

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy



Elmtree Grove School

Policy reviewed	September 2024
Next reviewed date	September 2025
Version	1

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Early Years Policy

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year and is intended 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. Our Early Years Foundation Stage accommodates children from the age of 4 to 5 years.

Aims

At Elmtree Grove School Foundation Stage we aim to give each child a positive and meaningful start to their school life, in which they can establish solid foundations on which to develop into independent and fearless lifelong learners.

We will encourage children to develop independence within a secure and friendly atmosphere; to support children in building relationships through the development of social skills such as cooperation and sharing; to help each child to recognise their own strengths and achievements through experiencing success and by developing the confidence to work towards personal goals.

Our high expectations will enable each child to develop socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally and to achieve their full potential. We will offer a structure for learning that has a range of starting points and unlimited availability for development through a wide range of new and exciting first-hand experiences that will give children the opportunity to consolidate, explore and test their skills, knowledge and understanding alongside existing experiences. We will ensure that children are kept healthy and safe and that they achieve the knowledge and skills they need to start school.

The Curriculum

Our Early Years team follow the curriculum as outlined in the 2021 Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) document, which is available on the school website or to download at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/earlyyears-foundation-stage-framework--2> This clearly defines what we teach. The following policy details the specifics of our setting.

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

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

A Unique Child

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, 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.

Positive relationships

We recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships and aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families. We value our Key worker system, this ensure both children and parents feel secure and communication between home and school is strong.

Enabling environments

We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. Through observations we assess the children's interests and stages of development and learning needs before planning challenging and achievable activities and experiences to extend their learning.

Learning and development

Our Foundation Stage has one classroom with it's own access to a covered outdoor area and our playground. Our classroom can also be opened up to encompass our creative room for arts & crafts activities. All our learning environments are organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, be

quiet and rest. The seven areas of learning are defined so that children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently.

Areas of Learning

We plan an exciting and challenging curriculum based on our observation of children's needs, interests, and stages of development across the seven areas of learning to support the children to work towards the final Early Learning Goals. All seven areas of learning and development are important and interconnected. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive, both in the EYFS and into Key Stage 1. These three areas are the **prime** areas:

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

Children are also supported through the four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

At Elmtree Grove School, all areas are delivered through a well-planned play based approach with a balance of adult led and child initiated activities. Throughout the Foundation Stage our long, medium and short-term plans ensure that each child has the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in every area at the appropriate developmental level. Our long term planning ensures coverage so that all children have opportunities to work towards and achieve the Early Learning Goals (ELG's) that define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS. We follow a half termly topic based approach which allows flexibility to ensure that both children's needs and interests are taken into account.

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. In doing so we can provide children with stimulating, active play experiences in which they can explore and develop their learning and to help them make sense of the world. Children have opportunities through their play to think creatively and critically alongside other children as well as on their own. They are

able to practise 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 interests, 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, facilitating, teaching and extending play, skills and language.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

The EYFS also includes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning and teachers plan activities with these in mind. The characteristics highlight the importance of a child's attitude to learning and their ability to play, explore and think critically about the world around them. The three characteristics are;

Playing and Exploring – children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'

Active Learning – children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements

Creating and Thinking Critically – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

Children are provided with a range of rich, meaningful first-hand experiences in which they can explore, think creatively and be active. We aim to develop and foster positive attitudes towards learning, confidence, communication and physical development.

Inclusion

Our whole school ethos, as well as that of the Foundation Stage, embraces inclusion. We recognise and respect the abilities and strengths of our children at all levels of development and the wealth of knowledge and experience that they bring from their differing backgrounds and cultures.

We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning and we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of individual children, so that children are able to reach their full potential. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds. We aim to 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.

We will provide: a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively; a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued; resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping; challenging activities for all children and for those whose ability and understanding are advanced. We will monitor children's progress and take action to provide support as necessary. Where a specific need is suspected we will liaise with the Special Educational Needs co-ordinator and seek advice from outside agencies, such as the speech and language service, the educational psychologist and the bi-lingual support services amongst others. We adhere to the Equal Opportunity and Inclusion policies of the school.

Assessment

Throughout Early Years, the children's knowledge, understanding, skills and achievements are assessed and tracked using the developmental stages set out in the document 'Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)'. As part of our daily practice we observe and assess children's development and learning to inform our future plans. We record our observations in a variety of ways and everyone in class is encouraged to contribute.

Our assessment depends on us getting to know our children and, to this end, we gather information from a range of sources; observations of the children in play, in adult led activities, through discussions with parents and carers and through talking to the children. We keep written and photographic evidence to help us build up a picture of children's strengths and achievements and to help us to plan for children's next steps in learning.

Every child has a 'Learning Journal' held on Class Dojo in which we record our observations and keep samples of the children's work. Parents/carers receive a notification when an observation has been added to their child's Learning Journal and they can then view this observation and any related photographs/videos and assessments.

Parents/carers are encouraged to add their own comments and also to upload their own observations to show us what their children are able to do at home. Children's 'Next Steps in Learning' are added to some observations so that parents/carers know how to help their children with their learning at home.

