

MARY SHERIDAN PRE-SCHOOL UNIT POLICY

This document is a statement of the aims and principles for the teaching and learning of the Early Years Curriculum at the Mary Sheridan Pre-school Unit.

Background

The Mary Sheridan Unit is part of St Nicholas School. It is based at the Children's Assessment Centre within Kent and Canterbury Hospital; within this multi-agency building, we are well placed to provide education services for children who may be accessing health services, such as Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and Speech and Language Therapy. Children with profound, severe and complex needs are identified by multi-agency professionals and allocated places through the Early Support Programme and approved by the Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF). Within the Early Support Framework we have the opportunity to share information about a family and child. This is an essential prerequisite to the joint and holistic review and co-ordination of services and support. The Teacher in Charge will visit a child either at home, or in their mainstream setting to gauge the child's ability to access learning within that environment, and how specialist provision may benefit the child.

Access

Mary Sheridan operates as a specialist education provision funded by the local authority **to accommodate the equivalent of six full time places. In order to ensure good inclusive practice, we work with mainstream to facilitate split placements.**

Children can access up to 3 sessions (9 hours) at the Mary Sheridan pre-school unit. In some instances, the parents may choose to continue with Portage and this will impact on the child's other education provision. At the heart of these decisions are the parents' requests for what they think is most beneficial for their child. There may be some instances where more sessions within the Specialist setting can be negotiated, when it is considered by multi-agency professionals that mainstream experiences may not provide an effective education for the child or their peers. This can be reviewed at any time and the ratio adjusted accordingly. The Unit supports children from three years old, up to school age. There are 6 children per session.

The Unit works in partnership with parents, carers, multi-agency colleagues and mainstream pre-schools to remove barriers so that all children can access the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum (EYFS). This was revised for September 2012 and these changes are reflected within the daily work of the unit.

We seek to actively work with parents and recognise that parents are their children's first teachers. We respect the unique relationship between parents and child, and spend time getting to know the child, as the parent sees them. 'Stay and Play' sessions are offered for the child and parent to come into the unit to meet staff, allow children to begin to explore the class and begin to develop relationships. These relationships begin before the child enters the unit classroom, and may begin very early on if the child is attending the Health run 'Honey bears' nursery. All families receive a home visit in which the parents have an opportunity to tell their family's story, and gives staff working at the unit the opportunity to meet and play with the child.

Ethos

The Mary Sheridan pre-school Unit aims to provide a free and protected space in which all children can experience themselves as learners. We recognise that this may be a child's first encounter with formal education and we work to ensure that children experience a flexible yet predictable, inclusive environment; this provides a good balance of security and appropriate levels of challenge. We aim to support children to become independent learners by supporting them to find their inner resources of curiosity and enthusiasm, so that they can enjoy engaging with learning and as they develop, manage their own ways of learning. We encourage all children to experience themselves positively and believe that nurturing and respecting the child's self-autonomy will lead them to recognise their own ideas, skills and knowledge leading to a positive sense of self.

We recognise that all the children who have been referred into the unit have Special Educational Needs. These needs vary. The two things all the children have in common are that they have some impairment in their contact functions. The tools of looking, touching, moving, listening, talking, smelling and tasting may be impaired in some way. The children cannot for various reasons make use of one or more of their contact functions in relating to the adults in their lives, to other children or to their environment, and this impacts on their ability to develop. The second common factor is that they are all children and deserve, and have the right to be given the same opportunities as all children. We see one of the roles of the adults within this setting to adapt opportunities to circumvent barriers which may be affecting the child's contact functions.

Within each session the children's needs will be varied. The groups are made up sessionally, and these fit with their mainstream timetables. In some instances there may be potential to provide a specific curriculum, but this depends upon the needs of the children within each cohort and each session.

EARLY INTERVENTION

We recognise the profound and continued effect of Early Intervention and pre-school education on equipping children with the skills they need for the rest of their lives and in helping them to understand themselves, each other and the world around them. We recognise that where children have special needs or disabilities, it is important that these are identified at an early stage and that identification leads directly to early intervention and support for families and children. It emphasises that early intervention strengthens the ability of families to provide effective support for their children and improves outcomes for the whole family.

