

HEATHCOTE

Primary School

Early Years Policy

This policy was adapted by Headteacher Lara Jeffries and Andy Mitchell. It will be presented in draft version to the full staff compliment for discussion and revision. The final version will be presented to Governors for consideration, approval and adoption.



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INTRODUCTION

“Children are born ready, able and eager to learn. They actively reach out to interact with other people, and in the world around them.

Development is not an automatic process, however. It depends on each unique child having opportunities to interact in positive relationships and enabling environments”.

“Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage” (2012),

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At Heathcote Primary School we greatly value the important role that the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) plays in laying secure foundations for the future learning and development and as preparation for life.

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

Young children will have had a wide range of different experiences and possess a wide range of skills and interests when they join our school. All children require a well-planned, well-organised curriculum in order to move their learning forward. The Foundation Stage should provide opportunities for all children to succeed in an atmosphere of care and where every child is valued. Ideally, all pupils should achieve the Early Learning goals by the time they reach the end of the Foundation Stage and be properly prepared for experiencing and accessing the National Curriculum when they enter Key Stage 1. This policy sets out the entitlement of our youngest children.

AIMS

The overall aim of the EYFS is to ensure that each child achieves a good level of development by the time they leave reception. It is every child’s right to grow up safe, healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and with economic well-being.

The EYFS principles which guide the work of all practitioners are grouped into four distinct but complementary themes:

A Unique Child

Every child is a competent learner from birth, who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

Positive Relationships

Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person.

Enabling Environments

The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children’s development and learning.

Learning and Development

Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of learning and development are equally important and inter-connected.

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At Heathcote Primary School we aim to support children to achieve the above principles by:

- Providing a safe, challenging, caring and sharing environment which is sensitive to the needs of the child, including children with additional needs.
- Providing a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for future learning in Key Stage One and beyond.
- Providing opportunities for children to learn through planned, purposeful play in all areas of learning and development.
- Valuing each child as an individual through praise, encouragement and assessing their individual needs enabling them to make progress.
- Enabling choice and decision-making, fostering independence and self-confidence.
- Working in partnership with parents/guardians and valuing their contributions.
- Ensuring that all children, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family backgrounds, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable Early Years Curriculum.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

At Heathcote, we value every child. We seek to provide a rich and relevant curriculum for all pupils, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, disability etc. The curriculum taught will prepare our children to become full and active citizens in an ethnically and culturally diverse society. The curriculum seeks to challenge stereotypes based on gender, race or ability and provides equal access and educational outcomes for all pupils.

Teaching in the Foundation Stage will be in accordance with the present policy for Equal Opportunities. We therefore 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. The classroom environment and resources for the Foundation Stage reflect children's varied home and community experiences as far as possible and attempt to avoid gender stereo-typing.

PLANNING

Our planning for learning is based on the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and is as far as possible cross-curricular, story based, and often led by the children's own ideas and interests. Planning for learning focuses on **the seven areas of learning**:

The Prime Areas

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

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The Specific Areas

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

At Heathcote Primary School we believe that all seven areas are equally important and depend on each other to support a rounded approach to child development. We aim to deliver all the areas through planned, purposeful play, with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities.

A cycle of themes (2 per term) is followed to ensure continuity, progression and full coverage of the Early Learning Goals.

A menu of activities, organised for Foundation Stage children, is set out below:

- Registration and calendar; visual timetable of activities for the day
- Discussion / Show and Tell / Circle Time / Philosophy / Carpet Time to discuss activities and review achievements of the day.
- Phonics sessions (10-15 minutes building up to 30mins)
- Numeracy and Literacy adult-led focused activities
- Structured Play (role play, self-initiated play, collaborative activities, 'small world', jig-saw, games, etc)
- Artistic/creative activity
- Wellie Wednesday (Forest School)
- Physical Education sessions building up to 2 a week.
- Whole class music sessions
- Whole class technology / ICT sessions
- Free Flow activities both inside and outside.
- 2 Guided Reads a week when children are ready.

