

Early Years Policy

Our vision is for Place Farm Primary Academy is to be an outstanding school, where excellent practice, high achievement, equality and well-being are at the heart of everything we do for our children and for our staff



“Around here, we don’t look backwards for very long....we keep moving forward, opening up new doors and doing new things because we’re curious....and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths”

Walt Disney

The research is clear: a child’s early education lasts a lifetime. An excellent early education is the foundation for later success. At Place Farm Primary Academy, we provide a high-quality education to give every child the best possible start, and we are aspirational for **ALL** pupils.

This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) here at Place Farm.

The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of practitioners working within the EYFS settings, including both teaching and non-teaching staff. It is the responsibility of the SLT to ensure that this policy is adhered to.

Our aim is to provide:

Quality and consistency so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind;

A secure foundation through learning and development opportunities which are planned around the needs and interests of each individual child and are assessed and reviewed regularly;

Partnership working between practitioners and with parents and carers;

Equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.

Confident, motivated and happy learners, developing the skills and attitudes necessary for their own successful future learning.

We believe that all children deserve to be valued as an individual and we are passionate in allowing all children to achieve their full, unique potential.

Principles

“Think and wonder, wonder and think.”

Dr Seuss

Within Early Years education we offer our children learning that is based on the following principles:

- Build on what each child already knows and can do;
- Inclusivity to all groups of learners and individuals, taking into account children’s backgrounds, ethnicity, gender, EAL and SEND;
- Provide a rich and stimulating environment, including challenging, exciting and imaginative indoor and outdoor learning environments;
- Provide a wide range of opportunities for independent learning, adult-directed learning, adult-led learning and child-initiated learning;
- Encourage parents and carers to become involved in their children’s learning;

- Provide a positive, supportive environment where children feel safe and secure to learn;
- Develop positive attitudes towards learning from an early age;
- Provide knowledge based on the Early Years Foundation Stage seven areas of learning;
- Provide an extensive range of opportunities for assessment in well thought out and detailed planning;

Admissions

Parents of children who require a Reception place will apply online to their Local Authority. Please see the school admissions department of your home local authority, the academy website and/or academy Admission Policy for details. All prospective parents are invited to visit our school and are taken on an informal tour. We also offer open sessions, for you to see the school, this may be during the day or an evening session, depending on demand. Under current Covid-19 restrictions, this may have to be via video link.

Legislation

Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Teaching in the EYFS in each Unity Schools Partnership setting is delivered in accordance with the government's statutory document, 'The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage' (September 2021).

Curriculum

“You're off to great places! Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting, so...get on your way!”

Dr Seuss Areas of Learning and Development

There are seven areas of learning and development that shape our educational experiences and opportunities. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

These three prime areas, are:

Communication and language

Physical development

Personal, social and emotional development

We also support children in **four specific areas**, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are:

Literacy

Mathematics

Understanding the world

Expressive arts and design

In planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners will reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in their practice.

Three characteristics of effective teaching and 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, and enjoy achievements;

Creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

The Leuven scales are used to measure children’s emotional well-being and involvement to assess learning, development and progress of children.

Teaching and Learning

“Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn”

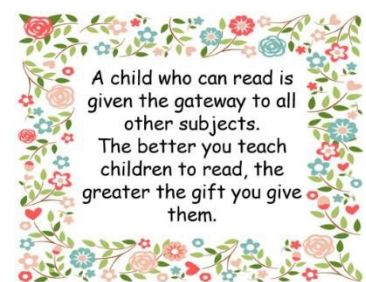
Benjamin Franklin

Practitioners will consider the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care and will use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all of the areas of learning and development.

Practitioners working with the youngest children are expected to focus strongly on the three prime areas, which are the basis for successful learning in the other four specific areas. The three prime areas reflect the key skills and capacities all children need to develop and learn effectively, and become ready for school. The balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning as children grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas. Practitioners will discuss this with the child’s parents/carers and agree how to support the child.

Each area of learning and development will be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity.

There is an on-going judgement to be made by practitioners about the balance between activities led by children, and activities led or guided by adults. Practitioners will respond to each child’s emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction. At Place Farm Primary Academy, we emphasise rigour and structure in all activities to ensure meaningful educational and developmental outcomes for every child. All adults play a huge part in every child’s learning and development. We ensure that adult levels of involvement are meaningful and purposeful and follow the child’s level of need, progress and interests. In Place Farm, daily teaching of literacy and maths occurs from the outset and is a key part of our curriculum.



Literacy

As of September 2022, in line with the government’s validation guidance, the teaching of phonics at Place Farm Primary Academy will follow the teaching sequence set out in the Sounds-Write programme. This is a quality first phonics programme built upon strong evidence, reflecting our commitment to evidence-informed practice in our school. It offers high quality CPD to develop expert practitioners and an instructional method of teaching that is highly structured, multi-sensory, incremental and is a coordinated approach to teaching children to both read and spell.

