



Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

THIS POLICY WAS AGREED BY TRUSTEES ON (Date):	2 nd February 2022
REVIEW DATE:	February 2025
CHAIR OF TRUSTEES:	
CEO:	



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Introduction

“Children learn and develop more from birth to five years old than at any other time in their lives. If children are at risk of falling behind the majority, the best time to help them to catch up and keep up is in the early years. Every child can make progress, if they are given the right support. When we give every child the best start in their early years, we give them what they need today. We also set them up with every chance of success tomorrow.” Development Matters, 2021.

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.

Seven key features of effective practice

Effective practice in the EYFS is built on these 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.

The best for every child:

All children deserve to have an equal chance of success. High-quality early education is good for all children. It is especially important for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. High-quality early education and care is inclusive. Children’s special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are identified quickly. All children promptly receive any extra help through the implementation of early intervention, so they can progress well in their learning.

High-quality care

The child’s experience must always be central to the thinking of every practitioner. High-quality care needs to be consistent. Every practitioner needs to enjoy spending time with young children. Effective practitioners are responsive to children and babies while understanding that children need opportunities to grow in independence.

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The curriculum: what we want children to learn

The curriculum is a top-level plan of everything the early years setting wants the children to learn that needs to be ambitious, develop children's early language and include careful sequencing that builds upon children's learning over time. Planning needs to be flexible and build upon children's interests. Depth in early learning is much more important than covering lots of things in a superficial way.

Pedagogy: helping children to learn

Every child can make progress in their learning with the right help. Effective pedagogy in the early years is a combination of different approaches. Children learn through play, by adults modelling, by observing each other, and through guided learning and direct teaching.

Through carefully organised enabling environments for high-quality play, children should be given the opportunities to create their own play. Practitioners should have the skills to be able to scaffold and intervene in order to develop children's knowledge and skills. Children in the early years also learn through group work, when practitioners guide their learning, particularly older children in the early years. A well-planned learning environment, indoors and outside, is an important aspect of pedagogy.

Practitioners should feel confident when consulting outside agencies, and where necessary, organise visits for children who need additional support when deciding future care. Where necessary, referrals are made and early assessments requested so that extra support for children and their families can be accessed. Practitioners should also meet regularly to share good practice and take part in moderation activities with both schools within the partnership and outside settings too.

Assessment: checking what children have learnt

Assessment is about noticing what children can do and what they know and making professional judgements without lots of data and evidence that uses up time spent with the children. Effective assessment requires practitioners to understand child development. Practitioners need to question the purpose of assessment and determine whether it will be useful.

Self-regulation and executive function

Practitioners should recognise the following information when working in the early years. Executive function includes the child's ability to hold information in mind, focus their attention, think flexibly and inhibit impulsive behaviour. These abilities contribute to the child's growing ability to self-regulate and concentrate their thinking so they can plan what to do next, monitor what they are doing and adapt to different situations.

It is important that children are given lots of opportunities to develop their language and communication skills. Language development is central to self-regulation: children use language to guide their actions and plans which can be developed through pretend play.

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Partnership with parents

It is important for parents and early years settings to have a strong and respectful partnership. This sets the scene for children to thrive in the early years. Opportunities such as regular 'Stay and Play' sessions are a fantastic opportunity to strengthen this partnership; parents will be able to share children's achievements and interests and become part of the school community. Through online observation tools (Tapestry), parents will receive regular insights into their child's learning, including ways that they can be supported at home with ongoing targets. Practitioners need to be aware that some children get much less support for their learning at home than others. By knowing and understanding all the children and their families, settings can offer extra help to those who need it most. It is important to encourage all parents to chat, play and read with their children.

Teaching and Learning

Practitioners need to be able to ensure that their decisions consider each individual child and their interests. Through careful observations, practitioners can identify strengths and the needs of the child to inform further intervention and planning. Through a mixture of child-led, adult-initiated and adult led provision, children can have access to a range of experiences that develop their learning.

Child-led provision: Classroom environments need to reflect both the overall curriculum and the children's interests. Children should be able to independently access a classroom that shows a balance of deliberate teaching and spontaneous learning. Children need to be given the skills to access their own learning and develop their own interests through child-led exploration. It is important that the children are given lots of opportunities to choose their own learning path through play.

Adult-initiated provision: Adults should be confident intervening during children's play to support and extend learning. There will be occasions where children's play needs to be supported to develop key skills such as communicating with others. This might be achieved through careful questioning or modelling a range of skills and experiences. Practitioners need to spend time getting to know their children and become familiar with each, individual child's needs. Teachers need to have a secure understanding of child development and understand the features of effective pedagogy: judging when to get involved and when to encourage; knowing how to scaffold children's learning so we can support them, without taking over entirely.

Adult-led provision: Children in the early years should have a section of the day where their learning is guided by the adults. Through careful curriculum planning and ongoing assessment, precision teaching will ensure the children develop their key knowledge and skills. As the year progresses, this timetable should change and adapt as the children's needs change. Practitioners need to assess their cohort and find their own balance between child and adult-led provision depending on the children in their current cohort. These sessions should include a Phonics and Maths session that is planned and tailored to the children and their needs; sessions should be engaging and encourage children to develop both their curriculum knowledge and *characteristics of effective teaching and learning*.

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Teachers and leaders are encouraged to design their own timetable that reflects their own class of children.

A careful balance of this provision ensures children are always learning and growing in independence every day.

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 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:

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Prime Areas	
Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Making relationships Self-regulation Managing self
Physical Development	Gross motor skills Fine motor skills
Communication and Language	Listening, attention and understanding Speaking
Specific areas	
Literacy	Comprehension Word reading Word writing
Mathematics	Number Numerical patterns
Understanding the World	Past and present People, culture and communities The natural world
Expressive Arts and Design	Creating with materials Being imaginative and expressive

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

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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.

The EYFS is about how children learn, as well as what they learn. Children need opportunities to develop their own play which they find enjoyable and motivating. They also need adults to 'scaffold' their learning by bridging that gap to help children achieve new things. Guiding children's play by encouraging planning and discussions are ways of helping children to develop the characteristics of effective learning.

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 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 indoor and outdoor environments that:

- Are welcoming, stimulating and safe
- Are appropriate for young children's physical needs
- Encourage children to access both indoor and outdoor areas throughout the day
- Are organised so that children can access resources, make choices and be independent learners through labelling and open shelving
- 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

Alongside the statutory baseline assessment completed in the Autumn term, practitioners should plan for regular, ongoing assessment that directly impacts in planning and provision for the children. Assessment is most effective when it directs professional judgement.

Teachers should focus on where the needs are in the class and action this directly into their practice. Thought should be given to the time frames of these assessments to ensure that adults are not taken away from valuable child-interaction time. Whilst assessment should not focus on a data overload, teachers will need to report on their children's progress over the different checkpoints in line with the EPA. Teachers need to have a solid understanding of child development and what they want their cohort to know and be able to do by the end of the early years.

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In practical terms, practitioners should implement Tapestry to monitor and make notes of children's needs and developments regularly. This will ensure that staff are aware of what interventions need to take place and where progress has been made, and therefore a change of planning is needed. Such observations should be shared with parents to ensure that the children receive the best possible chance of developing further at both school and home.

In addition to completing the statutory baseline, practitioners need to complete the Statutory Check at Two and the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile which is an assessment against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELGs). Teachers need to assess whether children are 'working towards' or have achieved the ELGs which should be informed by teacher judgements and looking at summative assessment (observations etc.).

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.

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.

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