

Early Years Policy

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1. Rationale

“It is vital that we get to know and value all young children. All children learn more in the period from birth to five years old than any other time in their lives. If children are at risk of falling behind the majority, the best time to help them catch up and keep up is in the early years. Every child can make progress, if they are given the right support.”

“When we succeed in giving every child the best start in their early years, we can give them what they need tomorrow. We also set them up with every chance of success tomorrow”
(Development Matters 2020)

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to the learning and development of all children from birth to the end of the Reception Year, which in Fiddlers Lane Community Primary School, is Nursery & Reception Class.

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. It is not just a preparation for the next stage but is vitally important in itself.

Learning for children is a rewarding and enjoyable experience in which they explore, investigate, discover, create, practice, rehearse, repeat, revise and consolidate their developing knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes. During the Foundation Stage,

many of these aspects of learning are brought together effectively through playing and talking.

Our early years practitioners aim to do all they can to help children have the best possible start in life, offering provision which enables them to develop their personalities, talents and abilities, irrespective of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities or gender.

We endeavour to provide the best possible teaching and learning for our children at Fiddlers Lane ensuring we give children the broad range of knowledge and skills that enable them to be 'school ready' and have the skills and attitudes of lifelong learners.

2. Our Core Purpose

At Fiddlers Lane Primary School, we provide highly effective teaching and learning within a culture of challenge, nurture and support. We support all children to progress to be the best they can be. Our curriculum enables as many children as possible to achieve a Good Level of Development by the end of their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and we build on this in subsequent years.

3. Aims/Objectives

At Fiddlers Lane, 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 environment with motivating and enjoyable learning experiences that enable children to become confident and independent learners. We value the individual child and work alongside parents and carers to help every child reach their full potential.

As outlined in the 'Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage':

'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.'

4. Statutory Framework of EYFS

Our carefully planned curriculum, quality interactions and use of assessment ensures that we address the seven key features of effective practice:

- 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.

As part of our practice we:

- Provide a balanced curriculum, based on the EYFS, across the seven curriculum areas, 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 carers;
- Plan challenging learning experiences, based on the individual child, informed by observation and assessment and by the children's own ideas and interests;
- Provide opportunities for children to engage in activities that are adult-initiated, child-initiated and adult supported;
- Provide a secure and safe learning environment indoors and outdoors.

5. Safety including safeguarding and welfare requirements

The safety and welfare of our children is paramount at Fiddlers Lane Community Primary School. We have robust policies and procedures in place to ensure their safety.

In Nursery & Reception we provide a safe and secure environment and provide a curriculum which teaches children how to take risks, follow rules and stay safe. We comply with the welfare requirements set out in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage and understand that we must:

- Promote the welfare of all children;
- Promote good health;
- Manage behaviour effectively and appropriately;
- Ensure all adults working with children are suitable to do so;
- Ensure that the environment is safe and all equipment and furniture is fit for purpose;
- Ensure all children have a challenging and enjoyable learning experience.

Within EYFS we have developed the use of **The Colour Monster** book in order for children to identify their feelings and emotions on a regular basis. Children are able to discuss their own feelings with their peers as well as with adults confidently.

We promote the good health of the children in our care in numerous ways, including the provision of nutritious fruit snacks, daily teeth brushing, access to milk & water throughout the day, allocating significant time for physical development and following set procedures when children become ill or have an accident.

The EYFS staff hold the Paediatric First aid qualification, which is a statutory requirement of the EYFS.

The Child Protection Policy is in place to ensure the safety of all stakeholders at Fiddlers Lane. Backing up this policy is a dedicated safeguarding team which includes the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Staff have access to the 'CPOMMs' safeguarding system to log any concerns regarding any aspects of safeguarding and behaviour. All staff are vigilant in reporting concerns.

6. The Areas of Teaching and Learning

Our early years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the 2021 EYFS statutory framework. The EYFS framework includes 7 areas of learning and development that are equally important and inter-connected sections. The prime areas are seen as particularly important for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building children's capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The 3 prime areas are:

Communication and language:

- Listening, attention and understanding
- Speaking

Physical development:

- Gross motor skills
- Fine motor skills

Personal, social and emotional development:

- Self-regulation
- Managing self
- Building relationships

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through 4 specific areas:

Literacy:

Comprehension:

- Word reading
- Writing

Mathematics:

- Numbers
- Numerical patterns

Understanding the world:

- Past and present
- People, culture and communities
- The natural world

Expressive arts and design:

- Creating with materials
- Being imaginative and expressive

We recognise that teaching can take place at all times of the day through directed teaching sessions, through times of play and inside and outside the classroom. We encourage all of these. We strive to make our environments irresistible to children and encourage our staff and volunteers to seize every opportunity for teaching. Weekly and daily planning formalise this and aim to ensure a balance of formal and informal learning. Staff are encouraged to think carefully about their questions and interventions in children's learning in order to optimise this. Learning should be personalised by building on the child's interests and involving them fully in reflecting on what they have learned and how they may build on their skills. Children will be intrinsically motivated to be life-long learners.

