

EARLY YEARS POLICY



SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

We believe that the best preparation for tomorrow's future is striving to do our best today.

We believe that because our children matter, they have the right to be safe and healthy, happy and confident, recognised for the individuals they are and for those they might become.

We believe that because our children's achievement matters, they have the right to an excellent learning environment that promotes high expectations, ensures inclusion, recognises diversity and promotes progress and attainment.

We believe that because our children's future matters, they have the right to lead, the right to follow, the right to take best advantage of present and future technology and the right to a global life free from threat

Aims (Outcomes)

Our school aims that all children:

- Are tolerant and responsible
- Are happy and confident
- Are safe and healthy
- Are skilled and willing
- Are eco aware
- Are techno 'cute'
- Are leaders and partners
- Are flexible
- Are given every opportunity to attain and progress
- Are mindful of the joy of diversity
- Are focused on being excellent in all they do
- Are expected always to do their best

SCHOOL AIMS

Our children matter, as does their achievement and so too does their future.

Because our children matter, we will work to:

- Ensure they are safe and ensure that they can keep themselves and others safe too
- Make sure that school life is happy, enjoyable and rewarding - taking each and every opportunity to build confident, positive citizens of the future
- Develop individuals with a sense of responsibility to themselves and to their community, able to respond positively to different views and beliefs

Because our children's achievement matters, we will work to:

- Release and develop the excellence latent in all our children
- Ensure high expectations in all we do, developing a culture that remains positive about the steps to success and able to celebrate success accordingly
- Provide an inclusive learning framework where individual needs are recognised and catered for, where diversity is celebrated for what it offers our school community
- Ensure that all children make good progress leading to attainment appropriate to potential
- Develop learners with a love of learning and a commitment to future learning in life

Because our children's futures matter, we will work to:

- Develop their ability to release the opportunities provided by technologies present and future
- Develop their awareness of their footprint upon this 'one' world and how they can contribute to its sustainability
- Develop a skills base and a solution-focused attitude that can be applied to effect in a variety of circumstances now and in the future
- Develop an ability to lead others and to be led by others in productive working partnerships

EQUALITY STATEMENT

Equal Opportunities is the responsibility of the whole school community and must be reflected throughout the organisation of the school and be addressed in the taught and hidden curriculum.

All staff, governors, parents/guardians and pupils will be involved in developing, implementing and monitoring the equal opportunities policy and practice.

All staff, governors, parents/guardians and pupils regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation and socio-economic background, are welcome and will be encouraged to participate in the life of the school.

The school recognises its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination and to promote good race relations.

BRITISH VALUES

The government set out its definition of British Values in the 2011 Prevent Strategy. At Westbrook Old Hall we reinforce regularly the following values through an agreed programme: Democracy, The Rule of Law, Individual Liberty, Mutual Respect and Tolerance of those of Different Faiths and Beliefs.

Context

"Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to achieve their full potential. A child's experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right and it provides the foundation for the children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up. When parents choose to use Early Years' services, they want to know the provision will keep their children safe and help them to thrive. The Early Years (EY) is the framework that provides that assurance."

Introduction

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. It is not just a preparation for the next stage but is vitally important in itself. For young children, there is no distinction between work and play.

Learning for young children is a rewarding and enjoyable experience in which they explore, investigate, discover, create, practise, rehearse, repeat, revise and consolidate their developing knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes. During the Early Years, many of these aspects of learning are brought together effectively through playing and talking.

Aims of the Early Years

In EY, we believe that all children are entitled to the best possible start in their school life, both intellectually and emotionally, in order to enable them develop their full potential.

We aim to support each child's welfare, learning and developmental needs by:

- Recognising that all children are unique and special.
- Understanding that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates - physically, cognitively, linguistically, socially and emotionally.
- Providing a safe, secure and caring environment where children feel happy and know that they are valued.
- Fostering and nurturing children's self-confidence and self-esteem through their developing awareness of their own identity and role within the community.
- Teaching them to express and communicate their needs and feelings in appropriate ways.
- Encouraging children's independence and decision-making, supporting them to learn through their mistakes.
- Developing children's understanding of social skills and the values and codes of behaviour required for people to work together harmoniously.
- Supporting children to develop care, respect and appreciation for others, including those with beliefs, cultures and opinions which differ to their own.
- Understanding the importance of play in children's learning and development.
- Providing learning experiences in play which reflect children's personal interests and areas of curiosity in order to encourage and develop their natural desire, interest, excitement and motivation to learn.
- Providing experiences which build on children's existing knowledge and understanding in order to challenge, stimulate and extend their learning and development.
- Providing effective learning opportunities in a range of environments, inside and outside.

The Early Years Framework

Teaching in the EY is delivered in accordance with the government's statutory document 'The Statutory Framework for the Early Years' (July 2014). This document is a principled approach to Early Years education, bringing together children's welfare, learning and development requirements through four themes: 'A Unique Child', 'Positive Relationships', 'Enabling Environments' and 'Children Learn in Different Ways and at Different Rates'.

The curriculum is centred on 3 prime areas of learning:

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

Providers must also support activities through four specific areas which strengthen the prime areas. These are:

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

These Areas of Learning and Development address children's physical, cognitive linguistic, social and emotional development. No one aspect of development stands in isolation from the others as all Areas of Learning and Development are closely interlinked. This ensures the delivery of a holistic, child-centred curriculum which allows children to make lots of links between what they are learning. All Areas of Learning and Development are given equal weighting and value.

