

Strawberry Fields Primary School



Early Years Foundation Stage Learning and Teaching Policy

March 2023

This policy is designed to complement the school's main learning and teaching policy, whilst also recognizing the unique characteristics of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the obvious and necessary differences in pedagogies.

Mission statement

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.

(‘The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.’ DfE, March 2021)

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. At Strawberry Fields, EYFS comprises F1 (nursery) and F2 (reception). Children usually enter reception at the beginning of the school year in which their fifth birthday will fall. Children are able to join nursery in the term after their third birthday.

We believe that a child's first years in school are vitally important as they build a secure foundation for their whole education. We aim to make this time a happy and enjoyable one for the children so that the children have a positive attitude to school and begin to develop a lifelong love of learning.

The Foundation Stage at Strawberry Fields Primary School has two main aims:

- 1) To value the children and give them dynamic and engaging educational and social experiences to allow each child to develop, explore and learn at their own pace and in line with their own interests
- 2) To prepare all the children for the next stage of their education

It is important that these two objectives are well-balanced against one-another. It is the excellence and professionalism of our Early Years staff, coupled with the ethos of the school, that allows our EYFS to balance these two aims successfully.

The four guiding principles governing Early Years practice 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 with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs to help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents/carers.**
- **Importance of learning and development and that children learn and develop at different rates.**

(‘The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.’ DfE, March 2021)

At Strawberry Fields Primary School, we will ensure we meet and value these core principles.

Strawberry Fields Primary School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. It is our aim that all pupils fulfil their potential.

A Unique Child

At Strawberry Fields Primary School we recognise that all children in our EYFS are different and individual, and have different needs, but all can learn, make progress and develop confidence, independence and a love of learning. We aim to use the individual interests, experiences and prior knowledge of our children to plan and support their learning and to make the transition from home to Early Years and then to Key Stage One as smooth, easy and seamless as possible.

It is particularly important in the early years to recognise and celebrate the unique character of each child in EYFS. For some, it may be the first time they have socialised or spent significant time with others. Being able to discover and enjoy the similarities and differences they have with others in a safe and accepting space is hugely important for their development.

Strawberry Fields is a fully inclusive school. All children and families are welcomed into our community and we seek to meet any individual learning, medical or social and emotional needs. It is our aim that all children, regardless of their needs, are able to access as much whole-class provision as possible, whilst allowing for any additional support, including formal interventions, Individual Provision Maps (IPMs), medical care or outside agency involvement that is required.

Positive Relationships

In keeping with the wider ethos of our school, it is central to the philosophy of our EYFS unit for all staff to develop strong, positive and nurturing relationships with the children they teach, which are based on trust and mutual respect. With this in mind, children in EYFS are all assigned a 'key person', in recognition of the fact that children thrive from a base of warm and loving care, provided by having close relationships with adults whilst in the Early Years. They get to know the child's sensitivities and personality well so they understand and can meet their needs and support their development.

All children at Strawberry Fields know they will be listened to, treated fairly, kept safe and encouraged to learn, work, play and make friends. We aim to ensure our children are happy and enjoy coming to school, as happy children will be more receptive and better motivated learners.

Staff will model the positive and respectful relationships we hope to encourage in our children in their interactions with all adults and children in the EYFS unit, as well as those within the wider school community. We work closely with families to support transitions, learn about the interests of the children, and share successes. Staff are always available to discuss issues or concerns with parents or carers. Across the year, we also host new parents' meetings, parents' evenings, a phonics meeting, a mathematics showcase event and 'Stay and Play' sessions. We value and encourage parent partnership because we recognise that working in partnership with parents and carers is central to the EYFS. Consulting them about children's early experiences helps practitioners plan for effective learning at the setting, and helps them support parents continuing their children's learning development at home. We use 'Tapestry' as an effective way to share learning between home and school. All contributions are encouraged and welcomed and provide opportunities for parents and carers to learn about the children's learning, in the setting and at home. Staff recognise that parents are the first educators of their children and that when the child enters the education system we must work together if the child is to reach his or her full potential.