The Early Years staff work together with different sizes of groups sharing expertise and supporting the learning process. Teaching Assistants lead many of these activities under the direction of the class teacher, and parents also support small groups and individuals during guided sessions.

ORGANISATION

Children develop rapidly during the early years; physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially. This is a crucial time in children's development and they are entitled to provision which supports and extends prior knowledge, understanding, skills and self-confidence.

The Foundation Stage builds on what pupils already know, understand and can do and to be fully effective the curriculum should be carefully planned and structured. The structure of our curriculum is built on the following strands:

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- provision for different starting points as children arrive with different experiences and from different settings
- use of external visitors or trips to enhance children's understanding
- relevant and appropriate content that matches pupils' needs
- planned and purposeful activities that provide opportunities for learning (indoors and outdoors)
- adult-planned and pupil-initiated activities (children do not necessarily make a distinction between 'work' and 'play' and neither should practitioners)
- time made available for children to become engrossed in their activities and to complete tasks as far as is practically possible
- planning needs to include time for practitioners to observe children during activities and tasks in order to plan for the 'next steps'
- teachers and teaching assistants need to intervene appropriately in order to help to develop pupils knowledge, skills, understanding, attitudes and behaviour
- the use of ICT on a regular basis used to promote learning where appropriate
- a well-planned and stimulating environment with appropriate resources
- high-quality care and support for all pupils, whatever their needs

ASSESSMENT

At Heathcote Primary School we undertake Assessment for Learning (AFL). 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 all to plan the next steps to meet a child's development and learning needs. All practitioners who interact with the child contributes to the assessment process:-

- an On-Entry assessment is completed within the first few weeks on entry and usually by the end of the first half-term in school
- progress is monitored closely and reported to SLT three times in the year
- much of the ongoing assessment is carried out by staff using observation techniques
- Playing and Exploring, Active Learning, and Creating and Thinking Critically support children's learning across all areas
- judgements about progress are based on the understanding of and observations made of each child's development and learning allowing for assessing of progress and planning for next steps
- ongoing progress is recorded using '2Build a Profile'. Practitioners take photos of pupil's work; tag them with learner details and EYFS learning objectives.
- informal discussions with children, marking and individual target setting and comments on work
- Foundation Stage Profile (FSP) summative assessment is carried out at the end of the Foundation Stage

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Information gathered through assessment is used:

- to inform future planning
- to set targets
- to help the early identification of Special Needs
- to inform parents, carers and children about progress and attainment

Foundation Stage staff hold regular consultations with parents, and written annual reports are forwarded to parents in the Summer Term.

TEACHING AND LEARNING STYLES

Play in the Foundation Stage:

“Practitioners teach children by ensuring challenging, playful opportunities across the prime and specific areas of learning and development. They foster the characteristics of effective early learning; Playing and exploring; Active learning; Creating and thinking critically”.

“Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage” (2012),

Through play children explore and develop learning experiences, helping them to make sense of the world around them. When involved in play children develop, practice and gather ideas and concepts, they learn about sharing, self-control, collaboration and the need for rules. Play offers children opportunities to communicate, think creatively, problem-solve and investigate with others as well as on their own. During play children can explore, experiment as well as develop their senses. Structured play enables children to express worries and fears and re-live them in a controlled, safe situation and environment. The importance of play cannot be overestimated.

In the Foundation Setting 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 through sustained shared thinking.

Learning Outdoors:

Great emphasis is placed on ensuring that the outdoor learning environment contributes to all areas of learning and therefore our Foundation Stage children have equal access to both indoor and outdoor learning environments.

INDUCTION

At Heathcote Primary School we believe that it is important for children to feel welcomed and secure in their new environment so that their learning journey can continue.

Smooth transitions are important for the parents/carers as well as the children.

