

Early Years Foundation Stage

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1 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. (Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage DFES 2012).

The Sovereign Trust provides children and their families with a supportive high quality learning environment. Starting at an academy can be a particularly emotional time for many of our families who are just beginning to come to terms with their child's needs. As a team, we are committed to supporting families through this journey. We ensure that the children feel safe, happy and valued through the environment we provide and the positive relationship.

2 Our Aims and Principles

We aim to promote the four principles of the EYFS:

2.1 A unique child

We believe that every child is a competent learner from birth and a valuable member of society. We encourage the development of independence and choice. We are committed to equal opportunities and are fully inclusive of all children and their families. We encourage children to respect others and value diversity through gaining awareness of themselves and others.

2.2 Positive relationships

We believe that children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person. Staff support pupils in developing secure relationships in a safe environment where they can learn to express themselves. We value parents as the co educator of their child and know that we can best support children's learning through developing a positive relationship with families. We liaise with other settings and professionals to ensure a consistent, informed approach and work as part of a multidisciplinary team.

2.3 Enabling environment

The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning and this is especially true of pupils with SEN. We provide a learning environment that best supports the learning styles of our children. This may differ between classes based on our knowledge of pupils and the approaches and environment they need to fully access the curriculum. We provide opportunities for children to learn through both indoor and outdoor play and through visits in the local community.

2.4 Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.

We are committed to recognising that our children have different starting points, learning styles, needs and interests and we use this information to ensure they fulfil their true potential. Where possible, skills are taught in practical, real life situations with opportunities to generalise learning. The development of social and communication skills are a key priority with many pupils experiencing major difficulties in these areas.

3 Starting in Education and Transition

We have a clear policy concerning starting school (see Transition Policy). Parents are fully involved in the process. Information is gathered from parents using the 'starting school' pro-forma and transition visits are set up that best meet the child and families needs. Parents are given a Handbook with relevant information and consent forms. Staff liaise with other settings and professionals. The Reception children have a 2 week staggered start to gradually introduce them to a full school day and lunch times.

The children have planned transition visits on changing class/Key Stage. The staff share information with the receiving teacher ensuring that any approaches are carried across to the next class. This could be to the next class, key stage or into a different provision. This reduces anxiety for the child and family.

4 Developing a home-school partnership

We believe in developing a close working partnership with parents which starts with their initial visits to school. We maintain communication through home-school books, telephone conversations or meetings. We hold regular meetings and hold coffee mornings for parents.

We understand that pupils may show different skills at home and school so information sharing is essential. We hold more formal parent's evenings in the autumn and summer term. A 'Learning Journey' book is provided for each family to record progress they see in their child. This supports our assessments of pupils and the planning of learning opportunities.

5 Organisation of classes

We usually have three or four classes in the Early Years. The age groupings of the pupils vary depending upon the needs of the children in the academies. Some of our classes cater for the needs of pupils with Social and Communication needs including ASD who require a more structured and visually clear environment. The classes for children with Social and Communication needs including ASD usually have a ratio of 5 children with 2 staff. The other classes have up to 9 children with an average of 2 staff depending on their needs. The Nursery children (the term after they are 3 years old) attend for 5 half day sessions (15 hours). We also provide statutory assessment for children as young as two years old. These pupils are offered a maximum of 3 sessions and staff work closely with other settings and parents to meet the needs of these very young children.

Staff are highly experienced and trained in a range of approaches to meet the needs of children with SEN e.g. TEACCH, PECs, Sign Along, Intensive Interaction, behaviour management. Our learning environments meet the needs of pupils so may be different to those in a mainstream school. Continuous provision varies on developmental and sensory needs.

We work as part of a multidisciplinary team e.g. with Speech & Language Therapist. We liaise and plan closely and advice is followed through the academy life and at home. Therapy is delivered through advice, individual work, small group or whole class depending on needs. Each class has a shared small room where staff can work individually with children to focus attention.

Physical activity is encouraged and each class has access to an outdoor play area.

6 The curriculum

Each of the classes provides continuous play based provision which varies based on the needs and interests of the classes. Adult's support learning by focusing pupils, extending play and communication. Some classes may be able to use areas such mark making and playdough while others classes need more sensory play (e.g. corn flour, physical play and soft relaxing areas). Children with autism do not tend to learn through play but need to be taught how to play. The classes for children with autism benefit the use of visual timetables and work stations to organise their time and restricted choice to develop their play and communication skills. This would not be reflected in a mainstream nursery but this is how children with autism learn and function best. Many of our pupils benefit from low distraction areas to focus on an activity.

Focused learning challenges and enhanced activities are developed through medium term planning. The short term planning identifies the activities for the week and organisational issues. It is flexible enough to allow staff to plan using the children's needs and interests.

We follow the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and provide our pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum covering the seven areas of learning.

7 Prime Areas

Communication and language development involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations.

Physical development involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food.

Personal, social and emotional development involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities.

8 Other Curriculum areas

Literacy development involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children must be given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems, and other written materials) to ignite their interest.

Mathematics involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces, and measures.

Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.

Expressive arts and design involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

For younger pupils or those with significant needs who are operating at very early development levels we focus upon the prime areas. Where appropriate, activities are differentiated to meet the pupil's needs. All areas of learning are interconnected with language and communication impacting on development in all areas. Language and communication and PHSE are a major focus in EYFS as the majority of pupils experience these type of difficulties. Our pupils learn best where they have access to real life experiences, objects and pictures and have opportunities to generalise these skills. We provide the children with a range of environments to extend their play opportunities (e.g. soft play area, sensory room and cookery room). As part of our curriculum, we take the children on visits to the local community (e.g. shops, café, church and park.) We also extend their first hand experience through topic related visits (e.g. farm.)

9 Assessment and Record Keeping

For whole academy aspects of assessment, recording and reporting, please refer to the academy policy on assessment. We use The Early Years Foundation Stage and Foundation stage Profile in Reception. Our assessment procedures are:

- For children on a statutory assessment place we use the academy based B squared assessment and PEP-R(a developmental play based assessment for pupils with ASD)
- All staff keep observations on the six areas of learning. These are shared through class meetings to plan appropriate next steps.
- Throughout the year photographic records are kept to show attainment in the six areas of learning (two per area). These are shared with parents at the end of the Summer Term through power point presentations.
- We record progress on the whole school B squared assessment. Pupils are base lined from the term in which they start.
- The EYFS Profile is completed in Reception but the children tend to have very low scores on this. B squared better reflects their attainment in small steps
- All pupils have an Individual Educational Plan from the completion of their assessment. These clearly show progress.

10 Monitoring & Evaluation

We have a Phase Leader for The Early Years. This role includes monitoring to:

- Ensure provision of an appropriately organised learning environment that supports learning and well being
- Leading the staff team to ensure the Trust and academies policies and practices are delivered to a high standard
- Taking an over view of the learning environment and resources to ensure they meet our high standards
- Coordinating planning, assessment, recoding and reporting
- Maintaining good liaison with parents, other providers, multidisciplinary team and community
- Performance management of other members of the Foundation Stage Team
- Reporting back to the Senior Management team and The Board of Trustees.