

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE POLICY

Aims

- To give each child a happy, positive and fun start to their school life in which they can establish solid foundations on which to expand and foster a deep love of learning;
- To offer each child a wide range of new and exciting experiences and give them the opportunity to consolidate, explore and test them out along with their own, individual experiences;
- To enable each child, through encouragement and high expectations, to develop, to the full, socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally.
- To offer a structure for learning that has a range of starting points and unlimited opportunity for development;
- To encourage children to develop independence within a loving, secure and friendly atmosphere;
- To support children in building relationships through the development of social skills such as cooperation and sharing;
- To help each child to recognise their own strengths and achievements through experiencing success and developing the confidence to work towards personal goals.

The Curriculum

At Westbrook Hay, being an Independent school, we have opted out of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework (revised 3 March 2017) for the purposes of Learning and Development but broadly follow the framework. The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development, all of which are seen as important and interconnected but three areas are seen as particularly important for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, for building their capacity to learn and form relationships and thrive (DfE 2017: 1.3), they support children's learning in all other areas, they are known as the prime areas.

The prime areas are;

- Communication and Language – Listening and Attention, Understanding and Speaking
- Physical Development – Moving and Handling and Self care
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development – Making relationships, Managing feelings and behaviour and Self-confidence and Self-awareness

The specific areas of learning develop essential skills and knowledge for children to participate successfully in society. The specific areas are;

- Literacy – Reading and Writing
- Mathematics – Numbers and Space, Shape and Measures
- Understanding the World – People and communities, The world and Technology
- Expressive Arts and Design – Exploring and using media and materials and Being Imaginative

Characteristics of Effective Learning

The EYFS also includes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. The Nursery and Reception teachers plan the environment and activities with these in mind. They highlight the importance of a child's attitude to learning and their ability to play, explore and think critically about the world around them.

The three characteristics are;

- 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.

Teaching strategies

We ensure there is a balance of adult led and child initiated activities across the day. Although, in the Nursery, much of the time is spent with children self-selecting tasks, the interaction between the adult and child is essential as the adult's response to children builds understanding and therefore guides new learning. The adult's role is to continually model, demonstrate and question what the child is doing. In Reception, as the children are ready, they will experience many more adult directed tasks, as they prepare for their transition to year 1.

Play

Learning through play is an important part of our Early Years classrooms. We believe children learn best from activities and experiences that interest and inspire them. Using Topics and children's interests as a starting point, we provide children with stimulating, active play experiences in which they can explore and develop their learning to help them make sense of the world. They have opportunities through their play to think creatively and critically alongside other children as well as on their own. They are able to practise skills, build upon and revisit prior learning and experience, at their own level and pace. Play gives our children the opportunity to pursue their own interests and inspire those around them. The children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions. We believe it is important that adults take an active role in child initiated play through observing, modelling, facilitating and extending their play. Getting the balance right between child initiated play and adult led activities, is very important to us.

Teaching

We include direct, carefully planned, adult led experiences for children in the form of structured adult led teaching and adult led group activities. These are particularly important in helping children to learn specific skills and knowledge and it is often through children's play that we see how much of this learning children have understood and taken on.

Each day we follow a timetable with set routines in place. This looks quite different in the Nursery and Reception classes. We set aside times each day when the children come together to be taught in the more traditional sense, gathered together on the carpet as a class or in small groups, in accordance with their age and stage of development. In these slots we focus on our topic work, maths, literacy, phonics, and stories. These sessions help to develop vital habits of learning: learning as a group, listening to the teacher, taking turns to answer, sitting still etc... Reading and story play an important part of the day. We want to make sure our children have a love of books and will leave the EYFS with a bank of stories they know well, both traditional

and modern classics. We make sure there is always time for whole class stories during the day but also that there are many opportunities to enjoy books at other times. Every child has the opportunity during the week to visit and borrow books from the School Library. In Nursery, children have opportunities to share books one to one, or in a group, with an adult or peers. As children are ready, they will start to read a school reading book individually with a member of staff, or in a group reading session.

The class timetables can be found on the school website and on the class notice board.

