

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy



“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.”

Source: DfE - Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, 2017.

1. Introduction

The Early Years Foundation Stage applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year.

In our school, nursery children join us for 15 hours / 30 hours per week, after a visit to the setting and a period of staggered entry. Nursery children can access flexible sessions and 15/30 hours free child care can be arranged to meet the needs of the children and parents. We also offer top up sessions for parents who would like to pay for extra sessions over and above the 15 hours. The Reception children join us, full time, after a short staggered entry in September.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is based upon four themes:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

This policy explains how our practice is underpinned by these four themes.

2. Aims

- To provide a structured, secure, caring and well-resourced learning environment, both inside and outside, which meets the individual developmental needs of our children.
- To enable the children to become confident, motivated and happy learners, developing the skills and attitudes necessary for their own successful future learning.

- To develop independence and individuality, whilst fostering respect and tolerance for others irrespective of ability, race, creed, gender or background.

3. The Four Key EYFS themes, as implemented at GPS

(i) A Unique Child

At Grangetown Primary School we believe each child is unique. We recognise that children develop in different ways and at varying rates. We use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Inclusion

We value the diversity of individuals within the school. All children at Grangetown Primary School are treated fairly regardless of race, gender, religion or abilities. All children and their families are valued within our school.

In the Foundation Stage we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social, economic and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- Planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests, and which develop their self-esteem and confidence.
- Using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs and interests.
- 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 contributions of all children are valued.
- Developing independent learning through a carefully planned and well resourced learning environment
- Using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping.
- Planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills.
- Monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary.

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."

Source: DfE - Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, 2017.

It is important to us that all children in the school are safe. We ensure children have clear boundaries and we help children to understand why these boundaries exist. We provide children with choices and with an element of responsibility for their actions. Children should be allowed to take risks, but our role is to teach children how to recognise and avoid hazards.

At Grangetown we:

- Promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill.
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs.

- Ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so. Adults working with children are DBS checked.
- Ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment are safe and suitable for purpose.
- Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs. The staff have daily discussions based on their observations of children and parents/carers are invited to contribute to learning journeys to help us plan effectively.
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

(ii) Positive Relationships

Positive relationships with and between children

At Grangetown we recognise that children learn to be strong, confident and independent from being in secure relationships. We are passionate about developing caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children, and about helping the children build secure and caring relationships with each other.

All staff involved with the EYFS aim to develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them.



Positive relationships with families - Parents as Partners



We recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value being partners with them in their child's education:

- We talk to parents about their child before their child starts in our school through a stay and play session and an induction meeting that is offered to all of our families.
- We offer all parents and children the opportunity to spend time in the Foundation Stage prior to starting school. This is maintained throughout the children's time with us offering termly parent workshops and events for the parents to be part of.
- We operate an open-door policy for parents with any queries.
- We offer parents the opportunity to share their children's 'Learning Journey' and we encourage and value the ongoing contributions from parents.
- We offer two parent/teacher consultation days per year and parents are given a report outlining their child's attainment and progress at the end of the academic year
- We have termly meetings with parents of children who have SEND, to discuss their progress and their next steps in learning

- We have developed a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents: for example class cuddly toy that can go home with children, weekly updates and parent and child workshops.
- We run Family Learning sessions every term, providing opportunities for parents and children to work and learn together.
- We run sessions for parents on particular areas of learning e.g. Phonics, Reading, Writing, and so on.

(iii) Enabling Environments



At Grangetown we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. We provide a safe and secure environment for our children to learn and we ensure that children have access to stimulating resources that enrich learning opportunities. We ensure that the environment reflects the needs, interests, culture and ability of the children as well as promoting play and exploration both indoors and out.

The Foundation Stage setting is organised to allow children to explore and learn in a variety of ways. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet, creative etc. The Foundation Stage has its own outdoor area. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. The children can explore, use their senses and be physically active.

(iv) Learning and Development

What does teaching and learning in EYFS look like?

Teaching in EYFS can take on many forms and it covers the many different ways that adults within the setting help children to learn.

We understand that the interactions between the adults and children are vital during planned and child-initiated play and activities. Practitioners interact with children through modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring, questioning, encouraging and investigating and providing challenges.



The environment in which the children learn is also integral to the learning process. At Grangetown we ensure that we provide a safe, secure environment that has established routines and expectations

rich in resources linked to children's experiences and interests.

In planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners reflect on the different ways that children learn and this will be built into our in our practice.

