

# The Heights Primary School Policy for **Early Years Foundation Stage Policy**

Version 1.3

**Responsible officer:** Headteacher  
**Responsible Committee:** Curriculum Committee

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## **Introduction**

This document outlines the philosophy, aims and principles of early years teaching and learning in reception at The Heights School. The document underpins practice in all areas of provision.

### **1. Early Years Foundation Stage**

‘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 important in its own right and 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 Education 2012

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At The Heights School we greatly value the important role that the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development. However, we also believe early childhood is valid in itself as part of life. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

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.

All children begin school with a variety of experiences and learning. It is the privilege of the practitioners working in reception to take on the task of building upon that prior learning and experience. This is done through a holistic approach to learning, ensuring that parents/carers support staff and the reception teachers work effectively together to support children's learning and development.

### **2. Learning and Development**

The early learning goals and the educational programmes are set out in the ‘Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage’ document (Department for Education 2012) which can be downloaded at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>.

The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development, all of which are seen as important and interconnected but three areas are seen as particularly important for igniting children’s curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, for building their capacity to learn and form relationships and thrive (DfE 2014: 1.3), they support children’s learning in all other areas, they are known as the prime areas.

The prime areas are;

- **Communication and Language** – Listening and Attention, Understanding and Speaking
- **Physical Development** – Moving and Handling and Self care
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** – Making relationships, Managing feelings and behaviour and Self-confidence and Self-awareness

The specific areas of learning develop essential skills and knowledge for children to participate successfully in society. The specific areas are;

- **Literacy** – Reading and Writing
- **Mathematics** – Numbers and Space, Shape and Measures
- **Understanding the World** – People and communities, The world and Technology
- **Expressive Arts and Design** – Exploring and using media and materials and Being Imaginative

### Characteristics of Effective Learning

The EYFS also includes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. The Nursery and Reception teachers plan activities within the Nursery and Reception classrooms with these in mind. They highlight the importance of a child's attitude to learning and their ability to play, explore and think critically about the world around them.

The three characteristics are;

- **Playing and Exploring** – children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'
- **Active Learning** – children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
- **Creating and Thinking Critically** – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

### Teaching strategies

We ensure there is a balance of adult led and child initiated activities across the day. Although much of the time is spent with children self-selecting tasks, the interaction between the adult and child is essential as the adult's response to children builds understanding and therefore guides new learning. The adult's role is to continually model, demonstrate and question what the child is doing. In some cases the adult will ask a child to come and complete a task or game with them; at other times they will participate in a child's game, extending it where possible.

By the Summer term in Reception the children will experience many more adult directed tasks as they prepare for their transition to year 1.

### Play

Learning through play is an important part of our Early Years classrooms. We believe children learn best from activities and experiences that interest and inspire them. Using children's interests as a starting point, we provide children with stimulating, active play experiences in which they can explore and develop their learning to help them make sense of the world. They have opportunities through their play to think creatively and critically alongside other children as well as on their own. They are able to practise skills, build upon and revisit prior learning and experience at their own level and pace. Play gives our children the opportunity to pursue their own interests and inspire those around them. The children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions. We believe it is important that adults take an active role in child initiated play through observing, modelling, facilitating and extending their play.

Getting the balance right between child initiated play, which is controlled, and adult led activities is very important to us.

### **Teaching**

As part of the children's learning experiences we include adult led activities for children. 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. 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 or as part of groups of various sizes. In these slots we focus on our topic work, maths, literacy, phonics, PSHE 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 etc.

Reading and story play an important part of the day. We want to make sure our children have a love of books and will leave the EYFS with a bank of stories they know well, both traditional and modern classics. We make sure there is always time for whole class story at the end of the day but also that there are many opportunities to enjoy books at other times. Every child is given their own book bag and has a designated day when they will have a group guided reading session.

### **3. Planning**

Good planning is the key to making children's learning effective, exciting, varied and progressive. Effective learning builds on and extends what children know and can already do. Our planning shows how the principles of the EYFS are put into practice and is always informed by observations we have made of the children, in order to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning needs. All practitioners who work in reception at the Heights are involved in this effective process.

