



Southridge First School

Early Years Policy

This policy was reviewed by the Governors on May 23rd 2017

It will be reviewed in Summer 2020 in line with government changes.

At Southridge First School we recognise, respect and robustly advocate the words of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework which states;

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

“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).

Introduction

Early Years education is the foundation upon which young children build the rest of their schooling. It is a holistic education that encompasses all learning and development. This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at Southridge First School.

The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of practitioners working in the EYFS setting, including both teaching and non-teaching adults.

In the policy the term ‘setting’ refers to the Early Years educational provision at Southridge First School. This is available to children part time from nursery at 3 years of age to Reception, the year in which they will turn 5 years of age and their final year of the EYFS.

In the policy the term ‘practitioner’ refers to the members of staff working with children within the setting.

Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage

In the EYFS setting at Southridge First School we believe that all children are entitled to the best possible start in their school life, both intellectually and emotionally, in order to enable them to develop their full potential.

We aim to support each child’s welfare, learning and developmental needs by:

- Recognising that all children are unique and special.
- Understanding that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates - physically, cognitively, linguistically, socially and emotionally.
- Providing a safe, secure and caring environment where children feel happy and know that they are valued by the practitioners looking after them.
- Fostering and nurturing children’s self-confidence and self-esteem through their developing awareness of their own identity and role within the community.
- Teaching them to express and communicate their needs and feelings in appropriate ways.
- Encouraging children’s independence and decision-making, supporting them to learn through their mistakes.
- Developing children’s understanding of social skills and the values and codes of behaviour required for people to work together harmoniously.

- Supporting children to develop care, respect and appreciation for others, including those with beliefs, cultures and opinions that differ to their own.
- Understanding the importance of play in children's learning and development. Providing learning experiences in play which reflect children's personal interests and areas of curiosity in order to encourage and develop their natural desire, interest, excitement and motivation to learn.
- Providing experiences which build on children's existing knowledge and understanding in order to challenge, stimulate and extend their learning and development.
- Providing effective learning opportunities in a range of environments, inside and outside.

The Early Years Foundation Stage framework

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. At Southridge we are committed to underpinning our provision with the four themes of the Early Years Foundation Stage in our Nursery and Reception Classes. A Unique Child, Positive Relationships, Enabling Environments, Learning and Development. Teaching staff reflect and record against these themes on a weekly basis.

A Unique Child

At Southridge we recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates and this is reflected in our provision. The characteristics of effective learning support the child to become a motivated and effective learner. Children will play and explore and 'have a go' at using all available resources; developing their experiences. Children will develop resilience and enjoy achievements through active learning and will make links, explore their ideas and strategies for problem solving through creating and thinking critically. Practitioners support the children in developing all these characteristics through playing alongside children and, where necessary, scaffolding and supporting their thoughts.

Children are treated fairly regardless of race, religion, gender or abilities. We welcome all children and families into our settings so that they feel included, safe and valued.

It is important to us that all children at Southridge are safe. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them to develop these important life skills. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards, both within school and in the wider environment.

We encourage a healthy lifestyle including taking exercise and eating healthy food.

Positive Relationships

We aim to promote positive relationships between staff, parents and children. Children are taught how to deal with difficult situations and relationships through the SEAL curriculum (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) as well as through their daily interactions with adults and other children. We recognise that parents are the child's first educators and their importance for the child's welfare and education is paramount.

All children are greeted as they come into the classroom and have a familiar routine with all practitioners. Staff will work with each child either on a one to one basis, in a small

group or as part of a larger group. They are able to build up confidence, rapport and respect with each child so that the children feel safe, happy and enjoy their time at Southridge First School.

Enabling Environments

In EYFS at Southridge First School we recognise the importance of a rich learning environment both inside and outside. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet and rest. The environment is set up in learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. There is an outdoor area.

This has a positive effect on the children's development. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. It offers the children the opportunity to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. As far as possible we offer the same opportunities and areas of learning in all of our environments. We observe the children during CIL (child initiated learning) and offer additional resources and support to enrich their learning. To ensure that we meet the individual needs of all of our children we make regular observations of the children's interactions, interests, skills, and development of concepts. These observations are used to inform our planning for groups of children, for individuals and our provision for resources as appropriate. Parents are asked to be involved regularly and we welcome the contributions they bring, understanding that they have a crucial part to play.

Learning and Development

There are seven areas of Learning and Development which are interconnected. Three areas (the prime areas) are crucial to develop lifelong learning and to help children form relationships.

