



Mill Lane Community Primary School & The Windmill Community Nursery

Growing, Thriving, Flying

Early Years Policy

Intent

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At Mill Lane Community Primary School we greatly value the importance that the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development. However, we also believe that early childhood is valid in itself as part of life. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

The EYFS for children is from birth to five years of age. All children begin school with a wide variety of experiences and learning and it is the privilege of the adults working in the foundation stage to accept the task of building upon that prior learning experience. This is done through a holistic approach to learning ensuring that parents and guardians, support staff and the Foundation Stage team work effectively together to support the learning and development of the children in their charge.

It is every child's right to grow up safe, healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution.

Implementation

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

A unique child. We work towards every child being a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement as well as celebration and rewards to encourage and develop a positive attitude to learning.

Positive relationships. We recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships and aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families.

Enabling environments. We recognise that the school environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. Through observations we assess the children's interests, stages of development and learning needs before planning challenging and achievable activities and experiences to extend their learning.

Learning and development. The Early Years area is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. The classrooms are set up in learning areas where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently.

At Mill Lane School, we:

- provide a safe, challenging, stimulating, caring and sharing environment which is sensitive to the needs of the 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 ensuring that all children, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability;
- provide opportunities whereby children experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development;
- provide experiences for all children, whatever their needs, which are inclusive rather than parallel.

Curriculum

We provide a broad and balanced curriculum that will enable each child to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually to their full potential. Each child is valued as an individual and teaching and learning is based on the understanding that children develop at different rates.

The curriculum framework includes seven areas of learning and development that are equally important and inter-connected: three prime areas and four specific areas. The prime areas are particularly important for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, for building children's capacity to learn and forming relationships. The prime areas are strengthened and applied through four specific areas.

Prime areas of learning

- Communication and language.
- Physical development.
- Personal, social and emotional development.

Specific areas of learning

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

Planning

We provide suitable content and activities for all areas of learning through purposeful play and teaching delivered through a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities.

Through exploratory play our children learn to make sense of the world. 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.

Planning to meet the prime and specific areas of learning is by providing opportunities for:

- playing and exploring: finding out and exploring, playing with what they know, being willing to 'have a go', thereby developing co-ordination and control;
- exploring a wide range of materials and providing opportunities to share ideas through the media of art, music, movement and design technology;
- active learning: being involved and concentrating, keep trying, enjoying achieving what they set out to do;
- creating and thinking critically: Having their own ideas, making links, choosing ways to do things;
- developing positive attitudes and appropriate behaviour, relationships and respect;
- accessing a wide range of reading materials;
- listening;
- linking sounds and letters;
- speaking in a range of situations to develop confidence and skills in expressing themselves
- beginning to write;

- developing skills of counting, adding, subtracting, measuring, recognizing shapes;

Observations of children's achievement, interests and learning styles are the basis of planning. Staff are skilled at observing children to identify their achievements, interests and next steps for learning. These observations then lead the direction of the planning. The medium term planning is based upon a different topic each half term. The weekly planning is based upon the topic but also takes into consideration children's interests and their next steps in learning. This fostering of the children's interests develops a high level of motivation for the children's learning.

Teaching

Staff respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction. Account is taken of the different ways that children learn, their individual needs, interests, and stage of development.

As children grow older, and as their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards more adult-led activities to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for year.

Inclusion and Equal Opportunities

Children with special educational needs will be supported as appropriate to enable them to access the curriculum fully. This includes children that are more able and those with specific learning difficulties and disabilities. Individual Pupil Profiles identify targets in specific areas of learning for those children who require additional support as identified within the school's Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy. The school's SEND Co-ordinator is responsible for providing additional information and advice to staff and parents and for arranging external intervention and support as necessary. Where a child may have a special educational need or disability, consideration is given to whether specialist support is required, linking with relevant services from other agencies, where appropriate.

In line with the school's Equal Opportunities Policy, we will provide all children, of all ethnicities, cultures, religions, home languages, family backgrounds, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability with equal access to all aspects of school life to ensure that every child is valued as an individual. All staff are role models and are aware of the influence they have in promoting positive attitudes and use that influence to challenge stereotypical attitudes.