Active Learning Through Play

We organise the day to provide a balance between the following: -

- Child Initiated Activities - children make choices from within the learning environment to meet his/her outcome for learning.
- Adult Initiated Activities - practitioners provide the resources to stimulate and consolidate learning.
- Adult Led Activities - children engage in planned activities to meet specific learning outcomes.

At Westbrook Old Hall Primary School, we recognise that young children learn best when they are active. We understand that active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods. Therefore, we believe that Early Years education should be as practical as possible and our EY setting has an ethos of learning through play.

We recognise the importance of children's play. It is an essential and rich part of their learning process, supporting them in all areas of development. Play is a powerful motivator encouraging children to be creative and to develop their ideas, understanding and language. Play is also flexible and able to suit the preferred learning style of the child. It can provide multiple ways for children to learn a variety of different skills and concepts.

In providing these active learning opportunities through play, we understand the central position of play within the EY framework. This is essentially a play based curriculum and pedagogy as the provision of play opportunities underpins its delivery.

Assessment and Record Keeping

The main EY assessment method is through practitioners' observations of children in different teaching and learning contexts, including both adult led activities and child initiated play. Practitioners make time to carry out planned observations of individuals and groups of children regularly. They also make spontaneous observations in order to capture significant moments of children's learning. All practitioners are involved in observing children. Practitioners use observations to support their developing knowledge of individual children. It informs them of children's abilities, needs, interests, play schemas and learning styles. Observations are evaluated, children's learning priorities are identified and relevant learning opportunities are planned to support children to make the next steps and progress.

Learning Journeys record children's progress over the academic year in all Areas of Learning and Development of the EY framework. Samples of children's work are gathered, along with photographic evidence and observations.

There is continuous monitoring and assessment of each child's development using the new Early Years Profile (2012). At the end of the year it provides a summary of every child's development and learning achievements. Baseline assessment is carried out using the EY Profile during the children's first four weeks upon entering the setting. Judgements made on children's development in the Profile are based on practitioner's evidence of the children's behaviour observed independently and consistently in their self-initiated and adult-led activities across all Areas of Learning and Development.

Planning

The EY framework provides a long-term plan to follow by ensuring that all Early Learning Goals are covered throughout the academic year.

Medium-term planning is created and takes into account the individual children's learning and developmental needs.

All Areas of Learning and Development are planned for and available to access within the setting. The learning opportunities provided include a range of adult led and child initiated activities both indoors and outdoors.

Parents as Partners

At Westbrook Old Hall Primary School, we recognise the importance of establishing positive relationships with parents, as highlighted by the EY framework. We understand that an effective partnership between school and home will have a positive impact on children's learning and development so practitioners endeavour to encourage the regular sharing of information about the children with parents.

We value the role of parents as children's primary educators. We encourage parents to share their unique knowledge of their child, providing further insight into the child as an individual (e.g. characteristics, interests, experiences, likes, dislikes). This supports practitioners in establishing interesting and stimulating learning experiences, responding to children's needs and interests.

Parents are kept informed of what is happening in the setting through regular letters, reading records and informal chatting at the beginning and end of the day. This also gives suggestions of how parents can support their children's learning at home; consolidating and building on what has been covered in the setting. Whole school newsletters are also sent home on a monthly basis.

Parents are invited to attend Learning Reviews during the course of the academic year. The first of these takes place during the Autumn term to allow practitioners and parents to discuss how children have settled into the setting. Another Learning Review takes place during the Spring term where practitioners will feedback on children's learning and development progress. A Parents' Evening is then held at the end of the Summer term to allow practitioners and parents to discuss children's achievements.

Other opportunities for practitioners to share children's learning, development and well-being with parents include Learning Workshop sessions once a term and end of year reports where children's achievements are recognised.

Parents are also invited to get involved with school life. There are opportunities for families to attend special events and assemblies throughout the year showing their particular skills.

The setting has a friendly, open-door ethos and practitioners are available to talk to parents at the beginning and end of the day. Parents are always welcomed into school and encouraged to discuss any concerns they might have. The classrooms are also open to parents after school three times each week, giving parents the opportunity to look around the classrooms, look at their children's learning journey's, class books and loan library books.

Admissions and Induction

Westbrook Old Hall Primary School provides full-time Early Years education for children in the Reception Year. This is for children who enter school from September of the academic year in which they will turn five years old.

Before they start in the setting, all children are offered two introductory sessions during the Summer term. The purpose of these initial visits is for children to meet their new practitioners and start to become familiar with the setting environment. Practitioners will also go to visit the children in their current pre-school settings. The aim of these visits is to support practitioners develop their knowledge and understanding of each child in order to make the transition period to Westbrook Old Hall Primary School as smooth as possible.

In the Summer term, parents are invited into school to meet the setting's practitioners. At this meeting, information regarding the induction process and what goes on in the setting is shared. There is also time for informal chat and parents' questions.

Information packs will be distributed to parents at this meeting, detailing school routines and expectations. Induction packs for children to complete with parents will also be given out as another way to support practitioners' knowledge and understanding of each individual child.

From the third week of the Autumn term, children attend the setting full-time. Every effort is made to make children feel safe, secure and happy. There is a relaxed and open ethos in the setting. Established routines, a calm atmosphere and encouraging talk are some of the strategies practitioners use to maintain children's positive feelings about school.

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the EY teachers to follow the principles stated in this policy. There is a named Governor responsible for the EY. This governor will discuss EY practice with the practitioners regularly and provide feedback to the whole governing body, raising any issues that require discussion.

The Head teacher and subject leader will carry out monitoring on the EY as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.