



Early Years Policy



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Rationale

"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).

Across the Bedenham and Holbrook Federation of Primary Schools we recognise that the Foundation Stage underpins future learning by offering a challenging and stimulating curriculum, which supports, fosters and promotes young children's independence. We recognise that the children enter the Reception class at the age of four as individuals with different experiences and attitudes. They have different levels of knowledge, skill and understanding. We seek to build upon and extend their home and pre-school experiences during their first crucial year of school-based learning.

Aims

- To provide an environment where children feel happy, secure and valued.
- To encourage children to be independent thinkers and learners.
- To ensure children become confident in making decisions.
- To allow for each child's individual development: socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically.
- To respect the cultural differences and abilities of all children.
- To use a variety of teaching methods, including opportunities for active involvement and structured play.
- To encourage sensitivity and respect towards others.
- To encourage a scientific curiosity and enjoyment of their environment, whilst having care and respect for living things.
- To promote and encourage an enthusiasm for reading and books.
- To provide opportunities in which children are encouraged to write.
- To develop an understanding of basic mathematical concepts.
- To train children to use computers confidently and safely.
- To provide opportunities for imaginative expression of ideas through art, music, drama and dance.

Experiences prior to starting school

We recognise that parents are the child's first educators and value the important role in their child's initial learning experiences. We seek to build a close working relationship with parents which begins with the transition programme before the child starts our schools. We also encourage positive links with our local pre-schools and acknowledge the part they play in the Foundation Stage. In developing links, we hope to provide a smooth transition from home and pre-school into the Reception class.

The Transition Programme

The induction programme for new children takes place during the summer term. It focusses on visits to the Reception class to see the children working on various aspects of the curriculum. Further meetings follow this when the Starting School booklet is given to and discussed with parents. This deals with all the general information parents need when their child begins school; how we run as a school; school uniform details and starting school dates.

Bedenham Primary School:

Parents and children are invited to four Boogie Mites sessions, offered both morning and afternoon. These sessions consist of a creative task, 'Boogie Mites' Song and dance and a visit to an area of the school. Through these sessions, the children get to know the whole school as well as the classroom environment, including important areas like where we have lunch and where the toilets are. There are also four drop-in sessions throughout the summer term where the new children can come along with their parents to play alongside the current Year R. The transition programme ends with an independent visit. Throughout the transition process children get to know their new teacher's and develop these relationships, which helps us to decide who will be their keyworker.

Holbrook Primary School: Parents and children are invited to a series of afternoon sessions which allow them to explore the classroom and meet the teachers. The new entrants are then invited to school for two mornings at the beginning of July. One visit includes the children staying for lunch. This introduces them to school, the classroom and the early year's team. It helps the child feel more confident and reassured about starting school in September. At this time the children are given a starting school pack including crayons, pencil and a booklet to do over the summer and return as they begin school.

In both schools, Parents are asked if they would like us to visit them in their home environment. These visits are arranged for July just before the holidays. It is an ideal time for parents to ask any last minute questions and the child to chat freely with the teacher. These visits are very important to establish positive relationships between the

school, the parents, and the child, which can then be built upon during the child's career at the school.

Assessment

Pre-schools provide the school with an up-to-date assessment and report before the children start with us in September. Those Pre-schools using Tapestry online Learning Journey to now transfer the children's accounts so we can continue these throughout their continuing journey through the foundation stage. This forms the basis of our initial assessment. Children then work within the Foundation Stage Curriculum and their development is assessed using the practitioners accumulating observations and knowledge of the child. We collate children's individual learning journeys online through Tapestry. This enables us to instantly share learning and successes with parents and carers. They in turn, have the opportunity to comment back on observations made and add their own. Safeguarding is an extremely serious consideration so all parents complete a contract before they are given access rights to the online program.

The initial assessment is completed within the first six weeks of school using the EExBA (Early Excellence) Baseline model. The results of this are shared with parents at parents evening in November. This acts as a starting point for developing each child's learning requirements and all further achievements are recorded in the child's individual records and shared with the parents each term, thus building towards the completion of the Profile at the end of the year.

The Curriculum

We aim to provide a full range of fascinating, motivating and valuable experiences, which are relevant, purposeful, and rewarding in order for the children to receive a broad and balanced curriculum. Young children learn most effectively through play and first hand experiences. Well planned guided and free play, both inside and outside is an important way in which young children learn with enjoyment and challenge.

During the Reception period, we aim to provide children with experiences to help them develop characteristics of effective learning. These characteristics pave the way for how they approach learning throughout their school career. The characteristics of effective learning are as follows:

Early years learning concentrates on 7 areas split between prime and specific areas of learning. Learning opportunities and activities are planned around each of the areas.

| Characteristics of Effective Learning |
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| Playing and exploring – engagement Finding out and exploring Playing with what they know Being willing to 'have a go' |
| Active learning – motivation Being involved and concentrating Keeping trying Enjoying achieving what they set out to do |
| Creating and thinking critically – thinking Having their own ideas Making links Choosing ways to do things |

The prime areas of learning are:

- communication and language
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development

Communication and Language.

Communication and Language is made up of three aspects: listening and attention, understanding and speaking. The classroom ethos is designed to give children 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. Once children develop communication and language skills their reading and writing skills will develop.

Physical development.

This is made up of two different aspects: Moving and handling and health and self-care. This involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children are also helped to understand the importance of physical activity and to make healthy choices in relation to food.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development.

PSED is made up of three different aspects: self-confidence and self-awareness, managing feelings and behaviour and making relationships. PSED activities involve helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills to learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities.