We believe that the Early Intervention they receive at the Pre-school Unit will enable children to access the most appropriate and suitable school for their needs.

We involve parents/carers and all other professionals in the Early Years to meet the needs of each individual child through an open, innovative child-centred curriculum, based on the 2012 EYFS

We aim to give the individual child the means by which to reach their full potential by:

- Working with parents and family
- Work within the framework of Early Support

- Collaborative working with the keyworkers
- Working with mainstream pre-schools and Reception classes
- Multi-agency working eg OT, PT, SALT, Paediatrician
- Developing strong relationships with individual children in all environments to know their strengths and needs.

Team Around the Child meetings (TAC) are held as and when required to review and update any intervention needed for the child and family. These are family led and maybe held in a venue of their choice and they may invite professionals, friends and family or any independent advisors and mediators. The meeting highlights any parental/carer concerns and professionals set targets or give advice for the next steps in the child's progress. The Family Plan is given to the parent/carer at the time of the meeting so they have a permanent record of the outcomes; including any appointment dates, professional contacts and advice.

THE CURRICULUM

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To develop skills that have already been acquired and use them in a wider environment
- To generalise these skills to make them functional in all environments.
- To understand the power that particular modes of communication can have upon an increasing circle of people and to help extend, refine and develop them in the most positive and successful way
- To make learning pleasurable and rewarding
- To help children think and communicate about their learning
- To develop independence and self-control

The curriculum follows the:

- Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum (2012)

The revised EYFS focuses on the 'How' of effective learning. These are defined as:

- Playing and exploring- *engagement*
Finding out and exploring
Playing with what they know
Being willing to have a go
- Active Learning- *motivation*
Being involved and concentrating
Keeping trying
Enjoying achieving what they set out to do
- Creating and thinking critically- *thinking*
Having their own ideas
Making links
Choosing ways to do things

The 'what' of the revised EYFS has been divided into Prime and Specific areas. The 'Prime' areas are:

- Personal, Social and emotional development
Making relationships
Self-confidence and self-awareness

- Communication and Language
 - Listening and attention
 - Understanding
 - Speaking
- Physical development
 - Health and self-care
 - Moving and handling

The 'Specific' areas are:

- Literacy
 - Reading
 - Writing
- Mathematics
 - Number
 - Shape, space and measure
- Understanding the world
 - People and communities
 - The world
 - Technology
- Expressive arts and design
 - Being imaginative
 - Exploring and using materials and media

The breadth of the EYFS considers the following areas regarding factors that influence children's learning:

- **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 and/or a key person;
- **Enabling environments** – the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning;
- **Learning and Development**- children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of Learning and Development are equally important and inter-connected.

The curriculum planning is in the form of a bank of activities which can be individualised for each child to help them access the curriculum. Each session is planned for with a balance of child led and adult led learning experiences that are evaluated at each session and used to inform future planning.

OTHER INTERVENTION:

It is acknowledged that the children may be accessing other services, depending on their needs and these may include:

- Occupational Therapy
- Physiotherapy
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Specialist Nursing Team
- Hearing and Visual Impaired Service
- Specialist Teaching Service

- Behaviour Service
- Educational Psychology
- Clinical Psychology
- Play Therapy
- Mainstream settings

The Unit works closely with the other agencies involved with the children and their families.

Children at the Pre-school Unit work on individual targets which have been identified with their key person and teacher in charge, looking at what the child is interested in, the nature of their difficulties and planning next steps. These targets are based on the individual need, which may be reflected in the EYFS and shared therapy goals which support the children's ability to learn.

OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT

The work of the Unit encompasses the following in order to fully assess an individual's needs:

- EYFS
- Family's views
- Paediatric Developmental Assessments
- Liaising with the child's mainstream pre-school
- Multi-agency assessments and reports
- IEP's
- Liaising with Portage
- Leuven's scale of Well-being and Involvement
- Alternative assessment through High/Scope observation records.

