St Helen's Primary School

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

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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 Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.' DfE September 2021

At St Helen's, the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum forms the underpinning and overarching framework for learning and development, for all of the children in our care.

We intend to enable our children to learn through play, experimentation and exploration, while making friends, developing social skills and cultural capital. We strongly believe in first hand learning, valuing the importance of the outdoor environment to develop children's thinking and problem solving skills. We understand the importance of practical learning experiences and strive to equip children with a love of learning and a natural curiosity.

In order to implement this we listen to our children and those who care for them and use this information to personalise each child's learning. We make regular assessments of children's learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs and next steps. We have created an environment that fosters self-esteem and self-efficacy to take forward into the school and beyond.

The impact of this will be measured by the children making the progress that they are capable of. We believe that early identification of additional learning needs supports this. We are committed to giving our children the best possible start to their school life, teaching them skills which ensure their well-being now and success in the future.

Principles

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. The majority of our children join the Reception class in the September following their fourth birthday.

The EYFS is based upon four 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;
- **Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates**.

A Unique Child

At St Helen's Primary School 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 their school and home environments and we begin to build links with the families. We observe how each child learns to gain an understanding of the characteristics they develop to become effective learners. We use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their personal best and planning is adapted to meet the needs of our children. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when we are planning for their learning.

At the Foundation Stage we set realistic and challenging expectations to meet the needs of all our children, so that most achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the stage. We do this through:

- Assessing on entry and identifying pupils who need to make accelerated progress
- Planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests and develop their self-esteem and confidence through a creative curriculum and learning environment;
- 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;
- 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;
- Monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary;
- Planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills;
- Working closely with parents, carers and other outside agencies to ensure all children's needs are met and enable them to access the curriculum and make good progress.

Positive Relationships

At St Helen's Primary School 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.

<u>Parents as Partners</u> - 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:

- Developing strong links with our neighbouring playgroups and nurseries to ensure relationships with parents, particularly parents of vulnerable pupils are established prior to starting school.
- Inviting all parents to an induction meeting during the term before their child starts school and again during the first half term of the child's reception year in order to detail how we aim to work with their child, particularly in relation to supporting learning at home.
- Arranging, where possible, visits by the teacher to their childcare setting prior to them starting school.

- Providing a school prospectus to all parents containing information about starting at St Helen's Primary School.
- Offering parents/carers and children the opportunity to spend time in Reception Class before starting school.
- Holding a parent consultation early in the academic year to establish how a child is settling into the school environment and then another in the Spring term to discuss their child's progress and next steps.
- Providing parents with a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each school year.
- Encouraging parents to contribute observations from home through our online Learning Journey system.
- Sharing our approach to teaching Reading and Phonics including weekly communication through online reading diaries and home link pages on Tapestry.
- 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.
- Providing weekly information on children's personal online learning journey which ensure parents have a clear understanding of the learning.
- Inviting parents to attend informal meetings about areas of the curriculum, such as phonics or reading.

Enabling Environments

At St Helen's Primary School 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 children have daily access to an indoor and outdoor environment that is set up in discrete areas of learning with access to continuous provision. The EYFS classroom is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, quiet or rest. The classroom is set up in learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. Play-based learning is paramount and children have opportunities to direct their own learning with planned opportunities provided by staff.

We plan a learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, that encourages a positive attitude to learning and reflects the individual's interests, passions and abilities. During play we provide our children with opportunities to encounter or create uncertainty, unpredictability & potential hazards as a part of their play. We refer to this type of play as "risky play" which enables children to take risks, think through decisions, gain self-confidence and judge risks and manage them for themselves. Children will often seek out opportunities for engaging and adventurous play. This is a natural part of children's play and we offer the opportunity to benefit from activities such as climbing, sliding, balancing, jumping from heights, hanging upside down and opportunities to handle and use tools. If as adults we eliminate all the potential risks, children will not form these learning opportunities to keep themselves safe. The children attend weekly Forest School sessions on the school site where they have the opportunity to build dens, climb trees, look for bugs, whittle sticks and toast marshmallows over an open fire.

We use materials and equipment that reflect both the community that the children come from and the wider world. We encourage the children to make their own selection of the activities on offer, as we believe that this encourages independent learning. However, we encourage children to extend their learning and experiences through a Busy Learning card which is introduced in the Spring term. We ensure that resources and spaces are safe to use and checked regularly.

Learning and Development

At St Helen's we recognise 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. The children have time and freedom to become deeply involved in the activities and their learning.

