

# Early Years Foundation Stage

**Policy 2022-23**



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## Introduction and overview

At West Lea school we believe that all children should be given the opportunity to experience the very best possible start to their education and our provision has been created to break down barriers to learning from the very first time our learners set foot in our school. We are committed to providing a high-quality early years' education which gives children a secure, safe and happy start to their school life, nurturing a life-long love of learning and supporting families through this key milestone in their child's life.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. In our school, the EYFS curriculum applies to our Reception class and Willow pathway classes who use a blended approach alongside the national curriculum to meet the needs of our learners. The early years approach supports our learners to access the curriculum through a personalised learning plan which is broken down into smaller steps and is supported by a key person system building on previous experiences.

We are fully committed to the purpose and aims of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2021) which clearly states: 'Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential' and that it also "gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life".

## Aims

Our Early Years Foundation Stage approach aims to:

- Create a happy, caring, secure and stimulating environment for all children;
- Encourage confidence, independence and a desire to learn;
- Provide equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, by ensuring that every child is included and supported;
- Children's special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are identified quickly in partnership with parents/carers, thereby ensuring children receive any extra help needed;
- Focus on the development of every child as an individual, valuing and building on their previous experiences;
- Work in partnership with parents and carers;
- Develop in children an enquiring mind, an interest in learning and an enthusiasm for the next stage of school life;
- Provide good foundations for later learning;
- Encourage good social relationships, developing self-esteem and respect for others.



## Overarching principles

We follow the four guiding principles that shape practice in early years settings:

### UNIQUE CHILD

We believe that every child is a **unique child** and that children develop in individual ways, at varying rates. We value the diversity of individuals within our school and celebrate differences in abilities and background. All children and their families are valued within our school and we give our children every opportunity to achieve their best.

We do this by:

- Taking account of our children's range of life experiences, interests, needs and stages of development when planning for their learning;
- Planning opportunities which build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests and develop their self-esteem and confidence;
- Using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs;
- Working closely with parents/carers, other professional adults such as speech therapists and specialist teachers as part of the learning process;
- Differentiating for all children's needs to ensure progression in their learning and development;
- Providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively;
- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- Using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- Ensuring all learning opportunities, experiences and resources are challenging for all, inclusive and enable children to learn together;
- Monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary;



## POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

We recognise that children learn to be strong and independent through secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with children and their families. We have a key person system where each child is assigned one of our teachers or early years' practitioners. A key person approach provides the child with a special adult to enable him/her to develop a secure attachment; the opportunity for the practitioner to develop a supportive relationship with the parents/carers, as well as helping to track and share the child's progress and development, ensuring that every child's learning is tailored to meet their individual needs.

We maintain an effective partnership between home and school by:

- Providing detailed information prior to admissions, enabling a smooth transition process;
- Visiting Reception children in their home setting prior to them starting school, to discuss their children's circumstances, interests, skills and needs and for children to meet their teacher/key worker;
- Holding a welcome stay and play session for new families joining the school to support the transition process;
- Listening to parents' accounts of their child's development and any concerns and aspirations they have through our key person system;
- Sharing the child's profile book regularly with their families so they can view their child's progress and add comments to their journey;
- Providing feedback about their child's day through our home/school communication book
- Creating a partnership in reading by providing a home reading record book where parents/carers can record comments or ask question and access ebooks their child is reading at school;
- Welcoming parents and carers into the classroom to share their expertise, experience and enrich the learning opportunities provided;
- Ensuring parents and carers are kept well informed about the curriculum and school life via email, newsletters, leaflets and school website;
- Offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress at progress and annual review meetings;
- Arranging a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between children, school and parents/carers, e.g. sports day, themed activity days, class assemblies, parent workshops and coffee mornings;
- Supporting children to be independent such as dressing themselves and going to the toilet. This is further evidenced and celebrated through our West Lea passports;



## ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

We recognise that children learn and develop well in enabling environments. Staff work closely with parents and carers to observe the children's interests, learning and development and use the information gathered to plan challenging but achievable activities and experiences to extend the children's learning.

