



Newall Green Primary School

Aiming High To Reach Our Goals

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Early Years Teaching and Learning Policy 2021

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Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to describe our Early Years curriculum and show how Newall Green Primary Schools strives to give each child the best possible start in life. We have high expectations of all children and we encourage them to develop independence throughout their time in Early Years. We are committed to providing high quality care and education and we aim to provide a wide range of learning experiences. Children's interests, previous experience and needs are carefully considered when planning for their learning. We strive to build good relationships with parents to secure a strong link between home and school. We use the following key documents to underpin our practice in the Early Years: Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2021), Early Years Foundation Stage Profile handbook (DfE, 2022 handbook) and Development Matters (DfE, 2020).

The EYFS Framework identifies four guiding principles which we use to shape our practice in school:

- 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.
- 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).

Contents of policy:

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1) Structure of Early Years

Nursery: In Nursery there two classes which are each led by a teacher (the children's key person). The classes are split into smaller groups for whole class teaching sessions which helps develop children's communication skills. Children have access to continuous provision within their classroom and the outdoor area. At the start of the year, children's start dates are spread out over a few weeks and they start on a part-time basis initially. This is soon built up to full-time when the children have settled into Nursery. Teachers work closely with parents to help children get used to the Nursery routine. Most children in Nursery start in September after they have turned three. However, if we have places available, children who turn three during the year can also join one of the classes. Teachers adapt the learning to suit their needs.

Reception: In Reception we have three classes which each have a teacher and a teaching assistant. The classes are taught separately for whole-class sessions but the classrooms are opened up during continuous provision. The teachers get to know all of the children and work closely together when planning activities. At the start of the year, all children start full-time straight away unless parents/teachers feel individual children need to attend part-time for the first few days until they settle in.

2) The Curriculum and Characteristics of Effective Learning

We follow the curriculum as outlined in the latest version of the EYFS statutory framework (2021). We build on the educational programmes to plan an engaging and challenging curriculum based on our observation of children's needs, interests, and stages of development.

The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development, all of which are important and inter-connected. Three areas are crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, for building their capacity to learn and form relationships and thrive. These are known as the prime areas. There are also four specific areas, through which the prime areas are strengthened and applied.

The prime areas are:

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

The specific areas are:

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

Characteristics of Effective Learning:

The EYFS Framework identifies three characteristics of effective learning. The curriculum has been developed with these characteristics in mind:

- **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 parents' evenings, teachers inform parents of their child's development in relation to the three characteristics of effective learning. At the end of Reception, teachers also provide parents with a written report which includes a commentary on each characteristic. Year 1 teachers are also provided with a report and teachers meet with them during the Summer term to discuss each child's stage of development and their needs during transition.

3) Teaching and learning

We believe it is essential to have a balance between adult and child-led learning in Early Years. This allows children to practise new skills and take ownership of their learning by applying it in different situations. Carefully planned adult-led activities are important to ensure children learn specific skills and knowledge. During play, they can practise these skills and we can then see how much of this learning children have embedded. Both Reception and Nursery follow daily timetables which provide set times for adult-led sessions and time for children to learn through continuous provision. Teachers plan for both adult-led and child-led sessions based on children's needs and any gaps in their learning. Staff will make on-going assessments of the progress and attainment of each child and use this information to aid future planning.

Learning through play (child-led learning)

Learning through play and practical hands on experiences underpins our approach to teaching and learning in Early Years. Through play, children develop a number of skills such as language, their emotions and creativity, social and intellectual skills. Children are able to practise and learn new skills and revisit prior learning and experiences at their own level and pace. Independent learning takes place indoors and outdoors and it is in these different environments that children explore and discover their immediate world. For most children their play/independent learning is natural and spontaneous although some children may need extra help from adults. Adults model and provide time, space and appropriate resources which inspire independent learning opportunities and the imaginations of the children. They observe play and join in when appropriate, watching and listening before intervening. Adults will model, observe, facilitate and extend children's learning. They will often ask children questions about the independent learning in order to develop their language and communication skills. All staff value child-initiated learning and provide safe but challenging environments that support and extend learning and development.

