

Hexham First School



Early Years Policy

Introduction

At Hexham First School, we are committed to 'preparing children for a life full of learning' and the highest quality care and education for our children. In the early years, our intention is to equip them with the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding for their future learning, but also for them to leave the reception year as kind, independent and resilient individuals that have the confidence and ability to communicate effectively, problem solve, develop ideas and think creatively. By providing safe and nurturing learning environments and rich and challenging learning experiences, we aim for our children to not only fulfil their learning potential but to establish a positive foundation for a happy and rewarding life.

We fully recognise and endorse the importance of the early years as outlined in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), 'Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfill 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.'

EYFS Legislation

The Statutory Framework for the EYFS sets the standards for learning, development and care of children from birth to five. The EYFS is based on four guiding principles:

- 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/ carers;
- Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.

Principles for our Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The following principles provide the framework for our provision in our Early Years setting:

- Effective education requires both a relevant curriculum and practitioners who understand it.
- Effective education requires that practitioners understand that children develop rapidly and at different rates throughout their development - physically, intellectually, socially and emotionally.
- Practitioners provide an environment in which children develop and learn the fundamental British Values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance.
- Practitioners ensure all children feel included, secure and valued.
- Early years experiences build on what children already know and what they can do.
- No child is excluded or disadvantaged because of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, special educational needs, disability, gender or ability.
- School works in partnership with parents, carers and their families.
- To be effective, our Early Years' curriculum is carefully structured.
- We provide opportunities for children to engage in activities planned by adults and also those that they plan or initiate themselves.
- Staff observe and respond appropriately to children.
- Well-planned, purposeful activity and appropriate intervention by staff engages children effectively in the learning process.
- The children are provided with rich and stimulating experiences in a learning environment that is well planned and organised.

The Curriculum Our curriculum reflects the EYFS Framework which details seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational programmes in early years settings:

Prime Areas:

- Communication and language
- Personal, social and emotional development
- Physical development

Specific Areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

Although the three prime areas of learning are fundamental to the development of each child, all seven areas are interrelated and are delivered in conjunction with each other.

The EYFS Framework also details three characteristics of effective teaching and learning which are considered when planning and guiding children's activities and the learning environment:

- Playing and exploring - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.
- Active learning - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties.
- Creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things.

These characteristics weave through all seven areas of learning and develop as children learn new things, acquire new skills, develop socially and emotionally and become better communicators. At Kingshill, our aim is to provide a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum which addresses the children's social and emotional, physical, intellectual, moral and cultural development within a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment. We carefully consider and plan a progressive curriculum around engaging topics, specifically chosen to reflect the seven areas of learning and to secure the foundations for children's learning in Year 1. It takes account of children's interests and how children learn to maximise engagement and ensure progress for every child.

Teaching and Learning

The curriculum is delivered through a balance of child-initiated (play-based) and adult-led learning. Every day, children are given plenty of opportunity for prolonged periods of uninterrupted play so that they can learn through exploration, discovery, rehearsal and experimentation. Great care is given to setting up our indoor and outdoor learning environments to ensure that they facilitate what we would like the children to learn and also reflect the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. Resources are chosen and enhancements planned that encourage children to collaborate, persevere and problem solve whilst at the same time developing their personal and social skills.

Alongside play-based learning, adult-led sessions take place throughout the week to introduce new learning, develop vocabulary, share stories, and celebrate our achievements. These may take the form of whole class or small group sessions and are planned to be short, focused and interactive, providing further opportunity for sustained shared-thinking and collaborative working.

Role of the Practitioner

Staff carefully plan enhancements to the continuous provision available during child-initiated learning, both indoors and outdoors, to provide a positive context for teaching and learning. Their role during this time is to interact with the children to support and extend learning and to be alert to possibilities that will naturally enhance outcomes for children through play. This includes helping children to make connections in their learning and to reflect on what they have previously learnt to move them forward, through appropriate questioning and discussion.

In addition, practitioners make skilled and meaningful observations of children which are used to identify children's Next Steps. This continual assessment provides a picture of every child's development and progress which is fed into planning, ensuring further quality play and activities are provided which encourage an appropriate level of challenge for each child.

Planning

- is a continuous process that is informed by assessment of previous activities.
- responds to the needs of individual children
- involves all the adults in the setting.
- is in accordance with the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework:

Assessment

Continual assessments are made of the children's learning and this information is used to inform future planning to reflect identified needs. The assessment processes in the EYFS:

- Offers all our children an opportunity to show what they know, understand and can do
- Recognises all the areas of learning in the EYFS
- Considers the characteristics of effective teaching and learning of individual pupils
- Relates to clear learning intentions
- Enables staff to plan more effectively · Helps parents to be fully involved in their child's progress.

Forms of Assessment

Nursery and Reception baseline assessments are completed within six weeks of a child starting school. Each child is assessed using a combination of the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) (for Reception children) and practitioner Observations.

