

# Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Created in: September 2021  
Review date: September 2022  
Approved by Academy Committee  
Recorded in TB minutes 15.09.2021

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## Introduction

*'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. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.'* (Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, DFE, 2021)

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At Highfield School we greatly value the important role that the Early Years Foundation Stage plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development, however we also believe early childhood is valid in itself, as part of life. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

At Highfield our practice reflects the guidance set out in the 'Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, Setting the Standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five document (DFE, 2021).

All children begin school with a variety of experiences and learning. The majority of children entering Reception will have attended Highfield Nursery. It is the privilege of the staff in Reception to take on the task of building upon the children's previous experiences. This is done through a holistic approach to learning, ensuring that parents/carers, and all staff work effectively together to support children's learning and development.

## Overarching Principles

The four guiding principles shape the practice in our EYFS department. These are:

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

## Aims

It is every child's right to grow up safe, healthy, and ready to face the challenges ahead. We aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum which will enable each child to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually to their full potential. Each child is valued as an individual and teaching and learning is based on the understanding that children develop at different rates.

### We aim to:

- Provide a safe, challenging, stimulating, caring and sharing environment which is sensitive to the needs of the child, including children with additional needs;
- Provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for future learning and development in Key Stage 1 and beyond;
- Provide opportunities for children to learn through planned, purposeful play in all areas of learning and development, both indoors and outdoors
- Use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress and achieve their full potential.
- Enable choice, decision-making and problem solving, fostering independence and self-confidence;
- Work in partnership with parents/carers and value their contributions;
- Ensure that all children, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability, have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development.

## Key Themes

At Highfield Junior and Infant School, the EYFS is based on four themes. These are:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships

- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

## A Unique Child

At Highfield Junior and Infant School, we recognise that every child is a competent learner who has the potential to be resilient, confident, capable and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in different ways and at varying rates. Children's attitudes towards their learning is influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

We believe that every child matters and we value the diversity of all children. All families are valued within our school, and we welcome opportunities to connect with the wider community. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their personal best and planning is adapted to meet the needs of all groups of learners. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when we are planning for their learning.

## Building Positive Relationships

At Highfield Junior and Infant School, we recognise that children learn to be strong, confident and independent from being in secure relationships. Therefore, we aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families. We recognise parents as partners and we value working with them in their child's education.

## The Learning Environment

We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. We believe that play-based learning is paramount. It underpins the EYFS and all aspects of children's development. We provide daily opportunities for children to direct their own learning with planned opportunities provided by the Reception team.

Here at Highfield Junior and Infant School, we aim to create an attractive, welcoming and stimulating learning environment which will encourage children to explore, investigate and learn through first-hand experience. Provocations are planned for both the inside and outside areas. These areas are carefully arranged to encourage quiet areas and more active areas within the learning environment. Children are encouraged to become independent learners and to take some responsibility for initiating their own lines of enquiry and investigation.

## Learning and Development

The EYFS learning and development requirements comprise:

- The seven areas of learning and development and the educational programmes;
- The 17 early learning goals, which summarise the knowledge, skills and understanding that all young children should have gained by the end of the Reception year; and
- The assessment requirements (when and how the practitioners must assess children's achievements, and when and how they should discuss children's progress with parents and/or carers).

There are seven areas of learning and development. They are split into prime and specific areas.

The three **prime areas** of learning and development are:

### Communication and Language

Children will be provided opportunities to experience a rich language environment, to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves and to speak and listen in a range of situations.

### Physical development

Physical activity is vital in children's all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives. Children will be provided with opportunities to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control and movement. Gross and fine motor experiences will be provided to support children with developing their precision, control and confidence.

### Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Children's personal, social and emotional development (PSED) is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives, and is fundamental to their cognitive development. Through strong, warm and supportive relationships with adults, children will learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others. Children will be supported to manage emotions, develop a positive sense of self, set themselves simple goals, have confidence in their own abilities, to persist and wait for what they want and direct attention as necessary. Through adult modelling and guidance, they will learn how to look after their bodies, including healthy eating, and manage personal needs independently. Through supported interaction with other children, they learn how to make good friendships, co-operate and resolve conflicts peaceably. These attributes will provide a secure platform from which children can achieve at school and in later life.

The four **specific areas** of learning and development are:

### **Literacy**

Children will be taught to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children will be given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems and other written materials) to ignite their interest.

