

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy

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Rationale

“Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to their full potential. A child’s experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure safe and happy childhood is important in its own right, and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up. The Early Years Foundation Stage is the framework that provides that assurance.”

Guidance

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. In Futura Learning Partnership (the trust) schools, all children join us, part time, at the beginning of the school year in which they are five. They begin attending school full time after the initial two week induction period. During their induction period, children will attend school for half days in weeks one and two and will stay for lunch in week two and three, by which time it is expected that most children will be attending school full time.

Founding Principles

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

A Unique Child

The trust recognises that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Children’s attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration/sharing assemblies and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Inclusion

The trust is committed to inclusive practice. We value the diversity of individuals within the school and do not discriminate against children because of ‘differences’. The trust treats each child fairly and with respect. All children and their families are welcomed to our community and are valued within each of our schools.

The trust believes that all of our children matter. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children’s range of life experiences when planning for their learning.

In the EYFS we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- planning opportunities that build upon and extend children’s knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence
- using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children’s learning needs
- providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively
- providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued
- using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills
- Monitoring children’s progress and taking action to provide support as necessary.

Safeguarding children’s well-being and ensuring that they are kept from harm is of paramount importance. We aim to educate children about boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards.

Welfare

“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.”

The trust recognises and understands that we are legally required to comply with certain welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2017. We understand that we are required to:

- Promote the welfare of children.
- Promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill.
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children’s stage of development and individual needs.
- Ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.
- Ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose
- Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs.
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

Positive Relationships

The trust recognises that children learn independence from secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with children and their families.

Parents as Partners

We recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make.

We recognise the role that parents have played, and their future role, in educating their children. We do this through:

- An introductory induction meeting for all parents;
- talking to parents about their child before their child starts in our school;
- the children have the opportunity to spend time with the teachers and EYFS staff before starting school such as during 'Stay and Play' afternoons or shared story times;
- inviting all parents to an induction meeting before their child starts school;
- offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress in our reception class and allowing regular access to the children's 'Learning Journey' books and/or Tapestry records;
- Encouraging parents to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns. There is a formal meeting for parents twice a year at which the teacher and the parent discuss the child's progress in private with the teacher. Parents receive a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each school year;
- arranging a range of activities throughout the year that encourages collaboration between child, school and parents: Wow workshops, School trips, Concerts, Sports Day etc.;
- Providing space in the children's 'Learning Journey' booklets and/or Tapestry records for parent to leave comments relating to the children's achievements.

All staff involved with the EYFS aim to develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them. The EYFS teacher acts as a 'Key Person' to all children in EYFS, supported by the teaching assistant, who provides interventions for their key children.

We have good links with our local pre-schools. Regular visits are undertaken by the EYFS teacher and EYFS staff. The EYFS teacher meets with pre-school staff to discuss new intake children. Staff and children from pre-school are regularly invited to school events (Christmas productions, concerts and Sports Day, etc.).

Enabling Environments

The trust recognises that each setting's learning environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development. This begins by observing the children and assessing their interests, development and learning, before planning challenging but achievable activities and experiences to extend the children's learning.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

Planning within the EYFS follows the schools' long term plan and medium term plans, which are based around half termly themes. These plans are used by the EYFS teacher as a guide for weekly planning, however the teacher may alter these plans in response to the needs (achievements and interests) of the children. This will be indicated on weekly planning as Possible Lines of Development (PLODS).

We make regular assessments of children's learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the EYFS takes the form of observation, and this involves the teacher and other adults as appropriate. These observations are recorded in children's individual 'Learning Journey' books and using Tapestry software. These sources also contain information provided by parents.

All trust schools will use, from September 2021, Tapestry for recording progress to enable more meaningful moderation and collaboration across settings. This will include baseline, mid-year and end of year assessments.

Within the final term of the EYFS, we provide a written report for parents. The written report provides a summary of each child's progress against the Early Learning Goals and assessment scales. We provide regular opportunities for the parents to discuss these judgements with the EYFS teacher.

The Learning Environment

The EYFS setting is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet and where they can rest.

The classroom is set up in learning areas, where children are able to find and located equipment and resources independently. Where possible, EYFS settings will have their own outdoor and covered area. This has a positive effect on the children's development. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. It offers the children space to explore, use their senses and be physically active.

Learning and Development

The trust recognises that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are interconnected.

Teaching and Learning Style

Our policy on teaching and learning defines the features of effective teaching and learning in our school. Features that relate to the EYFS are:

- the partnership between teachers and parents, so that our children feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement
- the understanding that teachers' have of how children develop and learn, and how this affects their teaching
- the range of approaches used that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions and extend and develop play and talk or other means of communication
- the carefully planned curriculum that helps children work towards the Early Learning Goals throughout the EYFS
- the provision for children to take part in activities that build on and extend their interests and develop their intellectual, physical, social and emotional abilities;
- the encouragement for children to communicate and talk about their learning, and to develop independence and self-management
- the support for learning with appropriate and accessible indoor and outdoor space, facilities and equipment

- the identification of the progress and future learning needs of children through observations, which are shared with parents
- the good relationships between our school and the settings that our children experience prior to joining our school
- there will be a gradual increase over the year, in preparation for KS1, of a more didactic teaching approach. Elements of more formal approaches will start from term 1.

Play

“Children’s play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. In their play children learn at their highest level. Play with peers is important for children’s development.”

Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, and learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. They express fears or re-live anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.

Active Learning

“Children learn best through physical and mental challenges. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods.”

Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need to have some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence they learn to make decisions. Play provides children with a sense of satisfaction and control as they take ownership of their learning.

Creativity and Critical Thinking

“When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, they discover connections and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. Adult support in this process enhances their ability to think critically and ask questions.”

Children will be given opportunities to be creative through all areas of learning, not just through the arts. Adults will support children’s thinking and help them to make connections by showing genuine interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open questions. Children are able to access resources freely and are allowed to move them around the classroom to extend their learning.

The areas of learning and development

There are seven areas of learning and development. All areas of learning and development are important and are interconnected. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children’s curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. These three areas, the prime areas, are:

- Communication and language;
- Physical development; and
- Personal, social and emotional development.

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

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design.

None of these areas can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are equally important and depend on each other. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult led and child initiated activities. In each area there are Early Learning Goals that define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS.

In planning and guiding children's activities, adults will reflect upon the different ways that children learn. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

- playing and exploring - children investigate and experience things, and are encouraged to 'have a go'
- active learning - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties; they enjoy their achievements, and
- creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

The teaching of phonics is central to the development of reading. The trust's preferred approach is a total alignment with Read Write Inc. This will be implemented if there are concerns with the phonic outcomes. This will require a rigorous and consistent tracking system that enables early identification and intervention when a child fails to make the expected rate of progress.