

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage
3. The Early Years Foundation Stage framework
4. Active Learning through Play
5. Assessment and Record Keeping
6. Planning
7. Parents as Partners
8. Admissions and Induction
9. Transition to Year One
10. Equal opportunities
11. Special Educational Needs

Introduction

Early Years education is the foundation upon which young children build the rest of their schooling. It is a holistic education that encompasses all learning and development.

This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at Meole Brace CE Primary School and Nursery.

The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of practitioners working in the EYFS setting, including both teaching and non-teaching adults.

In the policy the term 'setting' refers to the Early Years educational provision at Meole Brace C of E Primary School and Nursery. This is available to children who enter Nursery the term following their 3rd birthday and those who enter Reception from September of the academic year in which they will turn five years old. These children are in the final year of the EYFS.

In the policy Foundation 1 (F1) refers to our Nursery and Foundation 2 (F2) refers to the Reception classes.

In the policy the term 'practitioner' refers to the members of staff working with children within the setting.

Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage

In our EYFS setting we believe that all children are entitled to the best possible start to their school life, both intellectually and emotionally, in order to enable them to develop their full potential.

We aim to support each child's welfare, learning and developmental needs by:

- Recognising that all children are unique and special.
- Understanding that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates - physically cognitively, linguistically, socially and emotionally.
- Providing a safe, secure and caring environment where children feel happy and know that they are valued by the practitioners looking after them.
- Fostering and nurturing children's self-confidence and self-esteem through their developing awareness of their own identity and role within the community.
- Teaching them to express and communicate their needs and feelings in appropriate ways.
- Encouraging children's independence and decision-making, supporting them to learn through their mistakes.
- Developing children's understanding of social skills and the values and codes of behaviour required for people to work together harmoniously.
- Supporting children to develop care, respect and appreciation for others, including those with beliefs, cultures and opinions which differ to their own.
- Understanding the importance of play in children's learning and development.
- Providing learning experiences in play which reflect children's personal interests and areas of curiosity in order to encourage and develop their natural desire, interest, excitement and motivation to learn.

- Providing experiences which build on children's existing knowledge and understanding in order to challenge, stimulate and extend their learning and development.
- Providing effective learning opportunities in a range of environments, inside and outside.

3. The Early Years Foundation Stage framework

Teaching in the EYFS setting is delivered in accordance with the government's statutory document 'The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage' (March 2012). This document is a principled approach to Early Years education, bringing together children's welfare, learning and development requirements through four themes: 'A Unique Child', 'Positive Relationships', 'Enabling Environments' and 'Children Learn in Different Ways and at Different Rates.'

The curriculum is centred on 3 prime areas of learning:

1. Communication and Language.
2. Physical Development
3. Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Providers must also support activities through four specific areas which strengthen the prime areas.

These are:

1. Literacy
2. Mathematics
3. Understanding of the World
4. Expressive Arts and Design

Educational programmes which practitioners deliver in the setting must involve activities and experiences from one of the following seven areas. These are:

1. Communication and Language
2. Physical Development
3. Personal, Social and Emotional Development
4. Literacy
5. Mathematics
6. Understanding of the World
7. Expressive Arts and Design

These Areas of Learning and Development address children's physical, cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional development. No one aspect of development stands in isolation from the others as all Areas of Learning and Development are all closely interlinked. This ensures the delivery of a holistic, child-centered curriculum which allows children to make lots of links between what they are learning. All Areas of Learning and Development are given equal weighting and value.

At Meole Brace Cof E Primary School, we believe that Early Years education is important in its own right and should not be viewed simply as preparation for the next stage of children's education. We believe that the EYFS framework allows a natural progression into the National Curriculum at the beginning of Year 1.

4. Active Learning through Play

We recognise that young children learn best through when they are active. We understand that active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods. Therefore, we believe that Early Years education should be as practical as possible and our EYFS setting has an ethos of learning through play.

We recognise the importance of children's play. It is an essential and rich part of their learning process, supporting them in all areas of development. Play is a powerful motivator encouraging children to be creative and to develop their ideas, understanding and language. Play is also flexible and able to suit the preferred learning style of the child. It can provide multiple ways for children to learn a variety of different skills and concepts.

Practitioners provide both structured and unstructured play opportunities inside and outside. These activities are designed to engage children in practical, first-hand experiences which will support children to discover, explore, investigate, develop their personal interests and areas of curiosity, and help to make sense of the world around them as they begin to understand specific concepts. Play opportunities are also set up to provide children with opportunities to apply newly acquired knowledge, demonstrating their skills and level of understanding.

