

The Shrubberies School Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy

Introduction

The school's Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) policy is designed to reflect best practice, statutes and statutory guidance to assist the achievement of the aims, ethos and values of the school.

The Shrubberies School Early Years curriculum is drawn from the Early Years Foundation Stage with its Areas of Learning and Development. The following statement encompassing our beliefs as a school and the way we form our curriculum for our Lower School pupils.

"Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high-quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up."

(Statutory Framework for EYFS September 2021)

This policy is also based on the requirements that the statutory framework for the EYFS that applies from September 2021.

Aims

The four themes of the EYFS underpin all the guidance;

1. **A Unique Child:** We recognise every child as a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, independent, confident and self-assured. Our children develop in individual ways and at varying rates and their attitudes and dispositions are influenced by others.
2. **Positive Relationships:** Our children learn to be strong and independent through our positive relationships. Strong relationships with parents are paramount to the learning and progress of all pupils and therefore these relationships are built from the initial offer of a place at the school.
3. **Enabling Environments:** We recognise that all children develop well when environments give experiences responding to individual needs. There is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and carers. The curriculum is delivered through offering opportunities that embrace indoors and outdoors learning.
4. **Learning and Development:** Our children develop and learn in different ways. We teach children by ensuring challenging, playful opportunities across the Prime and Specific areas of learning and development. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are closely linked and rely on each other to enhance pupil progress. The themes foster the **Characteristics of Effective Learning;** Playing and exploring, Active learning and Creating and thinking critically.

The EYFS Curriculum

The EYFS Curriculum is set out in Prime and Specific Areas.

Prime Areas of Learning:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Communication and Language

Specific Areas of Learning:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

None of these areas can be delivered in isolation from the others. Within our Lower School department, we focus substantially on the Prime Areas, as these underpin all learning that is needed to progress within the specific areas.

As a department we are guided by the **Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage**. This is a non-statutory guidance material, which supports practitioners in implementing the statutory requirements of the EYFS.

We are very much led by individual needs, interests and stage of development of each child, and we use this information to plan challenging and enjoyable experiences for each child in all the areas of learning and development.

In planning and guiding children's activities, we reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in our practice. 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; and

Creating and thinking critically – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

Within the department there is a balance between adult led taught activities, adult supported activities and child initiated activities.

As a department, individual class 'topics' for the term are chosen and based around children's interests or an individual teacher's motivation. Because children and staff are motivated and interested it has a positive impact on their learning and progress. If a 'topic' has run its course and the children are less responsive the teacher will move on to choose another one.

The Department

The Lower School Department currently caters for children from 4-9 years, therefore incorporating children from KS1 and KS2. KS1 children follow the EYFS curriculum, as this is more appropriate to their developmental age, however, teachers are familiar with the requirements of the National Curriculum and aspects are used where appropriate for individual children.

At present the department consists of 4 classes, all of differing year groups from Reception – Year 4;

- Yellow Class
- Red Class
- Orange Class
- Green Class

Classes are not organised by age alone but also on the individual needs of pupils, stage of development and the mix of pupils in the cohort of a given year.

Total Communication

The EYFS curriculum continues in all areas of the school and community, not just the classroom (swimming pool, sensory and dark room, soft play room, forest school, the town of Stonehouse, and local parks). **Objects of reference, visual aids, photos/pictures and symbol timetables** and are used throughout the school day for all transitions. The impact for the children is that the needs of all children are differentiated in line with the child's level of development and transitions are smoother and less frustrating for all. All types of communication aids help with regards to the level of understanding for each child.

Staff and children use **Makaton** sign language to aid understanding and reinforce speech. Makaton is a language programme using signs and symbols to help people to communicate. It is designed to support spoken language and the signs and symbols are used with speech, in spoken word order. With Makaton, some children can communicate straight away using signs and symbols. Some children then drop the signs or symbols naturally at their own pace, as they develop speech. Some may not gain verbal speech but will communicate through Makaton signing.

Early Years Environment

Our Early Years environment is deliberately planned to be enticing, interesting and exciting for our children which helps them to develop a love of learning. Children are allowed freedom to take risks, make mistakes and perfect techniques and skills in order for effective brain development to take place.

The most important resource that we have is our dedicated and professional team of staff. The staff role is to play alongside and with children to encourage engagement, imagination, turn taking and other social skills. Staff develop children's play through conversation and questioning which helps broaden and extend children's thinking and learning. During this play, staff observe children and track their level of involvement and development as well as individual interests. These interests are what keep children engaged. By embracing these interests learning will be more meaningful to the children and will keep them more engrossed. These observations are then used to inform planning. Therefore, staff take into account all observations to help enhance the environment and plan appropriate experiences. Children's progress is tracked through the use of Earwig.

Topic Based Learning

In line with the current Early Years Foundation Stage and our embedded philosophy that children learn best through structured and meaningful play our Early Years staff are responsible for ensuring that the education and care all children receive is stimulating, enriching and meaningful to them; a personalised approach.

By listening to children and parents we develop our topics to plan experiences that aim to develop each child in all areas of the curriculum. These topics are derived from conversations with children and parents as well as observations of interests that children have displayed through their play and through the implementation of our three-year rolling programme.

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