Early Years Policy

DECEMBER 2024

Rationale

We believe education in the early years should recognise:

1. That learning is not compartmentalised into subjects but that it is all interrelated.
2. That there is a time to observe, in order to understand a child's learning, and a time to intervene, support and extend.
3. The value of early childhood as a part of life and not just as preparation for the next stage.
4. The equal importance of the social, emotional, physical and moral development of the child.
5. The need for first hand experience, learning through doing and play.
6. The importance of self-discipline.
7. That children start school with a variety of experiences and what they can do is their starting point.
8. That children learn through interaction with places, people and things.

Purpose

We believe children learn well when they are:

1. Physically and mentally active and engage in first hand experience.
2. Safe and secure and enjoy good relationships.
3. Encouraged to become independent and self reliant.
4. Given opportunities to talk and share experiences.
5. Given activities that challenge and extend their thinking.
6. Supported by sensitive adults who are interested in them.
7. Given opportunities to explore and experiment.
8. Given opportunities to co-operate and work in collaboration with others.
9. Not afraid of failure and celebrate success.
10. Mutually supported in their learning at home and at school.

General Aims

Our objectives are to establish an environment that should be

1. Stimulating but ordered.
2. Bright and attractive.
3. Organised to give access to a range of materials.
4. Have safe access to a secure outdoor area.

An environment that should be a place:

1. To be active and move around safely.
2. To be quiet and comfortable.
3. Where talk is encouraged.
4. Where a love of books is encouraged
5. Where asking questions is encouraged.
6. To create and develop imaginative role play.
7. To explore a range of creative and modelling materials.
8. Where parents are encouraged to become involved.
9. Where equal opportunity for every child is practiced.

Aims in establishing an Early Years Curriculum

To establish a curriculum that:

1. Based upon the current Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum and the Early Learning Goals.
2. Provides experiences which underpin and dovetail into the National Curriculum.
3. Gives access to the National Curriculum as appropriate
4. Addresses personal, emotional, social, intellectual and physical development.
5. Provides a broad and balanced range of experiences to promote learning.
6. Gives opportunities for sustained activities.
7. Is based on planning to reflect a range of individual learning needs.
8. Encourages independence, responsibility and respect for others.

Intended Outcomes

Through practice, the children will:

1. Feel secure, confident and valued.
2. Develop an understanding of what is right and wrong and learn how to cooperate with others.
3. Feel they are a valued member of the school, and that a strong self-image and self esteem is promoted.
4. Make progress in their learning, develop a positive enthusiasm for knowledge and learning, and be successful learners.

The staff will:

1. Understand their role and responsibilities.
2. Have clear aims when planning or working with children.
3. Observe children closely and use learning experiences to meet needs, develop interests and extend learning opportunities.

The parents will:

1. Feel involved and able to contribute to their child's education.
2. Be informed of schools' routines and procedures.
3. Support the school.

Partnership between home and school

Children's learning begins at home. The young child's curiosity and inquisitiveness has, by the time they are four, led to the acquisition of a wide range of skills verbally, socially, physically and knowledge of their place in the world. School experience should build on this early learning.

To help parents and children feel confident about this new phase of starting school, we provide opportunities for children and parents to become familiar with the school environment. Pre-school children and their parents are invited to visit the school and look around informally before they apply for a place.

When they receive a letter offering a place for their child, an information pack about the school is included.

The children visit the school for two sessions, where they take part in the class. Parents stay with their children for the first visit. They are informed of the dates and times of the visits by letter. During the first session, which the pre-school children and their parents spend in school,

staff are available to answer any questions and discuss matters, e.g. home visits. On the second visit, the children spend half a day in their new class with their new teacher.

In the Summer Term, before the child starts school, a New Parents Information Session is held. The Foundation Stage Teacher gives a presentation on the curriculum, expectations, staffing, etc. It is an opportunity for parents to meet with the staff in the setting, as well as the Principal, and to ask questions.

Quality and range of the curriculum

The Characteristics of Effective Learning and the Prime and Specific Areas of Learning and Development are all connected. We believe that the ways in which a child engages with other people and their environment – playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically – underpin learning and development across all areas and support the child to remain an effective and motivated learner.

The Prime areas begin to develop quickly in response to relationships and experiences, and run through and support learning in all other areas. The prime areas continue to be fundamental throughout the EYFS.

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

The specific areas include essential skills and knowledge for children to participate successfully in society. They grow out of the prime areas, and provide important contexts for learning.

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

Personal, social and emotional development

Through play and other activities, the children will learn to cooperate, share and take turns with others and relate appropriately to adults. Children will be responsible for helping to tidy up and take care of their environment. Relationships between staff and pupils will promote a positive sense of self and give them confidence in their own abilities. The children will be encouraged to become independent thinkers and choose resources to develop their play and learning.

Play is an essential learning experience. Opportunities will be provided for children to play with a purpose. Through imaginative and spontaneous play, children will have better understanding of experiences and situations, of themselves and other people. They will also have the

opportunity to share and discuss topics related to PSHE. The children will be taught the reasons for good health routines and will be encouraged to master self-care skills.