The major source of assessment and the generation of medium term IEPs are devised by use of the Pupil Asset assessment tool. Other information from the High/Scope infant and toddler and pre-school observation records are also used as the detail regarding Sense of Self, Social Relations and Exploration and Early Logic in particular more accurately reflect the small steps progress children attending the unit tend to make. Whilst there is ongoing observation, the findings are charted 2 times a year and the pupil progress monitored using Pupil Asset. This information is scrutinised and collated in order to support and advise both parents and professionals on the child's level of need. As a result, advice may be given to apply for an Education and Health Care plan (EHC) in order for the child to access a special school placement or designation or to support them in a mainstream setting. Not all children will require Statutory Assessment and will leave the unit on School Action Plus with a support package and a comprehensive transition process.

TRANSITION

Families receive support within the unit throughout the Observation and Assessment Period and beyond. Parents/carers are continually informed of their child's progress via a home link book, home school symbol board, multi-agency meetings and direct verbal contact. Staff attend Team Around the Child meetings and liaise regularly with other professionals involved in the child and family's well-being. Parents/carers are supported by the teacher in charge as to where the child's educational needs may be best met at the time of School Entry. EHC plans will be applied for where applicable. We support the parents through this whole process and in some instances accompany parents on school visits.

When the children leave the unit for School Entry we organise, in collaboration with the keyworker, transition meetings. Schools are invited to come and observe their prospective pupils and they receive recorded information.

As part of the transition process to St Nicholas school or other school placements we provide the following:

- Observation notes
- Assessment against the EYFS
- Mobility programmes
- Communication programmes, including PECS and use of visual supports
- Visual impairment programmes
- Hand function programmes
- Physiotherapy programmes where appropriate
- Pen portraits
- Reviewed IEPs and potential future targets to focus on.

The children are invited to attend at taster sessions in the Reception Class if transferring to St Nicholas School. Reception staff work at the Mary Sheridan Unit to gain experience and get to know individual children as part of the Transition process. The Reception Teacher then gives parents the opportunity of a home visit and/or individual meeting to help put the parents/carers at ease and feel secure with this next big step in their child's education.

SAFEGUARDING

Within the Foundation Stage children are taught about themselves and keeping themselves safe through adult and child led activities. The emphasis is on knowing themselves, naming body parts, understanding and expressing feelings, developing a strong sense of self and feeling valid, relating to one another, taking care of personal needs and resolving conflict. It is recognised that the children are at the early stages of this development, but that consistent messages from adults that emphasise staying safe will support children to learn these vital life skills. The Foundation Key-stage manager is a Designated Safeguarding Lead and any incidents or accidents which cause concern are recorded and reported according to school procedures, and held by the Headteacher.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy will be monitored on a yearly basis by the Foundation Key Stage manager to keep up to date with any adjustments to statutory legislation or curriculum and any changes will go via the Governing Body when necessary.

EQUALITY, SAFEGUARDING AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT

St Nicholas School, in all policies and procedures, will promote equality of opportunity for students and staff from all social, cultural and economic backgrounds and ensure freedom from discrimination on the basis of membership of any group, including gender, sexual orientation, family circumstances, ethnic or national origin, disability (physical or mental), religious or political beliefs.

St Nicholas School aims to:

- Provide equal opportunity for all
- To foster good relations, and create effective partnership with all sections of the community
- To take no action which discriminates unlawfully in service delivery, commissioning and employment

- To provide an environment free from fear and discrimination, where diversity, respect and dignity are valued.

All aspects of Safeguarding will be embedded into the life of the school and be adhered to and be the responsibility of all staff.

LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES

Safeguarding Policy
Community Cohesion Policy
Early Years Foundation Policy
Teaching and Learning Policy
Esafety Policy
Antibullying Policy
Behaviour Management Policy
Health and Safety Policy
Single Equality Policy
PSHEEC Policy
Physical Education Policy
Healthy Schools Policy

SALLY MULLERVY
REVISED TERM 1 2017
RATIFIED BY THE FULL GOVERNING BODY OCTOBER 2017 AND ACCEPTED BY THE LCS COMMITTEE –
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