

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Updated September 2020

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth until the end of the reception year. The Early Years Foundation Stage is a Key Stage in its own right. Early years education builds on the children's existing knowledge and understanding and it ensures that no child is excluded or disadvantaged. It offers a structure for learning that has a range of starting points, content that matches the needs of young children and activities that provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors through the provision of a rich and stimulating environment.

Aims

The curriculum of the EYFS underpins all future learning by supporting, fostering, promoting and developing children's:

- personal, social and emotional well-being
- positive attitudes and dispositions towards their learning
- social skills
- attention skills and persistence
- language and communication
- reading and writing
- mathematical skills
- knowledge and understanding of the world
- physical development
- creative development.

Implementation

The features of good practice in the EYFS are:

- the partnership between Early Years practitioners and parents, so that children feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement
- a strong partnership between Little Otters Playgroup and the Reception class to provide a seamless transition into school
- the understanding that Early Years practitioners have of how children develop and learn, and how this affects their teaching
- the range of approaches used that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions, extend and develop play, talk or other means of communication
- the carefully planned curriculum that helps children achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the EYFS
- the provision for children to take part in activities that build on and extend their interests and develop their intellectual, physical, social and emotional abilities
- the encouragement for children to communicate and talk about their learning, and to develop independence and self-management
- the support for learning with appropriate and accessible indoor and outdoor space, facilities and equipment
- the identification of the progress and future learning needs of children through observations
- the good relationship between the school and the setting that the children experience prior to coming to school
- the clear aims and the regular monitoring to evaluate and improve practice
- the regular identification of training needs of all adults working within the EYFS

Play in the EYFS

Through play the children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, and learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. They express fears or re-live anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.

Opportunities for outside play and education are used on a regular basis using the dedicated outdoor areas, the school grounds and through Forest School visits.

Inclusion

All the children are given every opportunity to achieve their best. The range of the children's life experiences are taken into account when planning for their learning. In the EYFS realistic and challenging expectations are set that meet the needs of the children, so that most achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the stage. Some children progress beyond this point. This is achieved by planning to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

The needs of all the children are met through:

- planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence
- using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs
- providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively
- providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued
- using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping
- planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills
- monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum

The curriculum for the EYFS reflects the areas of learning identified in the Early Learning Goals. The experiences that the children meet often enable them to develop a number of competencies, skills and concepts across several areas of learning. The children learn through a careful balance of child initiated and adult initiated activities.

During child initiated learning children are encouraged to choose activities and change from these themselves, moving from inside to outside as they wish. Emphasis is placed on children talking about their choices, playing independently, and accessing the resources they need. Adults participate in children's play to extend their learning and to build on their interests. Planning builds on interactions during child initiated learning to ensure that the curriculum reflects both the children's needs and interests. Short adult initiated activities are interspersed throughout the day to teach specific skills, such as phonics or number work, but the majority of the children's day is spent learning through play.

The 'Development Matters' provide the basis for planning, alongside and Characteristics of Learning statements, throughout the EYFS. Planning is flexible and done on a short term basis (weekly rather than half termly), to allow teachers to follow the needs and interests of children. It is individualised and focussed on children's next steps to enable them to make rapid progress.

Characteristics of Learning

- Playing and exploring
- Active Learning
- Creating and Critical thinking

Resources

The learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, encourages a positive attitude to learning, and develops children's independence. Materials and equipment reflect both the community that the children come from and the wider world. The children are encouraged to make their own selection of the activities on offer, as this maximises engagement and thus promotes learning.

Assessment and Recording

Children are assessed by careful observation, to enable adults to plan according to their needs and to complete the EYFS profile at the end of the Reception year. When children enter the setting they are assessed against the Development Matters statements, and they are tracked throughout their time in Little Otters and Reception. Little Otters have a Baseline Assessment Opportunities guide to aid tracking pre-school progress. This enables staff to check on the children's level of development, to keep track of their progress and to plan the next steps in their learning.

The children's progress is recorded using an online learning diary 'Tapestry' which parents can access online. Staff and parents can contribute to this and comment upon it and it provides an invaluable method of communication.

At the end of their time in Little Otters a transition record is produced which provides information on each child's learning and development, for both parents and Reception staff. In Reception parents receive an annual report that offers comments on each child's progress in each area of learning. It highlights the child's strengths and development needs and gives details of the child's general progress.

Parental/Carer Involvement

It is recognised that all parents/carers have an important role to play in the education of their child. Parents are involved in the following ways:

- Parents and children can attend our Toddler group before starting Little Otters to get to know the staff and the setting. Not available during Covid restrictions
- Little Otters operate a 'key worker' system.
- Parents are welcome to stay with their child at Little Otters for as long as is necessary to settle the child. Not available during Covid restrictions
- Parents are invited to a Reception induction meeting during the term before their child starts school. Not available during Covid restrictions
- There is an opportunity for a home visit from the teacher and TA before the children start in Reception. Not available during Covid restrictions

- Little Otters parents are invited in regularly to see how their child is progressing. Not available during Covid restrictions
- Reception parents have the opportunity to talk about their child's progress at two parents meetings. During Covid this will be either virtual or written reports
- All parents are encouraged to talk to the child's teacher or key worker if there are any concerns. – Virtually via Tapestry
- Reception parents are invited to a meeting during the Autumn term to find out more about the curriculum and how to help their child at home. Not available during Covid restrictions
- Parents are encouraged to contribute to their child's 'Learning Diary' (Tapestry).

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Early Years subject leader is responsible for monitoring the standard of the children's work. The quality of teaching is evaluated by the head teacher and other subject leaders. The Early Years subject leader is responsible for keeping themselves informed about current developments in the area. The subject leader gives the curriculum committee of the governing body information about strengths and weaknesses and indicates areas for further development.