Expect the Best, Achieve Success

Early Years Policy for the Foundation Stage

July 2026

Agreed by Governors:

Next Review: July 2027

This policy will be reviewed annually and will be published to all staff, parents and governors. It will be available from the school office as well as through the school's website.

Chair of Governors signature: .....

Head Teacher signature: .....

The Philosophy of the Foundation Stage at Westoe Crown Primary

"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 the Early Years Foundation Stage)

We aim to support each child's welfare, learning and developmental needs by:

- Providing plentiful opportunities for children to make choices and become independent in their learning in a variety of stimulating and safe environments.

- Recognising each child as a 'unique child' and understanding that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates - physically, cognitively, l inguistically, socially and emotionally.

- Providing a safe, secure and caring environment where children feel happy and know that they are valued by the practitioners looking after them.

- Providing learning experiences in play which reflect children's personal interests and areas of curiosity in order to encourage and develop their natural desire, interest, excitement and motivation to learn.

- Providing experiences which build on children's existing knowledge and understanding in order to challenge, stimulate and extend their learning and development.

- Providing effective learning opportunities in a range of stimulating and exciting environments, inside and outside.

- Using reliable and accurate assessment which is based primarily on the practitioner's knowledge of the child gained predominantly from observation and interaction in a range of daily activities and events.

Curriculum Intent

Intent

The Early Years Foundation Stage is crucial in securing solid foundations that our children continue to build upon throughout their schooling. Our curriculum is designed to encourage independent, inquisitive, resilient and happy learners. Every child is recognised as a unique individual. We take into account children's prior learning and various starting points to develop a holistic engaging curriculum that interlinks across all areas of the EYFS.

Our curriculum has been designed to enable children to succeed through cooperative and collaborative learning principles, offering a range of extended child led play and sustained shared thinking. As such, there is a strong emphasis on the Prime Areas of learning; Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Communication and Language. We work in partnership with parents, carers and other settings to provide the best possible start at Westoe Crown Primary, ensuring each individual reaches their full potential. We acknowledge and promote children's interests and strive to embed them in the curriculum to engage, excite and motivate, making learning relevant and meaningful. Our aim is to provide the knowledge and experiences to develop a sense of awe and wonder, creating 'magical moments' to wow and captivate each child.

We want children to see themselves as individuals and valued members of their own families, school and local community. We want children to learn that places and people are not all the same, each having similarities and differences which should be celebrated. We aim to develop children's play skills, perseverance and ability to interact with one another showing resilience, tolerance and respect for others whilst having confidence in their own abilities. By the end of the Reception year, our intent is to ensure that all children make at least good progress from their starting points and are equipped with the skills and knowledge to have a smooth transition into Year 1.

Implementation

Our EYFS curriculum follows the statutory guidance EYFS Framework 2021 and is supported by the Development Matters guidance 2021. The Characteristics of effective teaching and learning are also central to all planned learning experiences in our EYFS curriculum. Emphasis is on learning through play, direct practical experience and led by the interests of our children. There is a combination of adult-led, teacher taught sessions as well as a wealth of stimulating continuous provision opportunities encouraging children to develop their learning independently through discovery, exploration, curiosity and

challenge. Adults scaffold learning through skilful interactions and effective questioning. Our learning environments are high quality, vibrant, stimulating and exciting but most importantly relevant to the needs and age/stage of our children. The internal and external environments are designed to allow children to access resources and the curriculum independently, making their own choices. All environments are adapted regularly to meet the developing needs of the children, providing support and challenge to all.

In planning our EYFS curriculum we have considered what we want our children to learn, know and do. We want them to know about themselves and their place at home, then contrast our locality to other places (farm/sea), countries (China/Arctic), learn about the seasons and the science that comes with them (lifecycles in terms of growing plants, and animals e.g chicks) as well as celebrations and key events throughout the year.
Each half term, we use a thematic approach to inspire and bring the seven key curriculum areas to life:-

Prime Areas of learning

Communication and Language - developing a love of language through conversation, story telling and role play and providing extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development - managing emotions, developing a positive sense of self, positive interactions and conflict resolution.

