

Springdale First School

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

September 2013

Introduction

Early Years education is the foundation upon which young children build the rest of their schooling. It is a holistic education that encompasses all learning and development. This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at Springdale First School.

Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage

At Springdale we aim to provide highest quality care and education for all our children thereby giving them a strong foundation for their future learning. We create a safe and happy environment with motivating and enjoyable learning experiences that enable children to become confident and independent. We value the individual child and work alongside parents and others to meet their needs and help every child to reach their full potential.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework

Teaching in the EYFS at Springdale First School is delivered in accordance with the government's statutory framework and the four guiding principles that shape practice within the Early Years:

1. Every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
2. Children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**.
3. Children learn and develop well in **enabling environments**, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnerships between practitioners and parents/and or carers.
4. Children **develop and learn** in different ways and at different rates.

The curriculum is centred on three Prime Areas of Learning:

1. Communication and Language
2. Physical Development
3. Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Specific Areas of Learning include essential skills and knowledge for children to participate successfully in society:

1. Literacy
2. Mathematics
3. Understanding the World
4. Expressive Arts and Design

These Areas of Learning and Development address children's physical, cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional development. No one aspect of development stands in isolation from the others as all Areas of Learning and Development are closely interlinked. This ensures the delivery of a holistic, child-centred curriculum which allows children to make links between what they are learning. As effective Early Years practitioners we aim to plan a broad and balanced range of activities based on the needs of the children in our setting. We plan a yearly overview of topics, however, we also try to follow the children's interests when planning and involve them in choosing activities and resources at the medium and short term stage. The learning opportunities provided include a range of adult focused and child initiated activities both indoors and outdoors. Educational trips and visits from members of our community are also planned to support children's learning within the classroom. 'Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage' guidance material is used to support our planning.

When planning and guiding these activities we reflect on the different ways that children learn and support children in using the three Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning. These are;

Playing and exploring - children investigate and experience things and are willing to 'have a go'

Active learning - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties; they enjoy achievements

Creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things

Active Learning through Play

At Springdale First School we recognise that young children learn best when they are active. Therefore, we believe that Early Years education should be as practical as possible and our Foundation Stage has an ethos of learning through play. It is an essential and rich part of their learning process, supporting them in all areas of development. Play is a powerful motivator encouraging children to be creative and to develop their ideas, understanding and language. Play is also flexible and able to suit the preferred learning style of the child. It can provide multiple ways for children to learn a variety of different skills and concepts. Play opportunities are also set up to provide children with opportunities to apply newly acquired knowledge, demonstrating their skills and level of understanding.

We provide both structured and unstructured play opportunities inside and outside. These activities are designed to engage children in practical, first-hand experiences. These support children to discover, explore, investigate and to develop their personal interests and areas of curiosity. Play can also help them to make sense of the world around them as they begin to understand specific concepts. Through play activities children can apply their knowledge and demonstrate their skills and level of understanding.

Enabling Environments

We aim to provide stimulating and safe learning environments both indoors and outdoors. Children will be encouraged to actively explore the world around them, developing their creativity, independence, thinking skills and ability to solve problems across the curriculum. There is free-flow between the indoor and outdoor areas during child initiated activities. Both areas are also used for adult directed and adult initiated teaching. Resources used aim to stimulate, challenge and inspire children to engage in learning and provide for both the planned and unplanned curriculum.

Assessment and Record Keeping

Ongoing assessment is an essential aspect of the effective running of our Foundation Stage. Regular, planned and focused assessments are made of children's learning and individual needs. There is continuous monitoring and assessment of each child's development. This is updated at least once each term to track individual progress. At the end of the year it provides a summary of every child's development and learning achievements.

On-entry assessments are carried out during the first half of the Autumn term. These assessments are against the Development Matters age bands in the Prime Areas of Learning and Literacy and Mathematics. Assessments are supplemented by practitioners' evidence of children's behaviour observed independently and consistently in their self-initiated activities as well as transfer information from pre-schools. Evidence is gathered over the whole of the Autumn Term for Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design before a judgement is made.

The main EYFS assessment method is through our observations of children in different teaching and learning contexts, including both adult focused activities and child initiated play. Observations take place on a daily basis (both formally and informally). Teachers and Teaching Assistants carry out planned observations of individuals and groups of children regularly. They also make spontaneous observations in order to capture significant moments of children's learning. Other adults in school such as Lunchtime Supervisors and Breakfast and After School Club staff are also encouraged to make observations using 'Bubble Ups'. Observations are recorded in a variety of formats (e.g. learning stories, bubble ups, group observation sheets, photographs etc). Other methods of assessing children in Foundation Stage include engaging alongside children in their play, highlighting and annotating 'I can' success criteria and talking with children about their task or play. Learning Journals are used to collect all these observations along with samples of children's independent work. Children's workbooks also provide evidence for assessment.