Adult-led learning

Through adult-led activities we can introduce children to new ideas, provide opportunities for them to develop their skills and ensure that they experience all areas of learning in the EYFS. In addition to child-initiated learning, children are provided with daily adult-led sessions. Reception and Nursery each have three main daily teaching sessions. These are normally Phonics, Literacy and Maths. Teachers also plan whole class/group inputs linked to other areas of the curriculum when appropriate. Children also have at least one daily story session. These whole class/group sessions help to develop vital habits of learning such as learning as a group and taking turns. Teachers plan sessions based on the children's needs and differentiate them accordingly. Children are active learners during these sessions and they are provided with skills which they can then go and practise independently. Adult-led learning can also take place during continuous provision and indoor and outdoor activities are planned to help address gaps in children's learning.

Outdoor learning

Outdoor learning is a fundamental part of the Early Years and it has a positive impact on children's development. Being outdoors offers children the freedom to explore, use their senses and be physically active. It also offers opportunities to do things in different ways and on different scales compared to indoors. Our outdoor environment provides a range of resources and activities for children to explore and we try to ensure each of the curriculum areas are incorporated into the outdoor environment each day. Nursery and Reception

each have their own outdoor areas and they either have free-flow access or timetabled sessions inside and outside. Each area has a range of learning opportunities including a mud kitchen, climbing equipment, role play/stage area, balancing equipment, large scale construction, wheeled vehicles, water play and literacy and maths opportunities. Outdoors is both a teaching and learning environment, where there is a balance of child-led and adult-led learning. The outdoor area is comprehensively risk assessed and daily checks are completed by staff.

4) Parent partnership

Parents play a key role in children's development and it is essential for us to have a strong partnership with parents to ensure each child reaches their full potential. We encourage parents to make contributions and share information about their child's learning and development. We also regularly share information on children's progress and next steps in learning. We regularly invite parents in for workshops, assemblies or stay and play sessions to ensure they feel valued and develop good relationships with staff members. We do this through:

- Having informal conversations at the start and end of the day
- Providing regular homework and advice on home learning (see section 5)
- Organising a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents: Special assemblies, performances, sports day, stay and play sessions, etc.
- Sending home a school planner so parents can comment on their child's reading and use it to communicate with the key person
- Uploading observations to Tapestry so that parents can see how their child is learning at school
- Asking parents to upload their own observations to Tapestry or write them on a post it
- Holding parents' evenings twice per year
- Sending out a half yearly report and end of year report
- Sending out a year group newsletter each half term with information on topics etc
- Holding welcome meetings at the start of the year for all parents
- Providing an opportunity for parents to meet their teacher/key person before their children start Nursery

Information for new parents and children

For Nursery children, parents are invited to a 1:1 meeting with a Nursery teacher in the Summer term prior to them starting in Nursery. This provides an opportunity for teachers to gather information on the child before they start Nursery and allows parents to ask any questions they may have. The children are also invited to these meetings. Nursery parents are also invited to an open day where they can tour the Nursery, find out who their child's teacher will be and find out information on school policies etc.

Many children starting Reception have come from our Nursery so parents are already familiar with the school routines. There is a welcome meeting for all Reception parents in July which provides them with information on the daily timetable, how phonics is taught, the curriculum etc. Children are also invited to these meetings so that they can meet their teacher.

5) Home learning

We value the importance of home learning and all teachers work closely with parents/carers to ensure they feel confident supporting children's learning at home. At each parents' evening, teachers provide activity suggestions for parents to use at home to meet their child's targets. We also provide set regular homework/activities for parents to complete with their children.

Nursery: During the first half term, children will receive their home reading book and parents will be expected to read/share the story with them for 10-20 minutes each day. After October half term, children will also begin receiving one piece of homework per week. This could be suggested activities for parents to do with their child based on the work they have done in class. Or it could be a task for the children to complete and return to school.

Reception: During the first half term, children will receive their home reading book and parents will be expected to read/share the story with them for 10-20 minutes each day. After October half term, children begin receiving Literacy and Maths homework (alternate weeks) based on the work they have completed in class.

6) Safeguarding and risk assessments

Our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our whole school Safeguarding policy which can be found on our school website. The Early Years unit also has its own set of risk assessments which are stored electronically as well as in a file within the EYFS unit. These have been read by all staff members and are reviewed frequently. Staff in Early Years perform daily checks of the environment to ensure it is safe.

