

Hazel Oak School

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE POLICY

Aims

- *To give each child a happy, positive and fun start to their school life in which they can establish solid foundations on which to expand and foster a deep love of learning;*
- *To offer each child a wide range of new and exciting experiences and give them the opportunity to consolidate, explore and test them out along with their own, individual experiences;*
- *To enable each child, through encouragement and high expectations, to develop, to the full, socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally.*
- *To offer a structure for learning that has a range of starting points and unlimited opportunity for development;*
- *To encourage children to develop independence within a loving, secure and friendly atmosphere;*
- *To support children in building relationships through the development of social skills such as cooperation and sharing;*
- *To help each child to recognise their own strengths and achievements through experiencing success and developing the confidence to work towards personal goals.*

The Curriculum

The children in class one follow the curriculum as outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) document, which is available from the school office or to download at

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/299391/DFE-00337-2014.pdf

This clearly defines what we teach. The following policy details the specifics of our setting.

The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development, all of which are seen as important and interconnected but three areas are seen as particularly important for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, for building their capacity to learn and form relationships and thrive (DfE 2014: 1.3), they support children's learning in all other areas, they are known as the prime areas.

The prime areas are;

- Communication and Language - Listening and Attention, Understanding and Speaking
- Physical Development - Moving and Handling and Self care

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development - Making relationships, Managing feelings and behaviour and Self-confidence and Self-awareness

The specific areas of learning develop essential skills and knowledge for children to participate successfully in society.

The specific areas are;

- Literacy - Reading and Writing
- Mathematics - Numbers and Space, Shape and Measures
- Understanding the World - People and communities, The world and Technology
- Expressive Arts and Design - Exploring and using media and materials and Being Imaginative

Characteristics of Effective Learning

The EYFS also includes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. The teachers plan activities with these in mind. They 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.

Teaching strategies

We ensure there is a balance of adult led and child initiated activities across the day. Although much of the time is spent with children self-selecting tasks, the interaction between the adult and child is essential as the adult's response to children builds understanding and therefore guides new learning. The adult's role is to continually model, demonstrate and question what the child is doing.

In some cases the adult will ask a child to come and complete a task or game with them; at other times they will participate in a child's game, extending it where possible.

By the end of class one, the children will experience many more adult directed tasks as they prepare for their transition to class two.

Play

Learning through play is an important part of our Early Years classrooms. We believe children learn best from activities and experiences that interest and inspire them. Using children's interests as a starting point, we provide children with stimulating, active play experiences in which they can explore and develop their learning to help them make sense of the world. They have opportunities through their play to think creatively and critically alongside other children as well as on their own. They are able to practise skills, build upon and revisit prior learning and experience at their own level and pace. Play gives our children the opportunity to pursue their own interests and inspire those around them. The children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions. We believe it is important that adults take an active role in child initiated play through observing, modelling, facilitating and extending their play. Getting the balance right between child initiated play, which is controlled, and adult led activities is very important to us.

Teaching

We include direct, carefully planned, adult led experiences for children in the form of structured adult led teaching and adult led group activities. These are particularly important in helping children to learn specific skills and knowledge and it is often through children's play that we see how much of this learning children have understood and taken on. Each day we follow a timetable with set routines in place. We set aside times each day when the children come together to be taught in the more traditional sense, gathered together on the carpet as a class. In these slots we focus on our topic work, maths, literacy, phonics, and stories. These sessions help to develop vital skills such as: learning as a group, listening to the teacher, taking turns to answer and maintaining focus for a period of time.

Reading and story play an important part of the day. We want to make sure our children have a love of books and will leave the EYFS with a bank of stories they know well, both traditional and modern classics. We make sure there is always time for whole class story at the end of the day but also that there are many opportunities to enjoy books at other times. Every child is given their own book bag and has a designated day when they will have one-to-one time sharing books with an adult. Once the children's reading skills have developed, they will begin to read in small guided groups to prepare them for guided reading sessions in class two.

Each morning we allocate time to share news, update our weather board and decided the day of the week. We then take time to think about feelings and discuss the days

routines. The children often start these activities with songs and then we update our interactive board. This is a great time to build communication skills.

