



Orchard Partnership Academies Early Years Foundation Stage Policy



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Mrs Kostorz
Mrs Astley
Mrs Fisher

Introduction

‘Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child’s experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.’

Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage- Department for Children, Schools and Families
March 2021

The Early Years Foundation Stage applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. In the Orchard Partnership children are admitted to Reception in the September following their fourth birthday.

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At the Orchard Partnership Academies we greatly value the importance that the EYFS plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development. However, we also believe that early childhood is valid in itself as part of life. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

Aims and objectives

“When we succeed in giving every child the best start in their early years, we give them what they need today. We also set them up with every chance of success tomorrow.” Development Matters Sept 2020

At Orchard Partnership schools, we aim to support all children to become independent and collaborative learners. We will provide a broad and balanced curriculum that will enable each child to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually to their full potential.

In the Orchard Partnership Academies, we will:

- Provide a happy, safe, stimulating and challenging programme of learning and development for the children to experience as they begin their journey through school.
- Provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for further learning and development in Key Stage 1 and beyond and enable choice and decision making, fostering independence and self-confidence.
- Use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress.
- Develop excellent relationships with parents and carers to build a strong partnership in supporting their children.
- Provide a caring and inclusive learning environment, which is sensitive to the requirements of the individual child including those who have additional needs.

The early-years education we offer our children is based on the following principles:

- It builds on what our children already know and can do;
- It ensures that no child is excluded or disadvantaged;

- It offers a structure for learning that has a range of starting points, content that matches the needs of young children, and activities that provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors;
- It provides a rich and stimulating environment;
- It acknowledges the importance of a full working partnership with parents and carers.

Legislation

This policy is based on requirements set out in the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) that applies from September 2021.

Parents as Partners

We recognise that children learn and develop well when there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers. Parents and/or carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development. The progress check and EYFS profile helps to provide parents and/or carers with a well-rounded picture of their child's knowledge, understanding and abilities. We recognise that parents/carers are children's first and most enduring educators and we value being partners with them in their child's education through:

- Talking to parents/carers before their child starts school in various different ways to suit their setting.
- Providing a handbook of information about commencing Early Year environment, outlining the school's expectations.
- Inviting parents/carers and children the opportunity to spend time in Reception Class for induction visits before starting school.
- Providing an induction meeting for Reception parents/carers to meet with staff to discuss school routines, expectations and to answer any questions parents/carers may have.
- Holding a parent consultation early in the academic year to establish how a child is settling into the school environment.
- Operating an open door policy for parents/carers with any queries or concerns. Conversely, if Foundation staff have concerns about the progress of a child, they will immediately approach parents and carers to discuss them.
- Publishing a topic map/web detailing the areas of learning and the overarching theme of the term or half-term as well as a class newsletter/termly overview.
- Inviting parents to attend informal meetings about areas of the curriculum, such as phonics or reading.
- Sharing regularly the children's 'Learning Journey' with parents/carers and valuing the on-going contributions to this from parents/carers.
- Offering parent/teacher consultation meetings at which their child's progress is discussed.
- Sending a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of their time in reception.
- Asking parents to sign a generic permission form for visits, food tasting and photographs etc.
- Parents are invited to a range of activities throughout the school year such as assemblies, workshops, Christmas productions and sports day etc.
- Offering opportunities for parents and carers to visit the school on a volunteer basis to assist with the children's learning e.g. hearing readers.

Overarching principles

At the Orchard Partnership our schools ensure that the four guiding principles shape the practice in our settings. These are:

- every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured

- children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships
- children learn and develop well in enabling environments with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- importance of learning and development. Children develop and learn at different rates.

The EYFS is based on seven key features of effective practice as set out in Development Matters 2020

1. The best for every child
2. High-quality care
3. The curriculum: what we want children to learn
4. Pedagogy: helping children to learn
5. Assessment: checking what children have learnt
6. Self-regulation and executive function
7. Partnership with parents

Our early years settings follows the statutory curriculum requirements as outlined in the latest version of the EYFS statutory framework that applies from September 2021. We offer a broad and balanced curriculum that covers the statutory aspects as well as other knowledge and skills to support pupils' personal development, prepare pupils for their next stage of education and develop the whole child.

Learning and development

In the Orchard Partnership schools we cover seven areas of learning and development. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connect. None of the areas of learning can be delivered in isolation from the others. Our children's learning experiences enable them to develop competency and skill across a number of learning areas.

We ensure that we provide a balance of adult led and child initiated activities in order for most children to reach the levels required at the end of EYFS. 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.

The three Prime areas are:

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

The Specific areas are:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

Reception pupils also participate in a daily phonics session, following the guidance in the "Letters & Sounds" document and in line with school policy, through programmes such as 'Floppy's phonics' and 'Read, write inc.'