The specific areas of learning are:

- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design

Literacy

Literacy encompasses reading and writing. Literacy development involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children must be given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems and other written materials) to ignite their interest. In order to develop writing skills we provide a range of writing opportunities around the classroom. They include writing linked to role play areas, a designated writing area with a weekly challenge and writing opportunities in the outside environment. We encourage children to use a range of writing equipment such as pencils, highlighters, chunky board pens and chalks.

Mathematics

Mathematics is made up of numbers and shape, space and measures. This involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces and measures. Children are encouraged to use mathematical words and ideas in their play.

Understanding the World

This area is made up of three aspects: People and communities, the World and technology. Experiences involve guiding children 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. Learning and Development is based on first-hand experiences to observe, predict, make decisions and discuss.

Expressive Arts and Design

This area is made up of two aspects: exploring and using media and materials and being imaginative. It involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

This does not mean that a young child's experiences are divided up into areas. One experience may provide a child with opportunities to develop a number of skills, competencies and concepts across several areas of learning.

The Early Learning Goals establish expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage. Those children exceeding the Early Learning Goals will be working within the National Curriculum programmes of study, but still mainly through the context of play.

Topics are fluid, reacting to children's interests and ideas. Throughout the year key seasons and celebrations are planned in, but topics are spontaneous as ideas arise. Activities linked to these topics, or themes, are planned around the PLOD, possible lines of development.

Classroom Organisation and Management.

Children learn through play and much of the Foundation Stage curriculum involves learning by hands-on experience. They need to look, smell, listen and explore a wide variety of play materials. There is a varied selection of open ended resources in each of the learning areas of the classroom, carefully selected to promote the children's learning and understanding in those areas and to offer a range of new experiences.

The classroom is organised into designated areas for different aspects of the curriculum, eg. Writing, music, art and maths. Each area contains all the resources and equipment relating to that area of the curriculum, which are clearly labelled and accessible to the children. Children are encouraged to use and return all equipment correctly. The outside area is an integral part of the learning environment and contains similar opportunities as the inside area.

The day is organised so the children have a balance of child-initiated and more structured adult-led activities. There are many opportunities for choice and decision making to help the children gain in confidence and experience, and develop their thinking skills. The children are encouraged to talk to others about their experiences and show their achievements at review time.

COOL (Holbrook)/Busy (Bedenham) Time

Child initiated learning time is about children having opportunities and time to plan and develop their play and interests. Within child initiated time children are able to extend and apply their learning. They are also able to learn new concepts and skills. At Holbrook this time is known as COOL time (Continuing our own learning). At Bedenham it is known as Busy Time. During COOL/Busy time children are encouraged to explore, take risks, make decisions, solve problems and share their achievements with others. Children apply the knowledge and skills they gain from other areas of learning in a context, which is meaningful to them. They consolidate and internalise, thus forming deeper understanding. Child Initiated Learning Time not only provides opportunities to apply learning from other curriculum areas, but also helps children to develop skills, concentration, perseverance and the ability to work collaboratively, which can be applied to all the learning that takes place in school, at home and in all aspects of life.

Structured learning:

Literacy

Speaking and Listening

Stories and role play are a rich source of opportunities for speaking and listening in the classroom. We use the Pie Corbett materials that add actions to the stories, so that children can remember the sequence and vocabulary in the story. We often change parts of the story; the children can then add characters and describe them. This helps the children to write their own stories later in school.

Children are involved in planning activities, so are used to talking, explaining and making plans with others. Every day the classroom is a rich source of speaking and listening opportunities.

Linking Sounds and Letters

This is a very important part of the school day. Letter sounds are taught and used in these sessions, through fun and play activities. Games, white boards and computers are all used to help children remember and use letters to build up words. The children are grouped by ability and work within the phases of the 'letters and sounds' programme. Children use their knowledge to read and write words and sentences. 'Tricky words' are also taught. These are words which cannot be built up phonetically.

Reading

Reading is available to children at all times. Stories and other types of books are read regularly to the children. Each child has a book bag with books at their reading level and books to share at home with their parents. We try to hear each child read individually at least every week. The children also take part in a group guided reading session once a week from Easter onwards.

Writing

Opportunities for writing are available in every area of the classroom. Children begin by making marks and giving their marks a meaning. Later words and letters develop, and then sentences. Children write and record their thinking inside and outside the classroom on whiteboards, paper on clipboards and in paint and chalk!

Children are taught to write their name and the correct letter formation. Letters and sounds teaching provides them with the tools to write sentences which evolves into further longer pieces of writing.

Numeracy

In Early Years the emphasis is on developing children's understanding of numbers and the number system and discussion about their activities rather than on recording. This is achieved through a wide range of practical activities, careful questioning and the correct use of mathematical vocabulary. However children do record their work in their own way, such as in pictures or jottings.

There is always mathematical apparatus such as number lines, number tiles, various counters, numicon, money etc available for children to use in their 'play'.

Computing

The Reception classroom has computers and a range of software to support the Foundation Stage curriculum. Children are introduced to computing skills and everyday uses of technologies. Alongside the computers, we offer a range of resources; from whiteboards, beebots and remote controlled toys to mobile phones, calculators and radios, to ensure children are aware how IT is used in all areas of our lives.

Equal Opportunities

All children are given equal access to the Foundation Stage curriculum regardless of gender, race or religious beliefs or disability.

SMSC

We recognise that the personal development of pupils, spiritually, morally, socially and culturally, plays a significant part in their ability to learn and achieve. We therefore aim to provide an education that provides pupils with opportunities to explore and develop their own values and beliefs, spiritual awareness, high standards of personal behaviour, a positive, caring attitude towards other people, an understanding of their social and cultural traditions and an appreciation of the diversity and richness of the cultures.

Written by Jemma Marshall and Vicky Messem March 2016

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