Early years Foundation Stage Policy (EYFS)

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Introduction

This policy outlines the standards for learning, development and care for children within our EYFS settings, from the age of two to five. We know that children learn and develop more from birth to five years old than at any other time in their lives and we want to give every child the best start to their education through quality teaching and experiences in their Early Years. Throughout this policy we use the terms teacher and practitioner interchangeably, both refer to every adult working with children within our Early Years classes/settings.

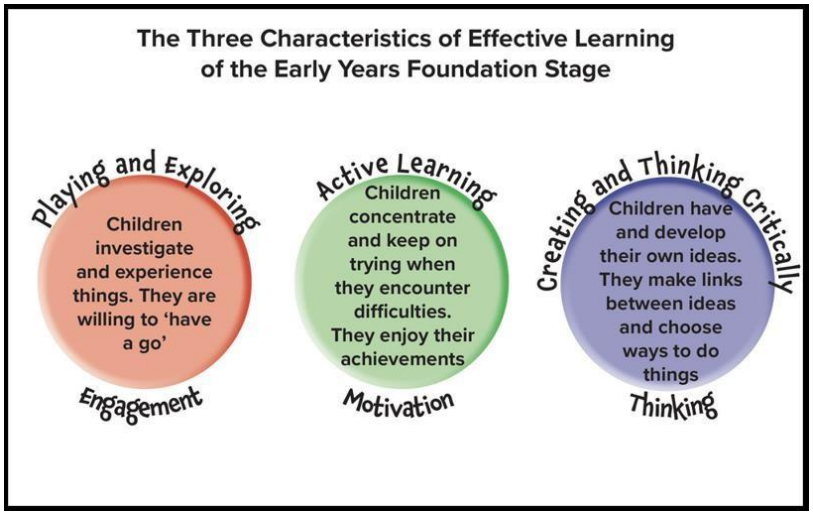
Aims

In all our EPA EYFS settings we aim to:

- Provide safe, challenging, stimulating, caring and sharing environments which are sensitive to the needs of every child and ensure that all children, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability achieve their potential.
- Provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for their future learning and development.
- Use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress.
- Enable choice and decision making, fostering independence and self-confidence.
- Work in partnership with parents and guardians and value their contributions.
- Through early identification, ensure that early support is provided for children who need it, including children with additional needs.

Overarching Principles

The EYFS is about what children learn, as well as how they learn. Effective practice is a mix of different approaches. Children learn through play, by adults modelling, by observing each other and through adult-guided learning. We recognise that children learn effectively when they are able to play, explore and think creatively and critically. This belief underpins the teaching and learning experiences we provide. The Characteristics of Effective Learning are:



Partnerships with Parents/Carers

It is important for parents/carers and our early years settings to have a strong and respectful partnership. This sets the scene for children to thrive in the early years. We endeavour to provide opportunities to strengthen this partnership, such as 'stay and play' sessions or 'open afternoons', where parents/carers will be able to share children's achievements and interests and become part of the school community. We will communicate with parents regularly, giving them insights into their child's learning, including their 'next steps' and ways that they can be supported at home. Often these are done via online learning journals, such as Tapestry. It is important to encourage all parents to chat, play and read with their children. Practitioners will be aware that some children get much less support at home than others and can offer extra help to those who need it most. Please also see our Key Person Approach.

Play

We recognise the importance of children's play as an essential part of their learning process. Play is a powerful motivator, encouraging children to be creative and 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 the children to learn a variety of different skills and concepts. Children need opportunities to develop their own play which they find enjoyable and motivating. They also need adults to 'scaffold' their learning by bridging that gap to help children achieve new things. We recognise that young children learn best when they are active. We understand that active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustainable periods. Therefore, we believe that early years education should be as practical as possible and we have an ethos of learning through play.

The Learning Environment

All children will have access to an inside learning environment and an outside learning environment. Both of these spaces will be valued equally and children will have access to both indoor and outdoor areas throughout the day. We strive to provide indoor and outdoor environments that:

- Are welcoming, stimulating and safe
- Are appropriate for young children's physical needs
- Are organised so that children can access resources, make choices and be independent learners
- Provide both quality and varied play experiences
- Have areas that facilitate learning in all areas of the curriculum
- Inside, we use displays to reinforce the value of children's work, celebrate achievements and help children consolidate prior learning

Learning and Development

All children deserve to have an equal chance of success and therefore high quality early education and care must be inclusive. It is vital that all special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are identified quickly and that all children promptly receive any extra help through the implementation of early intervention, so they can progress well in their learning.

