

Highwood Primary School



*"Preparing today's children
for tomorrow's world"*

Early Years Policy

November 2016

Ratified by Governors: 22 November 2016



Highwood Early Years Vision

'To provide everyone involved in the Early Years with a happy and stimulating environment, that ensures high quality care and safety while promoting independent learning and enabling achievement by all.'

The Early Years (EY) applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year.

The Curriculum

Nursery and Reception follow the curriculum as outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) document. The EYFS framework divides learning and development into seven areas; all of which are seen as important and interconnected. There are three Prime Areas and four Specific Areas.

The three areas known as Prime Areas support children's learning in all other areas and are seen as particularly important for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive (DfE 2014: 1.3).

The three Prime Areas and their associated foci are;

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

The four Specific Areas of learning develop the essential skills and knowledge needed for children to participate successfully in society.

The specific areas and their associated foci 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

None of these areas can be delivered in isolation. They are all important and depend on each other. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult led and child initiated activities. In each area there are Early Learning Goals (ELGs) that define the expectations for children to reach by the end of the Reception year.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

Early Years also promotes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. The Nursery and Reception teachers plan activities in the Nursery and Reception 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.

The vision of the EY is based upon four principles: These are:

- 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**, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers; and
- **children develop and learn in different ways and 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.

A Unique Child

At Highwood, we recognise that every child has the potential to be a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways, at varying rates. We understand that children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others so we use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration and sharing circle times, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Inclusion

We value the diversity of individuals at Highwood Primary School and do not discriminate against children because of 'differences'. All children at Highwood Primary School are treated fairly regardless of race, religion or ability. All children and their families are valued and we believe that all our children matter. All children are given every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning.

In the EY we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children. We achieve this by planning with specific groups in mind (boys/girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds).

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- Planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence;
- Using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs;
- Providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively;
- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- Using resources which reflect diversity and are free from 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 taking action to provide support as necessary.

It is important to us that all children in the EY are 'safe'. We aim to educate children about boundaries, rules and limits and help them understand why these are important. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. Children

should be allowed to take reasonable risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards.

Welfare

“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.” (EY Framework 2014)

At Highwood Primary School we understand that we are legally required to comply with certain welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2014. We understand that we are required to:

- Promote the welfare of children;
- Promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill;
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children’s stage of development and individual needs;
- Ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so;
- Ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose;
- Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs;
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

Positive Relationships

At Highwood Primary School we recognise that children learn to be resilient and independent through secure relationships with others. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

Parents as Partners

We recognise that parents are children’s first and most enduring educators and we highly value the contribution that parents make.

We recognise the role that parents have played, and their future role, in educating the children. We do this through:

- Visiting children in their homes and talking to parents about their child before their child starts in our Nursery and Reception classes;
- The Reception children have the opportunity to spend time with their teacher prior to starting at Highwood Primary School during our “Meet the teacher” morning;
- Nursery offer ‘stay and play’ sessions at the beginning of September for the parents and children to attend together;
- Offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child’s progress and allowing free access to their child’s “Learning Journal” on the first Monday of each month;
- Encouraging parents to talk to their child’s teachers about any concerns they may have;
- Arranging a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents. For example we invite family members to: busy

fingers, family fun learning sessions, themed activity days, Christmas Plays, sports days, and class assemblies;

- Providing 'magic moments' sheets for parents to add comments relating to their child's achievements;
- There are two formal parent consultation meetings per year, one in the Autumn term and one in the Spring term;
- At the end of the academic year, parents of Reception children are given an end of year report with comments on their child's achievements against the ELGs. Parents of Nursery children are invited to an additional parent consultation to discuss their child's progress, achievements and next steps.

All staff involved in the EY aim to develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them.

In both our Nursery and Reception classes each child is in a key worker group with either the class teacher or teaching assistant. The adults rotate groups throughout the year.

Enabling Environments

At Highwood Primary School we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. This begins with practitioners observing the children and assessing their interests, development and learning, before planning challenging but achievable activities and experiences to extend the children's learning.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

Planning in the EY follows the EY curriculum as this forms the basis of our long term plans. Weekly planning provides opportunities for adult directed activities as well as child initiated learning based on children's individual needs and interests. Early Years practitioners plan using daily notes, observations and interactions with children to inform where to take the learning. Although class teachers are responsible for writing plans, all members of the team attend meetings and give an input whenever possible.

"Good teaching and learning based on individual children's needs ensures high quality outcomes for children."

We make regular assessments of children's learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the EY takes the form of observation; this involves the teacher and other adults as appropriate. These observations are recorded in children's individual 'Learning Journals'. They also contain information provided by parents.

The Learning Environment

The EY learning environment is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. The environment is set up in learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. Both the Nursery and Reception classes have access to an outdoor learning environment which has a positive effect on the children's development. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales. It offers the children the opportunity to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. We plan activities and

resources for the children to access outdoors that help the children to develop in all 7 areas of learning.

Learning and Development

At Highwood Primary School we recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are interconnected.

Teaching and Learning

Our policy on teaching and learning defines the features of effective teaching and learning in our school. Features that relate to the EY are:

- the partnership between staff and parents, so that our children feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement;
- the understanding that staff have of how children develop and learn, and how this affects their teaching;
- the range of approaches used that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions and extend and develop play and talk or other means of communication;
- the carefully planned curriculum that helps children work towards the Early Learning Goals throughout EY;
- the provision for children to take part in activities that build on and extend their interests and develop their intellectual, physical, social and emotional abilities;
- the encouragement for children to communicate and talk about their learning, and to develop independence and self-management;
- the support for learning with appropriate and accessible indoor and outdoor space, facilities and equipment;
- the identification of the progress and future learning needs of children through observations, which are shared with parents;

Play

"Children's play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and pre-occupations. In their play children learn at their highest level. Play with peers is important for children's development."

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

Marking and presentation

Every child has their own learning journal. All adults contribute to this with observations, photos, children's voice, paintings, pieces of 'work'. All evidence within the learning journal must be dated, areas of learning, characteristics of effective learning identified and a next step for learning provided where appropriate. Pieces of 'work' must also be annotated with child's voice and verbal feedback will be given to the children on all pieces going into their journal.

Children also contribute and decide what goes into their learning journal. They have free access to their journals which they can add to daily.

Assessment

On entry to the EY the children are assessed against the Early Years Outcomes in order to provide a baseline judgement. During the year the Early Years Outcomes are reviewed in December and March as well as at the end of the school year.

Reception children will be assessed against the Early Learning Goals during the summer term. There are 17 ELGs and children will either achieve the expected level, exceed the expectations or be working towards them.

Behaviour

All adults have high expectations of the children. Adults will model appropriate behaviours at all times and children will be praised for the good choices they make. All children start every day on the 'happy face'. Throughout the day they may move up to the 'superstar' or down to the 'thinking face' or 'sad face'. If a child makes a good choice they move up to the superstar. If a child makes a poor choice they will be given a verbal warning and reminded of the behaviour that is expected. If the poor choice continues they will be moved to the 'thinking face' resulting in a few minutes thinking time. If this behaviour continues they will be put on the 'sad face' which means they will have some time out. Parents will be informed if their child has had any time out.

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of the EY teachers to follow the principles stated in this policy. There is a named Governor responsible for the EY. This governor will discuss EY practice with the practitioners regularly and provide feedback to the whole governing body, raising any issues that require discussion. The Head teacher and Early Years Phase Leader will carry out monitoring on the EY as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.

Policy Written by Caroline Paton

November 2016