Planning

In planning and guiding what children learn, Orchard Partnership staff reflect on the different rates at which children are developing and adjust their practice appropriately. We adapt learning to cover the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning which 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

The Early Learning Goals provide the basis for planning throughout the Foundation Stage. The planning objectives within the Foundation Stage are from the Development Matters Statements from the Early Years Foundation Stage document. The planning is based upon themes with phonics, maths and reading directed teaching.

Staff plan activities and experiences that enable children to develop and learn effectively across all areas of learning, as well as offering them opportunities to develop their cultural capital. Staff also take into account the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience. Where a child may have a special educational need or disability, staff consider whether specialist support is required, linking with relevant services from other agencies, where appropriate. In planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners reflect on the different ways that children learn and include these in their practice. They also show ambitious intent for all children. At Orchard Partnership, schools develop a strong continuous provision, and then plan enhanced provision and additional adult directed activities to support this. As children progress through the early years foundation stage, key group work, adult-directed and whole class work will be planned, as appropriate for the age and stage of the pupils.

Teaching

Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play, and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Practitioners respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction. As children grow older, and as their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards more adult-led activities to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for their next stage of education.

Observations

At Orchard Partnership, staff use observations as the basis for planning. We are skilled at observing children to identify their achievements, interests and next steps for learning. These observations then lead the direction of the planning. Relevant and significant observations are recorded in the children's online Learning Journeys, eg 'Tapestry'

Assessment

At Orchard Partnership schools, ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development processes. Staff observe pupils to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. These observations are used to shape future planning. Practitioners also take into account observations shared by parents and/or carers. This is all completed on an online learning journey, eg Tapestry. From these observations we are able to adapt timetables, the environment and planning to ensure we continue to be ambitious for all pupils.

When a child is aged between 2 and 3, practitioners review their progress and provide parents and/or carers with a written summary of the child's development in the 3 prime areas. This 'progress check' highlights the areas in which a child is progressing well and the areas in which additional support is needed.

Within the first 6 weeks that a child starts reception, staff will administer the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA).

At the end of the EYFS, staff complete the EYFS profile for each child. Pupils are assessed against the 17 early learning goals, indicating whether they are:

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

The profile reflects ongoing observations and discussions with parents and/or carers. The results of the profile are then shared with parents and/or carers. The profile is moderated within the Partnership of schools (referring to the Development Matters guidance and our own in school curriculum documents) and in partnership with other local schools, to ensure consistent assessment judgements. EYFS profile data is submitted to the local authority. Parents receive an annual written report at the end of the academic year.

The Learning Environment

The Foundation Stage classroom is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are specific areas where the children can be active, be quiet, creative etc.

Children have access to both inside and outside area across the day; this has a positive effect on the children's development. All schools have the opportunity to use Forest School provision. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and in different scales than when indoors. The children can explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. All areas of the curriculum can be explored outside.

Safeguarding and welfare

'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.'
(Statutory Framework for EYFS 2021)

In the Orchard Partnership Academies, we understand that we are legally required to comply with welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2014.

- To provide a setting that is welcoming, safe and stimulating where children can grow in confidence
- Promote good health including oral health;
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs
- To ensure that all adults who look after the children, or who have unsupervised access to them, are suitable to do so
- Ensure that the setting, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for the purpose it was intended for
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for the safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

Keeping Safe

It is important to us that all children in the school are 'safe'. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. We encourage children to take risks and highlight the importance of keeping themselves safe by teaching them how to recognise and avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children.

Risk Assessment

Risk assessments will identify aspects of the environment that need to be checked on a regular basis, when and by whom those aspects will be checked, and how the risk will be removed or minimised.

Staffing

Staffing arrangements must meet the needs of all children and ensure their safety. Providers must ensure that children are adequately supervised, including whilst eating, and decide how to deploy staff to ensure children's needs are met.

For children aged two there must be at least one member of staff for every four children. At least one member of staff must hold an approved level 3 qualification. At least half of all other staff must hold an approved level 2 qualification. For children aged three and over in registered early years provision where a person with Qualified Teacher Status, Early Years Professional Status, Early Years Teacher Status or another approved level 6 qualification, is working directly with the children. There must be at least one member of staff for every 13 children. At least one other member of staff must hold an approved level 3 qualification.

Good Health

All children are provided with a healthy snack each day as well as being given the choice of milk. They have access to water at all times.

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of those working in Reception to follow the principles stated in this policy. The Headteacher and EYFS co-ordinators will carry out monitoring on EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule. The Curriculum Committee of The Governing Body will also be part of this process.