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We have good relationships with local childcare providers and EYFS staff undertake home visits and/or visits to the children in their current setting prior to them joining Strawberry Fields. This develops a partnership between school and home very quickly. It also ensures that the children meet staff in a familiar setting. This also enables staff to ensure that the classroom meets the children's interests and needs from their very first day.

The children will be encouraged to feel part of the wider school community by attending assemblies when appropriate, joining in with sports day events, taking part in book share sessions with other classes and by eating their meals in the main school hall. Through this the children within Early Years have the opportunity to build relationships with children and staff across the whole school community.

We feel that these positive relationships allow children to learn to their best potential as they feel safe and valued. Furthermore, since young children are constantly learning, discovering and making progress, good communication between children, staff, parents and other agencies helps to ensure all learning is recognised and incorporated into the child's learning journey and considered in future planning.

Enabling Environments

For younger children, the environment in which they learn is crucial. It should be safe, stimulating and accessible. The prevailing atmosphere in the EYFS unit is calm and purposeful and the children feel safe, valued, respected and challenged. It is a key part of the school's philosophy that all children are, and feel, 'safe to fail', so that they are able to try new things, practice their skills and expand their knowledge. At Strawberry Fields, we aim to encourage all our children to develop a strong understanding of their emotions and develop a bank of skills to handle their emotions in a variety of ways.

The EYFS learning environment is calm, inviting, text-rich and well-resourced. The walls are used to display and celebrate the children's work or to support current topics and prompt questions. These displays are changed regularly.

Children have access to the outdoor area for the majority of the day. Key social skills can be developed in the outdoors area, such as waiting their turn to use a bike. It is also in the outdoor space that older (F2) children and younger (F1) children have the opportunity to learn and play together. It is important at this stage of a child's education that children are able to exercise choice about how and where they learn.

Provision, both indoor and outdoor, is well-matched to the children's need and is designed to support their learning, challenge them, engage them and encourage independence and responsibility. Children are encouraged to keep the areas tidy and respect the resources. At the end of each play session, the children work with the adults to tidy up the classroom and outdoor area.

When appropriate, groups of children may also access the community room. This can be used for teacher-led, whole class activities, small group, intervention and key worker time.

Learning and Development

Intent:

At Strawberry Fields our EYFS curriculum is designed to recognise and value children's prior learning from their previous settings and experiences at home. Through our curriculum, we provide children with engaging, stimulating and challenging play based learning experiences. We encourage children to build positive identities and relationships through managing and taking risks, having a go, developing resilience and promoting a 'can do' attitude. We offer a balance of child-initiated and adult-led learning using a continuous

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provision based approach. We value the children's choices and interests, which support our driving force for building knowledge, skills and understanding. To support our curriculum, we provide high quality provision, along with high quality interactions, so that we are laying the foundations for the children to become independent, successful and ambitious lifelong learners. Our curriculum and ethos ensures that every child is valued as an individual and feels safe and well cared for.

Implementation:

At Strawberry Fields our first focus is on the prime areas of learning because these form the foundation of a child's learning. Once the children feel valued and secure in these areas it enables us to develop the specific areas of learning. A vital aspect in the development of essential knowledge and skills is the use of continuous provision. This means that children are using and developing taught skills on a daily basis. Our continuous provision areas are set up to reflect the children's interests, as well as ensuring that reading, writing and maths have a high profile. Throughout a typical day, the children will have the opportunity to work independently, work collaboratively with their peers and with practitioners. Specific skills are taught through direct teaching sessions in both F1 and F2.

Impact:

At Strawberry Fields the impact of our curriculum is measured in a variety of ways. We carry out observations and assessments on a daily basis, which are continuously discussed as a staff team to move our learning journey forward. We measure the impact of our curriculum by internal termly data, as well as measuring outcomes against the local authority and national data at the end of the EYFS phase. The impact of our curriculum will, most importantly, be measured by how effectively it helps our children to develop into well rounded individuals who are independent, successful and ambitious lifelong learners.

Areas of Learning

Our curriculum encompasses seven areas of learning and development. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected.

Three areas are particularly important for building a foundation for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, forming relationships, and thriving.

Prime Areas:

- Communication and language
- Personal, social, and emotional development
- Physical development

Four areas help children to strengthen and apply the prime areas.

