



EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE POLICY

Our Vision:

We are committed to quality learning in a positive, happy and Christian atmosphere where everyone within the school community is valued as an individual. We expect everyone to, 'Treat others as you want them to treat you.' (Matthew 7:12-14). We have high expectations of all and strive to provide a safe, challenging, exciting and stimulating environment.

Our Values:

To ensure the safety, physical, mental health, emotional and well-being of our pupils are met and effectively supported through our school values of:-

- Respect – by respecting the individual needs of all our children and effectively supporting them with appropriate strategies to promote their well-being.
- Compassion – by showing compassion and understanding for each individual situation that a child finds themselves in.
- Creation – creating a safe and secure environment which allows children to be effectively supported, helping them to thrive and flourish.
- Perseverance – by persevering with challenges which may arise, in dealing with situations that children and families find themselves in. Always acting in the best interests of the child.
- Service – by building trusting relationships with children and their families as we serve to help to keep children safe.

Introduction

This document outlines the philosophy, aims and principles of early years teaching and learning in Willaston Church of England Primary School. The document underpins practice in all areas of provision.

“Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their potential. A child’s experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is of the greatest importance, it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.”

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At Willaston we greatly value the important role that the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life as well as preparation for the next stage of education.

The EYFS applies to children from birth to five years of age. The final year of the EYFS is referred to as the Reception year.

Aims

We aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum encompassed by the Christian ethos which will enable each child to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually to their full potential. Each child is valued as an individual, teaching and learning is based on the understanding that children develop at different rates.

At Willaston we aim to:

- provide a safe, challenging, stimulating and caring environment which is sensitive to the needs of the child, including children with additional needs.
- provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for future learning and development.
- teach the early skills of reading and writing and number.
- provide opportunities for children to learn through planned, purposeful play in all areas of learning and development in the indoor and outdoor environment.
- use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress.
- enable choice and decision-making, fostering independence and self-confidence.
- work in partnership with parents/guardians and value their contributions.

- ensure that all children feel valued, respected and included and that classroom resources and activities reflect the culture and language of their homes.

Implementation

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

A Unique Child - developing resilient, capable, confident and self-assured individuals.

Positive Relationships - supporting children in becoming strong and independent.

Enabling Environments - where opportunities and experiences respond to the individual needs of the child by developing a strong partnership between practitioner, parents/carers and the child.

Learning and Development - an acknowledgment that children learn in different ways and at different rates.

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 sharing assemblies and the house point rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Inclusion

All children and their families are valued within our school. We believe that children should be treated as individuals but they should have equal access to the EYFS curriculum. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We help them do this by planning to meet the needs of both boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children from different ethnic groups, and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

We strongly believe that early identification of special needs is crucial in enabling staff to support the development of each child and fully meet their needs. Concerns are always discussed with parents/carers at an early stage in an open, honest and sensitive manner and we will always seek their support and involvement. The school's SENCO is responsible for providing additional information and advice to practitioners and parents, and for arranging external intervention and support where necessary.

For further information see our Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Gifted and Talented Policies.

Equal Opportunities

At Willaston we aim to provide all pupils, regardless of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability, equal access to all aspects of school life and work to ensure that every child is valued fully as an individual. Practitioners, as role models, are aware of the influence of adults in promoting positive attitudes and use that influence to challenge stereotypical ideas.

For further information see our 'Equality Information & Objectives Policy'.

Positive Relationships

We firmly believe that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families.

Parents as partners

We recognise that parents/carers are the child's first and most enduring educators. When parents/guardians and practitioners work together in early years settings, the results have a positive impact on the child's development. We feel a successful partnership needs to be a two-way flow of information, knowledge and expertise and so we aim to provide a variety of opportunities to support this.

We value Parents and carers by:

- Organising a thorough induction programme to welcome children and parents into our school community.
- Encouraging the completion of the data collection forms and Safeguarding Booklet.
- Operating an "open door" policy, whereby they can come and discuss concerns and developments in an informal manner.
- Offering a 'drop-in' session on Mondays at 3.20pm to discuss concerns and developments at greater length, no appointment needed.
- Outlining the core areas of learning in reception during a Curriculum evening in September, to enable them to understand the value of supporting their child's learning at home.
- Providing monthly newsletters to inform of their child's current curriculum and learning needs, with an outline of activities which could be undertaken at home to support these.