Planning

We believe many children need to be given a starting point to learn new things and find topics are a great way to fire the imagination. The topics are outlined in the Programmes of Study, but are flexible to ensure we also follow the children's interests, school themes and local or national events e.g. the Olympics. Topics are usually based on the following areas of learning, 'Understanding the World', 'Literacy' and 'Communication and Language'; and range from a topic on Dinosaurs to In the Woods or Traditional Tales. Every half term staff plan the next topic, and you will be informed if the themes are likely to change.

In Nursery, a weekly newsletter is sent out, outlining what will be taught in the following week. In Reception, a half termly newsletter is issued.

Details of phonics being taught can be found on the Lower School section on the intranet.

Visits and visitors

In the Early Years, each class will go on at least one trip. These trips support and enrich the topic being taught and have included visits to a zoo or farm. We have a ratio of 1 adult to four children on trips, but in Nursery for the safety of the children, we aim to have a greater ratio of adults to pupils. School staff make up the large proportion of adults attending, but on occasions, we seek parental support. For safety reasons we say no to younger siblings coming along on school trips. Please refer to the 'Educational Visits EYFS Policy' for further information. Visitors also really enhance a topic and we like to have 'experts' coming in to talk to the children, a dentist for example. We often ask parents if they are able to share knowledge, skills and their culture with us.

Classroom organisation and the learning environment

Our Early Years classrooms have defined areas with clearly labelled resources to ensure children can access them easily. Each classroom is set up in a way to provide children with experiences and activities in all of the seven areas of learning. Classrooms have a writing area, maths area, creative area, book corner, role play area, construction/small world area, outdoor area and carpeted teaching area. A variety of activities are planned for and set up in the different areas each day.

The outdoor area is an important part of the classroom with many children choosing to learn outside during the day. We try to ensure that the range of activities outside reflects the different curriculum areas, for example setting up quiet spaces for a maths game, reading and for construction. In Nursery, physical activity often dominates, with climbing, running, cycling, digging and other active games being key. The Reception class shares the outdoor area with Year 1 and so often have more physical play during break time, with a separate time allocated for child initiated learning.

Each child has their own labelled peg and shoe box in the cloakroom. We encourage children to take responsibility for keeping their clothes in one place. A place is allocated in each classroom in which to put book bags.

The nursery classroom is purpose built and includes a nappy changing room and a sleeping area.

We are fortunate to have extended grounds including meadowland and woodlands, in which the children can play and learn, in a natural and exciting context. The grounds are an extension to our learning environment and are regularly used, to meet the all areas of the children's learning. In Reception, the classes have a dedicated woodland afternoon. We go outside in all weathers.

Assessment, observations, learning journeys and reporting

Assessment is an essential part of the learning and development of children in the EYFS. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations.

To ensure we have evidence of a child's progress in the EYFS we use a range of strategies all of which come together in their individual learning journey. They include a collections of children's work, photos and observations which create a rounded picture of the child.

The Learning Journeys are in a digital format and are available on request. Parents are encouraged to contribute to their child's learning journey through the use of our WOW stars and parent observation forms. WOW stars are where significant events that happen at home can be recorded, they are available in the atrium can be taken home to complete or can be completed by a member of staff, if you do not drop off or collect. Parents may also complete an observation to share what their child does at home. A template can be found on the intranet. A copy of the learning journey is provided before each parent consultation and with a copy of each school report.

On entry to Nursery and Reception we carry out baseline assessments for each child. Throughout the Early Years the Class Teacher completes an end of term assessment. At the end of Reception, the class teacher assesses each child against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELG) and comments on whether their development within each ELG is either 'emerging', 'expected' or 'exceeding'. This information is communicated to parents and carers in the Reception child's end of year report.

Ratios, Role of staff and key worker

We adhere to the statutory requirements in relation to ratios of staff to children. We ensure that staff are suitably qualified and we have a minimum of one paediatric trained first aider, in each class.

