



Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

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The Acorn Federation Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Introduction

“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.”

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards that all early years’ providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children’s ‘school readiness’ and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.

“Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage”,

Department for Education, 2021

The Early Years Foundation Stage applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. At The Acorn Federation children are admitted into reception in the September following their fourth birthday.

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At The Acorn Federation we greatly value the importance that the EYFS plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development. However, we also believe that early childhood is valid in itself as part of life. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

School Vision

Through working in partnership with our children, their families, staff and the local community we want all children to know they are God’s creation and that they are valued for all their talents so that they can succeed now and throughout their lives.

Our School Aims

Our Early Years aims align to our whole school aims. In the Acorn Federation we aim:

- To provide a happy, secure learning environment for all children
- To actively engage children in learning
- To foster a caring, family atmosphere in which everyone's contribution to the life of the school has equal value
- To enable a broad, balanced, appropriate and relevant curriculum for every child suited to their needs, abilities and interests
- To equip children with the basic literacy, numeracy and reference skills to make full use of the learning opportunities offered in their future Secondary Schools
- To allow children to fulfil their own potential
- To help all children to gain confidence, self-respect and a positive self-image

- To encourage curiosity and open mindedness
- To promote a Christian ethos within the life of the school which reflects its Anglican Foundation-
- To provide a moral code of behaviour
- To encourage children to participate in all the physical and creative arts activities available to them
- To prepare children for life in a multi-cultural society by developing knowledge, tolerance and understanding of other faiths and cultures
- To work in partnership with families and the community

Our Curriculum Intent

Our Early Years curriculum has been designed to ensure that each and every child is offered stimulating and awe-inspiring experiences with our aims and ethos at the core. Our progressive curriculum enables us to build strong relationships, celebrate diversity, encourage respect and build a sense of community. It provides and acknowledges success for all children, in all aspects of their development and it recognises, encourages and celebrates all types of talent.

We provide first hand learning experiences that allow children to develop independence, interpersonal skills and build resilience. Our cross-curricular approach enables our children to make meaningful links with their learning, designed to inspire an enthusiasm for learning and a love of reading, to ensure achievement and to support pupil well-being and happiness.

The early-years education we offer our children is based on the following principles:

- It builds on what our children already know and can do;
- It ensures that no child is excluded or disadvantaged;
- It offers a structure for learning that has a range of starting points, content that matches the needs of young children, and activities that provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors;
- It provides a rich and stimulating environment;
- It acknowledges the importance of a full working partnership with parents and carers.

Legislation

This policy is based on requirements set out in the 2021 statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

Key Person Approach

In Reception the key person assigned to each pupil will be the Reception Class Teacher and/or Early Years Lead

The responsibilities of a key person include

- helping the child to become familiar with the setting
- building a relationship with each child's parents, working in partnership with them to ensure that the child is being cared for appropriately for each family.
- responding sensitively to the child's needs, feelings, ideas and behaviour.
- ensuring that the learning opportunities on offer meet the needs of each child.

Our teaching assistants also contribute to the Key Person role on a day to day basis.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is based on four themes:

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

A Unique Child

At The Acorn Federation we recognise 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 and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Inclusion - We value the diversity of individuals within the school and believe that every child matters. All children are treated fairly regardless of race, gender, religion or abilities. All families are valued within our schools.

We give our children every opportunity to achieve their personal best and planning is adapted to meet the needs of all groups and abilities. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when we are planning for their learning.

In the Foundation Stage we set realistic and challenging expectations keyed to the needs of our children, so that most achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the stage. We do this 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 learn effectively;
- Offering a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- Employing resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- Planning challenging activities to meet the needs of both boys and girls, of children with special educational needs, of children who are more able, of children with disabilities and of children from all social and cultural backgrounds.
- Monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary (such as referrals to speech therapy) as necessary.
- Working closely with parents, carers and other outside agencies to ensure all children's needs are met and we enable them to access the curriculum and make good progress.

Positive Relationships

At The Acorn Federation we recognise that children learn to be strong, confident and independent from being in secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

Parents as Partners - We recognise that parents/carers are children's first and most enduring educators and we value being partners with them in their child's education through:

- Inviting children before they start their school journey to our 'Little Monkeys' getting to know us sessions

- Talking to parents/carers before their child starts school at our induction meeting to discuss school routines, expectations and to answer any questions parents/carers may have.
- Inviting new starters to spend time in Reception Class for sessions during the summer term.
- Operating an open-door policy for parents/carers with any queries or concerns. Conversely, if Foundation staff have concerns about the progress of a child, they will immediately approach parents and carers to discuss them.
- Written contact through the Reading record and school newsletters.
- Inviting parents to attend informal meetings about areas of the curriculum, such as phonics or reading.
- Offering two parents' evening meetings per year at which their child's progress is discussed.
- Sending a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of their time in reception.
- Parents are invited to a range of activities throughout the school year such as assemblies, workshops, Christmas Nativity play and sports day etc.
- Offering opportunities for parents and carers to visit the school on a volunteer basis to assist with the children's learning e.g. hearing readers.