There are three stages of planning the curriculum:

#### ***Long Term Planning***

We have created a framework which gives structure and coherence to the curriculum. The scheme of work consists of 3 very broad termly topics which provide the vehicle for delivering the Early Learning Goals and Educational programme. These topics are relevant to the needs of our children and also enable us to deliver a creative and balanced curriculum.

Term Topics:

Autumn - All About Me, All About Us

Spring - Journeys

Summer - Animals

#### ***Medium Term Planning***

We address particular aspects of the curriculum in more detail for each term. We include links between areas of learning and development and opportunities for ICT. Learning objectives, assessment opportunities, and activities and experiences for each area of learning and development are identified.

#### ***Short Term Planning***

We identify specific learning objectives, following the early learning goals and ensure that activities are differentiated and adults and resources are carefully deployed to meet the learning needs of all the children

on a weekly and day-to-day basis. This allows for flexibility in response to individual children's needs and interests and for revision and modification, informed by on-going observational teacher assessment. This planning format is consistent with the principles of Assessment for learning.

A weekly overview is made available for parents on the website.

#### **4. Staffing and Organisation**

There are two Reception classes at The Heights with a maximum of twenty five children in each class. There is a ratio of one teacher per class supported by two full time TAs across the two classes. The staff work as a team and meet formally at least once a week in order to plan effective provision, prepare resources and review assessments for the Reception Classes.

The Reception classes and outdoor areas have different learning zones including role play areas, literary areas, creative areas and book areas. The areas and resources are clearly labelled ensuring that children can access them easily and at all times during the day.

At The Heights we engage in ongoing professional development to improve our teaching skills, knowledge and understanding. All practitioners are encouraged to participate in local authority courses, in-service and local partnership group training. Practitioners also conduct and attend in house training and disseminate new initiatives, ideas and teaching methods to colleagues.

#### **5. Assessment, Recording and Monitoring**

Assessment is an essential part of the learning and development of children in the EYFS. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of development, interests and learning styles, and to then plan their next steps.

At The Heights we adhere to the principles of assessment of and 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. The children are also encouraged to assess their own learning.

##### ***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 recorded on group assessment sheets, other focused assessments e.g. sound/number and high frequency words, annotated examples of work, photographs, and information from parents. Parents have the opportunity to view and contribute to their child's learning and development records via our online tracking system.

##### ***Summative Assessment***

The children are assessed on entry and at the end of the Reception year. During the year the children are also assessed against the Development Matters Statements. These statements will be used throughout the year as a guide to making 'best fit' judgements about the overall progress a child is making. The child's learning and development is compared with a band of descriptors. This information is recorded in the school's online assessment and reporting system supported by photos and examples of children's work and staff's observational comments.

At the end of the Reception Year, summative judgements are made against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELG). Children's development within each ELG is judged either **emerging** (1), **expected** (2) or **exceeding** (3). This information is communicated to parents and carers in each child's end of year report.

Staff participate in in-house and local partnership group moderation meetings. This provides an external quality assurance and validation of our teacher assessments.

For further information see the Assessment Policy.

The quality of the taught curriculum is monitored by the Headteacher and Assistant Headteacher in school through lesson observations, pupil interviews, planning and scrutiny of work. The Teaching and learning across the foundation stage is monitored each year and the EYFS Profile data is analysed with the Head teacher.

## **6. The Learning Environment**

We aim to create an attractive, welcoming and stimulating learning environment which will encourage 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.

Activities are planned for both the inside and outside at various points during the day; children have the freedom to move between the indoor and outdoor classroom throughout the school day. The learning environment is divided into a variety of different areas: role play, book corner, mark making, maths challenge, topic display table, IT, creative area, play dough, sand, water, outside, construction, small world and puzzles. These areas are carefully arranged to encourage quiet areas and more active areas within the learning environment.

The outdoor area is an important part of the classroom with many children choosing to learn outside at different times of the day. We try to ensure that the range of activities outside reflects the different curriculum areas, and includes maths, reading, construction, art and small world areas. There is a partly covered outdoor area which is used to support the children's learning, and areas where the children can dig, explore and play in the mud kitchen and on bikes and trikes.

Children are encouraged to become independent, curious learners and to take some responsibility for initiating their own lines of enquiry and investigation, demonstrating a 'can do' attitude.