- Sharing progress at school through our 'Learning Journey' books.
- Sharing children's achievements through the 'celebration' evening and afternoon; an opportunity to look at a child's work with them in an informal manner.
- Encouraging them to share their child's special moments or achievements at home .
- Encouraging them to listen to their child read each night, to make use of the letters and sounds flash cards and to comment on reading progress in a home/school reading record book.
- Encouraging relevant learning activities to be continued at home e.g. maths games and library books, and ensuring that experiences at home are used to develop learning in school.
- Discussing individual targets at parents' evenings in Autumn and Spring terms. (Informed by the EYFS Profile).
- Providing an annual written report in July, summarising the child's progress against the early learning goals and EYFS.
- Inviting them to help in the reception class or other classes in the school and to accompany children on school visits.
- Offering sessions throughout the year when parents can, for example 'Stay and Play', 'Stay and Share', 'Stay and Build'.
- Encouraging them to be a 'Mystery Reader' and share a story with the class.

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. At Willaston, the Reception (EYFS) teacher acts as 'key person' to all the children in Reception, supported by the other practitioners.

Liaison with pre-school settings

We have close links with the local pre-school providers. The pre-school are regularly invited to school and staff from Willaston regularly talk with pre-school staff.

Our Induction Process

We place a high priority on meeting children's individual needs so transition into school is successful. Generally, our induction includes;

During Summer Term 2, pre-school children, who will be starting school in September, are invited to school with their parents/carers to take part in a Stay and Play morning with the existing Reception class. Children can join in with a variety of activities throughout the whole school environment. This is an informal opportunity for parents and children to 'get to know' the school and meet with staff and other members of the school community.

Children are also given a 'Summer Scrapbook' that they can fill with photos, pictures and comments to bring in to share on their first day in September. Opportunity is also given to the parents to ask any questions they may have about their child's induction.

Parents/carers are invited to an information evening where they have the opportunity to meet the Head teacher and all the staff, governors and members of the PTA. A short film is shown 'A Day in the Life of a Reception Child' starring current Reception children in their setting, following them through a whole day in school.

New Reception children are invited to spend a morning or afternoon session in the Reception classroom at the beginning of July. This coincides with 'Change-up day', when all children in the school visit their new classroom in preparation for September. At this point each child is introduced to their own 'year 4' buddy. The year 4 buddies write a letter to the child starting school introducing themselves.

During the induction period in September, children are split into two groups according to friendship groups and/or nursery settings. In these groups, during the first week, children will experience a combination of morning and afternoon sessions. The final half-day session involves the whole class together taking part in activities and staying for lunch, where they begin to familiarise themselves with the lunchtime routine in the school hall. In week 2 the children start full time school.

We work closely with parents to ensure individual needs are met. This induction process will be expanded and tailored where appropriate.

This carefully planned schedule allows:

- Children to feel secure in their new environment and gradually build up to full-time attendance.
- The teacher and teaching assistants to get to know the children individually and establish good relationships.
- The reception teacher to carry out a baseline assessment through observing the children and playing games.
- Admission on a full-time basis is introduced at the beginning of week 2, unless it is mutually agreed between parents, the EYFS leader and the head teacher that the child will benefit from a continuation of the part-time arrangement.

Year 4 children undertake the role of “Playground Buddies” to help new children become familiar with the playground and to become confident at joining in with playground games at lunch times.

Reception to Year 1 Transition

Reception and year 1 teachers work together to make the transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1 as smooth as possible.

At Willaston:

- Children are encouraged to develop independence when dressing and undressing and when organising their personal belongings throughout the reception year.
- Reception children meet the year 1 teacher during assembly, singing, playtime and other whole school activities during the reception year.
- Individual EYFS profiles and reading records are passed on to the year 1 teacher. The Profile provides parents and carers, staff and teachers with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels and a short commentary on each child's skills and abilities in relation to the three key characteristics of effective learning.
- Reception and year 1 teachers meet to discuss individual needs of children in July.
- Reception children visit their year 1 classroom and teacher on ‘Change-up’ day in July.
- The ‘Little Wandle’ approach to phonics and spelling is continued throughout year 1 and 2 and for other age groups where appropriate.
- There is a similar structure to the school day during the Autumn Term when the children move into year 1.
- There is an overlap in approach and routines, e.g. Fruit time, behaviour systems, timetables, etc.
- Where possible, the year 1 children continue to enjoy practical learning experiences which gradually become more formalised during the academic year.

Learning Mentor

Our Learning mentor works with small groups of children throughout the school during the afternoons. Children identified by class teachers and discussed with

parents, take part in activities to promote friendships, positive attitudes towards others and give them the opportunity for time to reflect before returning to class.