Planning

We believe many children need to be given a starting point to learn new things and find topics are a great way to fire the imagination. We have a two year topic cycle so both classes are working together on the same theme; topics are usually based on the following areas of learning, 'Understanding the World', 'Literacy' and 'Communication and Language'; and range from a topic on 'Festivals and Cultures' to 'Castles, Dragons and Knights' or 'Traditional Tales'. The topics are flexible to ensure we also follow the children's interests, school themes and local or national events. Every half term, staff plan the next topic, and book visits and visitors that will enhance the learning.

Staff plan in more detail on a weekly basis using daily notes, observations and interactions with children to inform where the learning journey should move to. Although class teachers are responsible for writing plans, the EYFS plan as a team, with Teachers and Support Staff all attending planning meetings and giving an input whenever possible.

All children have individualised and tailored plans based upon their individual and addition needs. We have high staff ratios in the classroom so that we can target areas that they children may need addition support with. Communication skills are a high priority in class one and we use PECs (Picture Exchange Communication Strategies) alongside a symbolised classroom. All the children are taught Makaton which staff model during learning opportunities. Some children have 'Teacch' workstations to enable highly structured and systematic learning approach. We ensure personal, social and emotion support is put in place and incorporated into daily learning. We have a designated low sensory area and a comfort area which children can access freely if they need time to calm or rest. The children also have regular relaxation times during the day to help them to self-regulate and to take some time to reduce anxieties that may have built during the day. The staff within the class have also received 'Beam' training and opportunities to build gross motor skills using beam are planned in daily. The children also have frequent opportunities for movement and sensory breaks.

Visits and visitors

We aim to build up to three visits in the Summer Term; these can range from weekly park and library visits to visiting the local farm or castle. We aim for a minimum ratio of one adult to five children but this based upon need and often we provide ratios of one adult to two children with some children having their own designated member of

staff if required. Ratios may vary due to the type of trip and location. For safety reasons we say no to younger siblings coming along on school trips.

We take walks to the park and library weekly, building up to visiting local shops in the area such as grocery stores to buy fruit for our snack. This provides real life learning opportunities and allows the children opportunities to communicate in different environment. For some children in the class, transition to different places can be tricky so we complete weekly trips to build their confidence in this area.

Visitors also really enhance a topic and we like to have 'experts' coming in to talk to the children, a doctor for example. We often ask parents if they are able (and brave enough!) to share knowledge or a skill, be it cooking, how to bath a baby, painting mehndi patterns on hands or playing guitar.

Classroom organisation

Our Early Years classroom has defined areas with clearly labelled resources to ensure children can access them easily. We follow the 'Communication Friendly Model' ensuring that they layout boosts communication opportunities. Each classroom is set up in a way to provide children with experiences and activities in all of the seven areas of learning. The Early Years classroom has a writing area, maths area, creative area, book corner, role play area, construction/small world area, outdoor area and carpeted teaching area. We also ensure there is a designated low sensory, high structured area for those children who need a more systematic approach to learning; these are tailored to individual needs and preferences. A variety of activities are planned for and set up in the different areas each day. The adults move to whichever area their focus for the session/day is.

The outdoor area is an important part of the classroom with many children choosing to learn outside for much of the day. We try to ensure that the range of activities outside reflects the different curriculum areas, for example setting up quiet spaces for a maths game, reading and for construction. Physical activity such as climbing, running, cycling and other active games are frequent during the day to ensure the children have lots of movements and sensory breaks.

Each child has their own labelled peg and tray in the cloakroom. We encourage children to take responsibility for keeping their clothes, book bag and work safely in one place! The children complete self-registration by collected their star and placing it on the class board. They are supported by adults who encourage independent skills where able.

Assessment, observations and portfolios

Assessment is an essential part of the learning and development of children in the EYFS. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations. To ensure we have evidence of a child's progress in the EYFS we use a range of strategies all of which come together in their individual online learning portfolio. We are very proud of our portfolios: these are collections of children's work, photos and observations which create a detailed picture of the child.

Where appropriate, we include individual next steps for children's learning. These next steps are discussed by the EYFS team in informal meetings after school each day and in the weekly planning meetings, these next steps inform planning for the next day and week ahead. Staff have their own iPad which is used to capture and note observations and next steps for learning. Parents have access to the portfolios through online personalise logins. They are encouraged to contribute and add logs of significant events that happen at home.

