



Lealholm Policy for the Early Years Curriculum

Introduction

At Lealholm Primary School we aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum, which reflects the value and importance of early years' education and recognises that the quality and success of learning in this phase has a profound impact on the effectiveness of all learning that follows from it.

We aim to provide a caring, stimulating environment, which encourages problem solving, collaborating and experimenting and enables the whole development of each child, developing strengths and helping any weaknesses. At Lealholm Primary School we recognise that younger children need a great deal of attention, time and care. In order to learn they need to feel safe, secure and happy and need to be able to trust the adults who care for them. We recognise that young children need first-hand experiences, which are self-initiated and planned. They need to be given time to make sense of their environment, to build on previously gained knowledge and skills and they do this most effectively through play. We believe that play supplies the foundation upon which learning is built and, bearing this in mind, our early years classrooms are divided into working areas which allow for both child initiated learning and teacher directed activities, each area focusing on a particular aspect of learning, helping to provide a broad and balanced curriculum and foster independence.

The foundation stage is a distinct stage and important both in its own right and in preparing children for later schooling.

At Lealholm Primary School we are committed to putting the principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage into practice. The principles which guide the work of all the early years practitioners are grouped into 4 themes:-

A Unique Child - every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

Positive Relationships – children learn to be strong and independent from a base of secure relationships with parents and key workers.

Enabling Environments – the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning.

Learning and Development- children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of learning and development are equally important and inter connected.

Objectives

- To provide a happy, caring, safe and secure environment for learning, which meets the individual needs and interests of the children.
- To develop warm and secure relationships between children and adults.
- To provide a high quality curriculum in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage document.
- To enable children to learn and develop skills, attitudes and understanding to reach the early learning goals.
- For the children to become aware of moral and social values.

- To encourage active learning through first hand experiences both in indoor and outdoor play, and through both verbal and non-verbal communication.
- To encourage children to become self-motivated and independent learners with a positive attitude to learning and self-discipline.
- To value the cultural diversity within our school and community.
- To foster positive home school links and share a common sense of purpose with parents.
- To prepare pupils for continuing education in Key Stage one and for the National Curriculum.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. In our school children join us in the reception year in a mixed reception/key stage one class.

Admission arrangements:

At Lealholm Primary School we recognise the importance of a positive introduction to school. Therefore our admission arrangements are carefully organised and regularly reviewed. We work closely with our feeder playgroups.

At present we have 1 entry in September with children starting in the term before they are 5 years old.

However if your child's fifth birthday falls between 1st March and 31st August they have the option of starting school at the beginning of the spring (January) term. Children are not obliged to start school until the term after their fifth birthday, if parents so wish.

The children are invited to spend sessions with the Infant class in the term before they join the school to meet the teachers and teaching assistant and become familiar with their new learning environment. These are arranged in liaison with the feeder playgroups, nursery and parents. The children will also have a visit from one of the teaching team at their playgroup and nursery setting.

A meeting for parents is also held in term before the children start, welcoming them to the school and giving them a chance to meet the teaching staff. During the meeting they will be given an information pack and introduced to the phonics method used in the school to teach reading, writing and spelling.

The Principles of Early Years

Principles and values are the cornerstones from which all relationships, procedures and provision in early year's education are shaped. They reflect a shared vision of children's needs and entitlement and the means by which educational objectives will be achieved.

The principles and values underpinning Lealholm Primary School's policy statement for early year's education are that:-

- each child is valued as a unique individual.
- each child is entitled to equal opportunities which are not hindered by stereotyped views about social or cultural background, gender or special needs.
- early years experience should build on what children already know, understand and can do.
- the child's past experiences and interests are appreciated.
- practitioners must be able to observe and respond appropriately to children, informed by knowledge of how children develop and learn.

- each child is entitled to a rich and varied curriculum which successfully combines care, support, inspiration and challenge. The curriculum for early years is an intentional curriculum which cannot be left to chance.
- to be effective, an early year's curriculum needs to be carefully structured to ensure continuity and progression.
- activities should be planned and purposeful, to provide opportunities for teaching and learning both indoors and outdoors.
- children should be given the time to become engrossed, work in depth and complete activities.
- there should be opportunities for children to engage in activities planned by adults and also those which they plan or initiate themselves.
- a well planned and well organised environment gives children rich and stimulating experiences and provides the structure for teaching within which children explore, experiment, plan and make decisions for themselves.
- children need to feel secure, included and valued. In order to work effectively with parents and their children positive relationships need to be built with parents. Children, parents and practitioners must work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

The Learning Environment

The combination of ethos, relationships, provision and opportunities creates an intricate context for learning. Together they influence and shape children's personal and social development, attitudes and approaches to learning. They have a profound effect on its quality and success.

