



Spread your wings, learn new things, fly as high as you can.

# Early Years Policy

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# Dovecotes Early Years Policy

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. Within Dovecotes Early Years Unit we have a Reception Class that can hold up to 45 children, a Nursery class which has a morning and afternoon session, and a Terrific for Twos room that also has a morning and afternoon session.

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

A Unique Child  
Positive Relationships  
Enabling Environments  
Learning and Development

## **A Unique Child**

We recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways, at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, as well as rewards (such as stickers and certificates) to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

## *Inclusion and Welfare*

We value the diversity of individuals within the school and do not discriminate against children because of 'differences'. All children are treated fairly regardless of race, religion or abilities. All children and their families are valued within our school. In our school we believe that all our children matter. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning.

In the EYFS 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 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 develop their self-esteem and confidence;
- Using a wide 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;
- 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;

It is important to us that all children in the school are 'safe'. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits. We provide children with choices to help them to develop these important life skills. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards.

We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children. We understand that we have welfare requirements to uphold and we endeavour to meet all the following requirements:

- Promote the welfare of children;
- 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;
- Ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose;
- Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs;
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for the safe and efficient management of the setting to meet the needs of all children.

## **Positive Relationships**

We recognise that children need to learn how to be strong, independent and how to form secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with children and their families.

### *Parents/Carers as Partners*

We recognise that parents/carers are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make. We recognise the role that parents/carers have played, and their future role, in educating their children. We do this through:

- Our Welcome Sessions for all those parents/carers with children starting in any of the areas within the Early Years Unit;
- A Questionnaire 'Starting Little Doves/Nursery/Reception for parents/carers to complete prior to starting school;
- Home Visits by the teacher and teaching assistant prior to the child starting within the Early Years Unit;
- Visits by a member of staff to meet the child in a previous setting prior to the child starting within the Early Years Unit;
- Talking to parents/carers about their child before their child starts in our school;
- Transition Sessions within the last half term before the Summer for those children starting in Reception in the September and for those moving into Year 1;
- Staggered starts for all the children starting within the Early Years Unit;
- Offering parents/carers regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress in our Nursery and Reception Classes;

- Sending weekly information sheets home detailing what the children have been during the week and ways that they can support their child at home;
- Encouraging parents/carers to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns;
- Providing a Termly Parents Evening for Nursery and Reception children.
- Providing a report to parents/carers with a child moving to Reception or in Reception on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each school year;
- Arranging a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents/carers. E.g. Assemblies, Easter Bonnet Parade, etc.
- Providing the opportunity for parents/carers to send information, pictures and other wow moments for any learning or achievements their child has made at home via a class email address.

All staff involved with the EYFS aim to develop good relationships with each child, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen. At our school, and in accordance with the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2021, all children have a key group worker. We have weekly Early Years Team meetings to talk about the children and talk through activities that are happening within the Early Years Unit.

## **Enabling Environments**

We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development. This begins by observing children, assessing their interests, development and learning, before planning challenging but achievable activities and experiences to extend the children's learning.

### *Observation, Assessment and Planning*

Planning within the EYFS is based upon the interests, needs and achievements of our children. Their interests lead us to develop half termly themes which we then use to produce weekly plans, highlighting key learning that is to be focussed upon within each activity.

Assessment evidence is gathered through our floor books and a daily class diary where staff record key learning and any 'WOW' observations seen during sessions. Staff spend a prolonged amount of time with the children in playful activities taking on a co-play approach. This means that Dovecotes' staff know the children thoroughly and have a good knowledge of individual children's level of development. We use observations of the children to inform next day and future planning in order to build upon the children's current knowledge.

Summative assessment considers whether individual children are 'on track' or 'not on track' to meet the requirements of the Early Years Curriculum by the end of each academic year. Both the Early Years Leader and the Headteacher work together to plan how those children currently 'not on track' will be supported to catch up. Our assessment is moderated both internally and with other external schools.

During the children's first few weeks attending any class within our Early Years Unit, staff assess what children already know and make plans to build upon this knowledge through continuous provision and focused activities. Within the first 6 weeks of Reception, all children undertake the National Assessment Baseline with the Early Years Lead. This is a statutory requirement that all schools must complete within 6 weeks of a child entering the Reception Year.

At the end of the Reception Year, Early Years staff assess whether a child is 'at the expected level' of the Early Learning Goal (ELG) in each of the 7 areas of development across the EYFS curriculum. Within the final term of Reception, a written summary is provided to parents/carers, reporting their child's progress against each ELG. Parents/carers are also provided with the opportunity to discuss these judgements with the class teacher.

### *The Learning Environment*

The EYFS Unit is carefully organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, quiet or can rest. All classes - Little Doves, Nursery and Reception - have a classroom base which is set up with freely accessible, easily identifiable equipment, which children are encouraged to access independently. We also have our own enclosed Early Years garden which is well-resourced to develop all 7 areas of learning. Being outdoors offers opportunities for children to do things in different ways and on different scales to when they are indoors. It offers the children the opportunity to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant.

### **Learning and Development**

We recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and recognise that they are inter-connected.

The 3 prime areas of learning in the EYFS are:

- 1) Physical
- 2) Communication and Language
- 3) Personal, Social and Emotional

The 4 specific areas of learning are:

- 1) Literacy
- 2) Mathematics
- 3) Understanding the World
- 4) Expressive Arts and Design

### *Teaching and Learning Style*

Practitioners need to consider different ways that children learn and reflect this in their practice.

The 3 characteristics of effective learning are:

- Playing and Exploring
- Active Learning
- Creating and Thinking Critically

Dovecotes staff ensure:

- They use their understanding of how children develop and learn, and how this affects their teaching;

- The range of approaches used provide first-hand experiences, with staff giving clear explanations, making appropriate interventions and extending and developing play and talk or other means of communication;
- A carefully planned curriculum that helps children work towards each class' 'I CAN' statements and the Early Learning Goals at the end of Reception;
- 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 observations, which are shared with parents/carers;
- The good relationships between our school and the settings that our children experience prior to joining our school;
- The clear aims of our work and the regular monitoring of our work to evaluate and improve it;
- The regular identification of training needs for all adults working within all areas of the Early Years Unit;
- Each child will be assigned a key person when they are in each class.

### **The 3 Learning Characteristics**

#### *1. Playing and Exploring*

Through play, our children explore and engage in learning experiences that help them to make sense of the world. They practise and build upon ideas, learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. Children 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, express fears or re-live anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.

#### *2. Active Learning*

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 how to make decisions which in turn provides them with a sense of satisfaction as they take ownership of their learning.

#### *3. Creativity and Critical Thinking*

Children should be given various opportunities to be creative through all areas of their learning, not just through the arts. Adults can support children's creative 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 with them around the classroom to extend their learning.

Our planning reflects children's interests. In this way, all objectives will be covered in a way that motivates children.

### *The Prime Areas of Learning*

Communication and Language

Physical Development

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

### *The Specific Areas of Learning*

Literacy

Mathematics

Understanding the World

Expressive Arts and Design

None of these areas can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are equally important and depend on each other. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. In each area of the Dovecotes' Early Years Curriculum, there are 'I CAN' statements that a child is expected to complete by the end of each stage. At the end of the Reception Year, a judgement is made as to whether each child has achieved an expected level for each of the Early Learning Goals.

### **Monitoring and Review**

The Early Years policy is linked to the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and the Early Years Leader supports staff to achieve the SIP targets. Early Years provision is monitored by the Headteacher, Assistant Headteacher (Early Years Leader) and Governors.