At appropriate opportunities the adults will:

- Question, respond to questions and engage the child in extended conversations that support sustained shared thinking
- Extend vocabulary, knowledge and skills
- Encourage independence
- Add resources that stimulate, motivate and engage the learner
- Demonstrate, model and work alongside the children
- Help children to see links in their learning
- Support and encourage the children
- Encourage children to be problem solvers, problem setters and investigators
- Re-direct the play if necessary
- Help children to learn how to negotiate and resolve conflict
- Promote children's well-being
- Observe and assess learning
- Record judgments and plan for next steps in learning
- Provide feedback to child/other adult/parents
- Ensure the environment is safe and secure and that the Welfare Requirements are in place.

7. Characteristics of Effective Learning

We uphold the view that learning is underpinned by the characteristics of effective learning. In planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners must reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in their practice.

The 3 characteristics of effective teaching and learning 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; and
- **Creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

We endeavour to provide our children with the opportunities to develop varied interests and preoccupations. Our children have opportunities to play and explore the world around them, are encouraged to take risks developing a trial and error approach to problems. They are becoming motivated learners who bounce back after difficulties, enjoying and achieving what they set out to do. Practitioners ensure children have the chance to think critically, are encouraged to have their own ideas and choose different ways to do things by skilful interaction (**encourage, question, enable, correct, model, inspire**).

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

We create long term plans based on a series of topics each of which offers experiences in all seven areas of learning as well as using children's interests to drive our planning.

Children will engage in whole group and small group activities alongside their independent learning. There are also allocated times for whole class daily 'carpet learning sessions'. These consist of Phonics (RWI), Maths (White Rose), Literacy (Drawing Club), RE, Think Equal, Tales Toolkit & Topic.

We plan a balance between children having time and space to engage in their own child-initiated activities and those which are planned by adults. During children's play, the adults in class interact when appropriate to stretch and challenge them further.

In planning and guiding children's activities, we reflect as practitioners on the different ways that children learn and build these into our practice. We create a stimulating learning environment to encourage children to free-flow between inside and outdoors as far as possible.

It is our aim that children leave the EYFS with:

- a positive 'can do' attitude to learning
- a willingness to take risks and make mistakes
- high levels of engagement in a task where they can practise and build up concepts, ideas and skills
- perseverance
- a love of learning
- ideas of their own, that they can plan and follow through
- an ability to express fears to relieve anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.

8. Early Language, Reading and Mathematics

At Fiddlers Lane, we provide a language-rich environment in which high quality talk is valued. All staff model good communication skills in their interactions with pupils and each other. For early phonics teaching, the school follows the Read Write Inc. (RWI) phonics scheme to ensure that we are effective in teaching children to be successful early readers. Home reading materials ensure that the children are given reading books that reflect their phonic knowledge, so phonics is the only strategy used for decoding. The children start by taking home sound blending books and by term 2 they take home RWI reading books. The school also places an importance on the development of early comprehension skills; in line with the Revised Framework to ensure that children are able, to comprehend what they read and listen to. This sits alongside the development of children's speaking, listening and language skills which are crucial for developing children's comprehension and vocabulary, with a specific focus on closing the vocabulary gap for children starting school with less experience of a language rich environment. During our Drawing Club sessions children are exposed to ambitious vocabulary and is used daily. Adults also strive to promote a love of reading through daily story time and carefully chosen books within the learning environment. Teachers closely monitor children's progress in reading through daily RWI reading sessions and 6 weekly RWI phonic assessments in order that interventions are implemented to address gaps in learning promptly. Advice is sought from the SENDCO where these do not prove successful.

Maths is taught through a range of experiences including counting as part of the daily routine; discreet teaching with follow up group activities and play based opportunities and experiences through the learning environment. We recognise that Maths can take place in any environment and we promote the use of learning maths skills through play-based opportunities. As with phonics, children experiencing any difficulties are identified early and support measures are put into place. Teachers target specific questions at individuals in whole class teaching, extending the children's understanding, allowing key mathematical concepts to be revisited and developed across the year. We adopt the White Rose Maths approach to our teaching, which ensures progression and coverage throughout the year.

9. Play

We believe that it is vitally important for adults to support children's learning through play. We believe that play, both indoors and outdoors, is the fundamental way in which young children learn. When playing, children behave in different ways. Sometimes, their play will be lively and interactive, sometimes they will describe and discuss what they are doing, and sometimes they will be quiet and reflective as they play. Through play, children will be developing skills across all the Prime and Specific areas of learning, working towards achieving the Early Learning Goals, the desired outcomes for the end of the EYFS.