These ongoing observations are used to inform the EYFS Profile/Development Matters bands. The children's progress is reviewed continually. Throughout their time in Reception, parents/carers are welcomed in to share their children's learning; both informally through our 'open door' policy and more formally during parent/teacher consultations.

At the start of Early Years, children are assessed to determine a baseline, or starting point, for their future learning. This is completed using the government baseline test; however, staff will also make their own judgements based on the adults' observations of children

during activities and play and this data will be used to plan next steps for each child. Once a half-term, staff assess the pupils against half-termly 'On-track' statements generated in school. These statements are based on practitioner knowledge and experience of progress in Early Years, progression documents and the necessary skills to work towards the Early Learning Goals. Any pupil who is not currently working at the expected level is offered additional interventions to support their progress and development.

At the end of the year the EYFS profile provides a summary of every child's development and learning achievements including whether they have reached a 'Good Level of Development' (GLD). Children are assessed against the Early Learning Goals (ELG) by the class teacher - who uses the exemplification documents, and their knowledge of the children to make a 'best fit' judgement.

The children are assessed as achieving a 1 or 2 against each area of the EYFS curriculum:

- 2 = Expected ELG – meeting the expected level
- 1 = Emerging ELG – not yet meeting the expected level

This profile data is used to help school benchmark and identify improvements. Parents/carers will be given information of their child's achievements in a written report at the end of the Summer term.

Transitions

At **Elmtree Grove School**, we recognise that starting school has the potential to be a stressful time for both children and parents. To this end we have established a strong procedure for transitions to ensure that our children and parents are as confident and secure as they can be when facing the challenges of each year group.

We hold a meeting in the summer term before the children start school to provide parents with key information, school expectations, knowledge on our curriculum and assessment and advice on how they can help their child. All parents are offered a home visit prior to their child starting school (either in person or via video). This gives children the security of meeting with their teachers in a safe, familiar environment and gives parents time to ask questions and share knowledge or any concerns they have about their child.

At the beginning of the school year, new children are given staggered entry times to ensure that they have the time to feel welcomed and to support them in exploring their new environment. In Reception there is up to a two-week 'settling in' period to ensure that children have the time to become secure and familiar with the new routines before starting school full-time. During this time, children attend school on alternate days.

At the end of Reception, children have the opportunity to meet with their new teachers in their classrooms on three occasions prior to starting Year One. At the end of each school year, teachers have the opportunity to share their knowledge of each child's knowledge, understanding and achievements, including end of year assessment data, with their next class teacher to ensure that all teachers have a well-rounded picture of the children prior to the new school year.

During children's time in Early Years, a range of shared activities are planned for all classes to help develop children's confidence and to ensure continuity in experiences throughout the Foundation Stage. Children make use of the whole school facilities, such as the ICT suite, library and playground for appropriate activities to ensure that children are confident and well prepared for moving around the school and for mixing with older children.

Community Links

At Elmtree Grove School, the Foundation Stage classes enrich learning and encourage strong links with the local area through local visits to the park, local farm, etc and inviting in members of the local community during our annual topic on people who help us.

Partnership with Parents

At Elmtree Grove School, we value the importance of the three-way relationship between children, parents and staff. We believe that parents and carers are a child's first educator, and therefore work very closely to ensure they are involved in what their child does at school. We want parents to feel they can speak to us about their child and to feel comfortable in our setting. We offer parents a variety of learning workshops to provide advice and information on how they can support their child's learning. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to share information about their child, to ask questions and to discuss their child's learning with the teachers.

We believe that all parents have an important role to play in the education of their child. We recognise the role that parents have played, and their future role, in educating the children. We provide every child in Early Years with a tapestry account. This enables teachers to provide information on children's experiences in school, and parents can share information about their child's experiences and achievements outside school. This information helps to build a well-rounded picture of the child in for everyone.

Parents are encouraged to join in with their child's education from the very start of their school journey. All parents are invited to join in with trips outside school and to join in with a range of activities from supporting phonics activities to sports day inside school. Parents are encouraged to support children's learning through completing reading records, simple homework activities and by sharing assemblies and whole class activities as well as sharing experiences on ClassDojo.

Through annual reports, parents receive information about their child's assessment and formal parents meeting are offered termly, where parents have the opportunity to speak with the teachers to discuss their child's progress and development, their next steps in learning and to view their child's learning journals. Parents are always welcomed to discuss their children informally at the end of the school day.

Health & safety and safeguarding

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. We follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements detailed in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Guidance (2021) and we adhere to the school's safeguarding policy.

All children have access to fresh water and fruit.

Our Foundation Stage classroom has access to the toileting facilities and we teach the children the importance of hygiene, hand washing techniques and throughout the year we plan cooking activities to give children experiences of a range of healthy food in The Den.

Monitoring of the EYFS

We are committed to providing the best possible experiences for our children. The EYFS Leader is responsible for monitoring provision, teaching and learning and children's progress. Information is shared with the Head of School and SLT as appropriate, and any necessary actions are taken. All adults in the Reception team have a key role in children's learning and development. Therefore, they are required to be knowledgeable and skilled in the EYFS curriculum. Any training needs for existing or new members of staff are identified and addressed as part of performance review cycle.