Our curriculum is essentially a play based curriculum alongside inspiration from the Reggio Emilia philosophy.

5. Reggio Emilia

According to Reggio Emilia philosophy the "child has a hundred languages". As practitioners we try to develop these languages: innovation, construction, fantasy, art, music, dance, speaking and use them to help children build knowledge and understand the world around them. The natural environment is incorporated into our setting as much as possible with a variety of natural materials used as resources for play and exploration.

We believe that children have enormous potential and curiosity and we encourage children to make their own theories and explanations.

In Foundation Stage 2 the children work in groups of 10-12 to explore, investigate and interact with the world around them. Teachers act as researchers alongside the children and facilitate their learning through listening to and documenting the children's theories and ideas. Practitioners act as a guide, researcher and valuable resource and aim to provoke, co-construct and stimulate thinking and collaboration amongst peers.

Instead of following a set agenda teachers let the child's interests steer the curriculum. We have established a "listening pedagogy" within the setting and create on-going projects which stimulate the child's curiosity and carefully document the learning taking place.

Documentation takes on many forms - photographs, transcripts, note taking and displays of children's work which are shared with the community - parents, families and other groups in school.

Great attention is given to the look and feel of our environment. In Reggio Emilia settings it is referred to as the third teacher. A welcoming environment in our setting encourages the children to engage in activity and discovery.

5. Assessment and Record Keeping

Ongoing assessment is an essential aspect of the effective running of the EYFS setting

Regular, planned and focused assessments are made of children's learning and individual needs. A record of each child's progress in all areas of their learning is kept by retaining and filing their assessment data.

The main EYFS assessment method is through practitioners' observations of children in different teaching and learning contexts, including both adult focused activities and child initiated play. Observations take place on a daily basis (both formally and informally). Practitioners make time to carry out planned observations of individuals and groups of children regularly. They also make

spontaneous observations in order to capture significant moments of children's learning. Observations are recorded in different formats (e.g. narrative style, post-it notes, whole class grids, photographs). All practitioners are involved in observing children.

We use observations of children's learning to support our developing knowledge of individual children. It informs us of children's abilities, needs, interests, play schemas and learning styles. Observations are evaluated, children's learning priorities are identified and relevant learning opportunities are planned to support children to make the next steps and progress.

Other methods of assessing children in the EYFS setting include engaging alongside children in their play, annotation of children's written work, talking with children about their task or play

Learning Journeys record children's progress in all Areas of Learning and Development of the EYFS framework. Samples of children's work are gathered, along with photographic evidence and observations.

There is continuous monitoring and assessment of each child's development using the new Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (2012). This is updated at least once each term to track individual progress. At the end of the year it provides a summary of every child's development and learning achievements. Baseline assessment is carried out using the EYFS Profile during the children's first six weeks upon entering the setting. Judgments made on children's development in the Profile are based on practitioners' evidence of children's behaviour observed independently and consistently in their self-initiated activities across all Areas of Learning and Development.

6. Planning

The EYFS framework provides a long term plan to follow by ensuring that all Early Learning Goals are covered throughout the academic year.

Medium term planning is created in which all Areas of Learning and Development are planned for and available to access within the setting.

The learning opportunities provided include a range of adult focused and child initiated activities indoors. The setting also makes use of the outdoor environment every day. Educational visits within the local community and further are also planned to support children's learning within the classroom. Short term planning is carried out daily. Practitioners meet to discuss and evaluate the day.

Observations of individual children's learning are used to drive planning.

In F2 skills development activities are planned at the end of the day to be carried out the next which reflect the children's interests and address learning needs.

Continuous provision is enhanced by considering how an activity was used and how learning can be moved forward for different groups of children. Planning meetings take place at the end of the school day so that flexible grouping and strategic planning can take place.

7. Parents as Partners

We recognise the importance of establishing positive relationships with parents, as highlighted by the EYFS framework. We understand that an effective partnership between school and home will have a positive impact on children's learning and development. So, practitioners endeavour to encourage the regular sharing of information about the children with parents.

We value the role of parents and carers as children's primary educators. Through questionnaires and informal chats at the beginning and end of the day, practitioners encourage parents to share their

unique knowledge of their child, providing further insight into the child as an individual (e.g. characteristics, interests, experiences, likes, dislikes). This supports us in establishing interesting and stimulating learning experiences, responding to children's needs and interests. We invite parents and carers to contribute to Learning Journeys which are accessible in the setting for comments to be added. More formally, we send home link sheets home for parents and carers to comment on their child's learning and development over time.