10. Planning

The teacher responsible for Nursery/Reception uses the EYFS statutory Framework. From this and from analysis of data and on-going assessments, areas of learning are planned through a series of topics, initiated by the pupils' interests, each of which offers experiences in all seven areas of learning. These plans then inform short-term weekly planning, alongside observations, which remains flexible for unplanned circumstances or children's responses.

Adult focused and independent activities are planned on a weekly basis. Children have the opportunity to work in each of the learning areas within the classroom and outdoors. Mountain challenges are placed in the learning environment to consolidate learning taking place and children are able to move up the mountain to achieve a certificate when all challenges are complete. Whole class, group and individual activities are used to develop skills in all areas of the curriculum, as appropriate. 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, our early years practitioners interact and question to challenge children. In planning and guiding children's activities, we reflect as practitioners on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in our practice.

11. Observation & Assessment

As part of our daily practice we observe and assess children's development and learning to inform our future plans. We record our observations in a variety of ways and everyone in class is encouraged to contribute. The Reception Baseline Assessment is carried out within the first four weeks of a child starting in Reception. We also use a range of assessments, both formative and

summative; record learning using Tapestry, Learning Journey wall, WOW squares, WELLCOMM, BLANKS.

We recognise that high percentages of our children start Nursery significantly below 'typical' development for their age. Analysing this data enables staff to plan a 'tailor made' curriculum offering activities and interventions that support the growing needs of individual children. This enables children to rapidly make progress with their learning and development across the Foundation Stage, Nursery and Reception. We have introduced and are continuing to embed the use of weekly Tales Toolkit in order to enhance children's story telling skills and daily drawing club sessions. We have trained staff in WELLCOMM, BLANKS and Elkan in order for children to receive the best speech and language interventions.

At Fiddlers Lane we capture children's learning through photographs, written descriptions & extended narratives. We use 'Tapestry' as an assessment and recording tool, alongside collecting examples of children's independent work. Each child has an online learning profile which is shared with parents. This is a working document that contains the learning documented over a year both at home and school. We work closely with parents and regularly share children's assessments on an ongoing basis. Each Reception child has a WOW square display and work is celebrated by all. Both Nursery & Reception contribute to the Learning Journey Wall which displays week by week the learning that has taken place. This is evidenced using photographs and children's work as well as a teacher write up for the week. At the end of the half term this is then placed in a Floor Book to show children's progression throughout the half term.

Parents/carers are encouraged to upload their own observations to show us what their children are able to do at home.

These ongoing observations are used to inform the EYFS Profile/Development Matters bands. The children's progress is reviewed continually. Throughout their time in Nursery & Reception, parents/carers are welcomed in to share their children's learning; both informally through our planned stay & play sessions as well as our parent consultation meetings.

At the end of the year the EYFS profile provides a summary of every child's development and learning achievements including whether they have reached a 'Good Level of Development' (GLD). Children are assessed against the Early Learning Goals (ELG) by the class teacher - who uses the exemplification documents, and their knowledge of the children to make a 'best fit' judgement.

The children are assessed as achieving a 1 or 2 against each area of the EYFS curriculum:

- 2 = Expected ELG – meeting the expected level
- 1 = Emerging ELG – not yet meeting the expected level

Teachers regularly attend moderation meetings provided by our local clusters and trust schools in which we work alongside other early years practitioners.

This profile data is the statutory data that is sent to the Local Authority and used to help school benchmark and identify improvements.

12. Inclusion

We value all of our children as unique individuals at Fiddlers Lane 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 meet the expected levels of development against 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. At times, it is necessary to work with children in a small group or on an individual basis outside of the learning environment to allow for specialist input e.g. Speech and Language support. However, whenever possible, support is provided within the classroom context.

13. Relationships with Parents/Carers and the Wider Community

We know what an important role parents/carers play in their children's learning journey and we aim to involve them as much as possible in school life. We recognise the huge contribution that parents make to their child's learning and we work hard to develop and sustain links with parents. We seek to start building relationships with parents from the term before their child starts school, through clear communication and the initial visits and information sessions. We do this in a range of different ways, which range from communication with home to inviting parents into the school setting. These include:

- Welcome evening
- Stay and play sessions
- Reading books shared between home and school
- Weekly and termly newsletters
- Parent workshops
- Home/School diaries
- Parents consultations

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, for example to the local library, and inviting members of the community into our setting.

14. Transition

At Fiddlers Lane we work closely with the local PVI's to ensure that we have detailed information about the children prior to them starting school. The SENDCo and Early Years Leader meet with the pre-schools in the summer term prior to the children starting school. The Early Years teacher observe all of the children in their pre-school settings and we invite the children to join us for stay & play sessions in the summer term. As the children prepare to enter KS1, the Year 1 teachers observe the children in the Early Years setting during the summer term. The Early Years teacher also meets with the Year 1 teachers to discuss the end of year data within a Pupil Progress Meeting in order to ensure a smooth transition into

Year 1. These discussion helps the Year 1 teacher to plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet the needs of all children. The children will also spend time with their new teacher in the Year 1 classroom.