At the end of reception a brief summary will be written for each child against the 'Characteristics of Learning' and shared with parents and Y1 staff as part of the transition process.

The three characteristics of effective learning 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 as well as take pride in their achievements.
- Creating and Thinking Critically – children have and develop their own ideas; make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things.

Playing & Exploring

“Children’s play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. In their play children learn at their highest level. Play with peers is important for children’s development.”

Source: EYFS. 2009. Theme Learning and Development 4.1 Play and Exploration

Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, and learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. They express fears or re-live anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.

Active Learning

“Children learn best through physical and mental challenges. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods.”

Source: EYFS. 2009.

Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need to have some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence they learn to make decisions. It provides children with a sense of satisfaction as they take ownership of their learning.

Creating and Thinking Critically

“When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, they discover connections and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. Adult support in this process enhances their ability to think critically and ask questions.” (Source: EYFS. 2009).

Children should be given opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning (‘creativity’ does not just mean ‘the arts’). Adults can support children’s thinking and help them to make connections by showing genuine interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open questions. Children can access resources freely and are allowed to move them around the environment to extend their learning.



How do our practitioners promote effective teaching and learning?

Playing and exploring

- Adults provide a wide range of stimulating resources which are accessible, open-ended and relevant to children's interests.
- There is flexible space indoors and outside for children to explore and move around freely
- Adults join in play sensitively, fitting in with children's existing play ideas
- Adults encourage children to develop new interests, try new things, take managed risks, and help children to learn by getting things wrong then trying again.
- Adults monitor how children play and adapt activities accordingly to support learning.
- Children have uninterrupted time to play and explore, and adults provide additional props to extend children's imagination and creativity
- Adults observe children and note signs of deep involvement and sustained concentration
- Adults recognise and praise children's successes.
- Adults only intervene in children's play to support, stimulate or extend children's learning when needed.

Active Learning

- Adults observe and reflect on what arouses children's curiosity and interests
- Children have opportunities to exercise choice over their activities – setting their own goals and methods
- Adults ensure children have time and freedom to become deeply involved in activities
- Adults encourage children to persist with difficulties, trying again or in a different way
- Adults provide stimulating resources and experiences related to children's current interests to encourage their involvement

Creating and thinking critically

- Adults show and talk about strategies – how to do things, including problem-solving
- Children are encouraged to learn together and from each other
- Adults foster a learning community which focuses on how and why, and not just what we are learning
- Adults support open-ended thinking by encouraging children not to always settle on the first idea or outcome
- Modelling being 'a thinker' and finding out things you don't always know
- Encouraging children to solve problems, identify solutions and overcome challenges
- Valuing children's questioning, conversations and suggestions
- Listening to the voices of all children, especially those known to be quieter, who speak English as an additional language, or those with an individual learning need
- Responding to what children are doing, saying and plan appropriate linked activities
- Encouraging children to reflect on their own learning.

Key Features of effective Teaching & Learning in EYFS AT Grangetown

- The partnership between teachers and parents, so that our children feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement.
- The understanding that teachers and teaching assistants have of how children develop and learn, and how this affects their teaching.
- Ensuring all adults within the setting are suitably qualified, and the importance we give to ongoing CPD.
- The range of approaches used that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions and extend and develop play and talk or other means of communication.
- The carefully planned curriculum that helps children work towards their goals throughout EYFS.

- The provision for children to take part in activities that build on and extend their interests and develop their intellectual, physical, social and emotional abilities.
- The encouragement for children to communicate and talk about their learning, and to develop independence and self-management.
- The support for learning with appropriate and accessible indoor and outdoor space, facilities and equipment;
- The identification of the progress and future learning needs of children through ONGOING observations.

Planning

Foundation Stage staff use observations as the basis for planning the environment, and for planning our Context for Learning ‘themes’ (topics). We use two cycles of medium term planning each year (12 topics over two years), which are all topic based. Staff are skilled at observing children to identify their achievements, interests and next steps for learning. These observations as well as our medium term planning then lead the direction of the planning.

Links to topic plans can be found here:

<https://www.grangetown.sunderland.sch.uk/Curriculum/Medium-Term-Planning/>

Assessment

Observational assessment involves reaching an understanding of children’s learning by watching, listening and interacting as they engage in everyday activities, events and experiences, and demonstrate their specific knowledge, skills and understanding. Observational assessment does not require prolonged breaks from interaction with children, nor excessive written recording. It is likely to be interwoven with high quality interactions or conversations in words or sign language with children about their activities and current interests. We use an online tool called ‘Tapestry’ to record children’s observations; these can be through written comments, photos and videos. Links to assessments are made as well as characteristics of effective learning. Parents can view their child’s journal and make comments as well as adding their own photos and notes.