### **Mathematics**

Children will be provided with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems and to describe shapes, space and measures.

### **Understanding the World**

Children will be guided to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.

### **Expressive arts and design**

We believe that the development of children's artistic and cultural awareness supports their imagination and creativity. Children will be provided with regular opportunities to engage with the arts, enabling them to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. As well as this, children will be provided with opportunities share their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play and design and technology.

### **Staffing and Organisation**

There are three Reception classes who share one unit, with a total of 90 children. There are 3 Teachers and 4 Teaching Assistants all known as Family Group Leaders. Children are organised into six family groups. Each child is assigned to a Family Group Leader. There are additional members of staff, as appropriate; to support individual children with specific needs throughout the year. Reception is led by a Year Group Leader. An Assistant Head Teacher is responsible for the EYFS phase. All staff have the appropriate qualifications to meet statutory requirements. We are always aiming to improve our teaching, skills, knowledge and understanding through training opportunities which comprise of regular PLD sessions, in class support, observations of colleagues, professional dialogue, and attendance at network meetings.

### **Planning**

Planning builds on and extends what children already know and can do. Our planning puts the principles of the EYFS into practice and is always informed by observations we have made of the children in order to understand and consider their current interests, development, and learning. All EYFS staff are committed to working together and are involved in this process.

EYFS staff consider the individual needs, interests and stage of development of each child in their care, and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all of the areas of learning and development. EYFS Staff working with the youngest children are expected to focus strongly on the three prime areas which are the basis for successful learning in the four specific areas. The three prime areas reflect the key skills and capabilities all children need to develop and learn effectively and become ready for school. It is expected that the balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning as children grow in confidence and ability within the prime areas. Throughout the early years, if a child's progress in any prime area gives cause for concern, Family Group Leaders discuss this with the child's parents and/or carers and, where appropriate, make an inclusion referral.

Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play and a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity. Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults. There is an on-going judgement to be made by FGL's about the balance between activities led by children, and activities led or guided by adults. Family Group Leaders respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interactions.

## **Assessment, recording and monitoring**

Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and FGL's to recognise children's progress, understand their needs and to plan activities and support. We analyse and review what we know about each child's development and learning, and then make informed decisions about the child's progress. This enables us to plan the next steps to meet their development and learning needs. All staff who interact with the child contribute to the assessment process.

### **Formative assessment**

This form of assessment is an integral part of the learning and development process. Family Group Leaders observe children to understand their stage of development, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations. Formative assessment may take the form of formal observations, informal observations, other focused assessments e.g. sound/number, annotated examples of work, photographs, video and information from parents/carers. Each child has an individual e-Journey in which this evidence is recorded. Next steps in learning are identified. Parents and/or carers are kept up-to-date with their child's progress and development through daily contact with Family Groups Leaders and regular meetings. Family Groups Leaders address any learning and development needs in partnership with parents and/or carers, and any relevant professionals.

In the EYFS we use the Developmental Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage age-related bands to make judgements about children's progress, on-going assessments feed into this. Progress is updated on an on-going basis and Pupil Progress meetings take place termly.

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### **Statutory Reception Baseline Assessment**

All children participate in the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) within the first 6 weeks of starting Reception. The RBA is a short, interactive and practical assessment of each child's early literacy, communication, language and mathematics skills when they begin school. The data from the assessment will be used by the Department for Education. This data is used to provide the baseline to measure the progress of a child from Reception to Year 6. The data from the assessment, including numerical scores, is not shared with parents, pupils, teachers, or external bodies, including schools. There are no published scores at pupil, school or national level.

### **Summative assessment**

The EYFS Profile is used to summarise all of the assessment undertaken and makes statements about the child's achievements in the seven areas of learning at the end of the Reception year. The profile provides parents/carers, and Family Group Leaders with a summative assessment of a child's attainment against expected levels. Each child's level of development must be assessed against the early learning goals. Practitioners must indicate whether children are meeting expected levels of development or are not yet reaching expected levels (emerging).

### **Monitoring of teaching and Learning**

Monitoring of teaching and learning is carried out in accordance with school policy. This includes observations of teaching and learning, pupil conferencing, learning walks and e-journey scrutiny. Monitoring is carried out by the Senior Leadership Team.

### **Learning through play**

*"Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults." (Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, DFE, 2017).*

At Highfield School we do not make a distinction between work and play. We support children's learning through planned play activities, and decide when child initiated or adult-led/guided play activities would provide the most effective learning opportunities. We believe that it is important for adults to support children's learning through play, by getting involved in the play themselves. Children are given the opportunity to explore and discover within a safe and supportive environment.

