Wychwood Primary School Early Years Policy

Intent

At Wychwood Primary School, our aim is to create a learning environment which allows children's creativity and curiosity to flourish, alongside the purposeful acquisition of language, skills, and knowledge. We aim to provide a curriculum that broadens children's experiences of the wider world and supports them in being inquisitive and respectful. Language is at the heart of our curriculum, and we aim to provide a language rich environment where children can learn new vocabulary, as well as providing plenty of opportunities for high quality interactions in our provision. We have a close partnership with our parents and carers and, by working collaboratively with them, we aim to encourage independent, enthusiastic learners who thrive and reach their full potential.

Implementation

At Wychwood Primary School, we deliver a well-structured curriculum for our Foundation Stage pupils. We provide excellent provision with many opportunities to develop language skills, creative thinking, and problem solving, with the aim to extend children's learning throughout the year. All our staff in the Foundation Stage Unit are passionate about helping children to progress and provide them with engaging opportunities to do this. Below you will find more information on the ways in which we do this, as well as additional information about the curriculum and classroom.

"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 the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), Department for Education, March 2012.*

The EYFS is based on four overarching principles:

- 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, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers; and
- Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.

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There are seven areas of learning and development that must provide a framework for planning, teaching, and assessing in early years settings. All areas of learning and development are inter-connected.

The three prime areas are:

• **Communication and Language** – children will be given many opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; to speak and listen in a range of situations.

• **Physical Development** – children will be provided with opportunities to be active and interactive; to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children will be taught the importance of physical activity and to make healthy choices in relation to food.

• **Personal, Social, and Emotional Development** – help children to develop a positive sense of themselves and others; forming positive relationships and develop respect for others; develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and have confidence in their own abilities.

There are four specific areas through which these three prime areas are strengthened and applied:

- **Literacy** – Children will be taught to link sounds and letters, as well as begin to read and write. Children will be given access to a wide range of reading materials to ignite their individual interests.

- **Mathematics** – Children will be provided with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces and measures.

- **Understanding the World** – Children will make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and discover people, places, religions, technology, and the environment. They will learn about the past through using picture books to spark their curiosity about significant people from the past and their achievements.

- **Expressive Arts and Design** – Children will explore and play with a range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas, and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

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Impact

The impact of our EYFS curriculum is reflected in having happy, confident children who can learn independently, are resilient and responsible, and are willing to take risks in their learning, as well as seeking out challenges. We aim to exceed the National and Local Authority data for children having achieved a Good Level of Development at the end of the year.

Planning:

The curriculum is planned through topics and themes that reflect and respond to the children's interests, offering experiences in all areas of the curriculum and which carry equal importance to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. This includes opportunities for adult-initiated and child-initiated activities. The long-term plan is an overarching framework for the year that helps to inform the termly planning. This is available on the school website. Each term, the teachers create a medium-term plan. This breaks down activities further and ensures that, each week, there is a range of activities that cover the whole curriculum.

Every Thursday, the Foundation Stage Team meet to plan activities for the following weeks provision. This is based around children's interests, and staff share ideas of what they have observed children doing in their child-initiated play. The staff will also use this planning session to share next steps for learning and how this can be incorporated into the following week. The provision that is provided weekly is a mix of child-initiated interests and activities to extend and challenge children's learning.

Classroom organisation and Learning Environment

The children have the freedom to explore across the whole learning environment. The children are taught how to seek out their own resources for their play and have access to many open-ended options. Below is a list of our open-ended resource areas:

- The Creative Area (cardboard tubes, bottle lids, feathers, pom-poms, paints, pencils, crayons, glue, boxes are available for the children to use in their creations).
- Message Centre (post-it notes, notepads, pencils, sound mats, books, stencils etc.).
- Maths trolley (a variety of counting resources, numicon, cubes, dominoes, bead strings).
- Construction Area (a variety of building materials such as K-Nex, wooden blocks, lego, stickle bricks etc.).
- Home Corner (dressing up clothes, dolls, kitchen equipment).
- Book corner.
- Storytelling Area (books, wooden puppets, and story maps).
- Nature Area.