Ethos

A positive ethos in Foundation Stage enables children to flourish. It has as its basis, warmth, care, mutual respect and high expectations. A positive ethos is characterised by:-

- adults who provide a good role model .They demonstrate qualities of warmth, sensitivity, self control and respect for others. They show appreciation of children's achievements, background and culture.
- pupils who have a strong sense of security and self-esteem. They have the confidence to express themselves, to make mistakes and to develop their own ideas. They emulate the positive attitudes and qualities demonstrated by others.

Personal and Social Development

Personal and social development encompass the processes through which young children gain a sense of themselves, their relationships and the ways in which they co-exist with others. It strongly influences children's capacity for learning how to learn.

Roles and Responsibilities of Adults

Young children see themselves largely through the eyes of adults. Adults help to determine each child's personal growth and progress in learning.

All those involved in the education of young children should develop relationships of trust so that children can confidently build on success and cope with minor failures. In particular, they should:-

- respect the rights and equality of children.
- value what each child brings, their experiences, ideas and feelings.

- empathise with children and enjoy their company.
- promote children's feelings of self worth.
- know and understand each child's needs and abilities.

Environment and Opportunities

An effective environment promotes opportunities for learning. It should not be viewed as something static or inert, but as a means through which children engage in sustained, purposeful activity and make progress across all areas of the curriculum. An appropriate and effective environment should be:-

safe, secure and stimulating.

reflect all curriculum areas of learning.

reflect children's abilities, needs, interests, culture and languages.

provide children with opportunities for independence and taking responsibility.

support children's need to observe, explore and try out ideas.

support children's need to concentrate and persevere.

support children's need for consistent daily routines.

Teaching and Learning

The quality of early years' education depends ultimately on the ways in which adults interact with children and use both the curriculum and environment as instruments of learning. The emphasis of our teaching and learning in early years is based on ability to:-

- share and understand the aims, objectives, principles and values of early year's education.
- understand how young children learn.
- communicate effectively through listening, discussion and questioning.
- provide appropriate role models.
- have well informed, high expectations of all children.
- provide high quality experiences that motivate and inspire children to achieve.
- observe and interact with children in order to plan for, monitor and assess their needs and progress.
- identify the next steps of learning.
- liaise with parents, colleagues and other agencies so that education becomes a continuous process.
- continue to develop their knowledge and expertise in early year's education.

How Children Learn in Early Years

Learning should be a rewarding, pleasurable experience, embedded in what is familiar. Children should enjoy coming to school.

The Importance of Play

Well planned play, both indoor and outdoor, is a key way in which young children learn with enjoyment and challenge. Play is children's work, helping them to explore ideas, roles and relationships. It is a major vehicle for learning. Appropriately planned and structured play in a secure environment, supports and develops children's need to :-

- socialise - learn how to control impulses and understand the need for rules.
- imagine - think creatively and imaginatively.
- express ideas, thoughts, feelings.

- observe, explore and try things out, making sense of the world. Appropriate, well timed support from adults in children's play will help to :-
- extend thinking and ideas.
- pose problems to be solved
- broaden children's knowledge
- convey values
- develop and provide models of language and communication.

The Importance of Talking and Listening

Developing oracy skills should be central to all activities and provision in early years' education. The term 'oracy' describes the interdependence of talking and listening. It is the major instrument of social communication and intellectual development. Talk introduces children to different ways of thinking and, combined with first hand activity, helps them to construct meaning from what they observe and do. Talking with and listening to children gives adults vital insights into their understanding and needs.

Parents and Carers as Partners

We recognise that parents and carers are valuable partners in education their children educators and we value the contribution they make. We encourage good relationships with parents by;

- encouraging parents and carers to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns.
- Holding 2 Parents Evenings during the year at which the teacher and parents discuss the child's progress.
- Holding an open afternoon in the Summer Term when the parents can share activities with their child.
- Send out a report of their child's attainment in the Summer Term.
- Asking parents to share and contribute to the child's Learning Journey.

Links with the Community and other Agencies.

The early years team is committed to working with and alongside individuals, organisations and groups within our local community We use the opportunities offered by the local community in the following ways:-

- people in the locality come to talk to the children - fire men, police etc.
 - the children extend their learning with visits to local businesses and places of interest - shops, library, castle, post office etc.
 - local transport is used to give experiences of different forms of travel.
- school trips are organised to places of interest.
- the children experience the arts and other cultures through visits from musicians, artists, theatre groups, etc.

Links with other schools and establishments catering for early years children

The early year's staff regularly attends courses and meetings organised by the Local Education Authority. The early years team benefits from close links with staff from other schools and attend support group meetings.

Professional Services

Early years benefits from close links with professional and local services, which makes an important contribution to our policy and care for each individual child.

The Curriculum

The Reception curriculum is based on the DfES Curriculum Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage and is partly delivered through topics. Literacy and Numeracy are taught following the EYFS Profile Early Learning Goals and are also linked to the key objectives of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies.