7) Transition between year groups and other settings

Nursery to Reception

Nursery and Reception teachers work closely together throughout the year and take part in joint moderations. This ensures Reception teachers develop a good understanding of Nursery children's attainment and needs before they move up. During the Summer term, each Nursery class spends one session per week in Reception. This provides them with the opportunity to get to know the environment and routines in Reception. The children also spend the morning with their new class teacher during the final 2 weeks of term.

Reception to Year 1

Reception children make use of the whole school facilities such as the hall, ICT suite and KS1 playground to ensure the children are confident and well prepared for moving around the main school building. Playing out with the KS1 children at lunchtime also prepares them for mixing with older children. During Spring term, Reception also begin attending KS1 assemblies once per week. In the final Summer term, the Reception classes visit the Year 1 classrooms once per week and take part in activities with a Year 1 teacher. This helps them get to know the environment and routines before September. The children also spend the morning with their new Year 1 teacher during the final week of term. The Year 1 teachers are provided with time to observe the children in the Reception environment. Reception teachers also moderate with Year 1 teachers during the year which helps inform the teachers of the children's abilities and needs before they move up.

At the end of each school year, teachers meet to share information on each child with their new class teacher including their knowledge, understanding, achievements and end of year assessment data. This ensures all teachers have a well-rounded picture of the children prior to the new school year. Teachers are also provided with copies of end of year reports for the children in their new class.

Other settings

We appreciate that starting at a new setting can be a daunting and unsettling experience for any child. This is why we try to ensure that children have met their teacher before starting Nursery in September. If children have attended other settings, teachers will contact them to gain further information about the child and discuss how to ensure their transition is smooth. Reception teachers will also contact settings new children have attended and will arrange a visit to observe the child if appropriate.

8) Planning

We use half-termly topics in both Reception and Nursery as a starting point to learn new things and fire children's imaginations. Our long-term plans show the topics we usually follow but they are flexible to ensure we also follow the children's interests, school themes or National events. Each half term the staff meet to plan the next topic and choose enhancements based on children's needs. The long-term plans also show how we cover other areas of the EYFS curriculum.

Staff plan in more detail on a weekly basis and teachers in each year group work together to plan lessons based on children's needs. We have weekly planning for Literacy, Maths and Phonics sessions. In Reception, teachers also plan class/group sessions for Expressive Arts & Design, PSED and Understanding the World. All areas of the curriculum are also covered through continuous provision. Reception children also have PE and ICT lessons. Continuous Provision planning shows children's learning challenges and enhancements that will be provided.

For Phonics we follow Read, Write, Inc. in Reception and Phase 1 Letters and Sounds in Nursery. Children will move onto Read, Write, Inc. in Nursery when they are ready. Literacy is planned around quality texts as we find this is the best way to engage children. At the start of each text, we plan 'hooks' to provide an exciting start to the sequence of lessons. In Maths Reception use the White Rose materials but adapt them to suit the children's needs.

9) Assessment

Assessment is essential to ensuring children make progress. As stated in the EYFS Framework (2021), 'ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process'. Our accurate assessment relies on us getting to know our children well and understanding their achievement and interests. Practitioners draw on their knowledge of a child to make a professional judgement about their stage of development. The EYFS Framework does not require physical evidence to be kept for each child but some evidence is kept if teachers feel it will support their assessment of a child. Discussions with parents and carers also supports teachers with their assessments.

During the first few weeks of the academic year, teachers assess the ability of each child using a baseline assessment. These assessments allow us to identify patterns of attainment within the cohort, in order to adjust the teaching programme for individual children and groups of children. The children are assessed on an ongoing basis and their levels are recorded at the end of each term in addition to the baseline assessment.

At the end of the Reception year, we record each child's level of development against the 17 Early Learning goals as Emerging or Expected. We do not report an Exceeding judgement to the Local Authority but as a school we do identify children who are working beyond the EYFS.

We have a strong internal moderation process and teachers meet regularly to ensure validity of assessments. Teachers have formal opportunities to agree assessment judgements with others; in addition to daily informal conversations. During moderation meetings we discuss the development of an individual child, or group of children. The discussion also includes reference to the three Characteristics of Effective Learning. Year group leaders or the EYFS lead will decide on a focus for the moderation meeting each half term. We also invite local nurseries to moderation meetings towards the end of the academic year.