



Healthy Empowered Ambitious Respectful Together

*Our values are at the HEART of our school*

# Early Years Policy

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## Our Vision

In the early years at Washingwell, we want children to be happy, confident, well-rounded individuals with a love for learning. We are committed to providing the best possible start to their school life, teaching them skills and providing experiences which will ensure their well-being now and success in the future.

We provide all children with a safe and stimulating environment that builds on each individual's wants, needs and interests. Children are given the opportunity to learn through play as well as through focused adult-led activities. Adults provide high-quality interactions and are role models for learning. Learning is fun, engaging and suitably challenging. We also value the importance of learning through the outdoors and believe that it offers children the opportunity to develop their thinking and problem-solving skills further.

There are four guiding principles that shape Early Years. These are:

- Every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- Children learn to be strong and independent through positive **relationships**.
- Children learn and develop well in **enabling environments** with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- The importance of **learning and development**; children develop and learn at different rates.

## Aims and Objectives

We aim to support all children to become independent and collaborative learners. We provide a broad and balanced curriculum that enables each child to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually to their full potential.

At Washingwell Community Primary School, we will:

- Provide a happy, safe, stimulating and challenging programme of learning and development for the children to experience as they begin their journey through school.
- Provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for further learning and development in Key Stage 1 and beyond and enable choice and decision making, fostering independence and self-confidence.
- Use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress.
- Develop excellent relationships with parents and carers to build a strong partnership in supporting their children.
- Provide a caring and inclusive learning environment which is sensitive to the requirements of the individual child including those who have additional needs.

The early years education we offer our children is based on the following principles:

- It builds on what our children already know and can do.
- It ensures that no child is excluded or disadvantaged.
- It offers a structure for learning that has a range of starting points, content that matches the needs of young children, and activities that provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors.
- It provides a rich and stimulating environment.
- It acknowledges the importance of a full working partnership with parents and carers.

## **Early Years Curriculum**

The curriculum for the Early Years forms the first stage of our Whole School Curriculum. It covers children in Nursery and Reception.

There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational programmes in early year's settings. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected.

The three prime areas are:

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

There are also 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

Children's development levels are assessed and as the year progresses, the balance will shift towards an 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 of the prime areas gives cause for concern, staff will discuss this with the child's parents/carers and agree on how to support the child.

Reception pupils also participate in a daily phonics session, following Unlocking Letters & Sounds, an accredited phonic programme.

## **Characteristics of Effective Learning**

We ensure that our environment and delivery of the curriculum incorporates the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning:

- **Playing and Exploring** - children will have opportunities to investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'. Through play, our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They 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.
- **Active Learning** - children will have time and space to concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy their achievements. Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence, they learn to make decisions. It provides children with a sense of satisfaction as they take ownership of their learning.

- **Creating and Thinking Critically** - we encourage and support children to have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things. Children will be given the opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning. Adults can support children's thinking and help them make connections by showing interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open ended questions. Children can access resources and move around the classroom freely and purposefully to extend their learning.

## **Planning**

### **Long term plan**

The long-term plan is built around the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum which is a statutory framework set out by the Government and the non-statutory guidance Birth to 5 Matters set out by the Early Years Coalition.

### **Medium term plan**

These cover a half-term's learning. Topics are planned carefully to ensure continuity and progression and to enable staff to respond to children's interests.

### **Short term planning**

Short term plans select activities and learning objectives from medium term themed plans, to meet the needs and interests of the children. Plans are extended and differentiated accordingly.

### **Observations**

Staff use observations as the basis for planning. Staff are skilled at observing children to identify their achievements, interests and next steps for learning. These observations then lead the direction of the planning.

### **Assessment**

During the first three weeks within Reception, the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment is carried out which is a statutory requirement. These assessments allow us to identify patterns of attainment within the cohort, in order to adjust the teaching programme for individual children and groups of children. We use the Foundation Stage Profile which is the nationally employed assessment tool that enables teachers to record their observations at the end of the Foundation Stage, and to summarise pupils progress towards the Early Learning Goals. It covers each of the seven areas of learning contained in the curriculum guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage. We record each child's level of development against the 17 Early Learning Goals as a 'best fit' judgement. We make regular assessments of children's learning throughout their time in both Nursery and Reception, and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs.

