

Policy for Early Years Foundation Stage

Aims

The aim of this policy is to provide an overview of exactly how Early Years works in our school. We appreciate the importance of the Early Years setting and understand how this learning underpins the rest of children's learning throughout the school.

In the Early Years we have five main aims:

- To ensure that each child enjoys school, arriving and leaving us happy.
- To provide the children with a warm, friendly environment where they feel safe, secure and valued.
- To develop love and enthusiasm for learning with good home/school links.
- To give the children the necessary skills, independence and character to flourish in the rest of the school.
- To ensure that each child meets their full potential and develops good foundations to build upon in the future.

Classes and Class Bases

Our published admissions number is 38. However, we often exceed this number. When we admit more than thirty pupils into Reception, the children get divided into two classes. These classes are called the 'Chicks' and the 'Ducklings.'

When this is the case, we register the children and do our teaching inputs in different class bases. However, for the rest of the time we work as one cohort, with the children free flowing between the two class bases, under the canopy and in the Early Years' corridor.

Our class bases and shared areas have been 'zoned' very strategically to maximise them to their full potential. The Chicks' class base is our Literacy classroom with a role play area, imagination zone that includes dressing up and a puppet theatre and a creative zone. Our Ducklings' class base is our Mathematics classroom with a mathematics role play area, construction area, messy area and investigation area.

The displays in both class bases have the same themes:

- Our Learning Journey
- Read, Write, Inc/story language actions/punctuation actions/sounds of the week
- Our Wonderful Work (this begins as a 'Welcome to School' display in September)

We also ensure that the children in both class bases have access to essentials to their everyday learning: number lines, letter formation of upper and lower case letters, days of the week, months and birthdays, seasons; we also have a visual class register (made of photographs rather than writing).

The Early Years' corridor is where we base our 'jungle library' and the 'jungle' reading incentive. Here the children have access to a range of fiction and non-fiction books. There is also a technology zone and a writing and mark making zone.

Our outdoor canopy area is used as an outdoor classroom and gives us outdoor access in all weather.

Planning

At the Meadows Primary School, we believe that children learn best when they experience topics that are of interest to them. Therefore, each year our topics are slightly different to the previous year in order to meet the needs and interests of different cohorts of children

During Child Initiated Play (CIP) in the afternoons we observe the child carefully and when we find a child/group of children who are totally engrossed in their play we create a, 'Learning Story' about it e.g. Dinosaurs, People Who Help Us, Superheroes, Transport etc. We then use these Learning Stories to generate topics, which are of direct interest to the children. This helps ensure that the children are enthusiastic about their learning, and that it is centred around them.

Once we have our topic theme in mind, we create two Medium Term Planning Grids of both 'Ideas' linked to all seven areas of the curriculum and an 'Objectives' grid that shows clearly which Early Learning Goals we intend to cover.

Our topics are enriched through visitors to school e.g. Chinese New Year workshop, parents who have jobs who help us have visited and given talks to children (ambulance drivers, firefighters, veterinary nurses) etc. We have also arranged visits linked to our topics e.g. 'Park Hall Farm' when we were studying farms. In addition to this, we endeavour to take the children on local visits to enhance our themes e.g. to Whittington Castle in order to give the children a sense of locality and an awareness of historical places around them when they are studying, 'Castles.' The children will also be taken on a visit to the local library in Oswestry to develop a love for reading and books and to try and encourage as many parents as possible to join by sending home membership forms for them.

In addition to topics generated by the children's interests, to ensure that we have a rich, broad and balanced curriculum we have some 'static themes' each term which ensures that we are meeting the entire 'Educational Programmes' as set out in the 'Statutory Framework for the EYFS' for e.g. Chinese New Year, Autumn, Christmas etc.

From our Medium Term Planning we then create our Short Term Planning which is the focus of our morning teaching and activities from Monday to Thursday. Our Short Term Planning shows daily Literacy and Mathematics inputs as well as activities linked to all seven areas of the Early Years curriculum. We identify which activities will be 'Adult Led' (AL), who will lead each activity, which activities are independent and where each activity will be based. Our planning will sometimes show the differentiation of adult led Literacy or Mathematics activities when appropriate and both support and challenge opportunities in our teaching inputs again when appropriate.

Each morning the children are offered opportunities to work outdoors under our canopy area, in our Early Years' corridor or in either the Chicks' or Ducklings' classroom.

Both the Chicks and the Ducklings classes work from the same planning to ensure that all our Reception cohort experience the same teaching inputs, learning and range of activities.