Practitioners should feel confident in supporting children's language and communication, executive function and self-regulation in the Early Years. Language development is central to the Early Years Foundation Stage and it is important that children are given lots of opportunities to develop their language and communication skills. Executive function includes the child's ability to hold information in mind, focus their attention, think flexibly and inhibit impulsive behaviour. These abilities contribute to the child's growing ability to self-regulate and concentrate their thinking so they can plan what to do next, monitor what they are doing and adapt to different situations.

All children will follow a balanced curriculum that enables them to make progress towards the Learning Outcomes which are divided into two areas:

Prime Areas

The prime areas are fundamental areas of learning that provide the foundation for all other areas of learning. The Prime Areas must be prioritised for our youngest children. These areas develop quickly in response to relationships and experiences, and run through and support learning in all other areas. The prime areas continue to be fundamental throughout the EYFS.

Specific Areas

The specific areas grow out of the prime areas and provide important contexts for learning. Specific areas include essential skills and knowledge for children to participate successfully in society. These are divided up further into 17 learning Areas:

Prime Areas	
Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Making relationships Self-regulation Managing self
Physical Development	Gross motor skills Fine motor skills
Communication and Language	Listening, attention and understanding Speaking
Specific areas	
Literacy	Comprehension Word reading Word writing
Mathematics	Number Numerical patterns
Understanding the World	Past and present People, culture and communities The natural world
Expressive Arts and Design	Creating with materials Being imaginative and expressive

Curriculum

The curriculum is a top-level plan of everything the early years setting wants the children to learn. It needs to be ambitious, develop children's early language and include careful sequencing that builds upon children's learning over time. Planning needs to flexible and build upon children's interests. Depth in early learning is much more important than covering lots of things in a superficial way. We encourage each setting to build their curriculums around high quality texts.

Approaches to teaching and learning

Every child can make progress in their learning with the right help. Effective pedagogy in the early years is a combination of different approaches. Children learn through play, by adults modelling, by observing each other, and through guided learning and direct teaching. Through carefully organised enabling environments for high-quality play, children should be given the opportunities to create their own play. Practitioners should have the

skills to be able to scaffold and intervene in order to develop children's knowledge and skills. Children in the early years also learn through group work, when practitioners guide their learning, particularly older children in the early years. A well-planned learning environment, indoors and outside, is an important aspect of pedagogy.

Through a mixture of child-led, adult- initiated and adult led provision, children can have access to a range of experiences that develop their learning.

Child-led provision:

Classroom environments need to reflect both the overall curriculum and the children's interests. Children should be able to independently access a classroom that shows a balance of deliberate teaching and spontaneous learning. Children need to be given the skills to access their own learning and develop their own interests through child-led exploration. It is important that the children are given lots of opportunities to choose their own learning path through play.

Adult-initiated provision:

Adults should be confident intervening during children's play to support and extend learning and to widen children's experiences. There will be occasions where children's play needs to be supported to develop key skills such as communicating with others. This might be achieved through careful questioning or modelling a range of skills and experiences. Practitioners need to spend time getting to know their children and become familiar with each, individual child's needs. Teachers need to have a secure understanding of child development and understand the features of effective pedagogy: judging when to get involved and when to encourage; knowing how to scaffold children's learning so we can support them, without taking over entirely.

Adult-led provision:

Children in the early years should have a section of the day where their learning is guided by the adults. Through careful curriculum planning and ongoing assessment, precision teaching will ensure the children develop their key knowledge and skills. These sessions should include a Phonics and Maths session that is planned and tailored to the children and their needs; sessions should be engaging and encourage children to develop both their curriculum knowledge and characteristics of effective teaching and learning.

Practitioners need to assess their cohort and find their own balance between child and adult-led provision depending on the age and stage of the children in their current cohort. Teachers and leaders are encouraged to design their own timetable that reflects their own class of children. A careful balance of this provision ensures children are always learning and growing in independence every day.

Assessment

Effective assessment requires practitioners to understand child development. Assessment is about noticing what children can do and what they know and making professional judgements without lots of data and evidence that uses up time spent with the children. Assessment should not take adults away from valuable childinteraction time for prolonged periods of time nor require excessive paperwork.

