



SHIRE OAK
C of E (VC) Primary School

Rooted in the community – growing for the future

Early Years Policy

Written April 2015, updated September 2018

Adopted at Governing Body on 25th February 2019, as recorded in minutes and signed by the Chair of Governors, Julia Kelly:



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This policy is due for review by February 2022

All our policies should be read in conjunction with our Shire Oak Values and the principles and practices detailed in our Equalities Policy.

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. At Shire Oak children are admitted into the Reception Class at the start of the school year in which they will be five years old.

“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

Department for Education (2017)

Principles:

The EYFS is based upon four themes: *the unique child*, *positive relationships* and *enabling environments* which in turn allow for the fourth theme of *learning and development*.

The Unique Child

Image of the child

At Shire Oak we recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We understand that children are individuals who develop in different ways, at varying rates and nurture their developing personalities and interests. We aim to provide a personalised learning experience in which observations are used to provide next steps that are appropriate and challenging. We also use these assessments to identify if children need additional help or support and work with other staff, outside agencies and parents to put appropriate measures in place.

Inclusion

We value the diversity of individuals within our school. All children at Shire Oak School are treated fairly regardless of race, gender, religion or abilities. We welcome all children, including those with physical disabilities and medical needs, and will make whatever adjustments we can in order to meet those needs. We also address other barriers to learning, including the needs of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, providing support from our Raising Families Consultant and Behaviour Support Worker. All children and their families are valued within our school. We do this by taking account of our children’s range of life experiences when planning for their learning.

(See whole school Inclusion policy)

In the EYFS we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children. We aim to achieve this by planning to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- Planning opportunities that 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;
- 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;

- Planning 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.

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.”

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Department for Education (2017)

We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. In the Foundation Stage we follow the school behaviour policy and ensure the children are familiar with the school rules and principles. Where ever possible we take a positive approach to behaviour management through praise and rewards but if necessary we consistently and fairly implement the warning system.

(See whole school behaviour and anti-bullying policy)

It is important to us that all children in the school are 'safe'. 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 children whilst allowing them to take safe, calculated risks.

(See the whole school Safeguarding Children Policy.)

At Shire Oak we have a Peer Mediator Scheme and a Buddy System as well as our Raising Families Consultant and Behaviour Support Worker all of whom support the emotional needs of the Reception Class. 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 are required to:

- Be alert to any issues of concern regarding child protection.
- Ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.
- Ensuring that the staff: child ratio is maintained at all times, including on visits out of the school premises.
- Promote the good health of the children in the setting including taking steps to prevent the spread of infection and take appropriate action if children are ill.
- Ensure snacks are healthy, balanced and nutritious and information is obtained about special dietary requirements.
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs.
- Ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose
- Ensure that every child receives challenging learning experiences tailored to meet their needs.
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

We endeavour to meet all these requirements.

Positive Relationships

Role of the adult

At Shire Oak we recognise that children become strong and independent learners by building secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families. All staff involved with the EYFS aim to develop strong bonds with children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them. During child-initiated-learning adults engage playfully with children and facilitate children's exploration as co-constructors of knowledge. During this time they use questioning,

resources and discussion to support children in their learning. When appropriate they also provide knowledge and expertise to enable children to meet their next steps.

Parents as Partners

Parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make. We recognise the role that parents have played, and their future role, in educating the children. We aim to start building strong links with parents/carers in the summer term before children enter Reception with. . .

- Posting out a booklet entitled Starting School.
- Meetings for new prospective parents at accessible times.
- Arranging home visits in early July when the Reception Teacher and Teaching Assistant call to have an informal chat with the family and are able to answer questions about school life.

Once children are in school we continue to foster good links with . . .

- Parents being welcome to come into class to share in their child's Learning Diary. Parental contributions to these Diaries are greatly valued.
- A Reading Meeting for parents is held in the autumn term so that parents can become familiar with the way we teach phonics and early reading and find out how they can support their child at home.
- Parents being encouraged to talk to their child's teacher if there are any concerns. There is a formal parents meeting each term at which the teacher and the parent discuss the child's progress in private.
- Parents receiving a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each school year;
- Regular Stay and Play Sessions, where parents can see first-hand the different activities being taught in class.
- Special Sharing Assemblies
- Communication with parents about the learning that is taking place through newsletters, notices, texts, the school website and Twitter.

Transition

The smooth transition from Foundation 1 to Foundation 2 is very important and something that we work hard to ensure runs smoothly especially as we draw from lots of different settings.

- We have good links with Headingley Pre-School and the other nurseries in the area.
- The children are invited to visit school for a play session in July.
- In September we operate a staggered entry system. The children arrive 10 pupils at a time from Tuesday to Thursday and just stay for mornings during the first week. Staying for lunch with their parents or carers on Friday.
- From the second week the children are in for full days.

Transition from Reception to Year 1

It is important to both Reception and Key Stage 1 staff to have a smooth transition after their first year. Staff work together and communicate effectively to meet the needs of all of the children during this transition.