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In addition to this, we have tables/areas set up to provide the following activities each week:

- Writing.
- Phonics.
- Understanding the world.
- Art.
- Maths.
- Funky Fingers.
- Role play area.
- Small world.
- Talking Time area.
- Zones of regulation area.

The outside space is open all day to the children, as we believe access to the outdoors increases energy, promotes health and well-being, and encourages the children's curiosity of their surroundings. Similar to inside, we provide a range of open-ended resources on our Maths trolley, our message centre, loose parts area, and the construction area. We also set up activities to cover the curriculum and reflect children's interests. In all areas of our classroom, we aim to provide opportunities for reading and language and therefore many of the areas have book boxes related to the area. Across the week, adults are timetabled to spend time in these areas, initiate conversations, and share books with children.

Induction

We have close links with local nurseries and pre-schools and, during the Summer Term, both we will visit the pre-schools and nurseries to observe children in their learning environments. It is also an opportunity for the teacher to play alongside the children and get to know them in an informal way. Time is spent talking to the staff to find out about children's interests and needs. In Term 6, we hold an open morning for new children and their parents to spend time exploring our learning environment and talking to staff. Following this, we then have another morning with just the children. An information evening regarding the Foundation Stage year takes place for parents. The teaching team are always available for new parents to discuss transition and host another information event during September.

Involving parents

We aim to build strong and positive relationships with our parents in the Foundation Stage Unit. We believe that when parents and staff work together it will have a positive impact on the child's development. A successful partnership needs to be a two-way flow of information and below are some of the ways we involve parents:

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- Parent meetings are held two times a year where we will discuss progress and next steps for learning.
- Two information meetings are held about the Foundation Stage Curriculum.
- Information is sent home in September about supporting children with learning to read.
- Inviting parents to participate in our Forest School sessions.
- Filming the stories that children have been learning as part of our Talk for Writing unit of work so that parents can enjoy telling the story with their child at home.
- Our staff are available at the end of the day and use this time to pass on information. We like to use this time to pass on moments from the day where their children have impressed staff with a particular area of learning. We also use this time to report back any incidents or any particular concerns.
- Newsletters are sent home on a termly basis.
- The children's Learning Journeys are sent home every half term. This is a great opportunity for children to talk about their learning to their families.
- Parents are asked to fill in 'Wow Moments' for when their child has impressed them at home. These are shared with the rest of the class.
- Parents are invited to help us on school trips and become regular volunteers within the classroom setting for e.g., helping with reading.
- We share a weekly information sheet about our learning across the week as a way to support parents in initiated conversations about school with their child.
- A report about each child's learning is sent home at the end of the year.

Teaching

We believe in forming a balance between adult-initiated activities and child-initiated activities. As part of our adult activities, we have direct teaching time. Each day the children will have a phonics, literacy, maths, and a wider curriculum lesson. In addition to this, over the week, they will also have two whole class reading lessons, three vocabulary lessons and one storytelling lesson. During these sessions, we aim to equip children with the knowledge, skills, and independence for them to continue their own learning through their own choices by using their initiative.

Maths

See the Maths Policy for more information on how this is taught.

Phonics

We follow the Read Write Inc. programme. Children begin by learning initial sounds (e.g., t, p, m) followed by special friends (sounds with two letters or more e.g., ay, igh, ee). Fred the frog joins us in our phonics lessons, and he only speaks in sounds for e.g., instead of cat, Fred will say c-a-t. The children are supported to orally blend words together and when they are ready and confident, they will begin to move on to reading these words.

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Literacy

Each term, we have a different topic and our literacy sessions fit in with these topics. We have a strong emphasis on storytelling, and the children learn to retell stories before moving on to creating their own. We spend lots of time during these sessions in building up a range of literacy skills before the children move on to writing.

Some of the skills we look at are sequencing stories, describing characters, role playing characters from stories, answering and asking questions about stories, and developing comprehension skills. For more information on our literacy coverage, please see our yearly overview.

When children are ready, we then move on to learning how to write words. We encourage the children to spell words by sounding them out using their 'Fred Fingers'. This is where they pinch the sounds of a word e.g., to spell cat they would pinch three fingers- c-a-t. Children also learn how to spell words that they are not able to phonetically sound out. These are called red words (e.g., the, so, she).