Play underpins the delivery of the EYFS curriculum. Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them to make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, and learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. The children 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. The children

are involved with both group and individual play, some initiated by adults, some by the children. They learn through being active learners, working with a wide range of resources.

Through play children will develop intellectually, creatively, physically, socially and emotionally. It gives children the opportunity to take risks and make mistakes.

## **Transition**

We aim to ensure that the children experience a smooth and positive transition as they move from pre-school/home setting to Reception and Reception to Year 1.

The aim is for all staff to have:-

- Shared understanding of what the principles of the EYFS look like in effective practice
- Understand and value the EYFS
- Promote best practice for transition by considering the transition experience of the children and effective transfer of information, including the EYFSP and characteristics of effective learning.
- Use information about children to plan a relevant curriculum

To support this we provide opportunities for staff to:-

- Observe the children in their current groups
- Take part in moderation of e-journals and writing assessments
- Discuss each child's individual needs
- Undertake home visits for new children
- Hold induction workshops for new children and their parents

## **Working in partnership with Parents and/ or Carers**

We recognise that parents/carers are the child's first and most enduring educators. When parents/carers and staff work together in early years settings, the results have a positive impact on the child's development. A successful partnership needs to be a two-way flow of information, knowledge and expertise.

We aim to develop this by:

- Undertaking home visits for all new children
- Holding a parent workshop for new children and their parent/carer before they start school
- Providing termly parent workshops to provide parents with a chance to support their child within school
- Holding regular parent meetings to provide information, including supporting our parents in the application process for starting their child at a school
- Providing an Information Booklet for Parents, this booklet provides information required as stated in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage
- Keeping an up-to-date notice board with relevant information
- Providing a year group overview informing parents/carers of current learning opportunities
- Inviting parents/carers to help in Reception and, subject to safeguarding procedures, support children on school visits
- Holding three parents evenings, discussing progress, celebrating success and sharing individual targets
- Providing an annual written report to parents to celebrate their child's successes

## **Equal Opportunities**

At Highfield, we aim to provide all pupils, regardless of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability, equal access to all aspects of school life and work to ensure that every child is valued fully as an individual. Staff, as role models, are aware of the influence of adults in promoting positive attitudes and use that influence to challenge stereotypical ideas.

Children with special educational needs will be given support as appropriate to enable them to benefit from the curriculum. This includes children that are more able, and those with specific learning difficulties and disabilities. Individual targets in specific areas of learning for those children who require additional support are also actioned/reviewed, in line with the school's Inclusion Policy.

The school's Inclusion Lead Practitioner is responsible for providing additional information and advice to key workers and parents/carers, and for arranging external intervention and support where necessary. For further information see the school's Inclusion Policy.

## **Safeguarding and Welfare requirements**

At Highfield School we take the necessary steps to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. We follow the EYFS Statutory Framework, legal requirements. We also follow the Child protection/safeguarding policy of the school.

The DSL's are displayed around school and staff are fully trained and aware of procedures in this area. Risk assessments for the indoor and outdoor environments and particular activities are carried out on a regular basis. All staff are involved in this process. Additional risk assessments for the Nursery and Reception are carried out by the Site supervisor.

It is our policy at Highfield to have all personal mobiles turned off whilst supervising children. iPads are used to record progress and to enable the engagement of parents in their child's learning, parents give permission for this to take place. E-journeys are developed over the year and information is shared with parents.

Mobile phones are never used to take photographs of children, staff have school equipment and this is used. Once the photographs are uploaded they are removed from the device. Consent for photographs is obtained from parents/ carers and stored appropriately.

At Highfield we comply with the Data Protection Act and the General Data Protection Regulations of 2018. We use photographs taken with permission on:

- School web site
- The school plasma screen on display in school
- Learning e-journeys

## **Missing Children**

In the unlikely event of a child going missing school policy will be followed. We will:

- Immediately search the school premises, both indoors and outdoors contact the parent/carer
- If necessary, inform the police review school security systems
- Make any necessary changes to ensure the safety of children

## **Complaints Procedure**

If a parent has a concern or complaint school policy will be followed. Any complaints are treated seriously and are investigated. Details are also provided in our Information Booklet for parents.

## **Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually, or more regularly in the light of any significant new developments or in response to changes in guidance.