- The Year One teacher comes across regularly to read stories to Reception in the last few weeks of term, so that she can get to know the children.
- The children look around their new classroom before the end of term.
- There is a meeting for parents in the September of the new term.
- The first term in Year One is organised on a similar basis to Reception with lots of child initiated as well as focused adult led groups.
- The Year One class has areas of provision similar to that in Reception including an outdoor area and creative area.

Enabling Environments

At Shire Oak we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. We see the environment as the 'third teacher' and aim for the environment to continue the provision for learning without the presence of an adult. This begins by observing the children and assessing their interests, development and learning, before enhancing provision to meet their needs.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

"Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It 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. "

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Department for Education (2017)

We make regular assessments of children's learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the EYFS takes the form of observations of the children as they are playing independently and are carried out by all adults working in the classroom. These observations are recorded in individual Learning Diaries alongside pieces of 'work' and photographic evidence. Observations/comments made by parents are also recorded in the Learning Diaries.

At Shire Oak School, we use the o-track to record judgements against the EYFS Profile. Each child's level of development is recorded against the 17 areas of learning derived from the ELG's. These assessments are used by the Year One teacher to ensure that provision meets children's needs when they move up to Key Stage 1. The Foundation Stage Teacher meets regularly with the Deputy Head Teacher to discuss the progress of the children and how to increase it further. Within the final term of the EYFS, we provide a written summary to parents, reporting their progress against the ELG's and assessment scales. Parents are able to discuss the report with the teacher.

These assessments are also used as the basis for planning. Planning is short term as it is based on current assessment and children's. The children decide on their topic each half term through voting and then mind-map the questions and interests they have surrounding the topic. This enables them to take control of their learning and increases engagement with the topic. We also follow children's individual interests, this often happens 'in the moment'. We also use Objective-Led-Planning to set appropriate and challenging goals for children based on previous assessment. This entails entering children's play with their individual next steps in mind and engaging playfully with them in order to meet these.

The Learning Environment

The Reception classroom is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, be creative as well as reflective. The classroom is set up in learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. The resources are designed to be as open ended as possible to allow children to explore and use their imaginations in their play. The areas are enhanced and changed regularly to meet the emerging needs and interests of the children and so that they have ownership of the classroom. The displays reflect the learning and achievements of the children as well as providing useful tools for supporting learning.

We also have our own outdoor area to which children have free flow access every day. This has a positive effect on the children's development as being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on a different scale than when indoors. It offers the children to explore use their senses and be physically active and exuberant.

Learning and Development

Children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are all connected.

Characteristics of effective learning

A key aim in the EYFS at Shire Oak is to teach children how to be confident, independent learners who are resilient to challenges. This is done through continuously promoting the characteristics of effective learning:

- Playing and Exploring – finding out and exploring their environment, using their own experiences in play and having the confidence to try new things.
- Active Learning – concentrating and becoming involved in activities, showing a sense of pride in their achievements and the ability to keep trying and overcome barriers.
- Creating and Thinking critically – using their own ideas and thinking of different ways to do things.

These underpin the entire curriculum and provide a strong foundation for learning and development. We promote the characteristics of effective learning by:

- Using the language of learning with children as part of our daily routine e.g. explore, problem solving, pride.
- Monitoring children's learning behaviours in our observations and assessments.
- Modelling learning behaviours by engaging playfully with children.
- Engaging with the whole schools 'growth mind-set' initiative including relevant displays.
- Seeing adults as co-constructors of knowledge who facilitate exploration rather than simply giving the answer.
- Celebrating effort and determination, not just the finished product.
- Reporting on the characteristics of effective learning to parents and Key Stage 1 staff at the end of the year.

Teaching and Learning Style

Our policy on teaching and learning defines the features of effective teaching and learning in our school. These features apply to teaching and learning in the EYFS just as much as they do to the teaching in Key Stage 2.

(See whole school teaching and learning policy)

In the Foundation stage all areas are delivered through a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Children take part in daily Phonics and Maths carpet times and an additional carpet time which could be about anything from topic to music. Reception class also have a weekly PE session in the hall and visit the school Library weekly. Surrounding these times provision is made for extended periods of child-initiated learning in the areas.

Play

“Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity. Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults.”

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At Shire Oak we value child-initiated, freely chosen activities in the areas of provision, both indoors and out. Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. It enables them to become independent learners as they investigate and explore their own interests and fascinations. Through play they practise and build up ideas, as well as consolidate skills they have learnt from adults. They have the opportunity to problem solve and think creatively alongside other children and express fears in controlled and safe situations. Play holds endless possibilities for learning and development and as such, the children's day is structured to provide periods of child-initiated learning.

Areas of Learning

The EYFS curriculum is made up of 7 areas of learning which are split into 17 strands. In each area the Early Learning Goals (ELG's) define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS. In order to achieve Good Level of Development (GLD) children must reach the expected level in all of the prime areas and the specific areas of Literacy and Maths. Initially there is a large focus on the prime areas of personal, social and emotional development, physical development and communication and language as these are fundamental to children's development. However, at Shire Oak we aim provide a broad and balanced curriculum which values all children's strengths and interests. As such, these areas are not delivered in isolation from the others and where ever possible we create cross curricular links to make learning engaging and meaningful.