Enabling Environments

At The Acorn Federation we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development, where the children feel confident, secure and challenged.

The Early Years classroom has been developed to offer a natural calm teaching space. The organisation of the classroom reflects the importance that is placed on developing independent, creative learners through play and first-hand experiences. Children have access to a wide range of resources and are taught to access these independently. We benefit from our own safe and secure outdoor area and the children access this through managed free flow provision everyday

The reception team aims to provide the following areas:

Role-play area

Small construction including wooden bricks, Lego, natural objects, small planks

Large construction including tins, tubes, crates, plants, pipes etc.

Sand and water play

Book corner – with a wide range of books including fiction and non-fiction

Books to support classroom areas including art books, maths books, construction themed books

Writing area with a range of resources to develop writing and phonics

Creative area with access to paint, recyclable materials, collage etc.

Playdough station

Musical instruments

Maths games and equipment

Small world toys

Learning and Developing

The Curriculum

Our Reception follow the curriculum as outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) document. This framework defines what we teach and we use the Development Matters guidance to support our curriculum. The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development, all of which are seen as important and interconnected. Three of the areas are referred to as the Prime areas. These are particularly important for building a foundation for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, forming relationships and thriving (Early Years Framework 2021)

The prime areas are;

- **Communication and language** Listening, Attention and Understanding, Speaking
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** Self-regulation, Managing Self, Building Relationships
- **Physical Development** Fine Motor, Gross Motor

The Prime areas are strengthened and applied through the further four areas which are referred to as the Specific areas.

- **Literacy** Comprehension, Word Reading, Writing
- **Mathematics** Numbers, Numerical patterns
- **Understanding the World** Past and present People, culture and communities
- **Expressive Arts and Design** Creating with materials, Being imaginative and expressive

We enrich the Early Years framework with our Acorn Federation curriculum to enhance the experience and opportunities available to the children. This includes special events and celebrations, memorable experiences, themes selected to drive the curriculum and half termly Forest School sessions. Our teaching of synthetic phonics is based on the All Aboard scheme and our teaching of mathematics is guided by the White Rose Maths Hub.

'It is the role of the setting to help children experience the awe and wonder of the world in which they live, through the seven areas of learning.' Ofsted Early Years Inspection Handbook, May 2019

Characteristics of Effective Learning

We ensure that our environment and delivery of the curriculum incorporates the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning:

- **Playing and exploring** - children will have opportunities to investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'. Through play, our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, 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.
- **Active learning** - children will have time and space to concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy their achievements. Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence, they learn to make decisions. It provides children with a sense of satisfaction as they take ownership of their learning.

- **Creating and thinking critically** - we encourage and support children to have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things. Children should be given the opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning. Adults can support children's thinking and help them make connections by showing interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open ended questions. Children can access resources and move around the classroom freely and purposefully to extend their learning.

Planning

The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum provides the basis for planning in our Reception classes. The planning objectives within the Foundation Stage are supported by the Development Matters Statements from the Early Years Foundation Stage document. Our planning is based upon themes with discrete lessons in phonics, reading, writing and maths. Practitioners select themes according to whole school themes, children's interests, experiences and prior learning. Progress and curriculum coverage are monitored half-termly. Staff also respond to children's social and emotional needs as well as their academic achievement.

Teaching

We ensure there is a balance of child-initiated learning through continuous provision, and adult led activities, across the school day. Although much of the time is spent with children self-selecting tasks, the interaction between the adult and child is essential. The adults respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction. 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 complete a task with them; at other times they will participate in the child's play, extending it where possible. There are set routines that we follow each day. There are designated times when the children come together to be taught and we focus on maths, literacy, phonics, stories and topic work. These times provide the opportunity for children to develop their ability to work as a group to listen, to take turns, to answer and concentrate. Whole class reading and story time are important parts of the day. We want our children to develop a life-long love of reading. Children are exposed to a wide range of both fiction and non-fiction texts to provide them with opportunities to hear and use new vocabulary. We imitate, innovate and invent stories through a Talk for Writing approach as we want our children to leave the EYFS knowing stories, both traditional and modern, well. We make sure there is always time for at least two whole class stories during the day, as well as opportunities to enjoy books within the continuous provision. In Reception every child is provided with a phonics based 'reading' book, alongside a story book. In school they will read everyday through our Phonics scheme.

Play

Learning through play underpins our approach to teaching and learning in the foundation stage. We embrace the fact that young children learn best from activities and experiences that interest and inspire them to learn. Our Reception classrooms and outdoor areas are also set up with areas of learning, offering continuous provision to build upon and deepen experiences and previous learning. Continuous provision provides children with stimulating, active play to encourage creative and critical thinking alongside other children, as well as on their own. Children are able to practice 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 interest, inspire those around them and consolidate their understanding and skills. The children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions. Our adults take an active role in child-initiated play through observing, modelling and questioning. They teach and extend play whilst developing skills and language. We understand that outdoor play is of equal importance as indoor play and therefore aim to offer guided access to our outdoor learning areas throughout the school day.

