



Early Years Policy

Seven Stars Primary School

1. Aims and Objectives

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. Early Years education is a vitally important stage in itself and not just the preparation for the next stage. This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of Early Years education at Seven Stars Primary School.

In this policy, Early Years education refers to the children in the Foundation Stage. This includes all children, both full time and part time, in Nursery and the Reception year.

2. Our Approach

Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their potential. A child's experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood helps provide the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is a framework for children's development from birth to the end of the Reception year of Primary School. The EYFS principles which guide those working within the early years setting are grouped into four themes:

- **A unique child:** Every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- **Positive Relationships:** Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents/carers and/or a key person.
- **Enabling environments:** The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning.
- **Learning and Developing:** Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. All areas of learning and development are equally important and interconnected.

These themes inform the practice of the Early Years staff. This helps ensure that staff provide the best possible support for the development, learning and care of each individual child within the Foundation Stage Seven Stars Primary School.

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3. Teaching and Learning

The EYFS curriculum is organised into seven areas of learning and development;

- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development**
- **Communication and Language**
- **Literacy**
- **Mathematics**
- **Understanding the World**
- **Physical Development**
- **Expressive Arts and Design**

Through topic work, carefully selected resources and a wide range of activities all seven areas of learning are covered. Children are encouraged to see the seven areas as interconnected and as equally important. We encourage the children to become involved in their own learning and development. Our planning for each topic area is done in collaboration with the children; we find out what they already know about the topic and then encourage them to think about what they would like to know. This helps them to take ownership of their learning and also of the learning environment.

Children learn at different speeds and in a variety of different ways so a wide range of teaching strategies are employed within the classroom to ensure that all children make progress. We aim to create a balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities within the classroom to help build children's confidence, self-esteem and independence.

The children are carefully observed and monitored from their first day in the Foundation Unit so that each child's individual interests and needs are fully met. If necessary children are supported through our Special Educational Needs program and our Able, Gifted and Talented provision.

A range of assessments are carried out throughout the year. These include formative assessments which are carried out on a daily basis and summative assessments which are carried out termly (this includes on-entry data during the first seven weeks of the Autumn term). All children have a Learning Journey where observations, photographs and examples of their work are placed. The Learning Journeys are used to inform our planning and as an assessment tool when completing each child's EYFS Profile. We use 2Simple to capture observations and record children's progress.

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In addition to the individual Learning Journey's, we also use class floor books for collaborative work, showing how ideas and play has been extended and how next steps can be identified. This floor book also allows the children to look at what they have done, taking ownership of their learning and revisiting some of our topics.

We feel that a daily routine is very important for the children learning and development helping to create a sense of security and safety. Children are introduced to these routines from their first visit to the classroom. During their first few days at school we encourage the children to take ownership of their classroom by working with them to devise a list of classroom rules. We use a variety of methods to deliver instructions and enable all children to tune in. These are in the form of singing, use of tambourine, simple instructions, sign-along and music. This is an effective way of engaging children in tasks or delivering instructions in a calm manner.

4. The Learning Environment

Carefully planned purposeful play, both indoors and outdoors, is the foundation of development and learning for young children. Children learn in a variety of ways: watching others, talking, asking questions, listening, exploring and investigating. Learning through play is both enjoyable and challenging and helps children to develop intellectually, creatively, physically, socially and emotionally.

Our learning environment provides the opportunity for children to access all areas of the curriculum. There are two classrooms and an outdoor area within the unit. Although the classroom is divided up into specific learning areas, they are all interconnected and there is free flow of children and resources between the areas. The learning environment is closely linked to the topic being covered and so resources are frequently changed to help provide challenge, stimulation and freshness. The environment has been carefully planned to meet the needs of the current cohort and can be adjusted suit the needs of the children as they progress throughout the year.

We have direct access to an outdoor area and children are encouraged from the very start to see this area as an extension of our classroom. This area gives the children a space to develop different ways of playing outside of the normal restrictions of the classroom. We provide blue suits for the children so that learning can continue without clothing being muddied or wet. We encourage the children to attempt to put on their own suits, sometimes laying out suits or starting zips.

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5. The Role of Adults in the Foundation Stage

At present there are 6 members of staff in the Foundation Unit: 2 teachers and 4 teaching assistants.

Although the teachers are responsible for the planning within the Unit, observations, discussions and ideas for developing areas is a collaboration between all staff. Staff regularly discuss what they have seen and share observations using the 2Simple program or discussion between individuals. It is important that this is done together as it is vital that the adults working within the foundation stage have a clear understanding of where the children are and where they need to go.

All the Early Years staff have a responsibility for observing and reflecting on the children's spontaneous play, as well as on the adult-led activities they carry out. These observations are placed within the children's Learning Journeys as well as being used to inform our planning to ensure that all children's development needs are being met and that the activities are appropriate for the individual needs of each child.