Fantastic Fridays

Our Friday planning is a different format. We frequently send home 'Home Learning Stories' for parents and carers to complete. This gives us a real insight into the children's interests at home and their learning. We use these Home Learning Stories to then generate our 'Fantastic Friday' topics and in the past this has led to some very exciting Fantastic Fridays including Beauty and the Beast, Scooby Doo, Inventions, Dinosaurs and That's Magic! etc. This planning again links to all seven areas of the Early Years curriculum, the Early Learning Goal being covered for each area and includes an initial teacher input. Again both the Chicks and the Ducklings work from the same planning to ensure consistency between classes and there are both indoor and outdoor learning opportunities available to the children. Sometimes our Fantastic Friday topics are linked to important days or events e.g. St George's Day, St David's Day, Children in Need day etc.

We try to ensure that by the end of the year each child in Early Years has had a 'Fantastic Friday' dedicated to them.

Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum

Our curriculum is based on guidance in the new 'Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Handbook 2021-Educational Programmes' which states that the children must have access to seven main areas of learning, 'The Prime Areas' and 'The Specific Areas.' These in turn are sub-divided to make seventeen areas of learning that we teach towards.

THE PRIME AREAS

- PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT – Self Regulation, Managing Self and Building Relationships.
- COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE – Listening, Attention & Understanding and Speaking.
- PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT – Gross Motor Skills and Fine Motor Skills.

THE SPECIFIC AREAS

- LITERACY – Comprehension, Word Reading and Writing.
- MATHEMATICS – Numbers and Numerical Patterns.
- UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD – Past & Present, People Culture & Communities and the Natural World.
- EXPRESSIVE ARTS AND DESIGN – Creating with Materials and Being Imaginative and Expressive.

At the start of the year, 'The Prime Areas' of learning are our main focus of observation and adult led activities, although all areas of learning are continually developed throughout the year. Once we feel that these areas have been firmly embedded, we move onto, 'The Specific Areas' of learning being the thrust of our observations and adult led activities.

Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning

'The Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning' (Statutory Framework for EYFS, page16, 1.15) play a fundamental role in the teaching and learning of children in the EYFS and underpin all areas of learning.

The three Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning are:

- **PLAYING AND EXPLORING** – children investigate and experience things, and ‘have a go’
- **ACTIVE LEARNING** – children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements.
- **CREATING AND THINKING CRITICALLY** – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

During the children’s learning in our morning activities and afternoon ‘Child Initiated Play’ sessions, we are constantly encouraging children to meet the above characteristics of teaching and learning. If we observe a child showing any of these characteristics, we make a Tapestry (on-line learning journal) entry noting which characteristics have been observed. These entries are monitored each half term to ensure that children are meeting all characteristics, and, where there are gaps, we tailor opportunities for children to develop these skills.

Assessment and Target Setting

Assessments in Early Years are made frequently in the form of Tapestry observations of individual and groups of children, our daily lesson evaluations and observations and notes written on any completed work produced by the children. Also, as explained earlier we are also noting any ‘Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning’ as the children demonstrate these.

We complete more detailed ‘Learning Stories’ during Child Initiated Play when children are really engrossed in their play and this is used as another means of assessment. These are included on Tapestry, with entries clearly titled with ‘Learning Story’.

Each child in Early Years completes the statutory new Baseline assessment in September. This will be used as an indicator of the progress that each child has made from EYFS to Year 6. We also use these baselines to help us tailor extra support children may need and to identify helpful activities which may be sent home for use with parents/carers.

Also, as we complete each section of the Read, Write, Inc Programme, we carry out a short RWI assessment for each child/each child in a particular section. We use this information to decide who is ready to move onto the next phase of the programme and who would benefit from more consolidation of their current phase. We also use these to identify children who are falling behind in their learning and plan activities to support these children, often asking for parental support with this. Often, these assessments are used in the initial stages to find group ‘gaps’ in learning so that these can be addressed through whole class/group teaching.

We also use Home Learning Stories to identify children’s learning at home and also comments that parents make about their child’s learning via Tapestry to inform our assessments. We also encourage a dialogue using the facility on Tapestry, where we can suggest further activities which could be done at home, and the parent/carer can feedback on their progress.

Data Collection and Progression

All of the assessments described above help us to track each child’s progress through Early Years. Once our Statutory Baseline assessments are completed we track each child for all 17 areas of the Early Years curriculum on our ‘Progression Tracker Grids.’

The Early Years team meets regularly and plots each child onto these Progression Tracker Grids (September Baselines, December, March and end of year, June) using the non-statutory 'Development Matters' document where children are working BELOW the Early Learning Goals, and then finally, using the statutory EYFS Framework, onto tracking whether each child is 'emerging' or expected' within each 'Early Learning Goal.'

On these Progression Tracker Grids, we identify children who are 'on track' or 'not on track' according to where a child would be expected to be at that time of year. Children who are identified as not 'on track' in any of the 17 areas are highlighted and actions are identified as appropriate.

