



# Early Years Policy

## Rationale

This policy details the provision we make for the early experiences, learning and teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at Hawthorn Primary school. We believe that every child is an exceptional individual and we celebrate and respect differences within our diverse school community. The ability to learn is underpinned by the teaching of basic skills, knowledge and values that equips our children for their future successes. We inspire our children to become accomplished, happy individuals, ready to reach their full potential in an ever-changing world.

## Aims

The aim of this policy is to outline our approach to achieving the requirements and goals in the delivery of the statutory requirements for EYFS 2021. At Hawthorn Primary, we aim to:

- give each child a happy, positive and fun start to their school life in which they can establish solid foundations on which to expand and foster a deep love of learning;
- offer each child a wide range of new and exciting experiences and give them the opportunity to consolidate, explore and test them out along with their own, individual experiences;
- enable each child, through encouragement and high expectations, to develop, to the full, socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally;
- to offer a structure for learning that has a range of starting points and unlimited opportunity for development;
- encourage children to develop independence within a loving, secure and friendly atmosphere;
- 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 developing the confidence to work towards personal goals.

## The Curriculum

Our EYFS team consists of a Nursery and Reception class. Both classes follow the curriculum as outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework 2021 (EYFS) document.

The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development, all of which are seen as important and interconnected but three areas are seen as particularly important for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, for building their capacity to learn and form

relationships and thrive. These areas support children's learning in all other areas, they are known as the prime areas.

At Hawthorn, our curriculum is underpinned by the Statutory Educational Programmes (*Educational programmes must involve activities and experiences for children, as set out under each of the areas of learning EYFS 2021*)

### **The prime areas are;**

- Communication and Language – Listening, Attention, Understanding and Speaking.
- Physical Development – Gross Motor Skills and Fine Motor Skills
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development – Self-Regulation, Managing Self and Building Relationships

The specific areas of learning develop essential skills and knowledge for children to participate successfully in society.

### **The specific areas are;**

- Literacy – Comprehension, Working Reading and Writing
- Mathematics – Numbers and Numerical Patterns
- Understanding the World – Past and Present, People, Culture and Communities and The Natural World
- Expressive Arts and Design – Creating with Materials and Being Imaginative and Expressive.

### **Characteristics of Effective Learning**

The EYFS also includes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. The Nursery and Reception teachers plan activities within their classrooms with these in mind. They highlight the importance of a child's attitude to learning and their ability to play, explore and think critically about the world around them. (*In planning and guiding what children learn, practitioners must reflect on the different rates at which children are developing and adjust their practice appropriately EYFS 2021*) 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.

### **Teaching strategies**

We ensure that there is a balance of adult led and child initiated activities across the day. Although much of the time is spent with children self-selecting tasks, the interaction between

the adult and child is essential as the adult's response to children builds understanding and therefore guides new learning. The adult's role is to continually model, demonstrate and question what the child is doing. In some cases, the adult will ask a child to come and complete a task or game with them; at other times they will participate in a child's game, extending it where possible.

By the Summer term in Nursery the children will experience more structured, adult directed tasks as they prepare for their transition to Reception, and likewise the children in Reception experience many more adult directed and independent tasks as they prepare for their transition in Year one.

### **The importance of play**

Learning through play is an integral part of our Early Years curriculum. We believe that children learn best from activities and experiences that interest and inspire them. Using children's interests and passions as a starting point, we provide children with stimulating, active play experiences in which they can explore and develop their learning to help them make sense of the world. They 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 experience at their own level and pace. Play gives our children the opportunity to pursue their own interests and inspire those around them. The children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions. We believe it is important that adults take an active role in child initiated play through observing, modelling, facilitating and extending their play. Getting the balance right between child initiated play, which is controlled, and adult led activities is very important to us.

### **Teaching**

We include direct, carefully planned, adult led experiences for children in the form of structured adult led teaching and adult led group activities. These are particularly important in helping children to learn specific skills and knowledge and it is often through children's play that we see how much learning the children have understood and taken on.

Each day we use a flexible timetable with 'set' routines in place. This looks quite different in the Nursery and Reception classes. We set aside times each day when the children come together to be taught in the more traditional sense, gathered together on the carpet as a class. In these slots we focus on our topic work, maths, literacy, phonics, and stories. These sessions help to develop vital habits of learning: learning as a group, listening to the teacher, taking turns to answer, concentration etc.