Practitioners should plan for regular, ongoing formative assessments that directly impacts in planning and provision for the children. Teachers should focus on where the needs are in the class and action this directly into their practice. Practitioners need to be able to ensure that their decisions consider each individual child and their interests. Through careful observation, practitioners can identify strengths and the needs of the child to inform further intervention and planning.

Alongside these formative assessments, practitioners will need to report on their children's progress over the different checkpoints in line with the EPA. Practitioners will also need to complete the statutory Two Year Old check, the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) and the statutory end of Reception Early Years
Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) which is an assessment against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELGs). At these summative assessment points teachers need to assess whether children are 'working at' 'below' or 'above' age related expectations. Practitioners should also meet regularly to share good practice and take part in moderation activities with schools within the partnership.

Parents/carers are given the opportunities to meet with their child's teacher at least twice a year and they receive an end of year written report in relation to their child's progress, achievements and next steps.

Practitioners should feel confident when consulting outside agencies, and where necessary, organise visits for children who need additional support when deciding future care. Where necessary, referrals are made and early assessments requested so that extra support for children and their families can be accessed.

High Quality Care

The child's experience must always be central to the thinking of every practitioner. High quality care needs to be consistent. Every practitioner needs to enjoy spending time with young children. Effective practitioners are responsive to children while understanding that children need opportunities to grow in independence. Please also refer to the EPA Safeguarding and Attendance policies.

Ratios and Qualifications

All of our settings adhere to the statutory early years ratios and qualifications, including having a paediatric first aid qualification. Children are always well supervised, including when they are eating such as snack and lunchtimes. Please refer to The Early Years Statutory Framework for more details: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stageframework--2.

Key Person Approach

Each child must be assigned a key person before they begin at the school. The role of the Key Person is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs, to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents/carers.

Food and Drink (including supervision while eating)

Where children are provided with meals, snacks, and drinks, these must be healthy, balanced and nutritious. Fresh drinking water must always be available and accessible to children. We must refer to the Nutritional Guidance, which can be found here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6839b75221069 8b3364e86fc/Early_years_foundation_stage_nutrition_guidance.pdf

All staff involved in preparing and handling food must receive training in food hygiene and must prepare food in a way to prevent choking. Guidance on food safety for young children can be found here: Food safety - Help for early years providers - GOV.UK (education.gov.uk).

Children must always be seated and well supervised when eating and drinking. Choking can be completely silent therefore it is important for staff to be alert to when a child may be starting to choke. Where possible, children should sit facing staff whilst they eat so they can make sure children are eating in a way to prevent choking and so they can prevent food sharing and be aware of any unexpected allergic reactions. When children are eating there must be someone in the room with Paediatric First Aid training. Where children have food allergies there should be an allergy action plan in place.

Safety of Premises

All Early Years classes must be safe and suitable for the age of children cared for. Thought is given to inside spaces, including overall floor space, and outdoor spaces. Risk assessments should be in place for both inside and outside. Risk assessments should identify aspects of the environment that need to be checked on a regular basis, when and

by whom those aspects will be checked, and how the risk will be removed or minimised. Thought given to risk-benefit analysis when planning children a range of stimulating activities and experiences.

Sleeping

We recognise some children may require a sleep whilst in our care and we must ensure safe sleeping practices are in place to protect children. Clear procedures, proper equipment and vigilant supervision prevent sleep related harm. NHS and Lullaby Trust provide authoritative, evidence-based guidance for safer sleep practices in the UK. Both organisations emphasise:

1 Safe Sleep Space

Children should sleep on firm, flat surfaces, like suitable mats, to prevent suffocation risks. These mats should be cleaned between use and a fitted sheet used per child. Soft surfaces like sofas and beanbags increase the risk of suffocation and positional asphyxia in sleeping children so should not be used for sleeping. Sleep areas must be free of pillows, cushions, toys, loose bedding, hanging cords/curtains to minimise entrapment hazards.

2 Avoiding Overheating

NHS recommends maintaining a room temperature between 16 and 20 degrees Celsius for safe and comfortable sleep. Light and minimal clothing layers are advised; thick blankets or duvets should be avoided to reduce overheating risks. Staff should check children for signs of overheating and adjust clothing or bedding accordingly for safety.

3 Proper Supervision

Staff should observe children easily and perform regular checks to maintain a safe sleep environment. Sleeping children must be checked frequently at regular intervals, we recommend carrying out these checks every ten minutes. We also recommend documenting these sleep checks in order to promote accountability and support compliance with safeguarding and inspection standards.