We support children and families through the following ways:

- Welcoming prospective parents/ carers to visit the school at any time and the school organises open days in October prior to a new academic year.

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- The EYFS phase leader makes contact with pre-school providers in June and visits prospective children.
- During the summer term we hold a New Parents Meeting to introduce the school's expectations, routines and outline the induction process. Parents/ carers have the opportunity to meet the class teacher and to visit the classroom.
- During the months of June and July pre-school children, who will be starting school in September, make visits to the Reception Unit for "stay and play" sessions and story times.
- During the first week in September Reception staff visit all of the children at home.
- The children begin school on a part-time basis for a week. This allows a gentle introduction to school as well as enabling practitioners to get to know the children individually and establish good relationships.
- Transfer records from the pre-school settings inform reception practitioners about the new intake. During the home visit parents/carers also help to complete a form that helps us get to know their child and family.
- In September Reception teachers hold a phonics information evening
- In November Reception Teachers hold a curriculum evening which informs parents/carers about how their child will be learning and how they can help to support their child at home.

HOME/SCHOOL LINKS

Parents and carers have a crucial role in the education of their children and we have developed positive, constructive and a genuinely strong partnership with our parents and carers. We have established this strong partnership through:

- the family-oriented, caring ethos of the school
- arranging events to attend before their children start school and providing information evenings for children, parents and carers.
- arranging induction sessions for Foundation stage pupils
- offering an "open door" policy, whereby parents/carers can come and discuss concerns and developments in an informal manner
- organising 'come and play' sessions each half term whereby parents can come into the classroom and play with their child
- offering formal consultations with parents and carers about their child's development and progress and to feedback on children's targets
- encouraging parents and carers to support the children's learning at home and by becoming an involved partner in school
- inviting parents/carers to access their child's learning profile electronically via '2 Engage Parents'

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- sending home a half-termly topic letter, informing parents/ carers of the learning that will be taking place at school
- Weekly Achievement assemblies for children to show their parents/carers their work/achievements.
- Providing an Open Day in July so the children can show their parents and carers their work/ classroom and to meet their new teacher and classroom.

TRANSITION INTO KS1

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

At Heathcote Primary School:

- Children are encouraged to develop their independence when dressing and undressing and by organising their personal belongings throughout the Reception Year.
- Reception Practitioners plan for more structured activities to be undertaken during the summer term.
- During summer term, we encourage less dependence on adult support.
- Reception children meet Year One teachers during whole school activities during the reception year.
- Individual EYFS Profile sheets and all assessment records are passed on to Year One Teachers.
- Children's learning journeys will be passed up to new class teachers.
- Reception and Year One teachers meet to discuss individual needs of children in July.
- Reception children visit their new Year One class and teacher for a session on "Move up Day" in June
- During the Autumn and Spring Term in Year One elements of the EYFS are maintained for continuity as well as valuing the importance of a practical, play based curriculum.
- In Year One children are given choice in the activities they access. There are plenty of hands-on tasks and practical activities, as well as a role play area and use of an outdoor learning area.

MONITORING

The effectiveness of the policy will be monitored during the year through;

- Monitoring of teaching and learning by the SLT/ SMT/ Governors and the Early Years staff.
- Visits from the inspectorate or advisory team,
- Sampling of pupils' work.
- Analysis of data to consider trends or other issues arising

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- Target setting as the year progresses working to ensure each child is at a level appropriate to their needs and abilities

The Role of the Early Years Foundation Stage Phase Leader is;

- to advise the Head Teacher of action required to develop the area
- to monitor the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum
- to develop and build upon the strong partnership with parents and carers in order to support the children's learning and development
- encourage staff to attend relevant training to support implementation of new initiatives
- to advise on the purchase, organisation and maintenance of teaching and learning resources
- to take a leading role in monitoring and evaluating the Foundation Stage provision, along with the Head Teacher and the member of the Governing Body who has a special interest in the Foundation Stage.