Reading and story play an important part of the day. We want to make sure our children have a love of books and will leave the EYFS with a bank of stories they know well, both traditional and modern classics. We ensure there is always time for a whole class story and in Reception we use 'Talk for Writing' and 'Box Clever' as part of our Literacy planning. Every

child in Nursery is given their own book bag and has a designated day when they will have group time sharing books with an adult. In Reception the children progress through the Read Write Inc. books and receive a Shared Reading Book each week which builds on their Phonics skills. Parents are invited into school every Monday and Tuesday afternoon to listen to their child read and to change their Shared Reading Book. In Nursery, parents are invited into the classroom every Tuesday for *'Story Club'*, this gives parents the opportunity to share a variety of stories available, with which their child will select for them to read during a session. Towards the end of the session parents and their children are given the opportunity to observe the nursery teachers delivering an interactive, live and engaging story; often the story is accompanied by props. At the end of the session, parents are given the opportunity to ask questions, this encourages parents to develop quality story time at home.

Both Nursery and Reception plan weekly visits to *Perry Common Library*. These regular visits develop links with the local community and give the families of our pupils the opportunity to sign up for their personal library card. This promotes ownership of on-going learning and allows parents to support 'reading for pleasure' outside of the school environment. Furthermore, these weekly visits provide our pupils with the opportunity to develop their interests in different books, genre's and authors. In Nursery, the visits support pupils to develop and explore skills in independent book handling.

## **Planning**

We introduce 'Provocations' and use 'Pupil Voice' as starting points for learning. We have moved away from 'Themes and Topics' as we feel these limit learning opportunities in the Early Years and is a flexible strategy to meet the interests and passions of our children.

Staff plan in more detail on a daily/weekly basis using daily notes, observations and interactions with children to inform where the learning journey should move to.

Educational visits and visitors are given great emphasis in the Early Years. Children explore the local community (Local businesses and charities, Perry Common Library and Elim Church etc.). The children also visit places such as; Birmingham Mosque, Lichfield Cathedral, Weston Super-Mare, The Farm, The Zoo, Halls Garden Centre etc.

Objective Led Planning is used to target children during continuous provision. Staff have a clear understanding of children's 'Next Steps' and where possible find opportunities in play to achieve individual children's current targets.

## **The Learning Environment**

Our Early Years classrooms have defined areas with clearly labelled resources to ensure children can access them easily. Each classroom is set up in a way to provide children with experiences and activities in all of the seven areas of learning. Classrooms have a wide range of literacy and mathematics resources, a creative area, book corner, role play area,

construction/small world zones, outdoor area and carpeted teaching area. A variety of activities are planned for and set up in the different areas each day. The adults move to whichever area their focus for the session/day is.

The outdoor area is an important part of the classroom with many children choosing to learn outside. We ensure that the range of activities outside reflects the different curriculum areas, for example setting up spaces for maths games, reading, writing, growing, creative, physical, imaginative play and construction for example. There is a 'reading shed' whereby children can take a quiet time out of the busy environment and share a book independently with friends. Our children benefit from fine and gross motor activities by way of exploration in the mud kitchen, gardening in designated 'growing area' and use of balancing equipment. In Nursery, physical activity often dominates, with climbing, running, cycling and other active games being key.

Each child has their own labelled peg in the cloakroom. We encourage children to take responsibility for keeping their clothes, book bag and work safely in one place!

### **Assessment, observations and portfolios**

Assessment is an essential part of the learning and development of children in the EYFS. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations.

To ensure we have evidence of a child's progress in the EYFS we use a range of strategies all of which come together in their individual portfolio. We are very proud of our portfolios: these are collections of children's work, photos and observations which create a detailed picture of the child. Staff have their own iPad (2 simple) which is used to capture and note observations. These observations inform assessment (Tiny Tracker – Stage of Development) and planning.

On entry to Nursery and Reception we carry out baseline assessments for each child. The Nursery Class Teacher submits end of term assessment data and the Reception Teacher submits end of half term assessment on Tiny Tracker which shows each child's development across the areas of learning. This data is then used to discuss progress and plan interventions in Pupil Progress Meetings with the SLT. At the end of Reception, the class teacher assesses each child against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELG) and comments on whether their development within each ELG is either 'emerging', 'expected' or 'exceeding'. This information is also communicated to parents and carers in the Reception child's end of year report and can be discussed in the final Parents' Open Afternoon in Reception.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation and the role of the Early Years lead**

All teachers at Hawthorn Primary school are responsible for monitoring standards in Early Years but the Early Years Leader, under the direction of the Head teacher, takes a lead in this. Monitoring activities are planned across the year. For example:

- Learning walks and discussions with children.
- Lessons observations (Head Teacher and Literacy and Mathematics Leads)
- Learning Journey and 'Book Looks' to monitor progress, attainment and standards.
- Professional dialogue between all members of the Early Years Team.
- Pupil Progress Meetings.
- Internal moderation and Acorn Partnership monitoring meetings which ensure quality and accurate moderation with experienced practitioners.
- Regular review of the impact of interventions

The Early Years Leader, Senior Leadership Team and class teachers are responsible for monitoring the standard of the children's work and the quality of teaching within the EYFS. The Early Years Leader is responsible for supporting colleagues in the planning and teaching, for being informed about current developments in the phase and for providing a strategic lead and direction for the phase in school.

