress and targets are discussed.

At the end of the summer term a report summarising the children's achievements and areas for development in the areas of learning in the Foundation Stage curriculum is sent home. This is returned to school and forms part of the children's individual records of progress. Reports and examples of work are added at the end of each academic year throughout the school.

The school takes part in both individual and cluster moderations from county each year to ensure assessments are accurate and in line with their criteria.

Parents as Partners

The school recognises the importance of strong links and positive relationships between practitioners and parents.

"Parents are children's first and most enduring educators. When parents and practitioners work together in early years settings, the results have a positive impact on children's development and learning." (Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage).

There is one intake for children starting in Reception which is in September each year and the children are full-time after two or three morning sessions to help with transition. Parents are invited to a 'Welcome Meeting' in the summer term prior to their child starting school. The class teacher then visits the children in their pre-school settings prior to their pre-school visits. At the welcome meeting information packs are given to all families following a visual presentation informing parents of a typical school day. As well as completing an admissions / medical information form, parents are asked to complete a sheet informing the school of any concerns so that the children can be supported accordingly.

Each day the class teacher greets parents and children on arrival as the children line up on the playground. This gives parents an opportunity to let the teacher know of anything urgent or to give the reading diary/organiser to the teacher if there is something that needs dealing with that day. Parents are encouraged to speak with staff at the end of the school day if they require more time. For the first three weeks of the academic year parents are allowed to bring their children into the classroom and help them with their coats etc. After the initial three weeks the children say goodbye to their parents on the playground and line up ready to walk into school with the class teacher.

Parents are encouraged to help in school if they are able. In addition parents are encouraged to attend open days, services and assemblies held in church, fund raising activities, the annual village May Fair, school trips and the Infant Nativity.

Parents are invited to a 'Reading Meeting' evening prior to the October parent consultations when parents have the opportunity to find out how their child has settled into their new routine. At the Reading Meeting parents are informed about how their children will be taught to read and how they can best support their children at home. They are also informed about the importance of valuing their children's mark-making at home and how this forms the foundations of writing. They then have time to discuss this further at the parent consultations if they wish. Read with a helper books (real books) are given out from the beginning of term and in addition to these Scheme Reading books are given out before the half-term break, beginning with picture books and then moving onto books with words.

Also at the 'Reading Meeting' parents are informed about how we use the Learning Journeys and how they can contribute to this at home by recording information in the book provided for each child. They are given an information pack explaining how we teach reading, phonics and how we write short observations for the children's Learning Journeys. Parents are informed in writing to collect their information pack if they were unable to attend the meeting. Information about how we teach children to write is given out later in the academic year when the children are more confident to write recognisable letters and phonetically spell words. Parents are regularly informed of how they can best support their children's learning. Children's reading diaries are used as a home/school communication and in addition to any comments parents may wish to make, they are asked to write in the diaries when the children have read to an adult at home. Reading diaries are checked and initialled by the class teacher and parents' comments or questions are responded to.

Parents who wish to help listen to the children read in school are given an information booklet of advice and are invited to speak to the class teacher about this if they so wish.

Transitions

Pre-school children have two school visits in the second half of the summer term before starting school. Also in the second half of the summer term the reception teacher and the H.L.T.A. visit Whitegate Pre-school regularly to familiarise themselves with the new entrants for September.

Transition from Reception to Year 1 is also very important. As part of a smooth transition from Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1, in the latter half of the summer term the children have a short daily maths lesson. In addition to the continued daily phonics lessons, the children have a short daily interactive Literacy lesson in which writing is modelled by the teacher and the children have the opportunity to practise on white boards with a 'talking partner'. Children who are not yet ready for this structure learn and consolidate Literacy skills through games with the H.L.T.A. In addition to teacher led group work, to encourage the children to *choose* to write, a wide variety of resources are placed in the mark making areas and in the outdoor writing bags. Children have one guided reading session with the teacher or H.L.T.A. once a week starting at the beginning of the Spring Term. Prior to this Guided Reading sessions consist of learning how to handle a book, how to segment and blend, how to use illustrations appropriately to help decode and how to read for meaning. The class teacher and the H.L.T.A. also listen to the children read each week.

For the first half-term of the new academic year the KS1 teacher offers a transition period within class. In addition to this the younger children in Year 1 spend each afternoon in Foundation Stage allowing appropriate transition through child initiated activities. During this time the Year 1 children have access to all indoor and outdoor areas of the F.S. curriculum. This also enables the Year 1 children to take on the responsibility of acting as good role models for the new entrants. Once ready, the Year 1 children are taught from a Year 1 curriculum to ensure they are being taught the same objectives as the Year 1s who work with the Year 2 children in the afternoons.