Prime areas

Personal, social and Emotional Development (PSED) - PSED is split into three areas: *Making Relationships, Self-confidence and Self-awareness* and *Managing Feelings and Behaviour*. Children are encouraged to form positive relationships, behave appropriately and have a positive view of themselves by:

- Recognising that in Reception children make the friends that they will have throughout their school life so placing great importance on PSED at the beginning of the school year.
- Children play games to help them learn each other's names and talk about common interests.
- Stories and circle times are used so children can discuss themes such as friendship and conflict and to support children to express their emotions.
- Later in the year Philosophy is used to encourage children to speak confidently in front of the class and understand each other's points of view.
- Behaviours such as sharing, turn taking and being kind are expected from children and are promoted using the school rules and principles.

Physical Development- is made up of *Moving and Handling* and *Health and Self-care*. In Reception children are encouraged to move and be healthy as it is important in developing their gross and fine-motor skills.

- Children are encouraged to be energetic and active in our outdoor area.
- Through using resources such as bikes and large construction they develop control in their gross motor skills.
- They also take part in weekly PE sessions where children get changed as independently as possible and learn specific skills including ball skills, gymnastics and dance.
- During PE, they also learn about why it is important to exercise and notice the effects of exercise on their bodies.
- Fine motor development is encouraged through the use of malleable materials in the areas such as play-dough and clay. In addition to this, there is a fine-motor challenge to encourage children to strengthen their pincer grip e.g. using tweezers or pegs.

Communication and Language- consists of *Listening and Attention, Understanding* and *Speaking* and enables children to express themselves clearly and with confidence.

- A large focus is placed upon this area in the autumn term and for children who have English as an additional language.
- Children are part of a language rich environment where phase 1 phonics activities and stories support children's listening skills and vocabulary development.
- Children also enjoy a wide range of songs, rhymes and poems to promote development in this area.
- Across the curriculum opportunities are given for children to express their thoughts and feelings e.g. through talk partners or circle times.
- Adults regularly model appropriate communication e.g. using the correct tense or adapting speech to the audience.
- The classroom is set up to encourage areas for collaborative working and talk.
- Times of the day such as snack or lunch time are used as opportunities for talk and listening.
- Philosophy encourages children to listen and respond appropriately to questions and points in discussion.

Specific areas

Literacy- involves the areas of *Reading* and *Writing*, where children are encouraged to make marks link letters to sounds.

- Children learn to read and write by following a Systematic, Synthetic Phonics programme. This is mainly based on Letters and Sounds but also uses the Jolly phonics actions.
- To compliment this children are also exposed to a wide range of fiction and non-fiction texts to encourage a love of reading.
- There are a range of opportunities to read and write for a purpose when in the areas of provision e.g. planning constructions or making shopping lists in the home corner.
- Children's fine-motor development is encouraged to support development in this area so that they are able to use a pencil effectively and form letters correctly.

Mathematics- is split into *Numbers* and *Shape, Space and Measure*. Children are able to think mathematically and develop skills such as comparing, ordering and sequencing.

- Children have a daily Maths carpet time where particular importance is placed on counting and the language of maths.
- Children learn to count and perform simple calculations using numicon and practical resources to support them.
- There are lots of opportunities for mathematical thinking and inquiry in the areas. In particular the water area, mud kitchen and construction area allow for a range of mathematical explorations.
- Children are encouraged to explore maths concepts in a practical and kinaesthetic way e.g. exploring numicon, action songs and rhymes or cooking.
- Children also begin with their maths passports later on in Reception to support their mental maths development.

Understanding the World- is divided into three areas termed *People and Communities*, *The World* and *Technology*. In this area children are encouraged to talk about their families and notice the similarities and differences between their own and others family lives. They notice features of the natural world and explore the purposes of a range of technology.

- The children are encouraged to explore family life through role play e.g. in the home corner.
- Opportunities are provided for children to talk about events in their own lives and the lives of their families including special events and festivals.
- The indoor and outdoor environment is set up to encourage exploration and discovery.
- The children's topics will often cover areas relating to understanding the world but opportunities are also provided to experience and make observations of the seasons, animal life-cycles and growing.

Expressive Arts and Design- involves *Exploring and using Media and Materials* and *Being Imaginative*. Children are able to express themselves through art, dance, music and imaginative play.

- Children are taught specific skills relating to art, dance and music through carpet times, topic learning and PE.
- The classroom is set up to provide a range of challenging resources to support development in these areas e.g. junk-modelling, construction, painting, drawing, clay, instruments and role- play areas.
- Children's creativity is valued and all forms of expression are encouraged and supported. This includes displaying a range of children's art work.
- There is a focus placed on skill development and process rather than the end product.
- Adults model and engage playfully with children as they add a story line or narrative to their play.
- Children's fine-motor development is encouraged to support development in this area so that they can use tools (such as paint brushes or scissors) effectively.