### **The role of the 'Key Worker'**

Each child has an allocated Key Worker. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs and to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents. All adults within the Early Years setting actively seek to form positive respectful relationships with the children in their care. The formation of healthy relationships between adults and children is essential in enabling children's well-being now and their future successes.

There are rare occasions when significant adults cannot be in the class and we aim to be consistent in who covers these absences.

### **Partnership with parents and carers**

We believe that parents and carers are a child's first educator and therefore work very closely to ensure they are involved in their child's learning at school. We want parents to feel they can speak to us about their child at any time and feel comfortable in our setting.

We provide regular opportunities for parents and carers to come into school and support their child, share their learning and celebrate successes. We keep parents informed through weekly 'Home Learning Letters and Class Pages' and we also meet regularly with them to ensure children's learning and development through the EYFS is happy and allows them to excel with

the support needed. This includes transition sessions, nursery visits and home visits, stay and play sessions (nursery), parent inspire workshops, 'Skills Building Projects', online (2 Simple) and folder based learning journeys, celebration assemblies, reports and parent consultations as well as more frequent informal communication to suit individual families.

When a child gains a place at Hawthorn we invite them and their parents to attend play sessions at school alongside all other children who will be starting. Home visits are books for new families which enables us to build positive relationships with families and interact with the child in their home environment. Over the first few days at the school we encourage parents and carers to stay for as long as they wish in the classroom to ensure the transition to the school goes smoothly. We have a slow staggered entry into Nursery and a slightly quicker staggered entry into Reception. Early in the first term parents are also invited to a parents' meeting so the settling in can be reviewed.

Our Rising children are invited to 'Stay and Play Sessions' during the term before their start Nursery.

Parents are invited to attend a Parents' Meeting each term and teachers are available most mornings and evenings to talk and to discuss more urgent matters.

Yearly workshops are arranged in Nursery and Reception. In Nursery the focus of the workshop is 'mark making' and providing useful information, tips and advice on how parents can support early writing in Nursery. In Reception, the focus of the workshop is 'phonics', parents are given the opportunity to observe a live phonics session and benefit from receiving practical advice, tips and activities with which they can support phonics at home. In both instances, parents and their children are supported with quality resources and packs with which they can apply their new found knowledge and understanding to. This allows the teaching and learning that occurs in our Nursery and Reception to have continuity and solidarity.

### **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.

It is important to note that members of staff do not use their mobile phones or personal handset devices in the classroom and are prohibited from taking photographs with their personal handsets. This is in line with Hawthorn Primary School Safeguarding Policy. Members of staff do, however, use school iPads to take photographs as evidence to support the regular observation assessment cycle in the EYFS. These photographs are used in children's portfolios, in class displays and on the school website. All parents are asked to state if they give permission for their child's image to be used on the school website through the paperwork in their initial starter packs.

We are a healthy school and our children receive free fruit (Reception and Nursery) and milk (Nursery) from a Government scheme. Our staff discuss and model good eating habits by eating alongside the children.

We have a kitchen in the Nursery which no child is allowed to enter and is secured with a safety door.

## **Homework**

Homework in the EYFS is age-appropriate and provided in line with whole school policy and as such is identified where appropriate. Our pupils are expected to complete 'take away tasks' at the end of each half-term, this may consolidate learning that has taken place throughout the term, provide resources to practice/refine skills at home, or may provide a 'project' 'task' 'enquiry' or 'stunning start' for the learning that will take place in preparation for the next half term.

## **Equal Opportunities**

At Hawthorn Primary School we offer an inclusive environment through promoting equality of opportunity for all and eliminating discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, ethnic origin, ability or specific needs. Equipment, resources and staffing are provided or adapted to meet specific needs.

Ensuring suitable learning opportunities and challenge matches to the ability of each pupil, we provide:

- open-ended activities and lessons;
- flexible grouping of our pupils and are mindful of setting different tasks to each a variety of abilities;
- resources of different complexity according to the ability of the pupil;
- additional support of individual pupils or groups of pupils, should they need it;
- additional teacher input to some pupils when needed.

## **At the end of EYFS, we expect that our children;**

- have strong communication skills, both written and verbal. Our children also listen respectfully and with tolerance to the views of others;
- take pride in all that they do, always striving to do their best;
- demonstrate emotional resilience and the ability to persevere when they encounter challenge;
- develop a sense of self-awareness and become confident in their own abilities;



- are kind, respectful and honest, demonstrate inclusive attitudes and have a sense of their role in our wider society.

Clare Maksymczuk (Leader for Early Years)

June 2021