

Early Years Policy



Reviewed January 2020

Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage

We firmly believe that every child has the right to experience an outstanding Early Years education that will provide them with a firm foundation for lifelong learning and development. We strive to ensure that our early years provision:

- Addresses the children's social, emotional, physical, intellectual, moral and cultural development.
- Builds upon children's current level of development and takes what they already know and can do as their starting point.
- Is fully inclusive regardless of gender, race, culture, home language, family background, special educational needs, disability or ability.
- Provides a rich and stimulating environment through a wide range of planned, meaningful activities and experiences and an enabling environment that allows children to make their own choices.
- Is a safe, secure and caring environment in which children become independent active learners.

The Early Years Foundation Stage – is based upon 4 overarching principles:

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

These emphasise that each child is unique and develops in different ways and the importance of strong relationships between early years professionals, children and families. Enabling environments allow children to thrive and learn through quality-based provision, which is enhanced and adapted to encourage children to develop as independent learners. There are 7 areas of Learning and Development in the Early Years curriculum, which are all connected and cannot be delivered in isolation. These are made up of 3 prime areas and 4 specific areas.

The Prime Areas are:

- Personal, Emotional and Social Development (PSED)
- Communication and Language (CL)
- Physical Development (PD)

The Specific Areas are:

- Mathematics
- Literacy
- Understanding of the World
- Expressive Art and Design

Characteristics of Effective Learning

The Characteristics of Effective learning underpin all learning in the EYFS and they identify how children learn through playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically.

Throughout the EYFS we plan a range of activities, which give children learning experiences and opportunities to work towards the Early Learning Goals and prepare them for the National Curriculum. Planned activities are appropriately differentiated to consider individual needs of children and to ensure that activities are closely matched to children's abilities and stage of development. Teaching and Learning takes place within the inside and outside classrooms. Within these areas there will be a range of activities and experiences that have a balance of adult led and child initiated and that cover all 7 Areas of Learning. Staff are required to enhance the continuous provision in the environment according to the children's interests and outcomes of informal and formal assessments.

Planning

The Early Years Foundation Stage framework (2014) sets standards for the learning, development and care of children from birth to 5 years old. This forms the long-term planning for teachers.

Medium-term planning identifies the intended learning, with outcomes, for children working towards the Early Learning Goals and beyond. Planning is theme based and where appropriate activities are based upon children's interests and stage of development. Ideas for themes and mini topics can develop throughout the year. The planning is based upon themes with discrete phonics, maths, writing and reading directed teaching.

The planning objectives within the Foundation Stage are from the Development Matters statements, stages of development. These are used for short term planning – weekly and daily.

Assessment, Recording and Reporting

Assessment is on-going which is integral to teaching and learning in each classroom. Children are assessed in a range of ways that informs teacher planning for individuals as well as for small groups and the whole class.

Baseline

In Autumn Term 1 Baseline assessments are based on teacher judgement, information from pre-schools and families to form a baseline judgement. This process does not involve any tests or pre-set tasks and is fully in line with good EYFS assessment practice using observations and interactions within everyday experiences. This process is designed to be formative in nature so that the information provides a baseline which directly informs and supports planning and next steps in learning. It assesses the Prime Areas and Specific Areas of learning and whether or not children demonstrate the Characteristics of Effective Learning – all critical indicators of future outcomes.

Ongoing Assessment

This may take the form of written observations, annotated photographs, post its, children's work and discussions with families and children that inform the profile of a pupil.

The Trust uses the Target Tracker program to create the EYFS profile for a child and both teachers and TAs have an IPod to take photos of significant moments of learning (WOW! moments).

Formal assessment

Termly phonics assessments, speech link and language assessments, term 1 baseline, termly assessments inputted into Target Tracker.

Pupil Progress meetings

There is an embedded cycle of termly tracking (6 times a year) to ensure that all pupils achieve minimum levels of expected progress. Those identified as not making expected progress are rapidly identified and strategies put in place to address under-performance.

