

Valley Road School

Early Years Policy

May 2021

Our Vision

Through a positive caring environment, we provide the opportunity for every child to reach their full potential. We ensure all children are ready for their next steps.

Within this document, the term Early Years is used to describe children within the Reception Class.

“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, Department for Education, March 2012

The Reception year must provide every child with a feeling of security, being valued and the confidence to explore new learning. The Reception year is unique in that it can set the tone for later school life.

The EYFS is based on four overarching principles:

- 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, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers; and
- Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.

This Early Years Policy includes the following:

- Aims and Principles
- Planning and organising the curriculum
- Classroom organisation and resources
- Use of whole school resources
- Induction
- Involving parents

- Language and Literacy Supporting the Reception Child
- Assessment and record keeping
- Monitoring and evaluation

Aims and Principles

- Reception practitioners should ensure that all children feel included, secure and valued.
- To provide a relevant curriculum with tasks that make sense to the children and are both practical and purposeful.
- To provide opportunities for children to engage in activities planned by adults and those that children plan or initiate themselves. Practitioners must consider the individual needs and interests of each child and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience in all areas of learning and development.
- Practitioners acknowledge the holistic nature of young children's learning and natural links will be made between different areas of the curriculum, with the emphasis on learning through play and the importance of developing speaking and listening skills.
- Practitioners must create a learning environment that develops children's imagination and encourages children to explore and express their ideas and feelings.
- Practitioners must respond to each child emerging needs and interests, guiding development through positive interaction.
- Involve parents and carers.

Planning and organising the curriculum

The curriculum for the Early Years forms the first stage of our Whole School Curriculum. It covers children in the Reception Class.

There are seven areas of learning and development that must provide a framework for planning, teaching and assessing in early years settings. All areas of learning and development are inter-connected.

The three prime areas are:

- Communication and Language – children will be given lots of opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; to speak and listen in a range of situations.
- Physical Development – children will be provided with opportunities to be active and interactive; to develop their co-ordination, control and movement. Children will be taught the importance of physical activity and to make healthy choices in relation to food.
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development – help children develop a positive sense of themselves and others; forming positive relationships and develop respect for others; develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and have confidence in their own abilities.

There are also four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied:

- Literacy – children will be taught to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children will be given access to a wide range of reading materials to ignite their interest.
- Mathematics – children will be provided 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.
- Understanding the World – Children will make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.
- Expressive Arts and Design – Children will explore and play with a 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.
- The curriculum is planned through a series of themes that reflect and respond to the children’s interests, offering experiences in all areas of the curriculum and which carry equal importance to provide a broad and balanced curriculum with opportunities for play and child- initiated activities.
- The long-term plan is the EYFS curriculum. This is an overarching framework that informs all other stages of planning. It shows the range of experiences and learning opportunities that are available while children are in the early years.
- Medium term planning takes the form of a theme based upon the children’s interests. It is evaluated weekly to respond to other emerging interests that the children may have.
- Short term plans select activities and learning objectives from medium term theme plan as deemed appropriate to meet the needs and interests of the children. Plans are extended and differentiated accordingly.
- Planning should provide a clear balance between challenging the most able children in some cases to exceed Early Learning Goals whilst recognising that an attempt to implement the more formal work before a child is ready could damage a child’s disposition to learn.
- By the end of the Reception year, the Numeracy and Literacy lessons will be in place in preparation for children entering Year 1.

Classroom Organisation and Resources

The organisation of the classroom reflects the importance that is placed on children learning through play and first-hand experience, developing independence and having opportunities to initiate their own activities.

The Reception class provides the following areas:

- Small world tray for retelling stories
- Role play area
- Large and small construction
- Sand and water
- Book corner with a range of fiction and non-fiction books

- Writing table with a range of writing resources
- Making area with access to a choice of natural and man-made resources
- Table top and small world toys
- Computers and printer
- Interactive whiteboard
- Malleable materials
- Musical instruments
- Painting and creative equipment
- Maths games and equipment
- Outside classroom – a safe, fenced area including a role-play gazebo, giant sand pit, den, outdoor chalkboard, planting equipment and areas, small sand pits, water trays, outside toys.

The Reception class also requests children bring in wellingtons and waterproof clothing in order to make full use of the outside classroom and school field.

