



Derry Hill School

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

At Derry Hill School we aim to provide the highest quality care and education for all our children thereby giving them a strong foundation for their future learning. We create a safe and happy enabling environment with motivating and enjoyable learning experiences that enable children to become confident and independent. We value the individual child and work alongside parents and others to help us meet their needs, develop positive relationships, and support each child to reach their full potential. The Early Years Foundation Stage applies to children from birth to five years of age. In our school, all children join us at the beginning of the school year in which they are five. (Compulsory schooling begins at the start of the term after a child's fifth birthday). The Early Years Foundation Stage is important in its own right, and in preparing children for later schooling.

As outlined in the EYFS 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.

We adhere to the Statutory Framework of the EYFS and the **four guiding principles** that shape practice within Early Years settings.

- 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 needs and help them 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 education needs and disabilities (SEND).

Principles into practice

As part of our practice we:

- Provide a balanced curriculum, based on the EYFS, across the seven areas of learning, using play as the vehicle for learning
- Promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice. We provide early intervention for those children who require additional support
- Work in partnership with parents and within the wider context
- Plan challenging learning experiences, based on the individual child, informed by observation and assessment
- Provide opportunities for children to engage in activities that are adult-initiated and child-initiated.
- Develop close positive relationships with individual children
- Provide a secure and safe learning environment both indoors and out

Foundation Stage Curriculum

We plan an exciting and challenging curriculum based on our observation of children's needs, interests, and stages of development across the seven areas of learning to enable the children to make good progress and achieve the early learning goals. All the seven 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 are the **prime** areas:

- **Communication and Language** – Listening, Attention and Understanding and Speaking
- **Physical Development** – Gross Motor Skills and Fine Motor Skills
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** – Self Regulation, Managing Self and Building Relationships

Children are also supported through the four **specific** areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

The **specific** areas are:

- **Literacy** – Comprehension, Word Reading and Writing
- **Mathematics** – Number and Numerical Patterns
- **Understanding the World** – Past and Present, People, Culture and Communities and The Natural World
- **Expressive Arts & Design** – Creating with Materials and Being Imaginative and Expressive

Characteristics of Effective Learning

The EYFS also includes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. These highlight the importance of a child's attitude to learning and their ability to play, explore and think critically about the world around them. The three characteristics 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 links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things.

Children are provided with a range of rich, meaningful first-hand experiences in which children explore, think creatively and are active. We aim to develop and foster positive attitudes towards learning, confidence, communication and physical development.

Long term and medium term plans are written using the EYFS based on a series of topics, each of which offers experiences in all seven areas. These plans then inform our short-term weekly planning, alongside our observations, which remains flexible for children's interests and unplanned circumstances.

Children have whole group and small group times which may increase as they make progress, with times for a daily phonics session, teaching aspects of Mathematics and Literacy, including daily reading practice and Drawing Club.

The curriculum is delivered using a play-based approach as outlined by the EYFS statutory framework. 'Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals and solve problems. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults.'

We plan a balance between children having time and space to engage in their own child-initiated activities and those that are planned by the adults. During children's play, early years practitioners support the children's learning and development. Practitioners interact to enable them to shape the teaching and learning experiences for each child.

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

We create a stimulating environment to encourage children to free-flow between inside and out.

Observation and Assessment

Within the first six weeks in which the children start reception the Reception Baseline Assessment is undertaken.

As part of our daily practice we observe and assess children's development and learning enabling us to understand individual children's needs, and plan activities and support. As stated in the EYFS statutory framework 'Assessment should not entail prolonged breaks from interaction with children, nor require excessive paperwork.' Therefore the focus is ongoing (formative) assessment enabling the practitioners to respond to day-to-day observations and support progress. Significant observations and achievements may still be recorded for some of the children some of the time. These records will be through a variety of means, such as informal notes and formal observations including photographs. Any observations and records of the child are used, alongside practitioner's knowledge of the child and professional judgment, to complete the EYFS Profile at the end of the academic year. The child's progress is reviewed continuously and is regularly discussed with parents.

Within the final term of Reception, we provide the parents with a report based on the child's progress in the profile, this includes all seven areas of the Foundation Stage Curriculum. The parents are then given the opportunity to discuss these judgements with the class teacher.

Safety

Children's safety and welfare is paramount. We create a safe and secure environment and provide a curriculum, which teaches children how to be safe, make choices and assess risks. We have stringent policies, procedures and documents in place to ensure children's safety.

Please see our separate policies and procedures on Health and Safety and Child Protection.

Inclusion

We value all our children as individuals, irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability or gender. We plan a curriculum that meet the needs of the individual child and support them at their own pace so that most of our children achieve the Early Learning Goals. We strongly believe that early identification of children with additional needs is crucial in enabling us to give the child the support that they need and in doing so, work closely with parents and outside agencies.

Parents as Partners and the wider context

We strive to create and maintain partnership with parents and carers as we recognise that together we can have a significant impact on a child's learning and development. We welcome and actively encourage parents to participate confidently in their child's education and care in numerous ways – see our separate Parents as Partners policy.

Working with other services and organisations is integral to our practice in order to meet the needs of our children. At times we may need to share information with other professionals to provide the best support possible.

We draw on our links with the community to enrich children's experiences by taking them on outings/inviting members of the community into our setting.

Transitions

Transitions are carefully planned for and time given to ensure continuity of learning. We acknowledge the child's needs and establish effective partnerships with those involved with the child and other settings, including nurseries and child minders. In the summer term the local preschool visits the Reception Class regularly with the children who will be starting school the following September. Children who do not attend the local pre-school are visited in their setting, if possible. Towards the end of the summer term all children are invited attend at least two introductory sessions at school to develop familiarity with the setting and practitioners. Finally all parents and carers are offered a home visit in September just prior to their child starting school.

Date of policy last review: October 2024

Reviewed by: Mrs Naomi Burr (EYFS Lead) and Dayle Hopes (Reception Class Teacher)

Ratified by: Early Years Link Governor

Date of next review: September 2025 or sooner if there are significant changes to procedure

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