Specific Areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

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Weaving throughout the EYFS curriculum at Strawberry Fields are three **Characteristics of Effective Learning**.

- **Playing and exploring** - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.
- **Active learning** - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements.
- **Creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

In the Early Years at Strawberry Fields, we will address the seven areas of learning and development and provide for the children's learning and developmental needs in the following ways:

- Providing a rich, well-planned learning environment in which children are able to access a wide-range of toys, games and activities linked to their needs and curriculum. This includes daily, extended access to the outdoors and opportunities for extended play.
- The tasks provided in the learning environment will be carefully considered to encourage independence, interdependence, sharing and problem solving. Where they feel it necessary, staff may encourage children to access a particular task or will spend specific time observing a child or task.
- Teaching and tasks will be designed to ensure all children are regularly challenged, in a 'safe to fail' environment that promotes the characteristics of effective learning (Playing and Exploring, Active Learning, Creative and Critical Thinking). Staff will use their excellent knowledge of the children as a whole, as groups and as individuals to match tasks appropriately to the different needs of the children.
- In F2, children will receive 'whole class' teaching 4 times daily, at the beginning and end of the morning and afternoon sessions. This will include a daily phonics session, a wider curriculum session, a maths session and a story session. These sessions will be short – initially lasting up to ten minutes and becoming longer as the year progresses. The exception to this is phonics, where the Sounds Write approach requires a daily 30 minute session from September.
- Phonics within F1 will be taught using phase 1 of Letters and Sounds. This is well thought out and planned according to the needs of each cohort of children.
- Phonics within F2 will be taught using the 'Sounds Write' approach. We teach the children about sounds within whole words. The children will be exposed to blending for reading and segmenting for writing from their very first phonics session.
- The children will be read to as a class and have texts discussed with them at least once a day
- When reading class books, early comprehension will be taught through the use of high-level questioning and modelled (verbal) answers. It is important children are able to express their thoughts about a text and justify their reasons, even before they are able to read independently themselves. In F2, one to one reading sessions will further support this as the children become developmentally ready.
- The school's reading scheme is phonics-based and matched to the Sounds Write phonics scheme. It will be used to encourage partnership between parents and school to support the children's learning.
- Each day, staff will support, develop and model play, extend and challenge children's learning, carry out focus tasks with individuals or groups of children as appropriate, based on the adults' good knowledge of prior learning and current topics.
- In addition, where further intervention is required, children will receive additional, targeted support with a designated member of staff. This may be formalised in an Individual Provision Map (IPM).
- Children will have a tapestry account to serve as a record of their learning and experiences which are shared with parents.

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- The curriculum will be designed to ensure all children are given the best possible opportunity to meet the Early Learning Goals (ELGs). As much as possible, staff will follow the children's interests as well as ensuring focus tasks and continuous provision are linked to the more formally taught elements of the curriculum.
- Whilst in the EYFS, children will be taught crucial skills that will stand them in good stead for the rest of their education, as well as more widely in life.
- Where practical, EYFS children will be involved in themed activities around school (e.g. the annual 'Music Day', Sports Relief activities, book week and other 'dressing up' days) in order to enrich their curriculum.
- All staff will undertake observations of children's 'wow' moments, and will record their findings using the 'Tapestry' website. Staff will ensure the need to secure good, valid observation data does not preclude them from supporting children in their learning and challenge them to progress. Often, the most successful observations involve adult/child interaction, challenge and high-level questioning.
- Strawberry Fields will seek and maintain good relationships with all stakeholders and outside agencies. This might include the use of local authority support, liaising with SENIT teams, visits to EYFS units in other schools and training opportunities for EYFS staff to improve provision, practice or leadership within the EYFS team.
- All teachers and support staff working in the EYFS unit are specialists in Early Years education, and will work together as a team to share expertise, experience and enhance and improve provision and practice.

It is our intention that the correct and considered implementation of this policy, along with the wider ethos and policies of the school, will ensure that children in EYFS at Strawberry Fields have an experience which is enjoyable, engaging and enriching in its own right, and leaves them well prepared for the next stage of their education.