We then move on to teaching the children how to write a sentence using the 'Hold a sentence' approach. This is where the children count the number of words in a sentence and use this to work out what the next word is that they need to write. We introduce the children to the 'great writers always' toolkits which covers what children need to include for a super sentence such as finger spaces, capital letters, using Fred fingers and reading back our writing. 'Hold a sentence' takes place daily in our literacy lessons when the children are ready to begin writing sentences and is followed up in smaller groups with the teacher across the week where the children can be supported or challenged in more specific areas.

Talk for Writing and Tell a story lessons

As part of our emphasis on storytelling, we use the 'Talk for Writing' approach in our literacy lessons. This is a powerful approach which enables children to learn the language they need for telling stories, before reading and writing them. Children begin by orally learning stories and learn to create a story map, which they can then use in their own play to retell the story independently. Activities to further understand the story then take place.

Following this, the children then adapt the story; this is where they will make changes to the story to make it their own. Later in the year, the children will begin to write their own stories. We believe that it is vital to spend time on building children's story language and allow them to become confident story tellers. When they move to writing, the skills they have previously learnt will support them to do so.

Our 'Tell a story' lessons are the second approach we use for our storytelling. This takes place once a week and the children learn about the structure of stories. We introduce

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them to the 5-part story planner (beginning, build up, middle, resolution, and ending). Each week, they are introduced to new story language (e.g., unfortunately, luckily, etc) or features of languages (e.g., adjectives, similes) and spend the lesson creating stories to embed the new skills and language they have learnt.

Using both these approaches together allows the children to develop a rich, sophisticated, and powerful range of story language whilst helping them to develop their own narratives. Providing children with these skills orally in the first instance supports them when they are ready to write their own stories.

Photographs

We take photos in the setting for our weekly learning sheet. This sheet is sent home every Friday and details the learning that has taken place that week. We encourage you to share these photos with your child as a way to prompt them to talk about their school day. You will be provided with permission slips where you can let us know your preference on where we can share these photos.

Forest School

The children will take part in Forest School sessions across the year and will go once a week. The sessions have been planned by a Forest School Leader. Forest School gives the children the opportunity to explore and experience the natural world. Going to Forest School allows the children to develop self-confidence, resilience, and gives them a safe space to take controlled risks. We provide further information about Forest School at our information meetings.

Woodwork

We have a dedicated woodwork area outside where children learn woodwork skills. Children are introduced to a range of tools in small groups and are shown how to use the tools safely. The woodwork area then becomes open on allocated afternoons, where the children are free to explore and create work using the wood.

Typical Day

The children begin their day at 8.30 am. At 8.30 am, the children take part in dough disco or doodle disco. Dough disco is where children have a ball of playdough and manipulate this in different ways to strength their hand muscles, which then supports them when they are writing. Doodle disco is where children copy particular patterns using pens which mimic the motions needed for good letter formation. After the register at 8.40 am, we begin with a short morning session with a language focus. This might be a storytelling session, a whole class reading session, or a vocabulary lesson. We then stop for 'wake up and shake up'. The children take part in Literacy from 9.00 am, Maths at 10.30 am and Phonics at 11.45 am. When the children are not taking part in the adult directed teaching time, they take part in their own child-initiated activities, and we have a free flow between both classrooms and outdoors. After lunch, we have

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a topic time which will be related to the wider curriculum, after which, the children have access to the free flow sessions. We then end the day with stories and singing.

Assessment

At the beginning of the year, staff spend time getting to know the children and use this time to assess which age band the children are working within. This then helps staff to plan for how to progress the children forward in their learning over the coming weeks. As the year progresses, we observe children's development and progress in all areas of the curriculum. This information will be gathered informally through observations, during small group work activity time, and playing as well as learning with the children during their play. Information about the children's learning will be provided at parents' evenings throughout the year. At the end of the year, a report will be sent home about the children's learning and development across the year.

Special Education Needs

As staff get to know the children and, as the year progresses, some children may have diverse learning needs. Staff will take account of these needs and provide appropriate provisions to support all pupils with additional needs. The teachers work closely with the school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) who will provide further support/advice and determine whether any extra support is needed. For children who join our setting with special needs, staff will spend time working with the previous setting to ensure a smooth transition. Staff will also visit children in their current setting and will be available for further phone calls with parents to support this process. In line with the rest of school, parents of children with special educational needs will have three meetings per year with the child's class teacher where a pupil profile is completed and the child's successes and next steps are discussed and shared with the parents.

Year 1 transition

We want our children to experience a smooth educational and emotional transition from Foundation Stage into Year One. The Year One teachers spend time in the Summer Term with the Reception Teacher discussing the children who will be in their class from September and their learning needs. The Reception children will take part in the whole school transition day and, in addition to this, have further opportunities to spend time with their new class teacher by having story time sessions with them. In September, the reception teachers will continue to work closely with the Year One teachers to support the transition. Our Year One classes use continuous provision and we work closely with them to ensure that the provision provided builds on the knowledge and skills children have learnt in Foundation Stage, as well as providing new opportunities and challenges.

Intimate Care

It is preferable that children are toilet trained before attending Foundation Stage. However, no child will be excluded from participating in Foundation Stage who may,

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for any reason, not yet be toilet trained and who may still be wearing nappies or any equivalent. If children are still in nappies and need regular help with toileting, staff will follow an intimate care plan that will personalised to the individual child and shared with parents. If children have accidents at school, they may find it difficult to wash, clean, and change themselves due to their young age. Staff will assist children in this so that they remain comfortable in their clothing for the rest of the school day. The school's safeguarding policy will be adhered to, to ensure both children and staff are protected appropriately.

Snack Time

Fruit is provided for children in Foundation Stage. At the start of the year we have snack altogether on the carpet and talk about the skills to have snack independently – washing our hands, pouring our drink, tidying up afterwards. We then transition to a rolling snack where children can choose when they have the snack across the morning. The children are supervised when eating at the snack table.

Oral Health

We aim to promote and maintain good oral hygiene habits. By learning about the importance of good oral hygiene we aim to ensure that we contribute to the overall well-being and development of the children. Below are some of the things we do to promote good oral health:

- As part of our transition information, we send out an oral health and hygiene questionnaire to establish toothbrushing habits at home and how often children have visited the dentist.
- As part of one of our units of works in the summer term, we are visited by a dentist who speaks to the children about the importance of brushing daily.
- We are visited by the local dental team who check the children's teeth and identify children who need further referrals.
- Across the year, when we talk about food, we discuss the benefits of different food groups and how we should aim for a balance of all of them.
- When the children have birthdays, we encourage them to bring in a picture book to share rather than bringing in sweets.
- Milk and water are the only drinks we put out as part of snack.

Safer Sleep

We recognise the importance of providing a safe environment for children who may sleep or nap. We follow the Department for Education's 'Safer sleep – How to provide babies and children with a safer sleep environment in your setting' guidance, developed in collaboration with The Lullaby Trust, alongside the safer sleep requirements within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework.
As an Early Years setting within a school, our children are aged 4–5 years and do not generally require or have a routine nap during the school day. Our classroom environment is designed primarily for learning and play rather than sleep and

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therefore, is not routinely set up as a designated sleep environment. If a child falls asleep during the school day, staff will assess the situation and, where appropriate, contact parents/carers to discuss this and agree the most appropriate course of action.

Where a child does fall asleep, there will always be an adult present in the room and the child will be checked regularly whilst they are sleeping. Staff will ensure that the child is positioned safely and that there are no obvious hazards that could affect their safety or breathing.

Where a child has additional needs or an identified greater need for daytime sleep, this will be discussed with parents/carers. An individual care plan will be put in place to ensure that the child's sleep needs can be safely supported within the setting. This will include identifying an appropriate, safe and suitable sleep space, such as a firm, flat mattress, and clear arrangements for supervision and regular checks. The individual plan and any associated risk assessment will be reviewed regularly and whenever the child's needs change. All staff will be familiar with the setting's safer sleep procedures and will follow current Department for Education and The Lullaby Trust guidance when supporting a child who is asleep or requires a sleep during the school day.