

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 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

The Nursery and Reception follow the curriculum as outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) document, which is available from the school office or to download at

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/299391/DFE-00337-2014.pdf. This clearly defines what we teach.

The following policy details the specifics of our setting. 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 2014: 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/ Reception teacher plans activities within the Nursery and Reception classrooms 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 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 some cases the adult will ask a child to come and complete a task or game with them; at other times they will participate in a child's game, extending it where possible. By the Summer term in Reception the children 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 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 experiences 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, which is controlled, 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. 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 story but also that there are many opportunities to enjoy books at other times.

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. We have a two year topic cycle so both classes are working together on the same theme; 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 Space or Traditional Tales. The topics are flexible to ensure we also follow the children's interests, school themes and local or national events e.g. the Olympics. Every half term (and occasionally termly) staff plan the next topic, and book visits and visitors that will enhance the learning. Staff plan in more detail on a weekly basis using daily notes, observations and interactions with children to inform where the learning journey should move to. Plans are summarised through half termly newsletters and regular updates are sent out via Tapestry (online learning journey). Although the class teacher is responsible for writing plans, the EYFS plan as a team, with Teachers, and Support Staff all contributing and giving an input whenever possible.

Visits and visitors

The part that visits and visitors play in the curriculum is given great emphasis, even in the Early Years. Visits can range from walking to the local farm, down to the beach or to the small woodland at the end of the village! We actively seek parental support on trips, however for safety reasons we say no to younger siblings coming along on school trips. Visitors also really enhance a topic and we like to have 'experts' coming in to talk to the children. We often ask parents if they are able (and brave enough!) to share their knowledge or a skill, be it cooking or how to bath a baby. We also ask parents to come into school every term and stay and play with the children.

Classroom organisation

Our Early Years classrooms have 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 adults move to whichever area their focus for the session/day is.

The outdoor area is an important part of the classroom with many children choosing to learn outside for much of 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. Physical activity often dominates, with climbing, running and other active games being key. Each child has their own labelled peg as well as a drawer. We encourage children to take responsibility for keeping their clothes, and work safely in one place!

Assessment, observations and portfolios

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 portfolio as well as Literacy and Maths books. Their portfolios (paper based and online) consist of collections of the children's work, photos and observations which all create

a detailed picture of the child. Where appropriate, we include individual next steps for children's learning. These next steps are discussed by the EYFS team in informal meetings. These next steps inform planning for the next day and week ahead. Staff have their own iPad, which are used to capture and note observations and next steps for learning. We use Tapestry to store our observations and formative assessments. All parents are invited to join Tapestry and contribute to their child's portfolio. They can also support children at home with the next steps that are recorded on observations. They are encouraged to contribute through the use of the app.

On entry to Nursery/Reception, we carry out baseline assessments for each child. Throughout the Early Years the Class Teacher submits end of term assessment data to the Head Teacher showing each child's development across the seven areas of learning. 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 also communicated to parents and carers in the Reception child's end of year report.

Role of staff and key worker

The Class Teacher is the named key worker for each child in the setting. 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 end of the Summer term for parents whose children will be starting with us in September. In the beginning of the school year we offer a phonics workshop. We also have a photo window to show what has happened in the classroom. When a child gains a place at Longhoughton CofE Primary School we ask them to attend a session at the school alongside all other children who will be starting. During this visit the children will be encouraged to stay for lunch. We give each family an 'All About Me' booklet to complete with their child and this document is the first piece in their portfolio. Parents are invited to attend two Parents' Meeting during the year and teachers are available most evenings to talk and to discuss more urgent matters.

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 Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Guidance(2014) https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/299391/DFE-00337-2014.pdf and there is a section in our school Safeguarding Policy that directly refers to practice in the EYFS. 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. Members of staff do, however, use school iPads and cameras to take photographs as evidence to support the regular observation assessment cycle in the EYFS. These photographs are

