



## **Early Years Policy**

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 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) at Place Farm Academy.

The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of practitioners working in 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.

### **Aims**

Our aim is to provide:

**Quality and consistency** so that every child makes good progress from their starting points 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 learning, equipped with the knowledge and skills to enable a smooth transition into Year1.

### **Principles**

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-led learning, adult-initiated 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**

**Foundation** - Parents of children who require a Foundation 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.

## **Legislation**

### **Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)**

Teaching in the EYFS at Place Farm Academy is delivered in accordance with the government's statutory document, 'Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.' (Updated 4<sup>th</sup> January 2024).

## **Curriculum**

### **Areas of Learning and Development**

There are seven areas of learning and development that shape educational programmes in the EYFS at Place Farm Academy. All areas of learning and development are important and interconnected. 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:**

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

Settings 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 & Learning

Each area of learning and development will be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a balance of adult-led, adult-initiated and child-led play. Child-led play enables children to follow their own interests, where staff will develop learning by engaging in skillful, positive and warm interactions.

## English / Literacy



In EYFS we follow the CUSP Early Foundations, which is guided by evidence-led curriculum structures, such as retrieval and spaced retrieval practice. It is underpinned by explicit vocabulary instruction and research-focused pedagogy.

## **EYFS CUSP consists of three elements:**

**1. Foundational knowledge:** what pupils should know and be able to do throughout the EYFS and how this will support their development and prepare them for Key Stage 1.

**2. Opportunities and experiences:** how this foundational knowledge can be learnt through play and through guided activities that will allow pupils to explore, experiment with and think hard about new and important concepts.

**3. Structured Story Time:** core texts that will introduce key language, ideas and themes that pupils will need to access the foundational knowledge, built into a framework that uses all that we know about effective literacy instruction.

## Phonics



We follow the Sounds-Write programme, an approved DfE provider to ensure consistency across the school. Sounds-Write is a highly structured, cumulative, sequential, explicit and code-oriented instructional programme for teaching all children to read and spell. For further information, please refer to our Phonics Policy.

Children are encouraged to read at home and are listened to regularly in school. They are given **books that match their phonic knowledge** in order for them to apply their learning with the aim of becoming successful, confident and fluent readers.

## Mathematics



In Early Years we follow the Mathematics Mastery Programme of work. High quality learning environments and meaningful interactions with adults, support children in developing mathematical thinking and discussion. Pupils learn through games and tasks using concrete manipulatives and pictorial structures and representations which are then rehearsed applied and recorded within their own child-led exploration.

## Wider Curriculum

Our wider curriculum is taught through the learning areas; 'Understanding of the World' and 'Expressive Arts and Design.' EYFS staff have a good understanding of how ELG's feed into the National Curriculum through our robust planning and CPD opportunities. In reverse, colleagues throughout the school are also aware of the key ELG's that link to each foundation subject and the progression of the subject.

Exciting, purposeful and contextual activities are planned to build on children's natural curiosity. For example, building a boat for their favourite toy enables them to think like a 'Scientist' and 'Engineer' as they explore a range of materials and test out their own ideas.

The following programmes are used from Y1 to Y6 and in Early Years we use the EYFS content when necessary.



## **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 in the Autumn term. Every child is a focus during the 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.

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 Foundation, 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 Foundation 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**

At Place Farm 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 fully inclusive schools - as described in our 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**

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 prior to them starting school where possible;
- Offering parents and carers regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress through an open-door policy and through Parent/Teacher meetings;
- Sending home regular newsletters to keep parents up to date with Classroom learning and focus
- 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 Phonic workshops 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 parent evenings, discussing individual next steps and progress;
- Sharing photos of weekly activities through Class Dojo.
- Sending home an annual written report to parents/carers on their child's attainment and progress at the end of the school year.

### **Safeguarding/Welfare of Pupils**

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

All learning assistants in the Early Years teaching team are qualified in Paediatric First Aid.

Medication will be kept 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: January 2024**

**Date to be reviewed: September 2024**