



## **Early Years Policy**

# Early Years Policy

## Introduction

At Meadowfield School our aim is to provide an outstanding and effective provision which will enable children to achieve to their full potential. We provide access to a broad and balanced curriculum that gives the children the broad range of knowledge and skills needed for good progress through school life, together with a secure and caring learning environment in which all children feel eager and motivated to learn while making good progress. It is one which seeks to promote the developing skills, concepts, confidence and independence of the individual child supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.

## Rationale

We uphold the principles that underpin the QCA Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage. As Early Years practitioners we aim to provide children with the opportunities to:

- Use their senses as a means of exploring the world
- Resolve conflicts, both intellectually and socially
- Learn through direct experiences
- Develop confidence in their own ability to make sense of the world
- Extend skills/abilities by testing them out in a range of situations
- Initiate, carry out and review their own projects
- Draw on a range of resources to achieve their intentions, developing a flexible and open-ended approach to problems
- Learn from mistakes
- Progress by building on existing knowledge and understanding
- Express ideas and feelings
- Enjoy fun and laughter with others
- Recreate what they have felt and experienced

## The Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework

The Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation stage updated in 2021 provides the non-statutory curriculum framework for all practitioners working with children from three years old to the end of Reception Year. This guidance is inclusive of all practitioners working within the foundation stage. The Foundation Stage establishes expectations for most children to achieve by the end of the Reception year. These are stated in the QCA guidance for the Foundation Stage as the Early Learning Goals and are reported on at the end of the year as being Emerging, Met or Exceeded.

The Early Learning Goals provide a useful tool for planning and assessment and are divided into 7 curriculum areas:

### 3 Prime areas

- Physical Development
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Communication and Language

### 4 Specific areas

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Expressive Arts and Design
- Understanding the World

The guidance also identifies stages of development which state the knowledge, skills and attitude children need in order to achieve the Early Learning Goals. The stages of development indicate the development of a typical child of that age and individual children may be working at different levels within each of the 7 areas of development.

As effective early years practitioners we aim to plan a broad and balanced range of play activities which are suited and carefully matched to the needs of the children both in and outside of the classroom. The Curriculum Guidance is used to support our individualised planning.

## **Parent partnership**

We recognise that children learn and develop well when there is a strong partnership between ourselves and parents/carers and value their contribution first and foremost. Each child is assigned a key person who builds trusting relationships and ensures that their learning and care is tailored to meet their needs. Opportunities are provided daily for liaison, either directly, through contact books and at other times through the open afternoons or special events. The school values parental contribution and aims to work in partnership to maximise the child's physical, intellectual emotional and social development. We use the online Learning Journal Evidence for Learning so that parents can see the learning that has taken place throughout the day and can contribute with photographs and observations from home.

We hold open afternoons three times per year where parents are invited into class to work and play alongside their child and observe the progress made.

We carry out parent workshops across the academic year to introduce families to our teaching strategies for them to carry on pupils learning journey within the home.

## **Admissions**

Throughout the year we offer opportunities for parents and children to visit our Early years provision including the nursery and Reception classes in order to get advice and information, and to look at the suitability of the provision in meeting individual needs.

Pre-school children are admitted free of charge after a successful referral through the Multi Agency Planning (MAP) meetings. Upon success parents are offered up to 3 sessions per week and depending on availability, morning (8.30-11.30am) or afternoon (12.30am-3.30pm) sessions given.

## **Transfer Information**

The school receives a copy of the EHCP and any pre-school placement records. The school nurse liaises with any medical professionals.

## **Curriculum**

We aim to provide children with a broad and balanced curriculum that supports learning both inside and outside of the classroom and is carefully matched to their needs. When planning the curriculum for children aged 4-7 years practitioners will take into account, the individual needs, interests and stages of development of each child in their care, and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience. We work closely with outside agencies such as Speech and Language therapists to provide any additional support required, which we embed within their EHCP targets.

## **Learning**

Play-based activities are at the heart of learning in the Foundation Stage. As the Curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage (QCA, 2000) states:

*“Learning for young 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 play and talking.”*

At Meadowfield we believe that well-planned play is the key to how young children learn. Providing children with opportunities to take part in a variety of play-based activities is at the core of our teaching.