The collection of assessment data in the Foundation Stage Profile is a statutory requirement. The teacher keeps progress records and learning journals and records examples of each child's work. These journals contain a wide range of evidence that is used to support a teacher's judgement.

Tracking grids are updated at the end of each term. This provides a summary sheet for each child which feeds into the whole-school assessment and tracking process. We record each child's level of development to be a best fit judgement based on the Birth to 5 Matters age ranges.

At the end of the final term in Reception we send a summary of these assessments to the Local Authority for analysis. The child's next teacher uses this information to make plans for the year ahead. We also share this information at parent consultation meetings and in the end of year report. Parents receive an annual written report that offers brief comments on each child's progress in each area of learning. It highlights the child's strengths and development needs, and gives details of the child's general progress. We complete these in June, and send them to parents in early July.

## **The Learning Environment**

The Foundation Stage classroom is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are specific areas where the children can be active, be quiet, creative etc. Children have access to both inside and outside areas across the day; this has a positive effect on the children's development. The Foundation Stage has its own outdoor area including a wooded area. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and in different scales than when indoors. The children can explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. All areas of the curriculum can be explored outside. Children also have access to weekly Forest School sessions.

## **Teaching & Learning Styles**

The features of effective teaching and learning in our school are defined in our policy on teaching and learning. They apply to teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage just as much as they do to the teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 or 2.

The more general features of good practice in our school that relate to the Foundation Stage are:

- the partnership between teachers and parents, carers and other settings that helps our children to feel secure at school, and to develop a sense of well-being and achievement;
- the understanding that teachers have 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 for 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;
- the identification, through observations, of children's progress and future learning needs, which are regularly shared with parents;
- the good relationships between our school and the other educational settings in which the children have been learning before 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 in the Foundation Stage.

## **Transition**

Starting school can be a difficult time for young children, we therefore plan this time carefully to support children with the transition and to ensure it is as smooth as possible for each child and that they settle in to their new class quickly and happily.

Parents of all children are invited to an Induction Meeting in the summer term to meet their child's new teachers and other key staff and learn more about the Early Years Curriculum.

This is an opportunity for staff to:

- To go through school expectations
- Explain about uniform and school dinners/ free school meals
- Purchase uniform and book bag if requested

- Explain the arrangements for the induction in to our Early Years Unit
- Explain about holidays and absences

The children are given a variety of opportunities to come in to school between May – July prior to starting school in September. These take the form of parent and child visiting their new class, two days of transition in school, buddy picnic, attendance at sports day and any other relevant events. This means that before they join their new class, the early year's environment is already a familiar place to them. Arrangements are also made for the children's new class teacher to visit them in their current setting.

Moving onto Key Stage 1 is also part of our transition plan. Throughout the Reception year, each child's involvement in whole school life will have been built upon; many of the teaching and support staff will already be familiar to them. They will have taken part in Key Stage and whole school assemblies as well as sharing lunchtimes with the Key Stage 1 children. Children have the opportunity to meet their new class teacher and spend time in their new class, during the summer term.

### **Intimate Care**

Intimate care is any care which involves washing, touching or carrying out an invasive procedure that most children are able to carry out themselves. However, depending on a child's age and stage of development, they may need some support, for example dressing, wiping their bottom after using the toilet and changing underwear following an accident. Every child has the right to privacy, dignity and a professional approach from all staff when meeting their needs and it is important that staff work in partnership with parents to give the right support to an individual child. No intimate care is to be given without the express written permission of the parent or guardian of that child which can be found in our Early Years Intimate Care Policy.

### **Monitoring and Review**

It is the responsibility of those working in Reception to follow the principles stated in this policy. The Head Teacher and EYFS Teacher will carry out monitoring on EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule. The Curriculum Committee of the Governing Body will also be part of this process.