In EYFS and Key Stage One, Sounds-Write sessions are taught daily for 30 minutes. Teachers teach children these key concepts and skills throughout their phonics sessions:

Conceptual Knowledge:

1. Letters are symbols (spellings) that represent sounds.
2. A sound may be spelled by 1, 2, 3, or 4 letters.
3. The same sounds can be spelled in more than one way.
4. Many spellings can represent more than one sound.

Skills:

1. Blending - the ability to push sounds together to build words.
2. Segmenting - the ability to pull apart the individual sounds in words.
3. Phoneme manipulation - the ability to insert sounds into and delete sounds out of words.

Children in EYFS begin with the Initial Code where they practice all three skills whilst learning the 1:1 sound-spelling correspondences and securing their understanding of key concept 1. This teaches children that the system is reversible, enabling them to decode and encode a wide range of words and sentences. Initially, children learn to read and write simple one syllable words with a CVC (Consonant-Vowel-Consonant) structure. Word structure complexity then systematically builds up so that children apply their code knowledge to monosyllabic words with up to 6 sounds.

Once they have mastered the Initial Code, children continue to practice all 3 key skills whilst moving onto the Extended Code, which explores key concepts 2, 3 and 4. During the Extended Code, children read and write monosyllabic and polysyllabic words at an age-appropriate level.

Key principles of the Sounds-Write programme:

- Sounds are presented in the context of a whole word, not in isolation. No previous knowledge of sounds is needed before starting the lessons.
- Teachers refer to sounds, not letter names.
- Precise pronunciation of consonants is always taught. Pupils should say the individual sounds separately and without an attached vowel e.g., /m/ is mmmmm, not 'muh'.
- The teacher uses gestures to let pupils know exactly what they want the pupils to do (e.g., pointing to individual sounds or running finger along a word to encourage children to blend.).
- Writing and spelling is an integral part of each lesson.
- Teaching through errors is a very important part of the Sounds-Write approach. Staff are trained in the potential errors they could encounter and specific ways to address them.

In driving for excellence in our teaching, we strive to deliver the following in our phonics teaching and wider reading provision:

- Strong staff subject knowledge as a result of high-quality CPD and a robust, systematic approach.
- Clear routines so the children know and understand the structure of the Sounds-Write session and expectations.
- Strong communication with parents regarding reading: parent sharing sessions, Sounds Write information meetings and videos of how to support children in their reading is shared regularly.
- Reading books that are in line with the GPCs the children are taught.
- Reading materials displayed around the classroom and outdoor area: these include books that are at the pupils' reading levels, words that are relevant to the area e.g., home corner - cot, hob, chair etc.
- Children are heard to read by a teacher at least once a week and more if necessary. A log of readers is kept, and daily readers are added to the log.
- Small group/one to one interventions are carried out to support the children in line with the SoundsWrite programme, where required.
- A range of videos linked to reading and writing are uploaded to Class Dojo to support parents

As children grow older, and as their development allows, it is expected that the balance will gradually shift towards more activities led by adults.

Children have daily access to well-planned stimulating learning environments, indoors and outdoors. These environments give children opportunities to be active and physical and also quiet and reflective. There will be periods of time regularly in the Summer term when children will sit and learn independently, as well as having group activities led by the teacher or Learning Assistant.

Assessment

In accordance with all schools nationally, each child will complete a reception baseline assessment during their first half term in reception. This is a task-based, age-appropriate assessment of mathematics and literacy, communication and language and is completed by Early Years staff. The assessment takes approximately twenty minutes and is delivered in English. As well as the National Baseline assessments, we also carry out our own in-house assessments using other resources: both assessments then give us good knowledge of where the child is in their learning and development and how we can move their learning and progress forward.

On-going assessment is an integral part of the learning and development process throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff are involved in making daily observations and assessments throughout the Foundation year; these include child-initiated tasks and teacher-led activities in the inside and outside learning environments. Observations, samples of work and photographs are examples of ways staff will collect information.

In Foundation, we also follow a 'Focus Child' approach. Every child is a focus each term. We have up to three children in each class as our Focus children each week. The week before the child is due to be a Focus child, the parents are given a sheet of paper with questions on to complete. This enables parents to say if they have any queries or areas they wish us to focus on. We then use this as a starting point for our Focus child: we follow the children's interests and support their learning through 'teachable moments' in the continuous provision and also during adult-directed and focused activities. Each term, the observations and focus differ slightly. At the end of the week, the parents are then invited in to discuss their child's week with the class teacher and what next steps of learning are in place. This encourages good relationships and parents/carers can support their child at home with their learning.