Communication and Language

In all activities in the Early Years environment, the basic skills of communication are promoted. The children are stimulated to use and extend their language by questioning, explaining, recalling and comparing. We have a language rich environment extended by the Fantastic Foundations and topic discussions.

The foundation of logical thinking will extend from listening and speaking which is relevant to their own environment and experiences.

Literacy

The children will listen to stories and poems and select their own books to enjoy, both in school and at home. This will encourage them to want to learn to read and also understand the conventions of books. Early reading skills will be taught, including phonics, and the children will be introduced to the reading scheme books as appropriate. The children have access to a variety of writing materials and emergent writing takes place at the writing table, during role play and making labels for their models and pictures. The children may write using known words, key words from word banks, words they sound for themselves, invented words and words they ask for. Initial writing is given adult support.

Mathematical Ability

During play the children will group objects, subitise, compare sizes, name shapes, use the language of measure and mass, play with numbers, order and copy patterns, discriminate, using apparatus and everyday objects, learn number rhymes and songs. Discussion will develop their mathematical understanding.

Maths planning introduces mathematical vocabulary and concepts through practical activities, which deepens their understanding and extends their knowledge of numbers to 10, the relationships between them and the patterns within those numbers.

Understanding of the World

Through various topics and activities, the children are given the opportunity to develop their knowledge of the environment as well as the language of past and present events. They ask questions about the world around them and begin to develop an understanding of themselves and other living things, exploring and making connections. Through play they experience an awareness of movement, e.g. pushes and pulls, and forces, bending and stretching. Using their senses, they develop skills of collecting and observing.

While sharing non-fiction texts, the children develop their knowledge of characters and events from the past as well as exploring what it is like in other communities and countries.

Although the current curriculum does not specifically detail ICT skills, the children use a variety of technologies, such as tablets, remote control cars and the interactive whiteboard.

Physical Development

Fine motor control skills and hand/eye coordination are developed through activities such as threading, painting, pencil control and manipulating small apparatus etc. The children will be encouraged to use small apparatus, e.g. balls, to develop gross motor skills. They will gain control over their bodies, e.g. hopping, balancing and use their bodies in imaginative ways. These activities will lead to self-awareness and self-confidence.

At Gravenhurst, we have one PE lesson each week. This helps children to develop their gross motor skills, use small and large equipment and use their imagination and bodies to perform a sequence of movements. We teach lessons in multi-skills, gymnastics, dance and athletics.

The outdoor environment also develops the children's fine and gross motor skills. Balance bikes help build the children's core body strength and gross motor skills. Balls, bats and other small equipment helps develop their fine motor control, in addition to their hand/eye coordination.

Expressive Art and Design

In art, the children are provided with a variety of media and materials, such as a range of papers, paints, brushes, drawing materials, printing materials, adhesives and model making materials. Opportunities will be provided for spontaneous expression, using materials of their own choice. Guided experiences will aid development of new skills and extend their range of inventiveness. Children design, make and talk about their models and use simple hand tools. They have plenty of opportunity to develop their imaginative play.

In music the children will have the opportunity to explore sound patterns and create music spontaneously by using conventional and homemade instruments. They will join in singing with other children and listen to a variety of music.

The children will be given opportunities to experience and engage in dramatic play and drama, develop familiar stories and create imaginary situations.

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is the essential knowledge that children need to prepare them for their future success. We broaden the children's experiences by taking the children on interesting visits as well as taking them to places in our locality, such as the local church or to park etc. We encourage visitors into school to tell us about their jobs or the organisations they represent. We also cook with the children as part of our topic work.

Planning and organisation

When the children begin their time at the school, they need time to explore their new setting and discovering where materials are located. These are stored as much as is possible, so that they are easily accessible and easily selected by the children.

The planning is based on Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum. From this, long term plans have been developed and each half term has a main topic. Within these topics, all areas of the Early Years Curriculum have been implemented.

An initial assessment is made during the first size weeks when the child starts school. This will inform planning which is so that they can start at a point which is appropriate to their individual needs.

Observations, record keeping and reporting

Children are observed informally for much of the time. The children's response to key learning objectives are recorded so that progress can be monitored. These observations, with regular notes are recorded, conclusions are drawn and future action decided upon. Insight is used throughout the school to monitor the children's progress and is updated half termly. Class Dojo is used to communicate with parents, share pictures and achievements at school. We have termly meetings with parents during which they may have access to their child's work. We also have parents evening, open days or any times that parents can speak to us. An annual written report is given on pupils in the Summer Term and the Foundation Stage pupils are assessed against the 17 early learning goals, indicating whether they are:

- Meeting expected levels of development
- Not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging')

Equal Opportunities

Each child is treated as an individual in his or her own right. Children are encouraged to develop mutual respect and appreciation. Each child has access to the Foundation Curriculum regardless of gender, race, religion, culture, disabilities and special needs.

Implementation and Review

This policy will be made known to all staff, parents/carers and governors, and published on the academy's website. Copies are also available upon request from the academy office. This policy will be reviewed every three years or as required.

Written by: Alexandra Diggins — Date: 9th December 2024
Agreed by Principal: Debbie Randall — Date: 10th December 2024
Ratified by Governors: — Date: