

Policy for Early Years

Our Early Years promotes the partnership between families, professionals and community groups working within the school setting and local area. We believe this helps the children to develop a positive image of themselves as confident, competent individuals and learners.

The children are provided with a wide range of activities and experiences in a secure, safe and happy environment that enables them to make progress in their development and learning.

We provide opportunities for the children to meet and overcome challenges, make decisions and work co-operatively with each other and adults.

Formative assessment through observation of our children helps to inform planning and further extend individual learning. Children with Special Educational Needs and disabilities are identified as soon as possible and appropriate support provided.

Aims

“Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child’s experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.”
Statutory Framework for Early Years 2018.

We aim to provide

- quality and consistency
- a secure foundation
- partnership working
- equality of opportunity
- a safe and secure environment

In addition we aim to support and develop the children’s learning and development in the Prime and Specific areas of learning.

Prime areas

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

Specific areas

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

In order to achieve this we aim to plan purposeful activities through play, which includes a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities.

The Early Years applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year.

The Early Years is based upon four themes

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

A Unique Child

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

The Unique Child reaches out to relate to people and things through the Characteristics of Effective Learning, which move through all areas of learning

- playing and exploring
- active learning
- creating and thinking critically.”

At Newcomen Foundation Stage we give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. Each child’s individual contribution is recognised, valued and encouraged in an atmosphere of acceptance and trust. 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, encouragement and rewards to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Inclusion

All children are entitled to enjoy a full life in an environment which will help them take part in society and develop as individuals with their own cultural and spiritual beliefs.

We value the diversity of individuals within the school and do not discriminate against children because of ‘differences’. All children within Newcomen Foundation Stage are treated fairly regardless of race, gender, religion or abilities. All children and their families are valued. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of all our children’s range of life experiences when planning for their learning opportunities. We therefore set realistic but challenging targets that meet the needs of all our children.

We meet these needs through:

- Planned opportunities that build upon and extend children’s knowledge, experience and interests to develop their self esteem and confidence
- Using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children’s learning needs
- Providing learning opportunities which encourage active involvement and motivate children
- Providing a safe, supportive and stimulating learning environment in which the contribution of all children are valued
- Providing challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills
- Monitoring children’s progress and taking action to provide support as necessary e.g. speech and language therapy.

Keeping Safe

It is important to us that all children are 'safe'. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all our children.

Health & safety and safeguarding

"Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them." We follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements detailed in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Guidance (2018). It is important to note that members of staff do not use their mobile phones or personal handset devices in the classroom and are prohibited from taking photographs with their personal handsets. However, the use of school iPads to take photographs as evidence to support the regular observation assessment cycle is permitted. These photographs are used in children's portfolios, class displays and on the school website. All parents are asked to state if they give permission for their child's image to be used on the school website through the paperwork in their initial starter packs.

Welfare

The welfare requirements are designed to support providers in creating settings which are welcoming, safe and stimulating, and where children are able to enjoy learning through play, to grow in confidence and to fulfil their potential." Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2018

At Newcomen Foundation Stage we understand that we are legally required to comply with certain welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2017. We understand that we are required to:

- Promote the welfare of children.
- Promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill.
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs.
- Ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.
- Ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose
- Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs.
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and school to meet the needs of the children.
- Work closely with all outside agencies.

Statutory Framework for the Early Years 2017

Positive Relationships

"Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person". <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/every-child-matters-statutory-guidance>

Learning is a lifelong experience which we are all involved in. Everyone working with young children has an important contribution to make to their education. Therefore, we cannot work in isolation as effective learning is based on active partnership with all those involved with the child. We recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

Parents as Partners

We recognise that parents and carers are children's first and most enduring educators and we highly value the contribution that parents make. We recognise the role that parents have played, and their future role, in educating the children.

We achieve this through:

- Offering pre-school home liaison visits where information about the setting and the child are discussed. An activity pack is shared with the child on the visit in order to establish a relationship between the child, parent and practitioner.
- Inviting parents and children into the setting, to spend time with practitioners and peers before they begin their placement.
- Introducing a key person to each child and their parents, where possible this will be the same practitioner who made the home visit. The role of the key person will be to give reassurance to each family regarding safety and care and to build up a relationship with the parents and child.
- Transition meetings, curriculum evenings, workshops, booklets and activity packs are offered when children begin full-time education.
- Parental sessions are available throughout the year. These offer parents and carers the opportunity to spend time in the setting and work with their child and their peers.
- Offering parents the opportunity to liaise with practitioners through their children's reading record book, parent consultations and by appointment.
- Practitioners from the setting greet parents and children every morning and afternoon.
- Invitation in to share school lunches.

Building Community Partnerships

We value community cohesion and encourage children to appreciate their local area.

- Local EYFS cluster group to share experiences and expertise
- Local visits e.g. shops, library, park
- Links with feeder pre-schools and child-minders.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

The long term continuous provision planning provides a broad framework for the curriculum to meet the needs of the Foundation Stage children. Medium term plans specify some learning activities and learning objectives again relevant to the children's needs and requirements of the Early Years Framework. However, opportunities are given for child-initiated activities to be explored and given valuable time within the curriculum. Short term plans are updated on a daily basis and are based around individual children's needs and interests. This information is reviewed to inform future planning. Foundation Stage practitioners have their Planning, Preparation and Assessment time in order to discuss their planning for both indoor and outdoor provision.

Observational assessment in Lower Foundation Stage

- Discussions with parents/carers during initial meeting
- Home visits
- Parent and child visits to Lower Foundation Stage
- Information from Entry to Lower Foundation Stage packs
- Diary contributions from Home and School included
- On-going conversations with parents/carers on a daily basis
- Formal consultations with parents
- Sticky labels - “catch as you can” observations
- Photographs
- Samples of work
- Focus group work
- Reports
- Learning Journals
- Home learning sheets

Observational assessment in Upper Foundation Stage

- Transition information from Lower Foundation Stage
- Reports from Lower Foundation Stage
- Transition meeting from Lower Foundation Stage to Upper Foundation Stage
- On-going conversations with parents on a daily basis
- Formal consultations with parents
- Sticky labels - “catch as you can” observations
- Photographs
- Samples of work
- Focus group work
- Learning Journals
- Reports

- Characteristics of Effective Learning

Assessments

Assessment is an essential part of the learning and development of children in Early Years. In our setting assessment is multi-layered and comprises a range of different strategies which are interwoven throughout the day in our Early Years setting. Assessment involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations. To ensure we have evidence of a child's progress in the Early Years we use a range of strategies all of which come together and formulate a Learning Journal for each individual child. These portfolios include evidence gathered from a range of sources including the use of:

- Post-it observations
- Teacher's knowledge of a child from day to day observations
- Parents views of their children
- Child initiated work
- Work recorded in learning journals and other focussed learning books within the setting
- Homework books
- Reading journals

At Newcomen we are very proud of our Learning Journals and other books related to school life. They give a detailed picture of each individual child and their progress throughout the school year. Where appropriate, we include individual next steps for children's learning. These next steps are discussed by the Early Years team during informal meetings both daily after school and in weekly planning meetings involving all staff within the department. Next steps inform planning for the following day and the week ahead. Parents have access to the Learning Journals and other books on a daily basis should they wish to see them. Learning Journals are also shared with parents at every open night and prior to their child entering Year 1. The journals are awarded to the children at the end of their tenure in EYFS.

On entry to Nursery, we carry out a baseline assessment for each child and this data is used to shape the learning environment within the Lower Foundation Stage. During the child's first two weeks attending Lower Foundation Stage, on-entry data, is completed using the Early Years Outcomes Framework. Evidence is collected from a number of sources including: information collated during home visits and with pre-visits made by the child and their parents/carers to the school prior to starting. Evidence from medical professionals involved with the child. Detailed discussions with parents/carers about their child. Practitioner observations of the child within the setting.

Evidence is collated through the use of observations and discussions with parents/carers, children and colleagues during the first term. At the end of Reception, the class teacher assesses each child against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELG) and comments on whether their development within each ELG is either 'emerging', 'expected' or 'exceeding'. This information is then collated into Redcar and Cleveland's profile system, recorded on SIMS, and then transferred nationally.

This information is also communicated to Year 1 teachers as well as parents/carers in the child's end of year report. Characteristics of Effective Learning are also reported to parents and Year One teachers via end of year reports.

Learning and Development

The Early Years education we offer our children is based on the Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2018.

The Characteristics of Effective Learning and the prime and specific Areas of Learning and Development are all interconnected.