In order to ensure that all children are observed, teachers can view how many observations each child has and the links to learning. Each adult has a weekly slot where they can focus specifically on observational assessments. We use a tick sheet to record which children have been observed each week and how often. An informal weekly discussion is also carried out by a member of the EYFS team, the focus of this is to show which areas children are accessing during their child-initiated time. This information gives us an insight into the children’s interests and the areas that need to be developed.

English as an Additional Language

In Foundation Stage we aim to meet the needs of all children including those who have English as an additional language. We will provide a broad and balanced curriculum, ensuring children make good progress and that they are well supported.

We aim to:

- Ensure that the EYFS is welcoming to all families and that children feel safe and happy when attending Nursery or Reception
- Make assessments on individual children in all seven areas of learning, highlighting where interventions will be needed
- Establish strong links with home and family and to identify cultural and religious backgrounds

- Provide appropriate educational and pastoral support to families
- Ensure that the setting reflects the culture of all the children, and that every child's culture and language is valued
- Monitor and assess progress regularly to check that the pupils are making good progress
- Work with families to ensure the children are making progress in their first language and there is no concerns about language delay
- Seek advice form the Local Authority if necessary
- Make the curriculum accessible through the provision e.g. use of visual and practical materials, use dual language resources, daily routine and visual timetables etc

Paediatric First Aid

The statutory framework for the early year's foundation stage (effective from April 2017) states that at least one person who has a current paediatric first aid certificate must be on the premises and available at all times when children are present, and must accompany children on outings. We should take into account the number of children, staff and layout of premises to ensure that a paediatric first aider is able to respond to emergencies quickly. In our Foundation Stage all support staff are paediatric first aid trained. All members of staff in the 2 year old provision and two staff in 3-5 year old provision are trained with one always being present and able to respond quickly to an emergency. Details of dates and certificates are kept centrally in the school office.

The Areas of Learning and Development

There are seven areas of learning and development in EYFS. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. There are three prime areas that are fundamental to learning and development:

Prime Areas

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

Staff also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied:

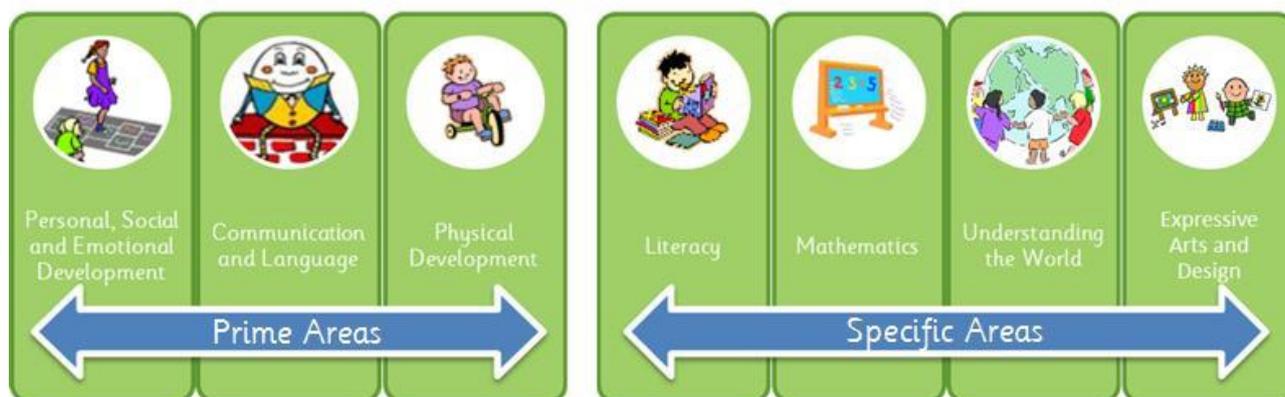
Specific Areas

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Knowledge of the world
- Expressive arts and design

All areas are delivered through a balance of adult led and child-initiated activities. The practitioners within the setting are aware and fully trained on how to deliver the Early Years curriculum thinking of the seven areas of learning and also the characteristics of effective learning.

We deliver learning for all of the areas through purposeful play and learning experiences, with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities taking into account children's interests.