Parents are kept informed of what is happening in the setting through regular letters, reading records and informal chatting at the beginning and end of the day. This also gives suggestions of how parents can support their children's learning at home; consolidating and building on what has been covered in the setting.

Whole school newsletters are also sent home on a weekly basis.

During the child's time in Reception (F2) parents are invited to attend parents' evenings during the course of the academic year. The first of these takes place during the Autumn term to allow practitioners and parents to discuss how children have settled into the setting. Another parent's evening takes place during the Spring term where practitioners will feedback on children's learning and development progress. In the summer term a final parent's evening is held when the child's Early Years Profile is shared and celebrated.

Nursery (F1) parents are invited to attend a parent/carers consultation meeting in each of the terms that the children attend nursery. Each meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss children's progress.

Parent/carers are provided with a written report at the end of the child's time in EYFS. This indicates levels of achievement and characteristics of learning. This report, alongside the individual's EYFSP is at the centre of transition meetings between staff as the children move onto Key Stage One.

Parents are also invited to get involved with school life. There are opportunities for them to help with activities such as educational visits and reading

The setting has a friendly, open-doors ethos and practitioners are available to talk to parents at the beginning and end of the day. Parents are always welcomed into school and encouraged to discuss and concerns they might have.

8. Admissions and Induction

Nursery (F1)

Our nursery admits children the term following their third birthday. Children are entitled to 5x3hr sessions per week. These may be taken every morning or every afternoon or as 2 full days and one half day (either am or pm) Parents/ carers can pay for extra sessions on top of their entitlement.

We offer lunch club which can either be included as part of the afternoon session or can be paid for as an extra hour of provision.

See Admissions Policy for more information.

We believe it is important to forge a partnership between home and school right from the start. Children and their families are visited in their homes prior to starting nursery. This develops home school links in the following ways:

- It opens lines of communication between home and the setting
- It allows parents to discuss anxieties in private including health issues or dietary needs
- It allows staff to meet children in their own secure environment and begin to establish relationships
- It allows staff to observe children in a relaxed atmosphere

See home visits policy for more information

We invite families to join us for family sessions which are held during the term prior to the children starting nursery. Family sessions are held on afternoons and are designated for families to visit the nursery with their child. These sessions run over the course of three weeks and enable the child and their family to become familiar with practitioners, the setting and routines.

Reception (F2)

Meole Brace CE Primary School and nursery provides full-time Early Years education for children in the Reception Year. This is for children who enter school from September of the academic year in which they will turn five years old.

Before they start in the setting, all children are offered a series of visits during the summer term. The purpose of these initial visits is for the children to meet their new practitioners and start to become familiar with the setting environment. Practitioners, with parental permission, will also go to visit the children in their current pre-school settings.

In the summer term parents are invited into school for an induction meeting. At this meeting information regarding the induction process and what goes on in the setting is shared. There is also time for informal chat and parents' questions. School information packs are distributed to parents at this meeting, detailing school routines and expectations.

From September children attend the setting full-time, though parents can opt for their child to attend part time should they see fit. Every effort is made to make children feel safe, secure and happy. There is a relaxed and open ethos in the setting. Established routines, a calm atmosphere and encouraging talk are some of the strategies practitioners use to maintain children's positive feelings about school.

See Admissions Policy for more information.

9. Transition to Key Stage One

During the final term of Reception transition meetings are held between Foundation Stage practitioners and Year one teachers. The child's EYFSP forms the basis of the discussion so that the receiving teacher has a good understanding of the child's learning and development and characteristics of learning. The first term in year one allows the children to continue to work in a practical way following the EYFS curriculum if progression towards early learning goals has not been assessed as expected. Children who have exceeded the early learning goal move onto the National Curriculum.

Transition meetings for parents and carers are held in the summer term when information about routines and schemes of work is shared and parent/carers are able to meet with their child's Year one teacher.

10. Equal Opportunities

All staff in school have a responsibility to maintain positive attitudes to diversity and difference, ensuring that inclusive practice is delivered throughout the school.

All children, irrespective of gender, ability, ethnicity, culture or religion, and social circumstances, have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development within the EYFS setting.

See Equal Opportunities Policy for more information.

11. Special Educational Needs

The early identification of special needs is vital and procedures listed within the SEN code of Practice are followed.

Early years staff liaise with parents, SENCO, Health visitors, Speech therapists, Occupational therapists, ESHIC and the Educational Psychology service to meet the needs of individual children.

See Special Educational Needs Policy.

Policy written January 2014

Review date

Foundation stage co-ordinator

Foundation Stage Governor