## **7. Liaison with pre-school settings and induction**

At the Heights we have close links with the different local Pre-Schools and Nurseries. The Reception and Pre-School teachers meet to discuss assessment and induction issues. We are continually looking at ways to further develop our transition from pre-school to school in addition to visits to pre-school settings.

A meeting for parents is held by the Headteacher and Reception Teachers during the Summer Term prior to entry, to introduce parents/carers to the school and reception procedures. Through this meeting the school's expectations and routines are communicated. The induction process and Reception curriculum are also introduced. Parents/Carers have the opportunity to meet the class teachers and to visit the Reception classrooms. Parents/Carers are given a Welcome to Reception brochure and a school prospectus which outlines the Reception curriculum and school routines, along with other important information.

During the summer term, all prospective Reception children are invited to visit the school and their classroom for a two hour introductory session. The Reception teachers offer home visits to all parents, to enable them to meet the new pupils on 'home ground'. This gives parents a confidential and informal visit in which to voice any concerns they may have about their child. Children and their families are also invited to different whole school Summer events. Transfer records from all Pre-School settings inform Reception practitioners about the new intake.

This allows:

- Children to adjust and feel secure in their new environment
- The practitioners to get to know the children individually and establish good relationships and the Reception teacher to carry out baseline assessments.

## **8. 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. See School Transition Policy.

## **9. Home/School Links**

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

- Outlining the reception curriculum to parents/carers during the new parents meeting in July, to enable them to understand the value of supporting their child's learning at home.
- Sending home a termly topic letter, informing parents/carers of the learning that will be taking place at school, with suggestions of the types of activities that could be carried out at home to support that learning.
- Holding parent/carer class visits to outline the Phonics programme and the reception curriculum and to provide an opportunity for asking questions.
- Operating an 'open door' policy, whereby parents/carers can come and discuss concerns and developments in an informal manner inviting parents/ carers to help in the reception class and to accompany children on school visits.
- Encouraging parents/carers to listen to their child read each night and to comment on reading progress in a home/school reading diary.
- Encouraging relevant learning activities to be continued at home and ensuring that experiences at home are used to develop learning in school.
- Discussing children's individual targets with parents/carers at termly parents' consultation evenings.
- Providing parents with overviews of the weekly plans.
- Providing an annual report to parents/carers summarising their child's progress and attainment throughout the year.

## **10. Equal Opportunities**

At The Heights 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 Equal Opportunities Policy.

## **11. Inclusion**

Children with special educational needs will be given support as appropriate to enable them to access the curriculum fully. This includes children that are more able, and those with specific learning difficulties and disabilities.

Provision Maps identify targets in specific areas of learning for those children who require additional support, in line with the school's Special Educational Needs Policy and Local Offer. The Reception teachers will discuss these targets with the children and their parents/carers. Progress is monitored and reviewed every term.

For further information see Special Educational Needs Policy and Challenge and Achievement for All Policy.

These policies will be reviewed as and when needed but at least every two years.

## **12. 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 (2014) [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/299391/DFE-00337-2014.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/299391/DFE-00337-2014.pdf) and there is a section in our school Safeguarding Policy that directly refers to practice in the EYFS.

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. This is in line with our Safeguarding Policy. Members of staff do, however, use school iPads to take photographs as evidence to support the regular observation assessment cycle in the EYFS. These photographs are used in children's portfolios, in 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.

We take all accidents seriously and always log and phone home immediately if a child bangs their head. We have cold compresses stored in the school freezer.

We encourage all children to start school without nappies but will support any children struggling with this. We acknowledge that young children often have 'accidents' and have stocks of spare clothes and change anyone who needs it. We ask parents to help keep our stocks of clothes high by returning anything their child has borrowed. Children are changed in the open area outside the toilets between the two classrooms.

Fire alarms are held regularly in line with whole school policy. There is an annual external check of equipment.

We follow whole school procedures for child protection (see separate policy). Karen Edwards, the Headteacher, is the Designated Safeguarding Lead and named Child Protection Officer and all concerns are discussed with her. Emma Fallon is the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead.

We have separate policies for Administration of Medicine in school and Off-site Educational Visits.

**Amendments:**

<u>Version</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Updated/reviewed</u>
1.1	August 2014	First version finalised
1.2	January 2016	Revision
1.3	June 2016	Revision