Observations or 'wow' moments taken during child-initiated learning. These may take the form of photographs, videos and/or written comments, captured on Class Dojo.

Formative assessment in the form of notes about individual children during group activities e.g. maths or literacy.

Half-termly Read Write Inc. assessments.

Detailed, diagnostic assessments for those children who are working significantly below age-related expectations.

Summative assessment in the form of reports or equivalent consultation documentation.

Statutory EYFS Profile. Reception children are assessed against the Early Learning Goals outlined in the EYFS Framework

Transition

Transition into Nursery

- School tours are offered to all prospective parents and children. We have a Saturday Nursery Open Day once per year. This is held in the Autumn Term.
- The teacher will also speak about induction and parents receive an information pack including admission forms.
- Prospective nursery children are invited into Nursery in July for a short visit of 1 hour ('Stay and Play') with their parents.
- The Nursery teacher offers all the parents and children a home visit prior to admission with the Nursery Teacher
- The Nursery teacher analyses all the admissions forms for the children entering Nursery and if necessary, will speak to the child's previous setting or the child's parents to obtain further information to support a child's special educational needs.
- Over the transition period, children entering Nursery do so as part of a staggered start. Most children enjoy their first visit very much and are eager to come into Nursery.
- Staff ensure that all children are given appropriate support particularly during their first few days. A few children need extra support for a longer period of time

and if this happens practitioners will work closely with the child and their parent/carer to solve any problems and agree a personalised induction plan to suit that child's needs.

Transition from Nursery to Reception

Nursery children have opportunities to use the school hall for P.E. and to take part in special events e.g. a Christmas Nativity. They have regular sessions in the hall. All of these experiences help the children to prepare for the transition to Reception,

Transition arrangements: • School tours are offered to all prospective parents and children. The Reception teacher will also speak about induction and parents receive an information pack including admission forms. • In July, children visit for a stay and play with parents and then without their parents to meet their new teacher and experience their new classroom.

- The EY lead analyses data from the Transition Level of Need tool kit and visits any children flagged as needing extra support. This may be at a nursery setting or a home environment.

Activities to aid transition from Reception to Year 1

- Reception children join the KS1 children in celebration assembly during Summer 2.
- The Year 1 teacher spends some time within the Reception class during the Summer term e.g. sharing work and story time.
- Children take part in a Summer term class transition morning.
- Year R/Year 1 teacher handover meeting

Inclusion

We value all our children as individuals at Hexham First School irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability or gender. We plan a curriculum that meets the needs of the individual child and supports them at their own pace. 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. See our separate policy on Equalities. Every child needs to achieve success in order to develop a positive self-image. We recognise that all our children, including those with special educational needs, require a differentiated approach in order for them to have access to the whole curriculum and therefore reach their potential.

Partnerships

Partnership with Parents

Working closely with parents during their child's time in the Foundation Stage will result in a positive impact on a child's successful development and learning. The partnership needs a two-way flow of information, knowledge and expertise to support the child fully. To achieve an effective partnership with parents we will:

- Show respect and understanding for the role of the parent in their child's education.
- Give parents opportunities to discuss their child's development and to listen to concerns they have.
- Ensure our settling in arrangements are flexible, giving children time to become secure and all adults involved in this - staff, parents and carers - time to discuss each child's needs.
- Make all parents feel welcome and valued.
- When appropriate use the knowledge and expertise of parents and other family members to support learning opportunities in the classroom.
- Use a variety of ways to keep parents fully informed about the curriculum.
- Discuss children's progress and achievements through meetings, on parents evenings and open days.
- Involve parents in continuing relevant learning activities at home. Similarly, experiences at home will be used to develop learning at school.
- Celebrate children's achievements and experiences at home, for example through sharing Wow moments on Class Dojo.
- Welcome parent/carers contributions and comments via Tapestry for capturing and sharing observations.

Behaviour Management

The class teacher has the overall responsibility for Behaviour Management supported by other members of the team. All practitioners follow the relational therapeutic practice approach and are trained in emotion coaching to ensure continuity and stability for the children. The children are aware of the Nursery and Reception rules as well as our whole school rules - ready, respectful and safe. Class Dojo points are awarded to celebrate each child's character linked to our Hexham Way School Values.

Staff Professional Development

The Early Years staff will attend appropriate courses/information evenings to extend knowledge, skills and expertise and in order to keep up to date and abreast of educational developments. The information is then shared with members of the team and, where appropriate, fed back to the whole school staff.

Staff: child ratios

The school is aware that there are a range of contextual factors that will affect staff: child ratios, and that these can change depending upon a variety of issues. The school will continue to monitor the ratios and ensure that:

- Staffing arrangements meet the needs of all children and ensure their safety in-line with the EYFS requirements.
- Children are adequately supervised, including whilst eating, and decide how to deploy staff to ensure children's needs are met.
- They inform parents about staff deployment, and, when relevant and practical, aim to involve them in these decisions.
- Children are usually within sight and hearing of staff, but always within sight or hearing. Whilst eating, children will be within sight and hearing of a member of staff.
- Suitable students on long term placements and volunteers aged 17 or over, and staff working as apprentices in early education aged 16 or over, may be included in the ratios at the level below their level of study, if the provider is satisfied that they are competent and responsible.