1. On-going teacher assessment built into class teaching
2. The EYFS teachers across the Trust moderate writing and maths progress termly with the early years lead facilitating. Areas of learning are identified across the Trust that are weaker than others and strategies put in place.
3. Agreed data systematically entered onto tracking system in Target Tracker.
4. 1:1 accountability meetings with SLT and individual teachers to identify underachieving pupils who are not SEN (with a focus on all disadvantaged pupils, including Pupil Premium). Targets set for children's progress the following term.
5. Identified group discussed at Pupil Progress Meetings, facilitated by the EYFS Teaching and Learning Advisor (TLA), to agree strategies/interventions to meet set target.
6. EYFS TLA supports class teacher through coaching and monitoring.

7. Key information from points 1 – 6 is shared at the Trust Strategy meeting, chaired by the CEO and Deputy CEO, to identify strengths and areas for development. This is directly fed into the Academy Development Plan, which is, therefore, regularly updated to reflect the changing needs of the school.

Transition:

In the Early Years, we acknowledge that there are three periods of transition: from home to school, Nursery to Reception and from Reception to Year 1.

The Stour Academy Trust strives to ensure that each child has a smooth transition in to school and between year groups.

Transition from Nursery to Reception

Entry to Reception is in accordance with Kent Admissions procedures with children starting in September following their 4th birthday.

- Rising 4's sessions are designed to support both families and children with the September transition to primary school. The Rising 4's is held in the Reception class where families and children can meet staff and participate in a variety of fun activities. This gives children the opportunity to become familiar with the school setting; build new friendships and increase confidence and understanding of school life.

All Rising 4's and their families are welcome to attend regardless of their September choice.

Transition to Nursery

- Once families accept a place at the nursery they are invited to attend a number of stay and play sessions with their child. This is a chance for children to explore and play in their new nursery classroom and join in with our singing and story time.
- We hold individual induction meetings with all families before they start with us. Families are encouraged to share information with us about their child's interests, developing skills and personal care needs.
- In term 6 we hold a Nursery Information session. This is an opportunity for new and existing parents to find out more about the ethos of our nursery, how we support children's learning and the day to day routines.
- We hold weekly Singing and Story Sessions for children age 0-3. These are a fun activity for the local community and also provide an opportunity for families who may choose to join our nursery to come and meet us and learn more about the nursery.

Transition to Reception

- In the summer term the Reception teachers visit the new entrants in their nursery/pre-school settings and documentation is passed on so that detailed information is gathered to ensure that the teachers have a full picture of individual children and the class as a whole. Each child is also given a transition booklet about their new school
- In Term 6, families are invited in for an information evening led by the EYFS Lead and the Headteacher about what to expect from the Reception year.
- Families are invited to 1-1 consultations with the Reception teacher to gather important information regarding the child that the family feel is important for the teacher to know.

Transition from Reception to Year 1

- In term 6 the Year 1 teachers spend time observing early years teaching and learning. They observe pupils in their Reception class setting.
- Meetings between teachers are held so that documentation can be passed on and detailed information gathered by new teachers to ensure that they have a full picture of individual children and the class as a whole.

- Year 1 teachers are clear about which pupils need to carry on the Early Years Curriculum and which pupils can access the Year 1 programme of study.
- SEN transition meetings are held about individual children so that provision maps are in place immediately at the beginning of the school year.
- Families are invited in at the end of term 6 to hear about the Year 1 curriculum and expectations and to see the new classroom and teacher.

Partnership with Families

The Stour Academy Trust acknowledges the importance of strong partnerships with families and actively encourages family involvement in school life. In the Early Years families bring their children into the classroom each day and are able to have informal discussions with the adults who teach them. If they require a more formal discussion, they are able to make an appointment to speak to the Class Teacher after school.

Families are kept informed about school activities and events through letters and newsletters informing them about key events relevant to their class, including the topic and curriculum coverage for that term. Children also have individual reading records and a home learning book so that there is a partnership between home and school to support children's learning.

Children have a profile that builds up a holistic picture of their progress and development over the year. Observations in the profile will capture "wow" moments in all areas of learning and will focus on what the child can do rather than what they can't do.