We aim to take the children's learning forward by providing opportunities for children to succeed in a secure environment in which all feel valued. We aim to develop and encourage

- The relationship between parents, children, teachers and other agencies working in harmony to create a partnership, which supports and values all children. Each child's individual contribution is recognised, valued and encouraged in an atmosphere of acceptance and trust. Children develop a good sense of well-being.
- The understanding of the early stages of human development, how children develop and learn and how this affects the style of teaching. Good practice incorporates both the welfare requirements and aspects from the new Early Years Foundation Stage documentation.
- A range of approaches used to provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions and extend and develop play and talk or other means of communication.
- A carefully planned learning environment which promotes autonomy and ensures that each individual child receives an enjoyable and challenging learning and development experience.
- The provision of opportunities for children to participate in activities that build on what the children already know, extend their interests and develop their intellectual, social and emotional abilities.
- Communication, listening, sharing ideas, deciding and talking about their learning, to develop independence and self-management.
- Learning experiences with appropriate and accessible indoor and outdoor space, facilities and equipment.
- Observations, monitoring and assessing in order to identify progress and future learning needs of each child or groups of children and evaluate and improve practice.
- The regular identification of training needs of all adults working within the Foundation Stage.

Playing and Exploring

“Children's play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and pre-occupations. In their play children learn at their highest level. Play with peers is important for children's development.”
Statutory Framework for Early Years 2018.

Young children are motivated to learn through their own play and through encouragement offered by children and adults. They are able to practise and build on ideas, concepts and skills which help them to make sense of the world. They can also take risks, make mistakes, learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. Through play and exploration children have the opportunity to think creatively with others as they investigate and solve problems. The enabling environment is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet and rest. The environment is set up in learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently.

Children have access to an outdoor area every day which has natural learning bays, construction and building areas, creative and physical areas and a wide range of small world equipment. The development of the outdoor environment is constantly developing. This has a positive effect on children's development. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. It offers the children the opportunity to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. We plan activities and resources for the children to access outdoors that help the children to develop in all areas of learning and we have daily opportunities for outdoor play.

Active Learning

"Children learn best through physical and mental challenges. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods."

Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need to have 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.

Creativity and Thinking Critically

"When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, they discover connections and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. Adult support in this process enhances their ability to think critically and ask questions."

Children are given opportunities to be creative through all areas of learning, not just through the arts. Adults support children's thinking and help them to make connections by showing genuine interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open questions. Children access resources freely and are allowed to move them around the setting to extend their learning.

Roles and Responsibilities

Teaching

We include direct, carefully planned, adult led experiences for children in the form of structured adult led teaching and adult led group activities. These are particularly important in helping children to learn specific skills and knowledge and it is often through children's play that we see how much of this learning children have understood and taken on. Each day we follow a timetable with set routines in place. This looks quite different in the Nursery and Reception classes. We set aside times each day when the children come together to be taught in the more traditional sense, gathered together on the carpet as a class. During these times we focus on our topic work, maths, literacy, phonics, and stories. These sessions help to develop vital habits of learning: learning as a group, listening to the teacher, taking turns to answer, sitting still and concentrating.

Reading is a fundamental part of what we do at Newcomen EYFS. We aim to ensure children have a love of books and will leave the Early Years with a bank of stories they know well, both traditional and modern classics. We use books as a stimulus for planning our topics. We also ensure that our children and parents have access to a range of reading books and we encourage parents to change their child's book on a daily basis. There is always time for whole class story at the end of the day and many opportunities to enjoy books at other times. Alongside this, we also complete daily guided read sessions with our children. This begins in the first week of entering Reception.

Role of the Early Years Leader

- to manage the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework
- to write and implement the Early Years policy with the support of the team
- to report regularly to the Headteacher about the achievements and planned developments for Early Years
- to attend meetings organised by the Early Years Consultants for the LA
- to disseminate any new information to colleagues
- to audit resources with the support of colleagues.
- to collate and analyse data to inform long term strategic planning.
- to represent EYFS on the SMT committee

Role of the Teacher

The teacher has day-to-day management responsibility for:

- the children
- teaching and non-teaching support staff
- the organising and smooth running of the nursery/reception class
- overall planning, assessment and evaluation of the curriculum and the children
- establishing links with colleagues in school, home, community and external agencies
- attending courses and continuing their own professional development
- disseminating information on current practices to the team.

Role of the Support Staff

The support staff have a valuable and vital role within the team and they:

- have a good knowledge and understanding of play
- are continually building up their skills to observe and assess
- ensure the smooth running and organisation of the class
- support the teacher
- are able to support teaching assistant students
- are willing to attend courses to further professional development.

Role of Students

The student is under the supervision of the course tutor, school-based mentor (Mrs Rhodes) and the college/university concerned. The student will need:

- time to observe and question
- help with collecting and collating relevant information
- support with preparation, tasks, observation and assessment
- time to carry out specific tasks detailed by the college/university

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