In the Summer term of Reception, the EYFS Profile will be completed for each child. The Profile provides parents and carers, practitioners and teachers with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels, and their readiness for Year One. The Profile will reflect on teachers' knowledge of individual children, all relevant records held by the setting, discussions with parents/carers and any other adults whom the teacher, parent/carer judges can offer a useful contribution.

Each child's level of development will be assessed against the early learning goals. Practitioners will indicate whether children are meeting expected levels of development ('Expected') or are working towards the expected levels ('Emerging'). This is the EYFS Profile. Reception staff will moderate children to ensure consistency with their judgements.

Year One teachers will be given a copy of the Profile report, together with a short commentary on each child's skills and abilities in relation to the Early Years Foundation Stage. These will inform a dialogue between Foundation and Year One teachers about each child's stage of development and learning needs and assist with the planning of activities in Year One.

The results of the profile will be shared with parents and carers in their child's end of year report. Parents will have the opportunity to discuss their child's report with their teacher, if they wish.

The Profile will be completed for all children, including those with special educational needs or disabilities. Reasonable adjustments to the assessment process for children with special educational needs and disabilities will be made as appropriate. Children will have differing levels of skills and abilities across the Profile and it is important that there is a full assessment of all areas of their development, to inform plans for future activities and to identify any additional support needs.

Unity Schools Partnership academies complete a Reception 30-word Phonics Screening check in the Summer term with data being passed onto Year One.

Induction and Transition to Foundation

A Parent information meeting is held in the Summer for parents of the prospective Foundation group. The purpose of this meeting is to welcome all of our families to the school, to disseminate important information about routines and the curriculum, to encourage discussion and to emphasise the vital importance of home-school co-operation and mutual support. This marks the beginning of the home-school partnership, which we regard as high priority for the benefit of all of our children.

Several events take place during the second half of the summer term, prior to the child's admission in September; these include activities such as visits to school, teachers visiting the pre-schools and nurseries and information sessions.

If a child has a specific need and extra transition meetings and visits are required, we will work with parents/carers and previous settings to arrange this.

Transition to Year One

Towards the end of the Reception year, the teachers will begin to prepare the children for Year One.

We do this by:

- Allowing the children to spend time in the Year One classrooms with Year One staff
- Scheduling 'transition days', when all classes spend a number of days with their new teacher in their new classroom.
- Presenting to parents the expectations for a child in Year One, the differences in timetable, homework and learning.
- Allowing time for the teachers of the existing classes to 'hand over' to the Year One teachers, giving information on family background, learning styles, friendship groups, academic ability, progress achieved through the year etc.
- Ensuring we are available for parents/carers to speak to us/contact us if they have any concerns.

Inclusion

"Every child deserves a champion - an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists that they become the best that they can be"

Rita Pierson

At Place Farm Primary Academy, we believe that all children matter and have equal rights - irrespective of the child's special educational need(s), disability, gender or ethnicity. Consequently, we aim to be a fully inclusive schools - as described in USP's Equality Policy. We give our children every opportunity to participate in a wide range of experiences, in order to help them to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of each child's communication needs, any disability and their range of life experiences when we are planning for their learning. This is outlined in school Accessibility Plans, which is an annually revised document outlining how each school intends to meet the needs for all children to access learning.

Parents

"Together may we give our children the roots to grow and the wings to fly"

Anon

We believe that all parents and carers have an important role to play in the education of their children. We therefore recognise their role by:

- Teacher visits to children's nurseries/ preschool settings prior to them starting school;
- Offering parents and carers regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress through Class Dojo and Parent/Teacher meetings;
- Sending home curriculum letters periodically to keep parents informed of their child's current curriculum and learning needs;
- Encouraging them to support their child in home learning activities;
- Encouraging parents and carers to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns;
- Providing various activities that involve parents and carers, such as inviting them to curriculum meetings and share sessions, as well as SEND meetings in order to discuss the kind of work that the children are undertaking in class and how they can continue to work with their child at home;
- Holding regular parents' evenings, as well as Focus child discussions, discussing individual next steps and progress;
- Sending home an annual written report to parents/carers on their child's attainment and progress at the end of the school year.

Safeguarding and Welfare of Pupils

The class teacher is responsible for the pastoral care of each child, as well as the academic side of school life.

Named members of each school's Early Years teaching team are qualified in Paediatric First Aid.

Medication will be kept well out of reach of pupils and administered in accordance with the Medicines in School Policy.

A school behaviour policy is in place and followed on entry to Early Years.

All safeguarding and child protection concerns will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and procedures followed in accordance with the Trust's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Monitoring and review

This policy is monitored and will be reviewed annually.

Date of Policy: September 2022

Date to be reviewed: September 2023