

Merley First school

**Early Years Foundation Stage
(EYFS) Policy**

Introduction

"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.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life."

(Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2014)

Purpose

The purpose of writing an EYFS policy is to focus our thoughts and energies into providing the best educational experience possible for our Reception children. Our policy will guide the way to ensuring our EYFS provision meets Government expectations for supporting children's learning and welfare but also acknowledges our current position and future proposals for improving standards and learning experiences.

Context

This Early Years Policy has been updated in September 2016 by Zoe Nash (Early Years Leader) in discussion with Jane Phillips (Headteacher).

Vision

At Merley First school we greatly value and respect the important role that the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development, however we also believe 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.

Our vision within the Foundation stage is to provide a safe and happy environment and create as many opportunities as possible to provide our children with skills, knowledge and understanding of themselves and the world around them and to allow them to make informed decisions and choices about their lives. We encourage our children to develop their own personalities and promote confidence and self esteem through positive teaching and play. We want our learning environments to inspire and motivate our children, generating a 'buzz of excitement' which indicates that our children are happy and focused on their learning.

Our core values as a school promote the rights of every child to learn in a secure and positive environment. Success is determined by our ability to meet the diverse needs of all of our children personally, socially, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually, creatively, morally and physically through the promotion of the principles of the EYFS themes and the Characteristics of Effective Learning. We aim to provide for all styles of learning, ensuring that visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learners can all access the curriculum in their preferred style. We aim to create strong relationships between our

children, parents, staff and any external agencies that may be involved in the nurturing and welfare requirements of our children. We are continually strengthening our links with our pre-schools and nurseries by involving them throughout the school year with what the children are doing. We also work closely with them to ensure a smooth transition for new children starting school.

Aims

It is our belief that every child should be given the opportunity and experience to reach 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. Our teaching is based on the Development Matters Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.

Our key aims for the delivery of the EYFS are to:

- provide an inspiring, challenging, stimulating, safe, 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 with good cross-curricular links that will set in place firm foundations for future learning and development in Key Stage 1 and beyond
- provide opportunities for children to learn through planned, purposeful play in all areas of learning and development
- ensure that there are extended opportunities for child-initiated play. This will enable deep level learning, high levels of engagement, decision-making, independence and self confidence
- use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress in their next steps
- provide opportunities for children to have ownership of what they are learning and have a direct impact on planning
- work in partnership with parents/guardians always encouraging and valuing their contributions
- ensure that all children, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability, have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development
- provide inclusive experiences for all children, whatever their needs and abilities.

These aims guide and inform all actions and decisions that we make in relation to the provision of education and commitment to its delivery for our children.

Principles

At Merley First School we believe in the four underlying themes of the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum (birth to five):

- 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 **learn and develop** 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. (statutory framework 2014)

There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational programmes in early years settings. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

These three areas, the **prime areas**, are:

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

Early Years Teachers must support children in four **specific areas**, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

The specific areas are:

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

Observation, assessment and planning

We implement each area of learning and development through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of child-initiated activity and adult-led tasks. Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is scaffolded and extended by adults. Early Years Teachers make ongoing judgements about how the children are progressing based on their observations of child-initiated learning and adult-led activities. We respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction. As children grow older, and as their development allows, it is expected that the balance will gradually shift towards more activities led by adults in the summer term, to help children prepare for their learning in Year 1. In planning and guiding children's activities, Early Years Teachers reflect on the different ways that children learn and demonstrate these in their practice.

The three **Characteristics of Effective 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.
- **creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make link

between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

EYFS Monitoring and Evaluation

An annual EYFS Action Plan is written with the main areas for development identified and how these will be achieved and when. This action plan is monitored termly by the Head teacher in subject feedback records. There are regular meetings with the Early Years Leader to discuss progress during the year in the EYFS curriculum and the children that are being tracked and how they are progressing. All Reception Teachers and Teaching Assistants receive regular training and updates to keep them informed of the latest developments with the EYFS curriculum.

Baseline assessment is carried out during the first half of the Autumn term, this is analysed and the children's end of year levels are predicted in relation to the Early Learning Goals. Any children that have a low baseline level are identified and then tracked through the year and this is analysed in relation to their term of birth or any other inhibiting factors. Intervention groups are set up to support children with achieving a Good Level of Development.

During the year Reception teachers jointly moderate their judgements to ensure that there is consistency across the year group. The Early Years Leader attends regular meetings and training to keep up to date with statutory guidance and expected practice. The Senior Leadership Team regularly carry out Scrutiny of Work visits which monitor assessment and learning within the Early Years curriculum. Merley First School also meets with other schools within the Wimborne Academy Trust to share best practice and to moderate judgements.

There are two points during the year where parents are informed about their child's progress in the EYFS curriculum and how their child is developing their 'Characteristics of Effective Learning'. At the end of the Reception year a Profile has to be completed for each child to say what they have achieved in relation to each of the 17 Early Learning Goals and a final report on the Characteristics of Learning is completed.

At the end of the EYFS all Parents are given a written summary during a meeting with the class teacher of their child's attainment against the early learning goals (ELGs). For each ELG the report must state whether their child is:

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

In the written report there are also comments on general progress with the Characteristics of Effective Learning. The discussion also provides support with the transition to year one.

The Induction Process

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

- EYFS staff 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 Merley First School in order to familiarise themselves with both the staff and the EYFS environment.

Then, in September:

- Where possible, EYFS staff will visit each child in their home environment.
- During the first two weeks, children will attend for either the morning or afternoon session only.
- During the third week, children attend for the morning/afternoon and a taster lunch session.

- During the fourth week and thereafter, children will attend for the full school day unless staff and parents/guardians agree that it is not in the best interests of an individual child.

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 and it is good practise for the school to inform the school nurse of all children requiring regular intimate care.

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 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 EYFS unit at Merley.

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 Education Plans identify targets in specific areas of learning for those children who require additional support commensurate with the school's Special Educational Needs Policy. The school's Inclusion Leader is responsible for providing additional information and advice to staff and parents and for arranging external intervention and support as necessary.

For children whose home language is not English we take reasonable steps to provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in play and learning, supporting their language development at home. Early Years Teachers must also ensure that children have sufficient opportunities to learn and reach a good standard in English language during the EYFS.

In line with the school's Equal Opportunities Policy, we will provide all children, regardless of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, 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.

Review

This Early Years Foundation Stage Policy will be reviewed annually by Zoe Nash (Early Years Leader)