There are seven areas of learning and development which require a balance of adult led and child initiated activities in order for most children to reach the levels required at the end of EYFS. The Prime areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The three Prime areas are:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Communication and Language
- Physical Development

Staff will also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

Specific Areas:

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

Through careful assessments and observations, including information provided by parents and other settings, children's levels of development are assessed. The balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning, as children grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas. However, if a child's progress in any of the prime areas gives cause for concern, staff will discuss this with the child's parents/carers and agree how to support the child. This may also include a discussion with the SENCo in order to access special educational needs support.

Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning

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

<u>Playing and exploring</u> - children 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.

<u>Active learning</u> - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy 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 - children 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.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

Foundation Stage staff use observations as the basis for planning. Staff are skilled at observing children to identify their achievements, interests and next steps for learning. These observations can then lead the direction of the planning. Some significant observations are recorded in the children's Learning Journeys on our online system, Tapestry. Teachers use the objectives from Development Matters non-statutory curriculum guidance to support planning. The planning is based upon themes with discrete phonics, maths and reading directed teaching. However, planning, which is based upon a different topic which is identified as the vehicle of interest to deliver the children's next steps in learning, also therefore responds to the needs, achievement and interests of the children.

During the first term in Reception, the teacher assesses the ability of each child using the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA). The RBA is an activity-based assessment of pupils' starting points in:

- language, communication and literacy
- mathematics

Teacher's also conduct their own baseline assessments to identify patterns of attainment within the cohort, in order to adjust the teaching programme for individual children and groups of children. 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 teacher keeps progress records and records examples of each child's work in separate work books. These work books contain a range of evidence that we share with parents at each parental consultation meeting. Tracking grids are updated at the end of each term. We record each child's level of development to be on track or not on track.

At the end of the Reception year in school, all children are assessed against the 17 Early Learning Goals and this is recorded onto the Early Years Profile. Within the final term of the EYFS, we provide a written summary to parents, reporting their progress against the ELG's and a short report on their Characteristics of Learning and next steps for Year One.

Teaching & Learning

The features of effective teaching and learning in our school are defined in our policy on teaching and learning. They apply to teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage just as much as they do to the teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 or 2.

Safeguarding & 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.'
(Statutory Framework for EYFS 2021)

At St Helen's Primary School, we understand that we are legally required to comply with welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage. 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 that all adults who look after the children, or who have unsupervised access to them, are suitable to do so.
- Ensure that the setting, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for the purpose it was intended for.
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for the safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

It is important to us that all children in the school 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 Whole School Safeguarding Children Policy)

Health and Safety

There are clear procedures for assessing risk which include procedures for keeping children safe during outings and for any aspects of the environment or provision that may require a further risk assessment. In addition to this, an annual risk assessment is conducted of the EYFS and in the safeguarding and child protection polices there is detailed information and procedures to ensure the safety of the children. The EYFS risk assessment must be read in conjunction with other relevant whole school polices.

In line with the EYFS statutory framework 2021, we undertake;

- A whole school medicines policy ensuring that there are systems in place to ensure that medicines and the systems for obtaining information about a child's needs for medication are kept up to date.
- Fresh drinking water and healthy snacks are available at all times
- Children's' dietary needs are recorded and acted upon when required
- A first aid box is accessible at all times and a record of accidents and injuries is kept (see First Aid policy).
- EYFS staff are paediatric first aid trained.
- A health and safety policy and procedures which cover identifying, reporting and dealing with accidents, hazards and faulty equipment.
- A fire and emergency evacuation procedure
- A safeguarding policy stating how mobile phones and cameras are to be used and stored securely whilst children are in the setting.
- All staff, regular helpers and volunteers have DBS checks.

Equal Opportunities

All members of the school are treated as individuals. We aim to meet the needs of all, taking account of gender, ability, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, sexual orientation, age, special educational needs, disability, and social circumstances. All staff are aware of the need for the curriculum to reflect cultural diversity and the need to prepare pupils for life in a diverse and multi-faith global society.

British Values

The children in EYFS talk about British Values during circle times. Regular opportunities are provided for voting on ideas to understand democracy. Daily discussions following on from independent learning, regularly address mutual respect and individual liberty. The characteristics of effective teaching and learning form the basis for these discussions.

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of those working in EYFS to follow the principles stated in this policy. The Head Teacher and EYFS Leader will carry out monitoring on EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule. Early Years is discussed termly at Full governing body meeting and this policy will be reviewed as necessary.

Date to be reviewed: April 2027