If a child falls asleep within provision the above safer sleeping procedures still need to be followed. Ensure they are in a safe, clear sleeping space and check them every ten minutes. If a child is regularly falling asleep in provision this needs to trigger further conversations.

Partnerships with parents/carers are important. Approach conversations with parents/carers sensitively and openly, respecting established routines and cultural practices. In these conversations we want to promote:

- Consistent bedtime routines
- Limited screen time before bed

• Appropriate sleep duration

• Supportive, non-judgemental conversations

If the school includes 2-year-olds we recommend explaining this safer sleep policy at induction and provide written materials to ensure understanding. Again, if the school includes 2-year-olds, it's very much recommended that a member of staff completes safer sleep training run by The Lullaby Trust.

Please refer to https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/safer-sleep-advice/ for more information on safe sleeping.

Toileting and intimate care

All children will have access to clean, well-stocked and safe toileting provision. All children are treated with dignity and respect. We recognise that some children will need support with toileting, either due to the age, developmental stage or because of disability or medical need. Children's privacy is considered and balanced with safeguarding and support needs when changing nappies and toileting.

When providing intimate care:

- We recommend a written record will be kept of when children have needed to be changed. This may include the date and time of the care, who was present and any care given. Parents should be kept informed of when children have needed to be changed.
- Good hygiene will be observed, including the use of gloves, hand washing and appropriate disposal of soiled items (clothes bagged, nappies in nappy bin etc).
- Schools will ensure that anyone who undertakes intimate care is an employee of the school and has had appropriate safeguarding checks. We strive for consistency of care and aim for the child's Key Person to provide support with intimate care.

We will work with children and their parents/carers to promote bladder and bowel health and maximum possible continence. This includes encouraging them to be as independent as they are able with their personal care. Guidance from The Children's Bladder and Bowel charity ERIC states that most children are ready to master potty independence and lead in many parts of the process from around 18 months. Indeed, research shows it is better for your child's bladder and bowel health to stop using nappies between 18 and 30 months. The majority of children will be capable of doing most things including wiping by themselves when they start school. Please refer to https://eric.org.uk/potty-training/ for more information on toilet training.

Screen Use

Evidence shows that screens can have a big impact on children and their development in the early years. Evidence suggests that too much screentime is associated with poorer cognitive and behavioural abilities in children, such as reduced verbal activity and reduced vocabulary, and can be associated with developmental delays, reduced attention and lower executive function.

Screen use should be limited to one hour a day, or less, for children aged two to five years. When thinking about using screens with children in our settings, we should bear in mind that they may already reach these screen time limits at home. Therefore, we should take a precautionary approach to using screens, only using them when strictly necessary for delivering specific learning and development aims.

Screens should never replace high-quality educator-child interactions, i.e. for a story or a song, as direct human interaction provides a much richer experience for children. Children should never passively watch a screen. Good practice if we are using a screen involves adults co-engaging with children, prompting children to think, predict, respond or discuss, and avoiding activities which provide an automatic response without any effort on the part of the child. We can do this through using techniques such as commenting, narrating, describing and open-ended questioning to stimulate conversation with children when using screens. Interactive, screen-free activities are preferable.

Parents and carers may look to us for advice and guidance on screen use for their children. We should work in partnership with families to share good practice to support healthy screen use at home. More information can be found here: https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/screenuse

Medical Conditions and Allergies

We must obtain a comprehensive list of a child's allergies, dietary requirements, and medical needs before they start with us. For any child with a known allergy or medical condition we must collaborate with parents/carers to establish an Individual Care Plan or a specific Allergy Action Plan. Also consider whether an individual risk assessment is required i.e. to consider allergens in sensory play. Emergency medication should be easily accessible to staff in the room where the child is located. Staff should receive the necessary training to be able to care for every child with confidence. Please refer to EPA policies including Supporting Children with Medical Needs Policy, First Aid and Medicines Policy and Allergy Safety Policy for more information.

Equal Opportunities

All practitioners have a responsibility to maintain positive attitudes to diversity and difference, ensuring that inclusive practice is delivered in the EYFS setting. All children, irrespective of gender, ability, ethnicity, culture or religion, and social circumstances, must have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development. See Equal Opportunities Policy for more information.

Monitoring and Review

There is a named governor for each EYFS setting who will discuss practice with practitioners. Head teachers will carry out monitoring of the EYFS settings as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.