

**Knaphill Federation of Schools**



**Knaphill Lower School**

**Early Years Policy**

**2017 - 2018**

# Early Years Policy- Knaphill Lower School

“A child is not a vase to be filled, but a candle to be lit” – Francois Rabelais

## Introduction

The earliest years in a child's life are absolutely critical. There is overwhelming evidence that children's experiences in their early years strongly influence their outcomes in later life. A strong start in learning and development is an essential foundation for lifelong learning. Central to our ethos at Knaphill is recognising early childhood as this pivotal stage of life. The philosophy of Knaphill upholds the principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage and ensures that they permeate our Federation values of:

- Trust
- Respect
- Perseverance
- Enjoy and achieve

At Knaphill Lower School we aim to provide effective practice throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage based on the principles and commitments of the *“Early Years Foundation Stage Framework – May 2008, revised 2012”*. We believe in and base our teaching and learning on four key principles:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

## Aims

We aim to meet each child's needs by:

- caring for the whole child, their health, both physical and mental, their feelings, thinking and spiritual development
- respecting each child and their family
- ensuring each child has the opportunity to develop the skills knowledge and understanding to achieve success within the EYFS and to build a thirst for life long learning
- providing a stimulating environment, indoors and out providing many opportunities of first hand experiences to encourage our children to be curious, ask questions and to be eager to discover and learn
- providing a thorough and well planned curriculum to meet the statutory requirements of the EYFS Framework and assessment procedures
- providing a secure, happy, safe and relaxed environment with adequate spaces; inside and outside, busy and quiet, independent and structured, for children to develop as learners
- planning for purposeful play and focussed learning, creating opportunities through play for children to talk and listen
- providing opportunities and time for children to pursue their own interests
- providing opportunities for children to interact, talk and share with others
- valuing and respecting each child as an individual, encouraging them to gain self-confidence and a sense of self worth
- providing opportunities for each child to make choices and decisions to develop their independence
- providing multi-cultural experiences including resources and stories which reflect different cultures and values
- fostering a partnership with parents and the community

## **The Learning Environment**

The learning environment is particularly important to the early years and when planned skilfully can provide additional support to children's learning and development.

In the early year's environment our children need:

- adults who will foster children's personal, social and emotional development
- adults who know how to interact and respond to children's actions and thinking
- well planned spaces - indoors and out
- learning opportunities - indoors and out
- quiet areas and noisy areas
- resources which will foster literacy, mathematical thinking, Understanding of the world, physical development, creative discovery and communication and language
- a strong focus on early literacy
- opportunities for children to solve practical problems
- opportunities and resources to encourage communication and language
- opportunities for independent learning and for adult focused activities
- time to complete tasks, ask questions and to follow through their thoughts, actions and interests

The early year's environment includes both inside and outside. It needs to be viewed as a whole providing different areas where resources, materials and activities are freely and easily accessible.

The areas of learning in the environment include:

- role play area
- book area
- literacy area
- graphics or mark making area
- mathematical experiences
- investigation area linked to our world
- construction area
- small world area
- music area
- creative area
- malleable area
- ICT opportunities
- sand/water areas

## **Taking the curriculum outside:**

It is important to develop learning opportunities outside because outdoor learning provides the opportunities for:

- the acquisition of gross motor skills
- taking risks
- fostering a love of nature and the environment
- motivation and imagination
- gardening
- large play which is not possible indoors
- learning experiences suited to the outdoor environment
- physical fitness

It is also important to take into consideration the social world we live in which can confine the opportunities which children have to play outside either from a safety point of view or lack of space in which we live.

Some crucial aspects of learning can only take place outside e.g. play with large construction equipment, gardening, care of animals, some sand and water activities. It is possible for the child to be more actively involved outside without the restrictions of noise and space.

We aim to provide an outdoor curriculum which is complementary to and an extension of the indoor curriculum. It is ever changing as it reflects the children's interests and needs.