The school will adopt the following staffing ratios:

For children aged three and over:

- In registered early years provision where a staff member with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), Early Years Professional Status, Early Years Teacher Status or another suitable level 6 qualification is working directly with the children, there will be:
 - One member of staff for every 13 children.
 - At least one other member of staff will hold an approved level 3 qualification.
- In registered early years provision where a staff member with QTS, Early Years Professional Status, Early Years Teacher Status, or another suitable level 6 qualification is not working directly with the children, there will be:
 - One member of staff for every eight children.
 - At least one other member of staff will hold an approved level 3 qualification.
 - At least half of all other staff holding an approved level 2 qualification.

For children in Reception classes:

- Class sizes will be limited to 30 children per school teacher, as per infant class size legislation.

Only under exceptional circumstances, and where the quality of care and safety of children is maintained, will changes be made to the ratios. Parents will be informed about staffing arrangements and, when relevant and practical, will be involved in staffing arrangement decisions.

Safety and suitability of premises, environment and equipment Accident or injury

The school will:

- Ensure that there is a first aid box/bag containing appropriate items for use with children which is always accessible.
- Keep a written record of any accidents, injuries and first aid treatment.
- Inform parents of any accident or injury involving a child and inform parents on the same day, or as soon as is reasonably practicable after, including details of any first aid treatment given.
- Notify Ofsted of any serious incident, illness or injury to, or death of, any child while in their care, and the action taken as soon as is reasonably practicable, but at least within 14 days of the incident occurring – note, failure to do constitutes an offence.
- Notify local child protection agencies of any serious accident or injury to, or death of, any child while in their care, and act on any advice given from these agencies.

Safety of premises The school will:

- Ensure that premises, both indoor and outdoor, are fit for purpose and suitable for the age of children cared for and the activities provided.
- Comply with health and safety legislation, including fire safety and hygiene requirements.
- Have an emergency evacuation procedure.
- Take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of children and others on the premises in the event of emergency.
- Have appropriate fire detection and control equipment which is in working order, such as fire alarms, smoke detectors, fire blankets and fire extinguishers.
- Ensure that fire exits are clearly identifiable and that fire doors are free from obstruction and easily opened from the inside. Premises and equipment The school will:

- Ensure premises and equipment are organised in a way that meets the needs of children and adheres to the relevant indoor space requirements as outlined in within the EYFS statutory framework.
- Provide access to an outdoor play area.
- Follow their legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, for example, the provisions on reasonable adjustments.
- Frequently check on sleeping children to ensure they are safe.
- Ensure there are an adequate number of toilets and hand basins available. There are toilet facilities available to the EYFS, with separate toilet facilities for adults.
- Ensure there are suitable hygienic changing facilities available for changing any children who are in pull-ups.
- Ensure there is an area where staff may talk to parents confidentially.
- Ensure there is an area where staff can take breaks away from areas being used by children.

- Only release children into the care of individuals who have been notified to the provider by the parent and ensure that children do not leave the premises unsupervised.
- Take all reasonable steps to prevent unauthorised persons entering the premises, with agreed procedures and protocols for checking the identity of visitors.
- Carry the appropriate insurance, e.g., public liability insurance. Risk assessment
The school will:
 - Take all reasonable steps to ensure staff and children are not exposed to risks and be able to demonstrate how they are managing risks.
 - Determine where it is helpful to make some written risk assessments in relation to specific issues, to inform staff practice and to demonstrate how they are managing risks if asked by parents or inspectors.

Visits

The school will:

- Keep children safe on outings.
- Assess the risks or hazards which may arise and identify the steps to be taken to remove, minimise and manage them.
- Ensure that adult to child ratios are considered in any risk assessment.
- Ensure that vehicles in which children are being transported, and the driver of those vehicles, are adequately insured. The Health and Safety Policy outlines the full health and safety policies and procedures.

Use of personal mobile phones by staff members

Staff members will not use personal mobile phones or cameras when children are present. Staff may use mobile phones on school premises outside of working hours when no children are present. Staff may use mobile phones in the staffroom during breaks and non-contact time. Mobile phones will be safely stored and in silent mode whilst children are present. Staff may take mobile phones on trips, but they will only be used in emergencies and should not be used when children are present, unless in the case of an emergency. Mobile phones will not be used to take images or videos at any time during trips.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Early Years Lead and the Headteacher will be responsible for overseeing the delivery of the appropriate curriculum and the evaluation of its success. This information will be shared with Early Years staff at regular meetings and will be used to support future planning and development initiatives.