On entry to class one we carry out baseline assessments for each child. Throughout the Early Years the Class Teacher submits end of term assessment data to the Head Teacher showing each child's development across the seven areas of learning. At the end of class one the class teacher assesses each child against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELG) and comments on whether their development within each ELG is either 'emerging', 'developing' or 'secure'. This information is also communicated to parents and carers in the child's end of year report and can be discussed in the final Parents' Evening.

Role of staff and key worker

Each child has a named key worker in the setting. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs and to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents. All adults within the Early Years setting actively seek to form positive respectful relationships with the children in their care. The formation of healthy relationships between adults and children is essential in enabling children's well-being now and their future successes.

There are rare occasions when significant adults cannot be in the class and we aim to be consistent in who covers these absences.

Partnership with parents and carers

We believe that parents and carers are a child's first educator and therefore work very closely to ensure they are involved in what we do with their child at school. We want parents to feel they can speak to us about their child at any time and feel comfortable in our setting. As well as visit days we offer a parent information session at the beginning of the school year and offer parenting workshops and other sessions for parents, such as our successful crafty themed sessions!

When a child gains a place at Hazel Oak School we ask them to attend a session at the school alongside all other children who will be starting and with their parents. We give each family an 'All About Me' pack to complete with their child over the summer and this document is the first piece in their portfolio. The children also have tasks to complete such as bringing an item of comfort which we display in class to ensure they feel safe and settled at the start of the year.

We have a slow staggered entry into class one to ensure that it is a positive experience for the children. Many have never been in a full time setting or separated from their main carer so we judge the amount of time required on an individual basis. Before the children start we complete a home visit and a previous setting visit as it allows us to see the child in different environments so that we can tailor the classroom to their individual needs. We sit down with each parent to go through the children's needs, things that comfort them, likes and dislikes; this helps us to learn more about the child and their family.

Early in the first term parents are also invited to a parents' meeting so the settling in can be reviewed. We are aware that most parents will be part of the school for the until their child reaches Sixth Form and want them to get to know their child's peers and their families, so in late September we arrange lots of events for parents to come and work on craft activities with their, children and their siblings. They can also meet other parents in a more informal setting.

Parents are invited to attend a Parents' Meeting each term and teachers are available most mornings and evenings to talk and to discuss more urgent matters. Each child has an individual diary which is completed daily. Some children may also have a food and or toileting diary which is completed and sent home each evening.

Health & safety and safeguarding

Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them. We follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements detailed in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Guidance (2014)

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/299391/DFE-00337-2014.pdf

It is important to note that members of staff do not use their mobile phones or personal handset devices in the classroom and are prohibited from taking photographs with their personal handsets.

This is in line with our Safeguarding Policy. Members of staff do, however, use school iPads to take photographs as evidence to support the regular observation assessment cycle in the EYFS. These photographs are used in children's portfolios, in class displays and on the school website. All parents are asked to state if they give permission for their child's image to be used on the school website through the paperwork in their initial starter packs.

We are a healthy school and our children receive free fruit and milk from a Government scheme but we ask that parents regularly provide healthy snacks to share; these might be bread sticks, rice cakes or more exotic fruits such as grapes or a pineapple. Some children within the setting require extra support with healthy eating due to sensory difficulties. We activity work to support and encourage eating through a staged eating approach designed by our community nurse. We also understand that parents may need support with this at home and we encourage parents to contact us if they would like help. In class one, we have two snack times per day to ensure that children with sensory eating difficulties have lots of time to try new textures. We also incorporate messy food play each week so that children can explore textures freely during play.

We take all accidents seriously and always log and phone home immediately if a child bangs their head.

We encourage all children to start school without nappies but we understand that this will be difficult for some and we will support any children struggling with this. Our community nurse can also support toilet training at home. Please see our intimate care policy for additional information on this. We acknowledge that young children often have 'accidents' (i.e. wet themselves!) and have stocks of spare clothes and change anyone who needs it. We ask parents to help keep our stocks of clothes high by

returning anything their child has borrowed. Children are changed in the open area outside the toilets.

All large climbing equipment is checked by our site officer and fire alarms are held regularly in line with whole school policy. There is an annual external check of equipment.

We follow whole school procedures for child protection (see safeguarding policy). Sinead Davies and Kara Robinson are our school Designated Safeguarding Leads and we have a larger Designated Safeguarding Team. All concerns are logged on 'My Concern'.

Please see additional whole school policies for medicine in school and off-site visits.