### **Health and Safety Outside**

At our school we take health and safety very seriously and daily checks and termly inspections are carried out by staff and governors to check our early year's outdoor area and to ensure that our equipment and resources are in good condition. A first aid box is situated near to the outdoor areas and a communication system is in place where by if an incident occurs additional help can be accessed as soon as possible.

### **Resources**

Resources need to be readily available and of a good quality. The resources within each environment/classroom area need to be evaluated regularly and then added to/renewed as necessary dependent on the children's needs and interests and through the findings of audits.

It is important to remember within early years that less is often more and we believe in quality rather than quantity. As far as possible we aim to provide resources which emphasise the natural materials of our environment and allow the greatest flexibility.

### **The Curriculum**

The EYFS Framework covers the development and learning of children from birth to the end of their Reception year in school. For us that means that children will arrive into our nursery or reception classes having already experienced and developed through many aspects of the Framework. Therefore we aim to build on our children's previous experiences as they enter our provision to ensure a happy and fulfilling time resulting in our children being ready for key stage 1 and beyond. Our early year's curriculum has been devised to specifically meet the needs of young children, the statutory requirements and our school's principles.

The Curriculum is divided into seven areas of learning; three of which are prime: **Personal, social and emotional development; Communication and Language; and Physical Development.** These prime areas of learning are integrally connected and are respected as transcending cultural differences. These areas reflect the beginnings of child development and are critical for influencing later success in learning. The specific areas of learning are experience dependent on the prime areas of learning and are the skills and knowledge specific to **Literacy; Mathematics; Understanding the World, and Expressive Arts and Design.**

The early year's staff plan focussed learning and playful activities and experiences in a balance. The seven areas are delivered to the children in a way that is meaningful and interesting to the children.

Pivotal in delivering our early year's curriculum is ensuring a strong focus on the characteristics of effective learning as documented in the EYFS Framework 2012.

These are:

- playing and exploring
- active learning
- creating and thinking critically

At the end of the Reception year the statutory assessment against the seventeen early learning goals and the three characteristics of effective learners is collated against children reaching the expected level of a 5 year old or emerging or exceeding that level.

## **Play**

The curriculum in the early years is based on a range of learning experiences, the basis of which is playful learning. One of the three characteristics of effective learning is playing.

Play provides opportunities for children to:

- practise co-operation/ make friends
- resolve conflicts
- solve problems/ investigate
- be aware of other people's feelings
- enjoy themselves
- be active
- explore
- have a go
- choose ways to do things and find new ways
- put into meaningful situations their own ideas
- persevere
- concentrate
- develop speaking and listening skills
- instigate and follow through their own learning
- rehearse and put into practise their skills, knowledge and understanding
- take risks within a safe environment
- try things out without fear of getting it wrong

Play provides a rich context for learning and teaching as stated in the EYFS Framework 2012.

*“Play and Exploration is one of the commitments key to Learning and development. The explanation of the commitment includes learning through experience, adult involvement and plenty of space and time to play outdoors and indoors. Practitioners need to ensure effective practice and reflection, overcoming time constraints and balancing creative learning with planning for the group.”*

For play to be valuable it needs to be planned and purposeful. Children need time to develop their play. Adults need to make careful observations of activities, and their interactions in play must be supportive of and responsive to the child's needs and potential.

## **Planning Observation and Assessment**

### **Long term planning**

Throughout Nursery and Reception we follow half termly topics which are flexible and may be adapted if necessary to take into consideration current interests.

### **Medium term planning**

We plan on a half-termly basis using the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework. A forward planner is used to divide the topic into fortnightly themes, learning and activities and which may be adapted to follow a particular interest.

### **Short term planning**

Weekly plans are divided into the areas of learning with both indoor and outdoor activities planned for. The weekly plans include learning intentions, differentiation and groupings, assessment and observation opportunities, the role of the adult, key language and questions. Plans are reflected upon each week and subsequent plans adapted as necessary.

### **Phonics**

Phonics lessons are planned using a range of frameworks including; Development Matters, Letters and Sounds, Jolly Phonics and Floppy's Phonics. Children take home a home learning pack and over the year and each child works at their individual level, stage and pace. A Reading and Phonics Talk takes place in the Autumn Term for parents / carers as well as regular updates and information throughout the year.