We then work together to produce an action plan for the September, December and March and this identifies additional support that will be given to these vulnerable children or whole class strategies if it is a more general issue e.g. listening.

Our Progression Tracker Grids also identify children who have Special Educational Needs, those who are entitled to free school meals and those in receipt of Pupil Premium funding, and allows us to track their progress too.

Transition from Nursery

We know that starting school can be a very scary time for new children and have systems in place to do everything possible to make school seem less daunting.

We have up to thirteen feeder nurseries or child minder's each year. We visit the nurseries which have three or more children coming to our school to discuss each child with key workers and meet the children in their familiar surroundings. For those nurseries and childminders with less than three children coming to our school, we make telephone calls and speak with each child's key worker. This is really valuable to us and helps us to know of any issues to watch out for on our 'taster sessions' and also helps us to set activities which the children will enjoy.

The children are invited into school for up to five separate 'taster sessions'; sometimes mornings and sometimes afternoons so that the children get to experience all aspects of a typical day in Early Years. Also, on one of the days, we invite the children (and their parents) to stay for lunch.

We find that having so many 'taster sessions' really helps the children to settle into school life quicker in September and gives them more confidence on their first day.

Parental Involvement

Initially, on transition from nursery, parents are invited into school for three different information sessions including:

- Session 1 – discussion about the general school routine/day and the Early Years' curriculum and expectations. The Headteacher and Early Years' teachers lead this.
- Session 2 – discussion with our Learning Mentor about 'Understanding Your Child.'
- Session 3 – an information session and workshop about how we teach 'RWI' in the Early Years.

Once the children have begun school we always have an 'open door' policy towards our parents so that they can come and ask any questions or discuss any concerns with us.

The parents also use our Reception direct email as a means of communicating messages to us and if their child has read that evening, this is recorded in the 'Jungle Reading Journal.' As stated previously, parents share with us children's home learning through completing of our Home Learning Stories.

Tapestry is also used to enable parents to view some aspects of their child's learning, and to create a dialogue about their progress and next steps.

We have our initial Parent Consultation earlier than the rest of the school because we realise that as a parent, you are keen to know how your child is settling into school life. This also gives parents another opportunity to ask any questions that they may have. We share with the parents how their child is settling in, their baseline reports and any targets/concerns we may have with them. We also give out useful and relevant aids such as letter formation charts and number resources.

After this, we have longer termly Parent Consultations discussing progress, strengths, any areas of concern and work alongside parents to set new targets. The aim of these meetings is to begin a two-way conversation with parents and to capture a more rounded picture of each child.

Parents are also kept informed about their child's learning via reading stickers in their 'Jungle Reading Journal' which shares how they are progressing through our 'Reading Jungle' (Early Years reading incentive). We share copies of completed 'RWI' assessments so that parents can see how they are progressing within our daily 'RWI' sessions too as well as informing them weekly of the sounds that their child has learnt that week.

Transition into Year 1

We recognise that the move from Early Years into Year 1 is a huge step, so during the Summer Term we gradually introduce the children to their new Year 1 teachers. In addition, we pass on notes about the children to their new teachers which include: end of year levels, gaps in learning, SEN notes, EAL notes, family notes and finally the Year 1 teachers have access to their end of year reports which include a summary of each of the 'Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning.'

The children have a taster afternoon in their new classes before the end of the term to get to know their new teacher.

The Early Years staff meet with Year 1 staff during the Summer Term to moderate Early Years' data and to share key information about each child. During this time, we share reports linked to the Characteristics of Effective Learning for each child.

Child Initiated Play

During each afternoon all children have access to 'Child Initiated Play' sessions. We use our Early Years' playground and forest area, providing the weather is suitable. The children are allowed to choose toys which they would like to play with during this time e.g. bikes, scooters, the 'Bug Box' etc.

During this time all Early Years staff interact with the children and move on their play/understanding and frequently record observations of the children on Tapestry. When the children are completely engrossed in their play and learning, we complete a more detailed 'Learning Story' on Tapestry.

Continuous Provision

'Continuous Provision' refers to the activities which are always on offer to the children regardless of our topic. These are changed frequently, with photos of each of these displayed in both classes. The children have to 'book in' and 'book out' of these activities using lanyards as 'tickets.' Continuous provision is also shown on planning and used to enrich and support previous or current learning as appropriate.

Learning Journeys

The children's written and other 'paper' work in Early Years is placed in their 'Learning Journey' books and other evidence is recorded on their online Tapestry journal, which include examples of work from all areas of the Early Years curriculum. Photographic evidence and film clips are recorded on Tapestry, along with a description of the activity and learning taking place. The majority of our evidence will be displayed here, and at the end of the year, parents are given the opportunity to download their child's work from the year.