The Early Years Curriculum is concerned with the child and the context in which learning takes place, as well as the content of learning. Activities can be multi-purpose, encouraging the development of skills across all curriculum areas.

Children are involved in a range of first hand experiences, leading to the acquisitions of knowledge, skills and concepts. A real interest in learning and a wish to succeed are fostered. Concentration and perseverance are encouraged. A balance between physical and quieter activities, and between challenging new experiences and secure familiar ones, are provided.

Language and Literacy - talking, listening and encouraging children to become readers and writers.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development - learning how to work and play, co-operate and function in a group, develop personal and moral values, understand themselves and others.

Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy - mathematical understanding and the foundations of numeracy with a focus on practical activities.

Knowledge and Understanding of the World - finding out about the world around them, other people and features of the natural and man-made world, these become a foundation for history, geography, technology and science.

Physical Development-physical control, mobility, awareness of space and manipulative skills in indoor and outdoor environments. Establishing positive attitudes towards a healthy and active way of life.

Creative Development - the development of imagination and the ability to communicate and express ideas and feelings in creative ways.

Planning is based on Developmental Matters in the EYFS document and takes into account the differing needs and interests of individual children. It is flexible enough to adapt to circumstances.

Staff plan together to provide a linked series of activities with clear learning objectives and outcomes, based on the needs and interests of the children. Staff ensure that all children are encouraged to experience all areas of activity, although they may not experience them each day. We plan a mixture of adult led and directed activities and child initiated activities. Children's choices are carefully monitored to ensure a balanced programme. There is no specialist teaching in early years, all staff teach all areas of knowledge to their children.

Planning sets out the ways in which different activities and the roles of adults can contribute to achieving curricular objectives.

Differentiation

By the beginning of year 1, some children will have exceeded the early learning goals, whereas others will be working towards some or all of the goals, particularly younger children or those with special educational needs.

Continuity and Progression

Continuity and progression are interlinked concepts relating to the nature and quality of children's learning experiences over time. The structure of the curriculum will be designed so that there is a developmental sequence of learning activity that meets the full range of children's current and expected future needs and helps them to progress step by step.

The Next Steps in Learning

Decisions about the next steps in learning can only be made when they are based on accurate

assessment and where the progression of skills, knowledge and understanding is clearly identified in all required areas of learning.

Special Needs

Any problems that may affect learning e.g. physical defects such as hearing, sight, or emotional / social / behavioural are identified at this early stage. The close relationship we have with parents and daily contact, enables us to discuss any problem on an informal basis, offering help and support and sometimes advising about outside agencies e.g. speech therapist. Records help to identify any areas of concern. The staff meet regularly to discuss these and the S.E.N. co-coordinator is kept informed. (See Special Needs policy.)

Resources/ Areas of Experience within the Classroom

Resources in early years are the responsibility of the teachers, who ensure that they are safe, well kept and stored neatly and safely. Dangerous/worn or unused equipment is removed. Replacement equipment and new resources are bought either through a school order, school funds or fund raising activities.

Monitoring, Assessment and Record Keeping.

In the Early Years at Lealholm Primary School, assessment is an on going process, based largely on what is observed. The EYFS Profile is started and used to inform planning and determine the child's individual needs accurately and appropriately. A record of their development is kept in their Learning Journal which is shared with parents.

Throughout the Foundation Stage

Children are observed regularly and evidence or notes pertaining to their particular skills, knowledge, understanding or needs are taken as a record of their achievement and to inform future planning. Several different strategies are used to monitor the children's learning e.g. tracking where appropriate, adult- child interaction.

On going assessment and samples of work are passed on to the next teacher when a child transfers from one class to another or one school to another.

Evaluation and Quality Assurance

Evaluation and monitoring take place within Early Years using a variety of strategies.

- the Early Years Policy is monitored through observations and discussions.
- the curriculum is evaluated during assessment activities and staff evaluate each lesson as well as weekly and termly planning.
- resources - discussion and observation of children at work indicate under or over used areas, while interaction indicates whether the required activities are being undertaken.
- the staff evaluates statistical information e.g. Profile results.
- the staff responds to information produced by OFSTED and the LEA. Advisory Service to help to view the achievements of the children in a national context and advise on strategies for improving the service.

Equal Opportunities

Staff monitor areas of the classroom and prepare work and activities so that every child receives his or her entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum. A variety of groupings e.g. free choice, mixed gender, age, is used. Consideration is given to resources to avoid gender stereo-typing. In all aspects of their relationship with the children, staff attempt complete fairness in their thoughts, speech and actions. The school policy for Equal Opportunities is followed.

Child Protection

Early Years' staff follow the guidelines as set out in the school's Child Protection Policy. The Nominated Person within the school is the Headteacher.

Health and Safety

Health and safety issues are the responsibility of all who work in the school setting. Every effort is taken to provide a safe, secure environment. Correct use of equipment and tools is continuously taught and supervised. Resources are regularly checked and damaged equipment is removed or replaced.