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## Early Years 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

Reception follow the curriculum as outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) document, this clearly defines what we teach and is available to download at:

[https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2017/03/eyfs\\_statutory\\_framework\\_2017.pdf](https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2017/03/eyfs_statutory_framework_2017.pdf)

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

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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

The EYFS also includes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. The Reception 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 summer term the children will experience many more adult directed tasks as they prepare for their transition to year 1.

### *Play*

Learning through play is an important part of our Early Years classroom. We believe children learn best through 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.

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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 habits of learning: learning as a group, listening to the teacher, taking turns to answer, sitting still etc...

Reading and storytime 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 but also that there are many opportunities to enjoy books at other times, particularly through our approach to Read Write Inc phonics.

### **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. The topics are flexible to ensure we also follow the children's interests, school themes and local or national events. Every half term (and occasionally termly) 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 attending planning meetings and giving an input whenever possible.

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## **Visits and visitors**

The part that visits and visitors play in the curriculum at Pattishall Primary School is given great emphasis, even in the Early Years. We aim to build up to visits in the Summer Term; these can range from a visit to a local farm to travelling further afield!

Visitors also really enhance a topic and we like to have 'experts' coming in to talk to the children; a dentist 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. The classroom is set up in a way to provide children with experiences and activities in all of the seven areas of learning. Our classrooms has a writing area, maths area, creative area, book corner, role play area, construction/small world area, outdoor area and carpeted teaching area. 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. There is always a great range of physical activity with climbing, running, cycling and other active games being key. The Reception class has a small outdoor area so we often have more physical play during break time, P.E. and occasional extra sessions in the playground.

Each child has their own labelled peg in the cloakroom and drawer in the classroom. We encourage children to take responsibility for keeping their clothes, book bag and work safely in one place!

## **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 portfolio which is now completed online through Tapestry.

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We are very proud of our portfolios: these are collections of children's work, photos, videos 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 and in the weekly planning meetings, and inform planning for the next day and week ahead. Staff have their own iPads which are used to capture and note observations and next steps for learning.

Parents have access to the portfolios through the Tapestry login. They are encouraged to contribute through the use of Tapestry, home/school diaries and the stars and rockets.

On entry to Reception we carry out a baseline assessment 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 Reception the class teachers assess each child against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELG) and comments on whether their development within each ELG is either 'emerging', 'expected' or 'exceeding'. This information is also communicated to parents and carers in the Reception child's end of year report and can be discussed in the final term in Reception.

### **Role of staff and key worker**

The class teachers are the named key workers for each child 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.

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When a child gains a place at Pattishall Primary 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' sheet to complete with their child over the summer and this document is the first piece in their portfolio. Over the first few days at the school we encourage parents and carers to stay for as long as they wish in the classroom to ensure the transition to the school goes smoothly. Just before half term, parents are also invited to a parents' meeting so the settling in can be reviewed.

Parents are invited to attend a Parents' Meeting in the autumn and spring terms and teachers are available most mornings and evenings to talk and to discuss more urgent matters.

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