Appendix 1: How we promote learning in the Prime and Specific Areas



Prime Areas

There are three prime areas which are fundamental to learning and development: Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Communication and Language Development, Physical Development.

How we promote Personal, Social and Emotional Development (making relationships, self-confidence and self-awareness and managing feelings and behaviour):

- All children are allocated a teacher and teaching assistant or a key worker in the two year old provision who supports the child and their family during their time in the setting.
- Staff model positive interactions and there are clear and consistent, developmental appropriate boundaries and expectations.
- Children are encouraged to interact with peers/adults and participate in play that requires co-operation, sharing and turn taking.
- New children are supported with a carefully planned 'settling in process'
- There is an emphasis on children feeling secure and happy at the setting before moving on to other areas of development.
- Small group interventions are carefully planned for those children requiring additional support within this area.

How we promote Communication and Language Development (listening and attention, understanding, speaking):

- The setting has a language rich environment, print is displayed throughout and songs, rhymes and stories are part of everyday routines.
- Activities linked to promoting oracy are undertaken on a daily basis and identified on planning.
- Open ended resources, activities and experiences are offered, such as messy play, sand, and water, to promote communication, excite children and stimulate imagination and curiosity.
- Staff use developmentally appropriate strategies when engaging children, e.g. facial expressions, gesture, Makaton signing, intonation, commentating on play, repetition, single word naming and two/three word instructions.

How we promote Physical Development (moving and handling, health and self-care):

- The space is organised to allow movement throughout each part of the setting. Resources which support the development of gross and fine motor skills are provided as part of continuous and enhanced provision.
- All children have access to the outdoors which provide the opportunity to develop gross motor skills, e.g. running, climbing, negotiating space and balance. A designated PE session is also timetabled weekly for Reception as well as a weekly 'Jumpstart Jonny' session.

- During the Spring and Summer terms children in Reception will access a weekly small group handwriting session, focussing on developing fine motor skills
- Children are provided with fruit on a daily basis and water is available throughout the day. Good self-care is modelled by staff e.g. hand washing, and children are supported with toilet training as necessary.

Specific Areas

There are also four **Specific Areas**, through which: *the three prime areas are strengthened and applied*' (EYFS, DfE, 2017). The Specific Areas are: Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World and Expressive Arts & Design.

How we promote Literacy (reading and writing):

- Children are provided with a wealth of books, from picture books to more complex stories, songs, rhymes and fact/fiction books. Adults model the use of books and children are encouraged to participate in regular 'story times'. Reception children can also take home a school library book each week.
- Daily phonics session using Letters and Sounds are delivered with opportunities to apply these skills across all other areas. The children also have a phonic based reading book.
- There is a daily session specifically focusing upon literacy activities.
- All topics include stories relating to the theme.
- Text is displayed throughout the environment, including hand written, typed and children's own work.
- Children are provided with equipment /activities that promote fine and gross motor skills (see physical development) all of which lead to the development of writing. Letter formation is specifically taught using our Handwriting Scheme.
- Writing materials and opportunities are provided across all areas and staff model writing for a purpose.
- Computers and iPads provide further opportunities to enhance literacy, and these are carefully planned – staff investigate particular apps and programmes, and these are pre-loaded.



How we promote Mathematics (numbers and shape, space and measures):

- The setting is a mathematical rich environment, number is displayed throughout and children are provided with varied activities, equipment and experiences that support many mathematical concepts, e.g. sorting, size, and grouping. This is linked across all areas.
- Number songs and rhymes are introduced to all children and staff consistently use mathematical language during every day play.
- There is a daily session specifically focusing upon maths.

How we promote Understanding the World (people and communities, the world and technology)

- Resources and displays represent people from diverse backgrounds, including those with diverse physical characteristics.
- Children and families are recognised as individuals, each with their own needs and experiences, children are encouraged to discuss their home life and the people important to them.
- There are regular visits out of the setting, linked to the current theme.
- Children access the outdoors daily.
- Computers/ IWB / iPads are available within the setting. Other Technology equipment is provided, e.g. cameras and programmable toys, and the children are taught how to use these correctly.



How we promote Expressive Arts and Design (exploring and using media and materials, being imaginative):

- Children are provided with a wide range of materials, resources and experiences that encourage them to explore and investigate as part of both continuous provision and directed activities.
- Music, songs and instruments are part of everyday routines and are used as part of our outdoor provision
- Close links are made with the other areas and all staff are aware of the specific focus upon developing language through creativity.

Policy reviewed & updated by Victoria Hanlon (Foundation Stage Leader) January 2021