Physical development - developing core strength, gross and fine motor skills developing proficiency, control and confidence.

These are complimented by the four **Specific Areas of learning:**

Literacy -developing language comprehension and auditory processing skills are the focus in the Nursery year. This prepares the children for formal daily phonics teaching using 'Jolly Phonics' in the Reception year.

Maths - using 'Power maths' to develop a mastery of numbers to 10 and developing spatial reasoning skills across all areas of maths including shape, space and measures.
Understanding the World - developing understanding of our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world.

Expressive arts and Design - developing artistic and cultural awareness to support imagination and creativity.

Our wider curriculum is taught through the specific learning areas; 'Understanding of the World' and 'Expressive Arts and Design.' EYFS staff have a good understanding of how ELG's feed into the National Curriculum through our robust planning and CPD opportunities. In reverse, colleagues throughout the school are also aware of the key ELG's that link to each foundation subject and the progression of the subject. Exciting, purposeful and contextual activities are planned to build on children's natural curiosity. For example, building a boat for their favourite toy enables them to think like a 'Scientist' and 'Engineer' as they explore a range of materials and test out their own ideas.

Our inclusive approach means that all children learn together, but we have a range of additional intervention and support for children who may not be reaching their potential, or are showing a greater depth of understanding and need further challenge. This includes, for example, sessions for developing speech and language, social skills, fine motor skills, phonics, and mathematics. In addition, for those children on EHCPs, bespoke plans have identified that learning may need to take place away from the classroom due to sensory needs and curriculum planning is adapted effectively. Regular monitoring of teaching and learning by SLT and the EYFS PAL ensure staff develop good subject knowledge. The EYFS PAL ensures staff receive CPD specific to Early Years to develop their practice.

Assessment is ongoing throughout the year. Pupil progress meetings every half term ensure consistency in assessment and planning for all children, identifying those in need of further intervention to accelerate progress.

Formal assessments in the Early Years Foundation stage include...

Baseline: Prior to children starting, staff spend time speaking to the child's parents, previous settings and read previous learning journey's to gain an understanding of the whole child and where they are at. During the first half term in Nursery or Reception, all staff use ongoing assessments, observations and conversations with the child to develop a baseline assessment. This identifies each individual's starting points in all areas so we can plan experiences to ensure progress.
The RBA (Statutory Reception Baseline Assessment) This assessment focuses on 'Language, Communication and Literacy,' and 'Mathematics.' The purpose of this is to show the progress children make from Reception until the end of KS2. This is completed within the first 6 weeks of beginning the Reception year.

Ongoing Observation and quality interactions: All ongoing observations are used to inform weekly planning and identify children's next steps. This formative

assessment does not involve prolonged periods of time away from the children and excessive paper work. Practitioners draw on their knowledge of the child and their own expert professional judgements through discussions with other practitioners, photographs and physical examples such as a child's drawing / making. 'Wow' moments are recorded in learning journals and shared with parents and carers.

Impact

By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, all children will have reached their personal best and have achieved at least good progress across all areas of learning, aiming for a good level of development (GLD). Impact is also evident through our successful transitions into Year 1. EYFS staff have a good understanding of how ELG's link to the National Curriculum, and through our robust planning and delivery across the spectrum of subjects – both core and foundation - children leave the EYFS stage with the skills, knowledge and confidence to continue their journey as scientists, historians, artists and geographers.

The Learning Environment

A well planned and well organised environment gives children rich and stimulating experiences; enabling children to make choices and act upon them. Provision must be made for social interaction and solitary play, with sufficient space for both individual and group work.

To encourage each child to become a problem solver and a decision maker within the environment, each area of learning will be well resourced, organised, labelled and accessible, enabling the children to become responsible for the use of materials therein.

The role of the adult is highly significant in the learning process. Educators of young children need to be open-minded, evaluative, reflective and responsive in order to support and reinforce the growing knowledge of the child.
Practitioners should observe and respond to children appropriately, engaging children in the learning process and help them make progress in their learning.