For more information on how we promote positive relationships throughout the school, see our Behaviour, Safeguarding and Inclusion Policies.

Enabling Environments

“A rich and varied environment supports children’s learning and development. It gives them the confidence to explore and learn in secure and safe, yet challenging, indoor and outdoor spaces.”

EYFS, Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007

At Willaston we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children’s development. We aim to create an attractive, welcoming and stimulating learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, which will encourage and challenge children to explore, investigate and learn through first-hand experience. We also aim to make it a place where children feel secure and confident, and are challenged to develop their independence.

The Learning Environment

The children have daily access to the indoor and outdoor environment that is set up in discrete areas of learning with planned continuous provision. Effective learning builds and extends upon prior learning and following children's interest.

Children are encouraged to become independent learners and to take some responsibility for initiating their own lines of enquiry and investigation.

Children take part in Forest School one afternoon fortnightly. Through these sessions they are involved in exploratory activities within the school outdoor area to begin with, using the meadow adjacent to the school grounds when appropriate. The children have the opportunity to discuss and investigate plants and wildlife in the local environment, using natural resources to create artwork and build structures. Children also have an opportunity to access Forest School outside of the fortnightly sessions with the Reception class teacher when planned and appropriate.

Planning

Effective planning is informed by observations of children to ensure we follow current interests and experiences. These observations are recorded in the children's individual 'learning story'. Staff will enhance play and extend as needed to further individual learning. Effective learning builds on and extends what children know and can already do ensuring challenge for all. Our planning is informed by observations we make of the children in order to understand and consider their current interests, experiences, development and learning needs.

There are three stages of planning the curriculum:

Long Term Planning

We plan the curriculum using a thematic approach. The themes cover areas that are familiar, of interest to young children and also enable us to deliver a creative and balanced curriculum. Themes are chosen to occasionally link in with other year groups and we also plan a whole school theme once a year.

Medium Term Planning

We address particular aspects of the curriculum in more detail for each term. When planning we follow the early learning goals of the EYFS profile and Development Matters documentation. There are seven areas covered by the EYFS profile and Development Matters. These are split into 'prime' and 'specific' areas:

Prime areas

Personal, Social and Emotional Development;

Communication and Language;

Physical Development;

Specific areas

Literacy;

Mathematics;

Understanding the World;

Expressive arts and design.

Through careful assessments and observations, including information provided by parents and other settings, children's development levels are assessed. 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. However, if a child's progress in any prime area gives cause for concern, staff will discuss this with the child's parents and/or carers and agree how to support the child.

The medium term planning reflects a balance of these seven areas of learning. Learning objectives, assessment opportunities, activities and experiences for each area of learning and development are identified.

Short Term Planning

The weekly plan is informed in two ways; we refer to the medium term plans which detail objectives and activities/experiences linked to the half termly theme. Planning is also informed through on going observation of child initiated or spontaneous activity and enhanced play opportunities (indoors and outdoors). This allows for flexibility in response to individual children's needs and interests and for revision and modification of plans. Through this, learning objectives for the next short term plan are identified.

“Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity. Play is used as an essential part children’s development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults. 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 must respond to each child’s emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction. As children grow older, and as their development allows, it is expected that the balance will gradually shift towards more activities led by adults, to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for Year 1.” (Statutory Framework for EYFS 2012)

Planning is monitored by the Headteacher and subject leaders.

Staffing and Organisation

There is one reception class at Willaston, with a maximum intake of thirty children. We maintain an adult/pupil ratio of 1:15 within the reception year. There is a teaching assistant in the class throughout the school day. The children have daily opportunities for structured and free-flow play both in the classroom and outdoor area. Adults support teaching small group focus activities or taking the role of facilitator to the child's self-initiated learning. The teacher liaises with the teaching assistants, regularly involving them in planning, preparation and assessment. We are always aiming to improve our teaching skills, knowledge and understanding and so all practitioners are encouraged to participate in local authority courses, in-service and local cluster group training. Practitioners also conduct and attend in-house training and disseminate new initiatives, ideas and teaching methods to colleagues through peer coaching. We also liaise with the local pre-school nurseries on a regular basis.

Safeguarding

We aim to provide a safe and secure learning environment for every child. Safety checks on the indoor and outdoor areas are carried out daily by the Reception class teacher. An outdoor safety check card is dated and signed each morning. This is located by the door to the outdoor area.

All adults who teach and support children must hold a current Cheshire DBS certificate. The teaching assistants working in the Reception class are paediatric first aiders. Parent helpers must sign in at the school office and wear a visitors' badge at all times.