### **Personalisation Progression and Differentiation**

The principle of starting with what the child knows and can do provides the basis for personalisation, differentiation and progression. The process of observation is used to determine each child's starting point and plans are made as to how to develop the child's learning further. Weekly evaluations and assessments are noted on the weekly planning sheets and these are used to inform the following week's planning; this will include any need to take an activity further and the needs of individual children, group or class.

### **Observation and Assessment**

During the first few weeks of starting school, children are observed playing, interacting and joining in a wide range of activities. Practitioners assess each child against '*Development Matters*' and make an overall judgement in each of the 17 areas, stating entering, developing or secure in one monthly age bracket.

Assessment in the Nursery and Year R is based on pupil observations which record what the children are achieving. Children's learning is compared and tracked against Development Matters 2012. All practitioners contribute to the ongoing observations and assessments in each child's profile and constant discussions between practitioners in Early Years are essential to the moderation and interpretation of children's learning. Information is regularly transferred to *Pupil Asset* for Reception children, judging children's progress against Development Matters and the Early Learning Goals. Through a process of ongoing observation and assessment the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile is completed during the Reception Year and results collated at the end of June each year, which is a

statutory assessment at the end of the Reception year. The EYFS Profile consists of 17 early learning goals across the 7 areas of learning and a judgement of a child's progress against the 3 characteristics of effective learning.

The profiles are shared with parents on a regular basis and parents are given the opportunity to add their own comments and observations.

### **Special Educational Needs**

Due to the focus on the observation, assessment and planning for individual children any special needs are identified as early possible and shared with parents at the first opportunity. Full details of processes and procedures are found in the school's special needs and inclusion policy.

### **Parental Involvement**

We believe the partnership between parents and the school is vital at this stage in the child's education. We value all contributions and strive to build positive relationships with families. We respect and consider all our families traditions, cultures and celebrations.

Home/ School links are developed in the following ways:

- Active involvement of parents when settling their children into school
- Curriculum information being shared with parents on a half termly and weekly basis via newsletters, planning overviews and the parent's notice board.
- Reception children taking home reading books and through reading diaries
- Class representative/ parent helpers/ parent workshops/talks
- Inviting parents into school to share and join in with religious, cultural or topical events
- Termly parent's evenings
- Home School agreements
- Clipboards to leave daily messages
- Notice boards
- Magic Moments- celebrations of home achievements
- Reports

### **Community Links**

Visitors are invited into school on a regular basis, to enhance and enrich the curriculum. Visitors may include, school nurse, fire-fighter, optician, librarian, RSPCA, church community, International visitors. We plan visits for children to gain real life experiences of our school community and facilities, such as, visits to the school kitchen or local post box.

### **Induction**

It is important that children feel happy and secure when they start Nursery/School. Therefore we arrange a gradual, staggered intake to our Nursery and Reception classes. We encourage parents to support their children during the early days to help them settle quickly.

In the Nursery families are offered a parent/teacher sharing day, tour of the Nursery and School and parent talk. This provides an opportunity for parents to receive necessary information and exchange information with practitioners. Prior to the September intake, parents are offered home visits from Nursery staff. The children are then introduced into Nursery gradually.

In Reception the children visit their new classroom for short sessions in small groups in the summer term, in addition to September, during the first week of the autumn term. During the second week children attend part time, mornings only. Autumn born children will have the opportunity of a trial lunch before starting full time. Lunch is then offered to spring born and summer born before they begin full time.

For information on admissions to Nursery see Admissions Policy.

### **References to other policies**

Behaviour policy

Biting Policy

Equal Opportunities

Special Educational Needs

Health and Safety

Intimate care Policy

### **Conclusion**

Areas for development within Early Years are planned for in the School Development Plan. The Early Years policy will be reviewed annually as part of the school's ongoing system of policy review and improvement.

**Autumn 2017**