The profile will be shared with children regularly and adults will involve children in their own assessment by encouraging them to review their learning and communicate their ideas and thoughts.

Families are informed of their child's progress through a summary of the profile in the form of the termly "Unique Story" report. They have the opportunity to make comments and discuss the information during parent consultations.

Families receive an End of Year report, which will illustrate their child's characteristics of effective learning (how a child learns). The teacher also makes a "best fit" judgement against the 17 early learning Goals (ELG) to report if the expected attainment has been reached by the end of the Reception Year.

Phonics

The Rose Report makes clear that 'high-quality phonic work' should be taught systematically and discretely as the prime approach used in the teaching of early reading.

In Early Years, across the Trust, a high-quality, systematic phonics programme, *Letters and Sounds*, is used to teach phonics in discrete daily sessions at a brisk pace. This provides a clearly defined and structured progression for learning all the major grapheme-phoneme correspondences. The *Jolly Phonics* programme is used alongside Letters and Sounds (when teaching phases 2 and 3) as it provides a multi-sensory approach, encompassing various visual, auditory and kinaesthetic activities that actively engage children to build words and activities involving physical movement to copy letter shapes.

- By the end of Term 2; children will have been taught all the major grapheme phoneme correspondences.
- During phonics session's children are taught how to apply their phonic knowledge to reading and writing straight away- first with CVC words, CCVC and CVCC words.
- This teaching is underpinned by a synthetic approach to blending phonemes in order to read simple words and segmenting words into phonemes in order to spell them.
- By the end of Term 4 children will be working confidently within Phase 4.

Reading

It is essential that teaching of early reading focuses on developing pupil's competence on both skilled word reading and comprehension skills.

- During Phonics sessions teaching concentrates on *skilled word reading*- decoding unfamiliar words and speedy recognition of common words.

- During daily Shared Reading and Group Reading sessions children are taught *comprehension skills* so that they read for meaning – “To read without reflecting is like eating without digesting” Edward Burke.

Teaching Reading

- Children get the opportunity to apply their phonic knowledge as a strategy to read simple texts independently.
- During Shared reading and Group reading children are taught other reading strategies alongside phonics to increase their fluency and understanding of the text.
- Right from the start, even with simple texts, children are taught and encouraged to draw on previous knowledge, use picture cues and the sentence structure to predict vocabulary, check the text makes sense and to make inferences.

Individual reading

- Children are given a school book to take home which they can read 90% independently so that they can read confidently with their family and demonstrate reading strategies they have been taught in school.
- There is a home/school reading record book which encourages families to comment.
- Families are actively encouraged to promote reading at home. A sticker incentive scheme offers children who read regularly at home are rewarded with a free book to take home. Children in EYFS can get on average 8 free books a year by reading daily with an adult.
- The school also offers reading/phonic workshops for families so they can more effectively support their child's development.

Writing

Children will be introduced to handwriting patterns at the start of Reception which will prepare them for cursive writing. There are daily handwriting lessons.

There is a writing book for each child which has a selection of independent writing from Child Initiated time and adult directed time. The books show the progression of writing through the Reception year.

Please see the Early Years Guidance for more detailed information about the Specific areas of learning.

Inclusion

We value all our children as individuals, irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability or gender. We plan a curriculum that meet the needs of the individual child and support them at their own pace so that most of our children achieve and even exceed the Early Learning Goals.

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, of children from all social and cultural backgrounds, of children from different ethnic groups, and of those from diverse linguistic backgrounds; Monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary (such as referrals to Speech Therapy) .Working closely with families and other outside agencies to ensure all children's needs are met and that we enable them to access the curriculum and make good progress.

Health and Safety

“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 2014). We understand that we are legally required to comply with welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2014.

- To provide a setting that is welcoming, safe and stimulating where children can grow in confidence.
- Promote good health.
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children’s stage of development and individual needs. To 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.
- 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.

The Board of Directors reviews and approves this policy every 2 years. It may, however, review this policy earlier than this if the Government produces new regulations, or if it receives recommendations on how this policy might be improved.