Use of Whole School Resources

- The Reception class use the hall for dance, drama, physical education and assemblies.
- Use of outside field, playground and adventure playground.
- The kitchen for a range of cooking activities.
- The IT suite and ipad trolley for use in classrooms.
- Large range of musical instruments.
- Seating area next to the infant classrooms where work is displayed for children and parents to share.

Induction

We have close links with Cygnets and Bishopswood nurseries, meeting to plan together throughout the year. This allows the pre-school children and the Reception teacher to become familiar with each other before the transition period begins.

The Reception teacher will visit other local nurseries to meet the children, play alongside them indoors and outdoors, and share stories and songs for several whole morning sessions between Easter and the end of the Summer Term.

A transition meeting to discuss children's transition records is held between the co-ordinators and class teachers in July.

Also in July, a meeting is held by the EYFS Coordinator and Reception teacher to introduce parents/carers to the school, reception procedures and curriculum. Parents/carers are given a school prospectus which

outlines the curriculum and school routines, along with a document pack to be completed and returned to school.

When school starts in September, all parents/carers have the option to have their children in school full time if they feel that their child is ready. They are part time for the first two weeks. In the first week they leave before lunch, and in the second, just after. The Reception teacher will consult with parents about how their child is settling into school to ensure that children are not becoming over tired with the days that they are doing in school through the first term.

Reception children are introduced to the life of the wider school gently as they are ready. Playtimes are separate in the first week allowing the children to settle with their classmates in a quiet atmosphere, building to full participation in school playtimes. The process is the same for assemblies, building up to full participation by the end of the first term. They participate in school assemblies as fully as possible, and every attempt is made to ensure the children know what to expect.

Involving Parents

Parents/carers are the child's first and most enduring educators. When Parents/carers and practitioners work together in early years settings, the results have a positive impact on the child's development. A successful partnership needs to be a two-way flow of information, knowledge and expertise. We aim to develop this by:

- Outlining how the EYFS is being delivered to Parents/carers during the new parents meeting in July, to enable them to understand the value of supporting their child's learning at home and how they can access more information.
- Newsletters are sent home every two weeks to keep parents informed of their child's current curriculum and learning experiences. There are also regular updates and photographs on TEAMS
- Operating an "open door" policy, whereby parents/carers can come and discuss concerns and developments in an informal manner.
- Sharing progress at school through annotated photographs and observations in a range of formats.
- In the Autumn term, there will be an evening meeting for parents to further explain the curriculum, with a particular focus on phonics and reading, and to share ideas on how parents can be involved.
- Discussing individual next steps and progress with parents/carers at parents' evening in Autumn and Spring terms.
- Providing an annual written report to parents/carers in July summarising the child's progress against the early learning goals and EYFS assessment scales.
- All parents will be invited to join the Valley Road PTA, which exists to facilitate social occasions so that families can get to know one another and feel part of the school, to raise money to provide extras that enhance the education of all children in school and to contribute to the ethos of the school by providing support for staff e.g. on special occasions by organising refreshments and making new-comers feel welcome.
- Any concerns over special needs will be discussed with parents and the Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) for the school.

Language and Literacy Supporting the Reception Child

- The first books that children bring home to share with parents/carers will be picture books and then books with simple repetitive text and rhymes.
- During the year, each child will take home independent reading books that have been shared at school.
- Each child may also take home a range of reading games or activities that involve matching sounds and pictures; making, reading and writing simple words that can be practised at home.

Assessment and Recording

This is in line with the school Assessment Policy.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This is in line with the school self-evaluation policy and associated documents.

Roles and Responsibilities beyond the Class Teacher

NURSERY NURSE

A NN is assigned to work with the Reception class each day. It is the NN's role to assist and support the Reception teacher as fully as possible. The NN will work with individuals and groups of children under the direction of the Reception teacher. The NN will be proactive in encouraging development in all areas of learning as well as aiding assessment, administration and enhancing the work space. Input and feedback to the Reception teacher is seen as a vital element in the education of the children.

TA

It may be the case another TA will also be in the class at the beginning of the year to aid settling in.

EYFS COORDINATOR

The coordinator's role is to support and challenge the class teachers in order to secure the highest quality education to the children.