We aim to create an appropriate environment for the needs of our children and this varies depending on the age and stage of the children in that class. We provide a stimulating and nurturing learning environment where children feel confident, secure, supported and challenged. The children have daily access to an indoor and outdoor environment that is set up in discrete areas of learning with planned continuous provision and opportunities to enable child-initiated play. Children will have the opportunity to be outside in all weathers and explore using all their senses and access a wide variety of resource, as we encourage independence. Our children also have access to a gardening area to develop understanding of the world activities and encourage exploration of the natural world.

Effective planning is informed by the class teams judgements and knowledge of the children, as well as observations of the children to ensure we follow their current interests and experiences. These observations are recorded in the children's online learning journals on our Evidence for Learning app. Play based learning is paramount and children direct their own learning, within the environment, from carefully planned opportunities provided by staff. Staff will enhance play and extend as needed to further individual learning.

We provide enabling environments by:

- Creating well planned lessons and activities (both indoors and outdoors) that provide key opportunities for children to learn with enjoyment and challenge;
- Recognise the importance of adult support and a secure environment in ensuring effective high quality, purposeful play;
- Extending and supporting children's spontaneous play and building on key skills that create independence;
- Providing support for children to investigate or solve problems by taking reasonable risks and making and learning from mistakes;
- Extending and developing children's language and communication in their play by modelling and joining in with their play;
- Planning activities that facilitate exploration, development of key concepts, ideas and skills and represent learning experiences which help children to make sense of the world;
- Evaluating access arrangements for all our learners and taking steps to overcome barriers to learning;
- Having visual timetables for the whole class and also for individuals where this is the chosen strategy;
- Stimulating play and exploration of nature through our forest school experience and enticing outdoor woodland area;



## LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

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

We use the EYFS curriculum to plan and ensure progression and continuity of skills in the seven areas of learning for our Early years and Willow pathway classes. These areas of learning depend on each other to support a rounded approach to early years' development and are inter-connected. All the areas will be delivered through planned, purposeful play, with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities.

### THE PRIME AREAS:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development.

These areas are particularly important for building a **foundation** for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, forming relationships and thriving.

### THE SPECIFIC AREAS:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding of the world
- Expressive arts and design

The specific areas are interconnected to the prime areas, through which they are strengthened and applied.

## Characteristics of effective learning

The EYFS also includes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning and teachers plan activities with these in mind. The characteristics 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. Children are provided with a range of rich, meaningful first-hand experiences in which they can explore, think creatively and be active. We aim to develop and foster positive attitudes towards learning, confidence, communication and physical development.

## Curriculum

We have used the guidance from Development Matters to help us write a rich and rigorous curriculum designed to enable all our pupils to make progress from their starting points. Our curriculum is organised into broad themes, for example, Animal carnival, which are linked to different strands in the other areas of learning. We use high-quality picture books to enhance learning for the chosen themes, these books help bring the theme to life for our pupils and make the learning memorable. We carefully decide what key knowledge and skills we want our pupils to gain from each theme and frame this learning in weekly vocabulary and questions. However, flexibility is also built in through weekly planning sessions which allow us to respond to pupils' interests and plan first hand experiences and provide opportunities for challenges appropriate to the age and stage of each child.

In the EYFS assessment of attainment and progress is primarily based on observation, discussion, questioning and evidence of children's independent learning alongside adult led activities. Valuable evidence of children's learning is obtained through observation of independent and adult led learning. During observations the adults in early years carry out in the moment teaching to move children on in the seven areas of learning. Observations are recorded in a variety of forms, photographic, video and annotations, which are uploaded onto the child's Evidence for Learning account. Profile books also contain information provided by parents about their child's achievements and experiences outside of school and the key person works closely with parents to keep them informed of their child's learning journey.

Each child's progress is recorded against the 'Development Matters Ages and Stages' documentation and using this information next steps are planned for using objective led planning.