We use these observations to support our developing knowledge of individual children. They inform them us of children's abilities, needs, interests, play schemas and learning styles. Observations are evaluated, children's learning priorities are identified and relevant learning opportunities are planned to support children to make the next steps and progress.

Parents as Partners

At Springdale First School we recognise the importance of establishing positive relationships with parents, as highlighted by the EYFS framework. 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 the children. We do this through:

- Talking to parents about their child before starting school (see Induction).
- Running Curriculum Workshops where we explain how we teach Reading, Writing and Mathematics and how parents can support their children at home.
- Providing a Curriculum Bubble at the beginning of each topic to outline our teaching and learning in each Area of Learning.
- Encouraging parents to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns. Formal parent consultations are held in the Autumn and Spring Terms; parents are informed of their child's progress and the next steps in their child's learning. Parents receive a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of the school year.
- Arranging activities throughout the year which encourage parents to celebrate their child's learning e.g. celebration assemblies and fab finishes to topics.
- Providing WOW stars for parents to jot down comments on their child's development and achievements outside of school.
- Asking parents to complete a 'Time to Reflect' form at the end of each half term. From this we find out what each child has enjoyed and the learning experiences which have captured their imagination. We also find out which areas of learning each child finds tricky. This information helps us to plan a curriculum which addresses and meets the needs of all our children
- Providing a short report on children's Characteristics of Effective Learning each term and encouraging parents to contribute their own comments.
- Written contact through home school reading log as well as the acknowledgement that parents can ring/email school to contact staff

Admissions and Induction

Prior to a child's entry into Springdale all children are offered three 'Getting to Know you Sessions'.

The purpose of these initial visits to school is for the children to meet their new teacher and teaching assistant and start to become familiar with the school environment. Teachers and Teaching Assistants will also visit as many children as possible in their pre-school settings. The aim of these visits is to develop our knowledge and understanding of each child in order to make the transition period to Springdale as smooth as possible.

A meeting for new parents is held in July. A presentation is given by the Headteacher and Early Years Leader about the Foundation Stage. School information packs will be distributed to parents either before or at this meeting, detailing school routines and expectations. There is also time for parents to look around the Foundation Base and ask any questions.

In September each child is offered a Home Visit. This is a chance for parents to talk to teaching staff on a one to one basis and to see children in their own familiar environment.

Children from our main feeder pre-schools are also invited to attend Christmas performances.

From Reception to Key Stage 1

During the final term in Reception, the EYFS Profile is completed for each child. The Profile provides parents and carers and teachers and teaching assistants with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels, and their readiness for Year 1. The Profile includes on-going observations, all relevant records held by Foundation Stage, discussions with parents and carers, and any other adults whom the teacher, parent or carer judges can offer a useful contribution.

Each child's level of development is assessed against the Early Learning Goals. The profile indicates whether children are meeting expected levels of development, if they are exceeding expected levels, or not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging'). Year 1 teachers are given a copy of the Profile, each child's annual report (which includes a short commentary on each child's skills and abilities in relation to the three key characteristics of effective learning). This informs the dialogue between Reception and Year 1 teachers about each child's stage of development and learning needs and assists with the planning of activities in Year 1.

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements

Children's safety and welfare is paramount. We create a safe and secure environment and provide a curriculum which teaches children how to be safe, make choices and assess risks. We have stringent policies, procedures and documents in place to ensure children's safety. We promote the good health of our children in our care in numerous ways, including the provision of fruit snacks, drinking water being available at all times and following set procedures when children become ill or have an accident.

See Health and Safety and Child Protection Policies.

Equal Opportunities

All members of our school community are of equal value regardless of:

- their ethnicity, culture, religion, nationality
- whether or not they are disabled
- their gender or gender identity
- their sexual identity

We recognise and respect difference at Springdale First School. Our curriculum aims to foster an appreciation of each other's cultures and beliefs along with the promotion of a healthy and positive self image.

See Equalities Statement.

Special Educational Needs

All children are encouraged to achieve their personal best and planning is adapted to meet the needs of all groups and abilities. Assessments take into account contributions from a range of perspectives to ensure that any child with potential special educational needs is identified at the earliest possible opportunity. Early identification of special needs is crucial to enable practitioners to support the development of each child. Concerns are always discussed with parents/carers at an early stage and the schools Inclusion Leader is consulted for further information and advice. Appropriate steps are taken in accordance with the school's policy for Special Educational Needs and Inclusion.

See Special Educational Needs and Inclusion Policies.