



## **EARLY YEARS POLICY**

### **Introduction**

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. We recognise it is not only a preparation for the next stage of education, but is vitally important in itself. For young children there is no distinction between work and play. 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 Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), many of these aspects of learning are brought together effectively through playing and talking.

### **School Aims**

The EYFS curriculum is designed to fulfil the following aims:

#### **Aim 1**

Provide a safe, happy and healthy school which recognises and celebrates effort and success

#### **Aim 2**

Enable pupils to be excited by learning

#### **Aim 3**

Enable pupils to value and respect themselves, other cultures and beliefs and their world

Our EYFS curriculum is also designed to help our children to develop our shared **School Values** of:

Friendship  
Hope  
Respect  
Forgiveness  
Truthfulness  
Wisdom

### **Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

In the EYFS we believe that all children are entitled to the best possible start in their school life, both intellectually and emotionally, in order to enable them to develop their full potential.

We aim to support each child's welfare, learning and developmental needs by:

- Recognising that all children are unique and special.
- Understanding that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates - physically, cognitively, linguistically, socially and emotionally, ensuring that every child is included and supported in line with equality of opportunity.
- Providing a safe, secure and caring environment where children feel happy and know that they are valued.
- Fostering and nurturing children's self-confidence and self-esteem through their developing awareness of their own identity and role within the community.
- Teaching them to express and communicate their needs and feelings in appropriate ways.
- Encouraging children's independence and decision-making, supporting them to learn

through their mistakes.

- Developing children's understanding of social skills and the values and codes of behaviour required for people to work together harmoniously.
- Supporting children to develop care, respect and appreciation for others, including those with beliefs, cultures and opinions different to their own.
- Understanding the importance of play in children's learning and development.
- Providing learning experiences in play which reflect children's personal interests and areas of curiosity in order to encourage and develop their natural desire, interest, excitement and motivation to learn.
- Providing experiences which build on children's existing knowledge and understanding in order to challenge, stimulate and extend their learning and development.
- Providing effective learning opportunities in a range of environments, inside and outside.

### **The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework**

Teaching in the EYFS is delivered in accordance with the government's statutory document 'The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage' (September 2021). This document is a principled approach to Early Years education, bringing together children's welfare, learning and development requirements through 4 Guiding Principles: 'A Unique Child', 'Positive Relationships', 'Enabling Environments' and 'Learning and Development.' The Framework covers the education and care of all children including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and those whose home language is not English.

The curriculum is centered on three Prime Areas of Learning and Development:

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

Providers must also support children through four Specific Areas which strengthen the Prime Areas. These are:

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

These Areas of Learning and Development address children's physical, cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional development. No one aspect of development stands in isolation from the others as all Areas of Learning and Development are closely interlinked.

All Areas of Learning and Development are given equal weighting and value.

### **Active Learning through Play**

At Higham-on-the-Hill C of E Primary School, we organise the day to provide a balance between the following: -

- Child Initiated Activities - children make choices from within the learning environment to meet his/her outcome for learning.
- Adult Initiated Activities - practitioners provide the resources to stimulate and consolidate learning.
- Adult Led Activities - children engage in planned activities to meet specific learning outcomes.

We recognise that young children learn best when they are active. We understand that

active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods. Therefore, we believe that Early Years education should be as practical as possible and our EYFS class has an ethos of learning through play.

We recognise the importance of children's play. It is an essential and rich part of their learning process, supporting them in all Areas of Learning and Development. Play is a powerful motivator encouraging children to be creative and to develop their ideas, understanding and language. Play is also flexible and able to suit the preferred learning style of the child. It can provide multiple ways for children to learn a variety of different skills and concepts. In providing these active learning opportunities through play we understand the central position of play within the EYFS Framework.

### **Assessment and Record Keeping**

The main EYFS assessment method is through practitioners' observations of children in different teaching and learning contexts, including both adult-led activities and child-initiated play.

Observations take place on a daily basis (both formally and informally). Practitioners make time to carry out planned observations of individuals and groups of children regularly. They also make spontaneous observations in order to capture significant moments of children's learning.

All practitioners are involved in observing children. Practitioners use observations to support their developing knowledge of individual children. It informs them of children's abilities, needs, interests, play schemas and learning styles. Observations are evaluated, children's learning priorities are identified and relevant learning opportunities are planned to support children to make the next steps and progress.