We understand that:

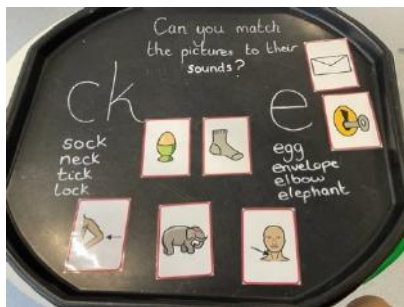
- The curriculum is a top-level plan of everything the early years setting wants the children to learn.
- Our planning needs to help every child to develop their language and we are responsive to children's needs through our weekly lines of enquiry annotations which are personal to each child.
- The curriculum is needs to be ambitious and carefully sequenced to help children build their learning over time.
- Young children's learning is often driven by their interests. Plans need to be flexible. Young children do not develop in a fixed way. Their development is like a spider's web with many strands, not a straight line.
- Depth in early learning is much more important than covering lots of things in a superficial way.
- Children need access to a wider curriculum, so we offer yoga, a forest school experience and music taught by specialist teachers.
- Visuals help our children learn so our classroom expectations are clear signs which show children how to be ready for learning such as good looking, good listening and taking turns.
- Children need strategies to support their learning. Our approach is to use 'my turn', 'our turn' and 'your' turn to demonstrate adult led learning.



- ‘My turn’ is demonstrated by the staff member but explicitly led by the class teacher.
- ‘Our turn’ is learning which may be explored in a small group or with a peer.
- ‘Your turn’ gives the child an opportunity to have a go at the activity independently. An individual can demonstrate their learning using a range of sensory and concrete objects.



Reading is the key that opens the door for our children to succeed in all areas of the curriculum and it is with this in mind we prioritise the teaching of phonics through a SSP programme called Little Wandle. Children in Reception are assessed and then begin to learn graphemes and phonemes correspondence, moving through the programme till when they heard to read in smaller groups and participate in practice reading sessions. Reading and Guided Reading groups too. Children take books home from our reading scheme and can access Little Wandle eBooks for phase appropriate reading opportunities as well as taking home a reading for pleasure book which they may need an adult to read to them.



All our learners are unique and are at different ages and stages of their learning journey. We use a range of strategies to support our students, such as:

- All staff use the identified strategies for individual students as per their pupil profile (see red folder).
- As a communication friendly setting, staff are trained to understand the reasons for communication difficulties (see communication chain: Communication chain information.pdf), and are equipped with strategies to adapt and develop communication skills.
- ELKLAN – the use of blanks questioning to support comprehension and questioning by staff
- Intensive interaction, tactical ignoring, sensory circuits are just some of the strategies we use to help our children regulate.
- Visuals, signs and symbols. Communicate in print, Makaton.
- Colourful semantics – a visual resource also modelled through actions for supporting sentence structure and grammar.
- General language and communication skills (chunking, modelling, repetition, processing time and checking understanding).
- Communication tools such as specific apps through tablets.
- Attention autism: This is a four-stage intervention created by Gina Davis, a speech and language therapist. The main purpose of Attention Autism is to develop and encourage communication, social interaction and joint attention skills through highly motivating and engaging activities.
- We have progressive now and next boards that reflect the stage the child may be working at. These help children to further understand their timetable and support transitions eg the use of a real object, naming the object and using the Makaton sign.
- Sensory and emotional regulation activities are a part of the daily curriculum diet include movement breaks, sensory circuits and outdoor learning. Every classroom has a sensory regulation area, sensory wall and use emotional regulation strategies such as token jars.



## Assessment and recording

On-going assessment through observation is an integral part of the learning and development process. Planning always follows the same pattern: observation, analysis and using information about the children to plan for the next steps in their learning. We make regular assessments of children's learning and use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs.

Assessment in the EYFS takes the form of observation, and this involves the teacher and other adults as appropriate.