For more information please refer to our 'Safeguarding' Policy and 'Health and Safety' Policy with specific reference being made to Risk Assessment and Medical needs (First Aid Training). Additional reference should also be made to the EYFS Risk Assessment.

Learning and Development

We recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are interconnected. While the seven areas provide a framework for the early years curriculum, young children's learning does not easily divide up into distinct areas. A particular experience may develop learning over several of the seven areas at any one time. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult led and child initiated activities. In each area there are Early Learning Goals that define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS.

Teaching and Learning

Effective teaching and learning is supported through:

- The partnership between staff and parents that helps our children to feel secure at school and to develop a sense of wellbeing and achievement.
- The understanding that staff have knowledge of how children develop and learn, and how this must be reflected in their teaching.
- The range of approaches that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions, and extend and develop the children's play, talk or other means of communication.
- The carefully planned curriculum that helps children achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage.
- 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 of children to communicate and talk about their learning, and to develop independence and self-management.
- The support for learning, with appropriate and accessible space, facilities and equipment, both indoors and outdoors, including the effective use of ICT.

- The identification, through observations, of children's progress and future learning needs, which are regularly shared with parents.

At Willaston, we do not make a distinction between work and play. We support children's learning through planned play activities, and decide when child-initiated or adult-led play activities would provide the most effective learning opportunities. We believe that it is important for adults to support children's learning through play, by getting involved in the play themselves and modelling by example.

Learning through play

"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."

"Early Years Foundation Stage",

Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007

Well planned play, both indoors and outdoors is one of the key ways in which children learn. It is the process through which children can explore, investigate, recreate and come to understand their world. It is not just imaginative play and role play but includes spontaneous, self-initiated lines of inquiry and exploration. Play is a vital component of children's lives. It is an important way skills are developed and practised. Play is essential for physical, intellectual, linguistic, emotional, behavioural and social development.

Principles of High Quality Play

- Play is an intrinsic part of children's learning and development.
- Play has many possible but no prescriptive outcomes.
- Play challenges children and offers them the chance to learn in breadth and depth.
- Play draws on what children already know and can do and enables them to master what is new.
- Play enables children to apply existing knowledge and to practise their skills
- Play encourages children to communicate with others as they investigate or solve problems.
- Play offers children opportunities to explore feelings and relationships, ideas, and materials, connections and consequences.
- Play empowers children to make choices, to solve problems and to be independent in their learning.

- Play enables children to express fears or relive anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.
- Play encourages children to struggle, to take risks and to become resilient as learners.
- Play can be supported and extended but not interfered with by adults.
- Play presents no barriers to children because of their language, cultures, abilities or gender.

Role of the adult

- To observe child-initiated play to understand and provide for their interests and needs.
- To plan and resource a challenging indoor and outdoor environment.
- To support children's learning through planned play activity.
- To extend and support children's spontaneous/self-initiated play.
- To extend and develop children's language and communication in their play.

Assessment, recording and monitoring

At Willaston we undertake assessment for learning. We analyse and review what we know about each child's development and learning, and then make informed decisions about the child's progress. This enables us to plan the next steps to meet their development and learning needs. All practitioners who interact with the child contribute to the assessment process.

Formative assessment

This type of assessment informs everyday planning and is based on on-going observational assessment of each child's achievements, interests and learning styles. Formative assessment may take the form of anecdotal observations, focused observations, baseline assessment, other focused assessments e.g. sound/number, annotated examples of work, photographs, video and information from parents. Each child has a 'Learning Story' Book in which this evidence is stored.

Summative assessment

The EYFS Profile summarises all of the formative assessment undertaken and makes statements about the child's achievements against thirteen scales. It summarises children's progress towards the early learning goals. It is completed at the end of each term by the class teacher and data is collected on the school's E-Profile system, collated annually by the LA in June. The teacher also undertakes in-house and local cluster group moderation.

Teaching and learning in Literacy and Maths is monitored by the English and Mathematics subject leaders (literacy comprises of reading and writing and maths comprises of number, shape and measures) each term in each class, through lesson observations, pupil interviews and whole school work sampling. Other areas of learning and development in the foundation stage are monitored in this way by the respective subject leaders. The Reception teacher monitors teaching and learning across the Foundation Stage each year and analyses the EYFS Profile data in conjunction with the head teacher.

For further information see the Whole School Assessment, Recording and Reporting Policy.

Approved by Governors May 2023



Signed Chair of Governors