



# EARLY YEARS POLICY

Reviewed: Autumn 2022

Review Frequency: Every 2 years

Approved by: Board of Trustees

## **Aims**

- To give each child a happy, positive and fun start to their school life in which they can establish solid foundations on which to expand and foster a deep love of learning;
- To offer each child a wide range of new and exciting experiences and give them the opportunity to consolidate, explore and test them out along with their own, individual experiences;
- To enable each child, through encouragement and high expectations, to develop to the full, socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally.
- To offer a structure for learning that has a range of starting points and unlimited opportunity for development;
- To encourage children to develop independence within a loving, secure and friendly atmosphere;
- To support children in building relationships through the development of social skills such as cooperation and sharing;
- To help each child to recognise their own strengths and achievements through experiencing success and developing the confidence to work towards personal goals.
- To enable children to be school ready when they leave EY.

## **Related Documents**

Child Protection policy

Safeguarding policy

Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs policy

Intimate Care policy

Safer Working Practice Guidance

## **The Curriculum**

The Nursery (where applicable) and Reception follow the curriculum as outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework (EYFS) document.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

This clearly defines what we teach. The following policy details the specifics of our setting. The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development, all of which are seen as important and interconnected but three areas are seen as particularly important for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, for building their capacity to learn and form relationships and thrive, they support children's learning in all other areas, they are known as the prime areas.

The EYFS seeks to provide:

Aspire Academies EYFS Policy 2022

- Quality and consistency
- A secure foundation
- Partnership working
- Equality of opportunity

The learning and development requirements cover:

- the areas of learning and development which must shape activities and experiences (educational programmes) for children in all early years settings
- the early learning goals that providers must help children work towards (the knowledge, skills and understanding children should have at the end of the academic year in which they turn five)
- assessment arrangements for measuring progress (and requirements for reporting to parents and/or carers)

The safeguarding and welfare requirements cover the steps that providers must take to keep children safe and promote their welfare.

Overarching Principles:

- Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured
- Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships
- Children learn and develop well in enabling environments with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers. (See “the characteristics of effective teaching and learning” at paragraph 1.15)
- Importance of learning and development. Children develop and learn at different rates. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The prime areas are;

- **Communication and Language** – Listening and Attention, Understanding and Speaking
- **Physical Development** – Moving and Handling and Self care
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** – Making relationships, Managing feelings and behaviour and Self- confidence and Self-awareness

The specific areas of learning develop essential skills and knowledge for children to participate successfully in society. The specific areas are;

- **Literacy** – Reading and Writing
- **Mathematics** – Numbers and Space, Shape and Measures

- **Understanding the World** – People and communities, The world and Technology
- **Expressive Arts and Design** – Exploring and using media and materials and Being Imaginative

### **Characteristics of Effective Learning**

The EYFS also includes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. The Nursery (where applicable) and Reception teachers plan activities within classrooms with these in mind. They highlight the importance of a child's attitude to learning and their ability to play, explore and think critically about the world around them.

The three characteristics 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.

### **Teaching strategies**

We ensure there is a balance of adult led and child initiated activities across the day. Although much of the time is spent with children self-selecting tasks, the interaction between the adult and child is essential as the adult's response to children builds understanding and therefore guides new learning. The adult's role is to continually model, demonstrate and question what the child is doing. In some cases the adult will ask a child to come and complete a task or game with them; at other times they will participate in a child's game, extending it where possible.

By the Summer term in Reception the children will experience many more adult directed tasks as they prepare for their transition to year 1.

### **Play**

Learning through play is an important part of our Early Years classrooms. We believe children learn best from activities and experiences that interest and inspire them. Using children's interests as a starting point, we provide children with stimulating, active play experiences in which they can explore and develop their learning to help them make sense of the world. They have opportunities through their play to think creatively and critically alongside other children as well as on their own. They are able to practise skills, build upon and revisit prior learning and experience at their own level and pace. Play gives our children the opportunity to pursue their own interests and inspire those around them. The children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions. We believe it is important that adults take an active role in child initiated play through observing, modelling, facilitating and extending their play. Getting the balance right between child initiated play, which is controlled, and adult led activities is very important to us.

### **Teaching**

We include direct, carefully planned, adult led experiences for children in the form of structured adult led teaching and adult led group activities. These are particularly important in helping children to learn specific skills and knowledge and it is often through children's play that we see how much of this learning children have understood and taken on.

Each day we follow a timetable with set routines in place. This looks quite different in the Nursery and Reception classes. We set aside times each day when the children come together to be taught in the more traditional sense, gathered together on the carpet as a class. In these slots we focus on our topic work, maths, literacy, phonics, and stories. These sessions help to develop vital habits of learning: learning as a group, listening to the teacher, taking turns to answer and sitting still.

Reading and stories play an important part of the day. We want to make sure our children have a love of books and will leave the EYFS with a bank of stories they know well; both traditional and modern classics. We make sure there is always time for whole class story at the end of the day but also that there are many opportunities to enjoy books at other times. Every child is given their own book bag and has a designated day when they will have one-to-one time sharing books with an adult, or a group reading session.