The Classroom teacher and the teaching assistant are also responsible for the displays in the classroom as this is an important part of the children's learning environment. A large percentage of the children's work is displayed within the classroom or within the school promoting a sense of pride and achievement. Time is also given for children to share things they have achieved or made at home or in class.

Both the Classroom teacher and the teaching assistant attend courses regularly to keep up to date with any new developments.

We continue to develop our knowledge and understanding of the Early Years and put what we have learned into practise. We achieved the Step into Quality Award in January 2016 and are very proud of the work that the whole team did to ensure that we are providing a stimulating, challenging and welcoming environment in which the children can explore and learn.

6. Liaison within the School

Our Foundation Unit allows all adults to get to know the children in both Nursery and Reception and enables adults and children to form good relationships. A safe and secure learning environment with happy, welcoming and responsive adults is paramount to a child's wellbeing and learning. Children moving from our Nursery into Reception class have a smoother transition as they already know the learning environment and the adults within it.

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Children that come into our School from other Nurseries or schools are encouraged to visit the Foundation Unit with their parents or guardians so that they can see our environment and meet the adults. Visits are made to Nurseries and liaisons with key workers and parents are vital to ensure a smooth transition. However, we recognise that children are individual and we work closely with parents to ensure that children are school ready and further visits and Stay and Play sessions are tailored to meet the needs of that child.

The Reception teacher, teaching assistant and Year One teacher work closely to make the transition from Reception to Year One as easy as possible. Reception and Year one are given plenty of opportunities to work and socialise together. This encourages friendships and allows the Year One children to 'teach' the Reception children how to play. The Year One teacher is invited to the Summer Stay and Play session, where she can meet the parents of the children moving into her class.

7. Parents as partners

We recognise that parents' influence is important throughout childhood. Parents guide, encourage and teach their children and research has shown that parental involvement in a child's schooling is the most important factor in the success of the child's educational achievements in adolescence. We also recognise that school for some parents can be a daunting place and are sensitive to the experiences that some parents may have had during their school years

We work hard to form good relationships with parents and other family members, ensuring that there is always a friendly face at the classroom door, time is given to parents to share information or concerns and recognise that what they say is valued. We encourage parents to play an active role in their child's schooling.

To enable parents to work in partnership with the school we:

- Have an open door policy, ensuring that the Early Years staff are accessible both at the beginning and end of the school day so that parents/carers can chat and share information. Appointments can also be made to meet with staff in a more formal context;
- Encourage parents to participate, wherever possible, in the school life of their child through reading at home, sharing hobbies, jobs and skills with the class;
- Provide a Nursery and Reception newsletter at the start of each term to let parents and carers know what topic is being covered and other classroom information so they are fully informed;

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- Encourage parents to share in their child's learning in school by providing "Stay and Play" sessions for parents and carers to come into school and play with their children, talk to staff and find out what we are doing in school. It also give parents a chance to ask questions in a relaxed environment and for adults to give support if needed. "Stay and Play" sessions are flexible, they are planned through the conversations we have with parents and we are able to show them things we are learning or how we do things in school eg. phonics.
- Provide timely feedback on children's progress through two parent consultations and an end of year report.
- Parent Workshops are planned for by the teachers to meet the needs of the parents and there is flexibility to ensure that everyone feels that they can be part of their child's learning. We have held Phonic and reading workshops yearly but are also there for individual parents.

8. The settling in process

For children who are going to attend our Nursery, we invite parents and children to look round our Unit. Through discussions with parents and observations of the child, we can make the transition into Nursery as smooth as possible by providing more visits, taster sessions and further discussions with parents.

In the Summer term, a meeting is held for the parents of those Reception children joining us in September. This meeting enables the parents to meet their child's new teacher and the other members of staff, ask any questions, look around the classroom and the school and find out a little more about the Early Years curriculum. This meeting takes place before the children are invited in for their induction visits.

The children are invited to look round the Unit with their parents throughout the year. Children then attend an induction session towards the end of the Summer term in preparation for them joining in September. These induction visits give the children the opportunity to explore their new classroom, their new school and it gives both the children and adults a chance to get to know each other a little better.

The visits are broken down as follows:

- Prospective parents and children can look round the school throughout the year,
- Summer term visit – takes place from 9.50am until 12noon,

Again, these visits can be tailored to meet the needs of the individual.

After the long summer break we feel it is important to integrate the children gradually.

Week 1 – children in 8.50am – 12.45

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Week 2 – children are in full time 8.50am -3.15pm.

Again, these inductions can be tailored to meet the needs of the individual.

9. Step into Quality Award

We are very proud of our achievement of the Lancashire Step into Quality Award. We aim to provide the best care and learning to all individuals and ensure that parents and carers can expect the best possible start for their children. As a team, we strive to create interesting and challenging environments where children can explore and make sense of the world by asking questions and forming opinions.

Lisa Hollinghurst Nursery Teacher

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