Staff ensure that they:

- Make systematic observations and assessments of each child's achievements, interests and learning styles
- Reflect on the characteristics of learnings for each child and this is used to plan next steps with the key person  
Use these observations and assessments to identify learning priorities, next steps, interests and to plan relevant and motivating learning experiences for each child;
- Match their observations to the expectations of the Development Matters and Early Learning Goals;
- Assessment does not entail prolonged breaks from interaction with children. We use Development Matters, Early Learning Goals and the West Lea stage descriptors to assess the children.

Practitioners plot the individual progress of each child as they grow and develop. As the child progresses through the EYFS, staff will make judgements based upon their observations of the child in all seven areas of learning and reflect on the targets from their EHCP.

During the Reception year, children are assessed against the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and West Lea stage descriptors. For children on the Willow pathway, we use the West Lea stage descriptors in conjunction to observations, assessments, discussions with parents/carers and other professionals to inform final summative judgements.

During the year, there are formal opportunities to feedback information to parents and carers through parent/carer consultations in the Autumn, Spring and Summer Terms. Parents and carers are vital partners in the assessment process. Towards the end of the academic year, a written report, covering the seven areas of learning, will be given to parents and carers indicating whether children are meeting expected levels of development or not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging').



## Transition

At West Lea school we value the importance of our pupil's wellbeing and confidence when entering a new year group and class. We understand that this could be a challenging and apprehensive time for pupils and that this can subsequently affect their wellbeing and academic achievement.

Therefore, we aim to ensure that pupils feel safe, secure and settled in their new environment by effectively implementing a transition plan across the Early Years Foundation Stage. There are many strategies taken to aid effective transition including parental involvement, environment planning and plenty of opportunities for new teachers and pupils to meet in a familiar context such as through home visits and having a stay and play introductory session in school.

## Welfare

'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.' (3.1 statutory Framework for EYFS 2021)

At West Lea school, we recognise our responsibility for promoting the welfare of our youngest children and we confirm welfare requirements are secure by ensuring:

- All adults with access to our children will receive the appropriate level of DBS checking and as part of the induction process, will have discussed and signed a school code of conduct;
- All staff employed by West Lea school, receive a thorough induction training to help them understand their roles, responsibilities and key information about how things work in the school;
- All staff will undertake regular Child Protection training and are expected to follow the school guidance in following up a cause for concern;
- Staffing will be organised to ensure the safety of the children and to ensure staff/child ratios are always followed;
- First aid will only be administered by trained personnel. Procedures are in place to inform parents/carers of accidents involving their child;
- Procedures are in place to ensure security of children and the safe release of children into the care of individuals named by the parent/carer;
- As a healthy school, there is a focus on emotional well-being, healthy eating and physical activity. Good health will be promoted and appropriate action will be taken when children are ill;
- Routines are in place to support children's growing understanding of personal hygiene;
- Children's behaviour is managed effectively through the use of a whole school behaviour system, which is adapted to the stage and development of individual needs;
- Risk assessments will be undertaken and reviewed regularly;
- Indoor and outdoor premises, furniture and equipment will be regularly checked and repaired, washed etc. as required;
- Records, policies and procedures required for the safe efficient management of the setting will be maintained;
- Whole school policy documents will be available for parents and carers.

Our Reception and Willow pathway children follow a PHSE and life and work curriculum which promotes good oral health, as well as good health in general and learn how to take care of themselves. This curriculum builds on the foundation to having good physical and mental health as well as exploring key themes related to safeguarding.

## **Monitoring of the EYFS**

We are committed to providing the best possible experiences for our children. The EYFS assistant head teacher and campus leadership team are responsible for monitoring provision, teaching and learning and children's progress. Information is shared with the Executive leadership team, other SLT and Reception team as appropriate, and any necessary actions are taken.

All adults in the Reception and Willow pathways staff team have a key role in children's learning and development. Therefore, they are required to be knowledgeable and skilled in the EYFS curriculum. Any training needs for existing or new members of staff are identified and addressed as part of their personal learning plan targets.



community  
**kindness**  
**learning for life**  
innovation **inclusion**