### **Planning**

We believe many children need to be given a starting point to learn new things and topics are a great way to fire the imagination. Topics are usually based on the following areas of learning, 'Understanding the World', 'Literacy' and 'Communication and Language'. The topics are flexible to ensure we also follow the children's interests, school themes and local or national events. Every half term (and occasionally termly) staff plan the next topic, and book visits and visitors that will enhance the learning.

Staff plan in more detail on a weekly basis using daily notes, observations and interactions with children to inform where the learning journey should move to. Although class teachers are responsible for writing plans, the EYFS plan as a team, with Teachers, Nursery Nurses (where applicable) and Support Staff all attending planning meetings and giving an input whenever possible.

### **Visits and visitors**

The part that visits and visitors play in the curriculum is given great emphasis, in the Early Years. We actively seek parental support on trips; however for safety reasons we have to say no to younger siblings coming along on school trips.

Visitors also really enhance a topic and we like to have 'experts' coming in to talk to the children. We may ask parents if they are able to share knowledge or a skill.

### **Assessment**

Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise children's progress, understand their needs, and to plan activities and support. Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves practitioners knowing children's level of achievement and interests, and then to shape teaching and learning experiences for each child reflecting that knowledge. In their interactions with children, practitioners should respond to their own day-to-day observations about children's progress and observations that parents and carers share.

Assessment should not entail prolonged breaks from interaction with children, nor require excessive paperwork. When assessing whether an individual child is at the expected level of development, practitioners should draw on their knowledge of the child and their own expert professional judgement and should not be required to prove this through collection of physical evidence.

Parents and/or carers should be kept up-to-date with their child's progress and development. Practitioners should address any learning and development needs in partnership with parents and/or carers, and any relevant professionals. Assessment should inform an ongoing dialogue between practitioners and year 1 teachers about each child's learning and development, to support a successful transition to key stage 1.

Assessment is an essential part of the learning and development of children in the EYFS. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations.

The Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) is a short assessment, taken in the first six weeks in which a child starts reception.

To ensure we have evidence of a child's progress in the EYFS we use a range of strategies all of which come together in their individual portfolio. We are very proud of our portfolios: these are collections of children's work, photos and observations which create a detailed picture of the child. Where appropriate, we include individual next steps for children's learning. These next steps are discussed by the EYFS team in planning meetings; Staff have their own device which is used to capture and note observations and next steps for learning.

Throughout the Early Years the Class Teacher submits end of term assessment data to the EYFS Lead and Principal showing each child's development across the seven areas of learning. At the end of Reception, in the final term of the year in which the child reaches the age of five, the class teacher completes the EYFS Profile for each child, assessing them against the expected levels within the Early Learning Goals (ELG) and comments on whether their development within each ELG is either being met, or whether a child is not yet reaching them. They also assess readiness for Year 1 and Year 1 teachers must be given a copy of the Profile Reports. The Profile must be completed for all children, including those with SEN. Schools must share the results of the Profile with parents and/or carers, and explain to them when and how they can discuss the Profile with the teacher who completed it.

Reasonable adjustments to the process should be made as appropriate. This information is also communicated to parents and carers in the Reception child's end of year report and can be discussed in the final Parents' Evening in Reception.

### **Role of staff and key worker**

The class teacher is the named key worker for each child in the setting. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs and to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents. All adults within the Early Years setting actively seek to form positive respectful relationships with the children in their care. The formation of healthy relationships between adults and children is essential in enabling children's well-being now and their future successes.

There are rare occasions when significant adults cannot be in the class and we aim to be consistent in who covers these absences.

### **Partnership with parents and carers**

We believe that parents and carers are a child's first educator and therefore work very closely to ensure they are involved in what we do with their child at school. We want parents to feel they can speak to us about their child and feel comfortable in our setting.

When a child gains a place at one of our Academies we ask them to attend a session at the school alongside all other children who will be starting and with their parents.

### **Health & safety and safeguarding**

Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them. We follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements detailed in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage and there is a section in our school Safeguarding Policy that directly refers to practice in the EYFS. These include having regard to: the government's statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018', the 'Prevent duty guidance for England and Wales 2015' and the government's 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' statutory guidance.

The DfE requirements explain what early years providers must do to: safeguard children; ensure the suitability of adults who have contact with children; promote good health; manage behaviour; and maintain records, policies and procedures.

Members of staff use Technology to take photographs as evidence to support the regular observation assessment cycle in the EYFS. These photographs are used in children's portfolios, in class displays and on the school website. All parents are asked to state if they give permission for their child's image to be used on the school website through the paperwork in their initial starter packs.

We are all healthy schools and our children receive free fruit and milk from a Government scheme.

We take all accidents seriously and always log and phone home immediately if a child bangs their head.

All large climbing equipment is checked by our site manager and inspected on a regular basis and fire drills are held regularly in line with whole school policy. There is an annual external check of equipment.

Where intimate care is required e.g. Nappy Changing, please refer to the Trust's Intimate Care Policy and the Safer Working Practice Guidance.

Where it is likely that a child will need to be handled by adults, procedures must be clearly planned for, recorded and communicated with parents and all key staff, in accordance with the detail in our 'Reducing the need for restrictive Interventions' policy.

We follow whole school procedures for child protection (see separate policy).

We have separate policies for medicine in school and off-site visits.