Assessment

We make regular assessments of children's learning to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Staff also take into account observations shared by parents and/or carers. Assessment takes the form of both formal and informal observations. At the end of their foundation stage in school the children's progress is recorded on to the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. Each child's level of development is recorded against the 17 Early Learning Goals, indicating whether they are:

- meeting expected levels of development;
- exceeding expected levels;
- or, not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging')

The Learning Environment

The Early Years classrooms are organised to allow children to explore independently and learn securely and safely. There are areas set up inside and outside linked to the Prime and Specific areas of learning. The Foundation Stage Classrooms have their own outdoor area. The free flow between the inside and the outside has a positive effect on the children's development. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and in different scales than when indoors. The children can explore, use their senses and be physically active. The Early Years classes also have access to the school hall and environmental areas.

Parents as Partners

We recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value being partners with them in their child's education through:

- talking to parents about their child before their child starts in our school;
- offering both parents and children the opportunity to spend time in the Foundation Stage for an induction visit before starting school;
- providing an induction meeting for parents to meet with staff to discuss school routines and to answer any questions parents may have;
- operating an open door policy for parents with any queries. Conversely, if Foundation staff have concerns about the progress of a child, they will immediately approach parents and carers to discuss them;
- sharing regularly the children's 'Learning Journey' with parents and valuing the ongoing contributions to this from parents;
- offering three parent/teacher consultation evenings per year;
- sending a report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of their time in both nursery and reception;
- we will set out the school's expectations in a 'Home School' agreement which is given out to parents with children starting in the Reception Class.

Admission Arrangements

Children enter the Nursery in the term after their third birthday, subject to availability. Children enter the Reception Class in September of the school year in which they are five. Places in Nursery are offered in accordance with the school's admissions policy and the Reception Class are offered in accordance with the Local Authority.

The Induction Process

During the Summer Term prior to starting school the following September the following visits are conducted:

- The Reception teacher will visit pre-school settings from which September's intake will be taken.
- Each child and their parents and carers will be invited to spend some time at Mill Lane Primary school in order to familiarise themselves with both the staff and the foundation unit environment.
- During the first week, children will attend for the full school day unless the Headteacher, Foundation staff and parents or guardians agree that it is not in the best interests of an individual child.

Health and Safety

We have a Health and Safety policy which all staff and students are familiar with and we have designated people responsible for first aid in school. Foundation Stage staff have had paediatric first aid training. Children are taught the safe and appropriate use of equipment and materials. Children are taught to be mindful when moving around the school and are aware of safety issues. Risk assessments are undertaken before after school activities take place and before we embark on school outings. A full Health and Safety Policy is available in School.

Intimate Care

"Intimate" care is any care which involves washing, touching or carrying out an invasive procedure that most children are able to carry out themselves. However, depending on a child's age and stage of development, they may need some support, for example dressing, wiping their bottom after using the toilet and changing underwear following an accident. In most cases, intimate care is to do with personal hygiene.

Every child has the right to privacy, dignity and a professional approach from all staff when meeting their needs and it is important that staff work in partnership with parents/carers to give the right support to an individual child.

No intimate care is to be given without the express written permission of the parent or guardian of that child and all parents and guardians will be asked to provide that permission when their child joins the Foundation unit at Mill Lane Primary school.

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of the EYFS staff to follow this policy. The Senior Leadership Team will carry out monitoring on the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring system

Impact

This policy fulfils the requirements set out in the 2021 statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

It demonstrates a holistic approach to learning ensuring that parents/ guardians, support staff and the Foundation Stage team work together effectively to support the learning and development of the children in their charge.

It fulfils the commitment to every child's right to grow up safe, healthy, enjoying and achieving and making a positive contribution.

It lays secure foundations for future learning

Reviewed: May 2023

Next Review: May 2026

Governor committee with Responsibility: Quality of Education

Signed on behalf of the Governing Body:

