

Mountfields Lodge Primary School



Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Aim High, Reach for the Sky

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy

Introduction:

The 'Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage', sets the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five. It was updated in July 2020 as an 'Early Adopter' version and this updated version is due to be statutory from Sept 2021. Mountfields Lodge opted to become an 'Early Adopter' school and have referred to the updated version since Sept 2020.

The Foundation Stage is a critical year and lays much of the foundation for later schooling. There are much to consider when teaching and caring for our youngest children in school and this policy outlines the elements that we bring together to get the best out of our pupils.

Most children who come to Mountfields Lodge Primary School in EYFS have previously been to a pre-school or nursery setting and have had a range of different learning experiences and opportunities. On average around 20 different settings, mostly from Loughborough, feed our Foundation Stage and we maintain good relationships with these settings to ensure transition is smooth. When the children arrive, our primary goal is to make them feel settled and we have a number of transition measures to make this possible (detailed later in the policy).

Organisation of our EYFS:

We ordinarily have 3 classes of approximately 25 pupils in our foundation stage (depending on intake) each with a separate classroom and outdoor area and also a shared large playground for Foundation Stage only. We also have two additional teaching spaces. Each class is taught by a teacher and an LSA and depending on the needs of pupils in the class, other LSAs may be deployed to EYFS.

It is expected that all children join us at the beginning of the school year in which they are five. In exceptional circumstances, they may join after this point and compulsory school starts in the term the child is 5. (*x-ref. Admissions Policy: School Website > 'Key Information' > Admissions*)

The EYFS Curriculum and Teaching and Learning Considerations

7 Key Features of Effective Practice in EYFS

As outlined in *Development Matters*, Seven Key features of Effective Practice should underpin everything in EYFS. A more in depth description of these critically important features is in the *Development Matters* Document at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-adopter-schools-eyfs-framework>

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

We know these are crucial and invest thought and time into ensuring we are fulfilling each of these Key Features to give each child the best chance of success.

Four Principles of EYFS

We understand that there are 4 critical overarching principles that shape our practice and these need to be the 'foundation' of all that we do before we consider specifics of the content of our EYFS Curriculum.

- **Unique Child** - Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- **Positive relationships** - Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.
- **Enabling environments** - Children learn well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents/carers.
- **Learning and development** - Children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early year's settings, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The Seven Areas of Learning:

The 'Seven Areas of Learning' (detailed in 'Development Matters' and the 'Statutory Framework') also shape the educational programme in early years' settings.

These are divided into **3 'Prime' areas** and **4 'Specific' areas**.

The 3 'Prime' areas form the basis of successful learning. However, it is expected that as the children develop there will be a shift to a more equal focus across all 7 areas.

The **Prime** areas comprise:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development

The **Specific** areas comprise:

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

The 'Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage' sets out the skills, knowledge and understanding we hope our children will reach, or exceed, by the end of EYFS. Alongside this, the '*Development Matters*' document (revised Sept. 2020) details examples of children's learning progressions within the 7 areas of learning, organised into the age bands *Birth to 3*; *3&4 year olds*; *Children in Reception (we call this EYFS)*. To support EYFS Staff, there are examples of how teaching staff can support the learning progressions that are typical of each of the age bands. There are also observation checkpoints that give assessment and progress guidance.

Early Learning Goals:

The **7 Areas of Learning** are broken down further into **Early Learning Goals** (ELGs) and have '**best fit descriptors**' to help measure children's development at the end of EYFS:

Communication and Language

- Listening, Attention and Understanding
- Speaking

Personal Social and Emotional Development

- Self-Regulation
- Managing Self
- Building Relationships

Physical Development

- Gross Motor Skills
- Fine Motor Skills

Literacy

- Comprehension
- Word Reading
- Writing

Maths

- Number
- Numerical Patterns

Understanding the World

- Past and Present
- People, Culture and Communities
- The Natural World

Expressive Arts and Design

- Creating with Materials
- Being Imaginative and Expressive

Although much of the content in the ELGs descriptors is helpful, we are basing much of our curriculum on what we feel is most important for ***our children and our setting***.

Therefore, we are currently developing our '**Mountfields Core Learning**'. We have taken each of the Areas of Learning and produced, with consideration of all we know about our children, some 'non-negotiable' objectives that we consider are important as a 'foundation' base for learning and development as a young person. We expect all children will achieve the 'Core Learning' and will revisit these goals throughout the year in multiple contexts. This way of thinking helps to simplify our curriculum intent. The 'core learning' expectations will of course not be the only content learned in our rich learning environment, but they simply identify the 'must-haves' by the end of the year. The 'Mountfields Core Learning' expectations are replicated in all year groups in Mountfields Lodge.

Planning, Teaching and Learning

With the above principles and features underpinning practice, our curriculum is planned and delivered in a fun, rich, multi-sensory way and is **play-based**. First hand experiences are paramount in the learning process and our resources encourage talk in play. The contexts of our

curriculum are diverse and delivered through a range of topics and themes incorporating all areas of learning. Some activities are child-initiated and some adult-led.

We plan thematic learning that is often based on quality texts or stories that act as a hook for the children. We observe children; informally assess children; and have meaningful interactions with them, then adapt activities accordingly, taking into account interests and ability. Most weeks (when restrictions allow) we meet as a whole EYFS for a shared inspiration activity or event related to our topic. This allows more opportunity for discussion between different groups of children and gives some of the planned activities more gravitas and shared context. We teach Maths, Phonics (daily), Literacy/Topic and Handwriting in discreet whole-class, or group, teaching sessions and there are usually related tasks in the provision.

We know that children experience learning in different ways and develop at different rates and we use the '**Characteristics of Effective Learning**' to guide the set-up of classroom provision and interactions.

Characteristics of effective Learning:

- **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

With reference to the Characteristics of Effective Learning, we organise a range of experiences and opportunities which give our children chance to make decisions and choices, work individually or in groups, and explore the learning environment. There is provision both inside and outside and play can 'free-flow' between both. We also use our extensive grounds and local area to enhance the learning experiences regularly. Children are encouraged to communicate and talk about their learning, and develop independence and self-regulation.

Sometimes we may select specific children to take part in adult-led activities or particular tasks, this judgment is made taking into account everything that is known about the individual and their holistic needs. Not all children will necessarily complete each task. We may also incentivise tasks that may benefit a child when they do not self-select.

Child-initiated, play based learning is often enhanced by an adult, who will have some time to be an 'ELF' (Early Learning Facilitator). The adult is not designated to a group or activity so is available to oversee the children accessing 'child-initiated' activities. The adult can then, when suitable, sensitively interact with the children to develop their learning, further their understanding or expand concepts and ideas through open ended conversation. They may sometimes observe, rather than join in with play, to gather understanding of how the pupils learn and subsequently adapt planning, provision and teaching. We prepare children socially and emotionally both through discreet teaching sessions delivered through 'Jigsaw' a whole school scheme, and through meaningful interactions.

Depending on the cohort and needs of the children, we may stream children within the whole department or just within classes for phonics teaching. This is completely dependent on the range of abilities and how these are spread across the 3 classes.

We use a consistent behavioural code for all children, supported by the school 'Behaviour Policy' and our school **ABC Code of Conduct**, which has been slightly amended to meet the needs of the children in the Foundation Stage.

We are open-minded and innovative practitioners in EYFS. We seek new teaching and learning strategies; we share successes (and challenges) with one another; we identify the training needs of adults working in the Department and provide CPD through INSET training, scheduled staff-meetings and peer support.

Inclusion in the EYFS

We aim to give our children every opportunity to achieve their potential. We do this by taking account of our children's interests and experiences when planning for their learning. (x-ref. 'Inclusion' Policy.)

In the EYFS we set realistic but challenging expectations related to our 'Mountfields Core Learning'.

We aim to support children who are not accessing the curriculum with interventions, such as NELI (Nuffield Early Language Intervention). These are children who appear to not learn at the 'expected' rate and/or may have had less learning experiences. They need to 'catch-up' with peers. This is critical as it can become more challenging to catch-up the older the children get.

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- **Planning opportunities** that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests and develop their self-esteem and confidence;
- **Using a range of teaching strategies** based on children's learning needs;
- **Providing a wide range of opportunities** to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively;
- **Providing a safe and supportive learning environment** in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- **Using resources** which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- **Monitoring children's progress and providing intervention** as necessary. Additional provision is coordinated by class teachers in conjunction with our SENDCo. An additional record may be kept by class teachers/support staff detailing daily activities and outcomes for a child or group of children (e.g. 'Probes' or Phonics Support Group.)

Assessment:

Most of assessment in EYFS is carried out through continuous observation of, and discussion with children. Any misconceptions are addressed through timely intervention 'in the moment' when it is most relevant to children.

Our holistic understanding of the children and understanding of pedagogy, help us to form next steps for children at the point of teaching. Regular discussions between staff, and conversations with parents, also provide important assessment information. Children also take part in assessments where more specific data needs to be gathered. These assessments can be more

formal but we make the assessments as stress-free and low-pressure as possible – the children often enjoy them.

Although settling the children into school is of highest importance in the first weeks, during this time we make **'baseline' assessments**. The baseline assessments we use are a combination of the most useful parts from the National Baseline, our LPAP Academy's assessments and some of our own assessments. **However, the most important assessments are those made whilst talking and interacting with children.** Using this range of assessment tools informs our planning and teaching.

The level of development children should be expected to have attained by the end of the EYFS is measured by the early learning goals (ELGs). Teachers will record each child's level of development against the 17 ELGs as 'emerging', 'expected' or 'exceeding' (the 'exceeding' judgement is likely to be removed at the beginning of academic year 2021-22).

A profile for each child will be completed with an optional brief commentary on the child's skills and abilities in relation to the 3 characteristics of effective learning. This data also enables us to see the progress each child has made over the academic year against the ELGs. Collection of the data is currently a statutory requirement (although not in the year 2020-21). At present, scores also comprise part of the national picture on attainment in the Foundation Stage. Although currently it is not clear how data will be collected in the year 2021-22 and whether the National Baseline will continue.

The ELGs should support teachers to make a holistic, best-fit judgement about a child's development, and their readiness for Year 1. When forming a judgement about whether an individual child is at the expected level of development, teachers should draw on their in-depth knowledge of the individual child and their own expert professional judgement. This is sufficient evidence to assess a child's individual level of development in relation to each of the ELGs. Multiple sources of written or photographic evidence are not required, and teachers should not record unnecessary evidence.

The progress our pupils make towards, and the attainment within our Core Learning will also be a measure we use to assess our pupils.

End of year teacher judgements help inform our Annual Reports to parents by enabling us to see if a child is 'working at', 'below' or 'above' the level we would expect. This information is also shared with Key Stage One staff at the end of the Summer Term, ensuring that provision matches the needs of the children when they move in to Year One.

To assist in making our judgements, **we moderate regularly across our 3 classes** within the Department to ensure consistency. Cross Year group moderation with KS1 also takes place at least once a year. **Judgements are externally moderated** throughout the year across our LPAP EYFS Group to ensure consistency between schools.

Leicestershire County Council currently has a remit to ensure a thorough and robust system of end of year moderation is in place, and the process takes one of two forms: either a visit to school by an external moderator, or participation in a 'moderation meeting' by a member of our staff. There is an expectation that we send a representative to the meeting, should we not receive a moderator visit. Work samples are discussed at the meeting and agreement on judgements is reached.

Some evidence is gathered using **Tapestry Online Learning Journal**. We add regular 'observations' using photos, videos, assessments and notes. Parents are able to view this Learning Journal and we encourage them to contribute with comments, photos and videos of 'proud'

moments, 'fun times', anecdotes and observations from home. These can be used to help build a picture of the 'whole child' and are a fun and interesting way for children to share their home lives.

Transition:

It is vital that there is a smooth transition from pre-school/home to starting school. Many children will find the change to formal school a challenge for a range of reasons. So there are a number of measures we put in place to support children:

- **We visit the children in their familiar pre-school setting** and discuss with pre-school staff details about the child. We also ask parents and pre-school settings of any particular friendship groups their child has. We use this information to help us compile our class lists.
- **Transition information** (a 'Progress Summary') is sent to us from Nurseries and Playgroups. This is used to help us to plan for children's interests and needs, and to further their learning.
- Parents / carers are invited to **an induction meeting** during the term before their child starts school. There is a presentation, a tour of the Department and a chance to meet the staff and ask questions.
- Parents are given **a welcome pack** which outlines much of what happens in Foundation Stage and a booklet they can fill in with their child to help inform us of interests/dislikes etc.
- Most children will come to **a 'stay and play' session** with us with either their parents or Pre-School staff during the summer term. This gives them a chance to see the classroom environment and the range of activities we offer at school.
- Children are invited to attend school for **a short induction morning** without their parents/carers during the Summer Term before starting in the Autumn. They attend with the rest of their cohort and are in class groupings.
- **We meet with parents on a 1:1 basis** either at their homes or at school to discuss their children in more detail. We feel this is vital to form good relationships with parents and children.
- **Children attend part-time for the first two weeks** when they start school.
- Children do not stay for lunch while they are part time, and the shorter session helps to build their confidence and prepare them for full-time school.
- **Parents/carers are invited to some sessions in school.** This is an opportunity to see their child accessing the activities on offer and socialising with their peers. It is also a chance to ask questions and meet other parents.