The curriculum at Meadowfield is planned to provide a balance between the following:

**Child Initiated Activities:** where the child makes choices from within the learning environment to meet his/her own outcomes for learning. Skilful adult interaction scaffolds learning and extends play to enable the child to make progress.

**Adult Initiated Activities:** experiences where the practitioner chooses and provides the resources to stimulate and consolidate learning. These experiences may not always require the direct involvement of an adult.

**Adult directed Activities:** experiences which are planned and supported by practitioners and which aim to meet specific learning outcomes.

## **Long and Medium Term Planning**

At Meadowfield each term is divided into topics. A balance of adult initiated and adult directed activities both inside and outside the classroom are linked to these themes.

Each medium term plan covers one topic and is separated into the 7 areas of learning within the Foundation Stage. This has been designed to be a working document and evaluations are made at the end of the block of work, resulting in plans being reviewed, updated and modified.

## **Short-Term Planning**

Short-term plans cover daily Teacher Directed and Child Initiated opportunities both indoors and outdoors. The objectives are more focussed and differentiated.

Much of our timetable is allocated to child-initiated activities. This time is central to an early years setting as it allows the children to develop many skills when supported effectively by practitioners. The way in which this cycle of plan – do – review is organised develops over the year. Children are supported by adults in the setting in making their choices and understanding the rules and routines of the setting.

By the end of Reception year, the children will be confident in selecting their own resources within the environment and using them independently. The adults will work alongside the children, interacting, questioning, scaffolding thinking, supporting independence and responding to questions, actions while addressing any misconceptions. All of the activities and routines planned aim to reflect the Principles for Early Education as stated in the Foundation Stage Guidance.

Literacy and Mathematics activities occur across the week. The children receive whole class inputs and individual practical follow up activities that are linked to the topic plans for the term.

## **Observing, Assessing, Recording and Reporting**

At Meadowfield, observation is regarded as a powerful tool for assessment. Practitioners regularly discuss observations made in the setting. These observations are used to plan the next steps in each individual child's development.

Observations and assessments are recorded in order to chart the progress of each individual child and inform the 'Evidence for Learning' learning journal. During child-initiated activities, practitioners will observe a specific child and will be focussed on that child's individual development. Observations evolve over the year focussing on the child's achievement in relation to the stages of development and Early Learning Goals.

Across the day observations will be made that relate specifically to the targets in the EHCP. These will be recorded on Evidence for Learning and the progress towards them will be tracked and new small steps written. Other observations and assessments occur during the adult-initiated or adult-directed activities. A selection of all observations will be recorded on Evidence for Learning throughout the week.

Ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development process. Staff observe children regularly to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. We also take into account all observations

shared by parents and/or carers. All observations are collated by the Class Teacher and next steps for learning are identified and fed into planning and as part of our assessment tracking system. Assessment is reported to parents three times yearly through the sharing of the provision plans and an end of year report. Parents are able to request a discussion around progress at these times.

At the end of the EYFS, we complete the EYFS profile for each child. Children are assessed against the 17 early learning goals, indicating whether they are:

- Meeting expected levels of development
- Exceeding expected levels or,
- Emerging into the expected levels.

## Learning Journal

At Meadowfield we use the online Learning Journal Evidence for Learning. All staff working with the children in EYFS will upload observations and assessments relating to the areas of the curriculum, Prime and Specific and also the EHCP targets. These are available for parents to view instantly, comment on and add their own observations.

## Health and safety


It is the class teacher's role to ensure that all new entrants are made aware of important issues such as fire drills, first aid and safety rules. Extra assistance may be needed for some children but all practitioners should always seek to promote developing the children's independence. Many issues will be approached through the topic activities during the Reception Year.

## Equal Opportunities

We aim to ensure that all children should be guaranteed equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, culture, class or disability. All resources are carefully selected to reflect positive images of all groups. Our planning aims to foster an appreciation of each other's cultures and beliefs along with the promotion of a healthy and positive self-image. All practitioners will aim to avoid stereotypical language, actions and situations.

## Safeguarding and Welfare procedures

Our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our Safeguarding Policy.

 Statutory Policy Approved by Governing Body	
Policy Adopted	Date: September 23
Policy Approved	Date: 1 March 2024
Next Review	Date: Academic Year 2024/25