The class teacher is the named key worker for each child in the Reception class. In the Nursery, the key worker may be a Class Teacher, Leader or assistant and you will be advised of the name of your child's key worker. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs and to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents. All adults within the Early Years setting actively seek to form positive respectful relationships with the children in their care. The formation of healthy relationships between adults and children is essential in enabling children's well-being now and their future successes.

There are rare occasions when significant adults cannot be in the class and we aim to be consistent in who covers these absences.

Partnership with parents and carers

We believe that parents and carers are a child's first educator and therefore work very closely to ensure they are involved in what we do with their child at school. We want parents to feel they can speak to us about their child at any time and feel comfortable in our setting. As well as the Nursery and Reception visit days we offer a Meet the Teacher session at the beginning of the school year and offer parent workshops and a stay and play session during the year.

When a child gains a place at Westbrook Hay we ask them to attend a session at the school alongside other children who will be in their class. The length of the session will depend upon the age of the child and for Nursery children age three years and under, we request that their parent stays for the session. We give each family an 'All About Me' booklet to complete with their child over the summer which is used to help build up a positive relationship, in the first few weeks of school. In the first term, parents are invited to a parents' consultation so that settling in can be reviewed and progress discussed. There is a second parent consultation in the Spring term and a report at the end of the Autumn and Summer terms.

Teachers may be contacted via email and on request, a meeting may be arranged. If a matter is urgent in nature, please leave a message with the school office. Teachers are available most evenings to talk and to discuss more urgent matters.

An information book outlining the day to day running of the class is provided on joining and when updated.

Health & safety and safeguarding

Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them. We follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements detailed in the EYFS Statutory Guidance (2017). Please also refer to our school health and safety and safeguarding policies.

The Lower School building was custom designed for the provision and comfort of children in the early years and meets the statutory requirements outlined in the EYFS guidance.

Regular evacuation drills are undertaken in line with our whole school policy, to ensure that the procedure is second nature and that the children are not distressed by the procedure or alarm. The School has a no smoking policy.

For the safety of the children there is key code entry into the Nursery and Reception classrooms, and all visitors are required to sign in at the School Office and wear a Visitors lanyard, whilst on the premises.

We take all reasonable steps to ensure staff and children in our care are not exposed to hazard or risks and take immediate action to eliminate or minimise risk.

It is important to note that members of staff do not use their mobile phones or personal handset devices in the classroom and are prohibited from taking photographs with their personal handsets. This is in line with the schools Safeguarding Policy. Members of staff do, however, use school iPads to take photographs as evidence to support the regular observation assessment cycle in the EYFS. These photographs are used in children's Learning Journeys, in class displays

and on the school website. All parents are asked to state if they give permission for their child's image to be used on the school website through the paperwork in their initial starter packs.

Children will only be released to those adults listed by the parent or carer. If there is a change in collection arrangements, we must be notified in writing.

The snack and meals which we provide are healthy and water is freely available throughout the day. Our staff model good eating habits by eating alongside the children. All children eat a school lunch and are encouraged to try new foods. The menu can be viewed on the school website. Children who attend After School Care are provided with a light tea. Please ensure that we are notified of any allergies or dietary requirements.

All members of the Early Years team are trained in Food Safety for Catering and there are hygienic preparation areas in each classroom and After School Care. Breakfast, is prepared and served by the school catering team and is served in the dining hall.

We take all accidents seriously, members of staff are trained in paediatric first aid and are available at all times during the day, to administer first aid. We log all incidents and email home, after dealing with an accident. We also phone home immediately if a child bangs their head. We have cold compresses stored in the Lower School freezer, situated in the staffroom. There are first aid kits in each year group, in after school care and the woodland area. A first aid kit is carried if children are walking out in the grounds, or on a school trip.

We encourage all children to start school without nappies but will support any children struggling with this. We acknowledge that young children often have 'accidents' and have stocks of spare clothes and change anyone who needs it. We ask parents to provide a spare change of clothes for their child. Please see the Intimate care policy for further information.

We follow whole school practice and whole school policies apply, with the exception of the following policies:

Educational Trips (EYFS)
Supervision (EYFS)

Reviewed: March 2017
Reviewer: Head of Lower School