Young children learn through "play" and do not make a distinction between "play" and "work" and neither should practitioners. Well planned play with effective adult support is a key way in which young children learn and develop, practice skills, think creatively and communicate.

Child Initiated Learning

In the Foundation Stage the quality and breadth of learning cannot be divided into specific curriculum areas alone, as young children do not learn in a linear, compartmentalised or prescriptive way. Based on the evidence from educational research in the way young children learn it is apparent that active learning is the key. Learning should be initiated in some instances by the child rather than teacher/adult directed.

For learning to be active it must encompass the following:

MATERIALS A wide variety of materials need to be readily available.
MANIPULATION Children are able to handle, explore and work with the materials freely.
CHOICE Children must be encouraged to plan and choose their activities, and set their own goals.
LANGUAGE Children are given sufficient opportunity to discuss their work and evaluate it.
SUPPORT Adults must support and facilitate children's learning to enable them to extend their work. Peers and adults recognise and encourage the child's problem solving and creativity.

To initiate all these principles in the Foundation Stage we have provided:-

1. Well planned and organised environment with well planned purposeful activity.
2. A well structured Early Years curriculum.
3. Observation, recording and assessment.
4. Monitoring and evaluation.

Observation, recording and assessment

Assessments are based primarily on daily observation and interactions with the child. Practitioners observe the learning which a child demonstrates spontaneously, independently and consistently in a range of contexts. Daily interaction with children provides the practitioner with a vast well of knowledge about all aspects of their personality, their likes, dislikes, friendship groups and preferred ways of working. Children are unique and they respond to different things at different times in different ways, so practitioners always use their knowledge of what inspires and works for the children who they know and work with. Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves practitioners knowing children's level of achievement and interests, and then shaping teaching and learning experiences for each child reflecting that knowledge. Assessments take account of a range of perspectives including those of the child, parents and carers and other adults who have significant interactions with the child. Observations are evaluated, children's learning priorities are identified and relevant learning opportunities are planned to support children to make the next steps and progress.

At the beginning of the Reception year, within the first six weeks, the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) will be completed. The RBA assesses a child in early mathematics, literacy, communication and language. The purpose of the RBA is to form the starting point for cohort-level school progress measures. There is no expected standard and children cannot pass or fail. Instead, teachers receive a series of narrative statements to inform them how the child has performed on the day.

The EYFS Profile is the national, statutory assessment tool against which teachers record their observations of all children's progress towards the Early Learning Goals. The profile provides parents and carers, practitioners and teachers with a well- rounded picture of a child's knowledge, summarising and describing the child's attainment against expected levels, and their readiness for Year 1. It is based on ongoing observation and assessment in the three prime and four specific areas of learning. In the final term of the Reception Year, practitioners will make a judgement of 'emerging' or 'expected' against the 17 Early Learning Goals set out in the 'Early Years Foundation Stage Profile'.

Inclusion

Our environment is designed to be inclusive and foster a sense of belonging. Children are given the freedom to choose their own interests in a truly gender equal environment. Every child is fully accepted, respected and valued to ensure there are no barriers to learning. Every child is 'unique' and every endeavour will be made to meet each individual need.

Special Educational Needs

Provision for children with special education needs being made through differentiated tasks, questioning, environment and equipment, I.E.P.'s and support of Special Educational Needs support staff.

English as an Additional Language

Providing children with English as an additional language with full access to the Foundation Stage curriculum and with support of E.A.L. support staff.

Parents as partners

The Early Years framework highlights the importance of establishing positive relationships with parents. We understand that an effective partnership between school and home will have a positive impact on children's learning and development. So, practitioners endeavour to encourage the regular sharing of information about the children with parents to establish interesting and stimulating learning experiences that respond to children's needs and interests.

Daily contact with parents before and after school allows for a smooth transition and effective relationships between home and school established. Regular parents meetings to discuss progress throughout the year, invitations to assemblies and performances, 'Stay and Play' sessions, 'Workshops for parents' ensure that parents are partners in the learning and development of each child.

Mrs E O'Neil
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