Observations

Foundation Stage staff use observations as the basis for planning and assessment. Staff are skilled at observing children to identify their achievements, interests and next steps for learning. These observations then lead the direction of the future planning. Each week the children's learning is recorded on the display learning journey and then transferred into the floor book. This enables children the opportunity to look back at previous learning.

Assessment

During the first week in Reception, the class teacher assesses the ability of each child using a baseline assessment. These assessments allow us to identify patterns of attainment within the cohort, in order to adjust the teaching programme for individual children and groups of children.

The Foundation Stage Profile is the nationally employed assessment tool that enables teachers to summarise their pupils' progress towards the Early Learning Goals. It covers each of the seven areas of learning contained in the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage.

We record each child's level of development against the 17 early Learning goals as emerging or expected. We make regular assessments of children's learning, and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the Foundation Stage takes the form of both formal and informal observations, photographic evidence and through planned activities. Assessment is completed regularly and involves both the teacher and other adults, as appropriate. The collection of assessment data in the Foundation Stage Profile is a statutory requirement.

Our tracking grids identify where we believe children need to be in their learning in order to meet the Early Learning Goal at the end of the year, are updated termly. At the end of the final term in Reception we send a summary of these assessments to the LA for analysis. We share this information with parents in the end-of-year report.

Parents receive an annual written report that discusses the child's characteristics of effective learning and offers comments on each child's progress in each area of learning. It highlights the child's strengths and development needs, and gives details of the child's general progress. We send these to parents in July each year.

Transition

Starting school can be a difficult time for young children; we therefore plan this time carefully to support children with the transition and to ensure it is as smooth as possible for each child and that they settle in to their new class quickly and happily.

Starting Reception – Parents of all children starting in the next academic year will be invited to an Induction Meeting in the summer term to meet their child's new teachers and other key staff and learn more about the Reception curriculum. This is an opportunity for staff to:

- Go through the school handbook
- Explain about uniform, PE kit and school dinners/ free school meals
- Explain about holidays and absences
- Explain the arrangements for the gradual induction in to reception

The children are able to come in to school to meet their new class teacher for three induction sessions during the summer term. Parents can leave their child during all sessions. This means that before they join their new class the Reception environment is already a familiar place to them.

Safeguarding & Welfare

At The Acorn Federation we understand that we are legally required to comply with welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2021.

The EYFS requires early years providers to show consideration of the following ten areas of safeguarding and welfare.

- **Child protection:** being alert to any issues for concern in a child's life and following appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures
- **Suitable people:** checking the suitability of practitioners and other people who have regular contact with children
- **Staff qualifications, training, support and skills:** ensuring staff are sufficiently qualified and have the knowledge and understanding necessary for their role
- **Key person:** assigning a named member of staff to build relationships with the child and parents in order to meet the child's individual needs
- **Staff-child ratios:** ensuring children are adequately supervised at all times
- **Health:** promoting the health of children and implementing procedures regarding illness, infection, food and drink, and accidents
- **Managing behaviour:** using appropriate strategies to understand and manage unwanted behaviour
- **Safety and suitability of premises, environment and equipment:** ensuring that indoor and outdoor space is fit for purpose and suitable for the age of the children and the activities offered
- **Special educational needs:** putting the necessary arrangements in place to support children with SEN or disabilities in accordance with the [SEND Code of Practice](#)
- **Information and records:** maintaining records and sharing information with parents and professionals as appropriate to meet children's needs

Keeping Safe

It is important to us that all children in the federation are 'safe'. We aim to educate children on 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. We encourage children to take risks and highlight the importance of keeping themselves safe by teaching them how to recognise and avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children. (See our Safeguarding Children Policy). Daily risk assessments of the environment are in place.

Food and Drink

All the children in the EYFS are entitled to a school meal, and milk is provided for under 5's during the morning. A variety of fruit is available for snack, and children are encouraged to bring their own healthy snack if they choose to. Children bring their own water bottles and these can be refilled during the day if required.

The children eat their lunch sitting together, alongside the other children within school, Staff are available to monitor the children's choices, encourage good table manners, correct use of a knife and fork, and help with the cutting up of food.

Information about the children's dietary needs is sought when they enter school. A list of the children's dietary needs is available and all practitioners have regard to this when putting out food and drink or when leading a cooking or food-tasting activity. The school dinner menus are displayed on the school website. Any concerns about how much or what a child is eating will be discussed with parents/carers.

Impact

We recognise that every child is unique and that they develop and learn in different ways and at varying rates. We want all of our children to develop a positive attitude to learning and therefore we strive for our children to become curious, resilient and self-assured in order to prepare them for the next stage of education, laying secure foundations for future learning and development

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of those working in Reception to follow the principles stated in this policy. The Head teacher, EYFS lead and EYFS governor will carry out monitoring on EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.