Baseline assessment occurs within the first few weeks of the children starting in the Reception class. Initial judgments are on entry into school detailing children's Areas of Learning and Development, Characteristics of Effective Learning and Wellbeing and Involvement. In addition to initial observations, practitioners gained evidence from parental discussions and information from previous settings.

Children's mathematical and literacy work is recorded, in their work books. Each piece of work is marked and when appropriate, symbols are used to indicate what the children have done well and what they need to try hard with, next time. Children's work is marked, by an adult, with the child wherever possible.

There is continuous monitoring and assessment of each child's development and learning. This information is then used to complete the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile at the end of their Foundation Stage year. The Profile provides a summary of each child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels and their readiness for Year 1. The information is shared with parents, carers, practitioners and teachers to support transition and inform future planning of activities in Year 1.

The EYFS Profile results are reported to the Local Authority, who in turn forward data to the relevant Government Department.

### **Planning**

The EYFS Statutory Framework and non-statutory guidance provide a long-term plan to follow by ensuring that all Early Learning Goals are covered throughout the academic year.

Medium term planning is created and considers the individual children's learning and developmental needs.

All Areas of Learning and Development are planned for and available to access within the setting.

The learning opportunities provided include a range of adult led and child-initiated activities both indoors and outdoors.

### **Parents as Partners**

At Higham-on-the-Hill C of E Primary School, we recognise the importance of establishing positive relationships with parents/carers, as highlighted by the EYFS Framework. We understand that an effective partnership between school and home will have a positive impact on children's learning and development. Practitioners will encourage the regular sharing of information about the children with their parents/carers.

We value the role of parents/carers as children's primary educators. We encourage parents/carers to share their unique knowledge of their child, providing further insight into the child as an individual (e.g. characteristics, interests, experiences, likes, dislikes). This supports practitioners in establishing interesting and stimulating learning experiences and enabling them to respond to children's needs and interests.

Parents/carers are kept informed of what is happening in the school/classroom through regular letters, reading records and informal chatting at the end of the day.

A half-termly newsletter is sent to parents with details of what is being taught in the coming weeks. This also gives suggestions of how parents/carers can support their children's learning at home; consolidating and building on what has been covered in the classroom.

Parents are invited to attend drop ins and workshares during the course of the academic year. There are also 2 in-person meetings: the first of these takes place during the Autumn term to allow practitioners and parents to discuss how children have settled into their new class. A further meeting takes place during the Spring term where practitioners will feedback on children's learning and development progress.

Another opportunity for practitioners to share children's learning, development and well-being with parents/carers are the end of year reports, where children's achievements are recognised.

Parents are always welcomed and encouraged to discuss any concerns they might have with a member of staff.

### **Induction**

Higham-on-the-Hill C of E Primary School provides full-time Early Years education for children in the Reception Year. This is for children who enter school from September of the academic year in which they will turn five years old.

Before they start in school, all children are offered a series of 'come and join in' sessions during the Summer term. The purpose of these initial visits is for the children to meet their new practitioners and start to become familiar with the classroom environment. Practitioners will also go to visit the children in their current Pre-school settings if the time allows. The aim of these visits is to support and develop their knowledge and understanding of each child in order to make the transition period to Primary School as smooth as possible.

In the Summer term also, parents are invited into school to meet the school practitioners. At this meeting information regarding the induction process and what goes on in the school is shared. There is also time for informal chat and for parents' questions to be answered.

Information packs will be distributed to parents at this meeting, detailing school routines and expectations. Induction packs for children to complete with parents will also be given out as another way to support practitioners' knowledge and understanding of each individual child. Every effort is made to make children feel safe, secure and happy. There is a relaxed and open ethos in the classroom.

Established routines, a calm atmosphere and encouraging talk are some of the strategy's practitioners use to maintain children's positive feelings about school.

### **Monitoring and review**

It is the responsibility of the staff who work in the EYFS staff to follow the principles stated in this policy.

There is a named Governor responsible for the EYFS. This governor will discuss EYFS practice with the practitioners regularly and provide feedback to the whole governing body, raising any issues that require discussion.

The Headteacher and subject coordinator will carry out monitoring within the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.

### **Health and Safety**

Teaching and support staff will supervise all safe use of tools and materials. General teaching requirements for health and safety apply within the EYFS.