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development – children develop confidence and self-esteem, learn how to manage feelings and respect others.
- Communication and Language – children have opportunities to speak and listen in a range of situations and experience a rich language environment.
- Physical Development – children have opportunities to be active and develop coordination (both gross motor and fine motor); they learn about healthy choices.

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through four specific areas:

- Literacy – involves children learning how letters link to the sounds and begin to read and write.
- Mathematics – children have opportunities to develop counting and calculation skills, to use numbers in everyday activities and recognise and describe shapes and measures.
- Understanding of the World – children have opportunities to find out about people and communities, the environment and technology.
- Expressive Arts and Design – involves exploring feelings and ideas through music, dance, role play and design.

Active Learning through Play

At Southridge First School we recognise that young children learn best when they are active. We understand that active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods. Therefore, we believe that Early Years education should be as practical as possible and our EYFS setting has an ethos of learning through play. We recognise the importance of children's play. It is an essential and rich part of their learning process, supporting them in all areas of development. Play is a powerful motivator encouraging children to be creative and to develop their ideas, understanding and language. Play is also flexible and able to suit the preferred learning style of the child. It can provide multiple ways for children to learn a variety of different skills and concepts. In the EYFS setting at Southridge First School practitioners provide both structured and unstructured play opportunities inside and outside. These activities are designed to engage children in practical, first-hand experiences which will support children to discover, explore, investigate, develop their personal interests and areas of curiosity, and help to make sense of the world around them as they begin to understand specific concepts. Play opportunities are also set up to provide children with opportunities to apply newly acquired knowledge, demonstrating their skills and level of understanding.

In providing these active learning opportunities through play we understand the central position of play within the EYFS framework. This is essentially a play based curriculum and pedagogy as the provision of play opportunities underpins its delivery within settings.

Assessment and Record Keeping

Ongoing assessment is an essential aspect of the effective running of the EYFS setting at Southridge First School.

The main EYFS assessment method is through practitioners' observations of children in different teaching and learning contexts, including both adult focused activities and child initiated play.

Observations take place on a daily basis (both formally and informally). Practitioners make time to carry out planned observations of individuals and groups of children regularly. They also make spontaneous observations in order to capture significant moments of children's learning. Observations are recorded in different formats (e.g. narrative style, post-it notes, whole class grids, photographs). All practitioners are involved in observing children. Practitioners use observations to support their developing knowledge of individual children. It informs them of children's abilities, needs, interests, play schemas and learning styles. Observations are evaluated, children's learning priorities are identified and relevant learning opportunities are planned to support children to make the next steps and progress.

Other methods of assessing children in the EYFS setting include engaging alongside children in their play, annotation of children's written work, talking with children about their task or play and in Learning Journeys. Staff may carry out formative assessments to

record children's progress and response to more direct teaching and this will reflect in their books and personal records held by teaching staff.

Learning Journeys record children's progress over the academic year in all Areas of Learning and Development of the EYFS framework. Samples of children's work are gathered, along with photographic evidence and observations.

There is continuous monitoring and assessment of each child's development using the new Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (2012). This is updated at least once each term to track individual progress. At the end of the year it provides a summary of every child's development and learning achievements. Baseline assessment is carried out using the EYFS Profile during the children's first six weeks upon entering the setting. Judgments made on children's development in the Profile are based on practitioners' evidence of children's behaviour observed independently and consistently in their self-initiated activities across all Areas of Learning and Development.

At the end of the Reception year all pupils' progress to date is gathered. This is a statutory requirement. Year 1 staff, Parents the National and Local government are informed of whether children reach the expected level of development by the end on the EYFS. (The expected level refers to children's ability to work securely in the Early learning Goal across each of the seven areas of learning).

Planning

The EYFS framework provides a long term plan to follow by ensuring that all Early Learning Goals are covered throughout the academic year. Medium term planning is created with all early years practitioners involvement and takes into account the individual children's learning and developmental needs.

All Areas of Learning and Development are planned for and available to access within the setting. The learning opportunities provided include a range of adult focused and child initiated activities indoors. The setting also makes use of the outdoor environment whenever possible. We value all areas of learning and development and understand that they are inter connected.

Child-initiated learning is an important part of our daily routine at Southridge First School and whenever possible adult-directed activities are play based, active and related to the children's interests. We aim to help children with their learning through observing, getting involved in their play, supporting their thinking and asking open questions.

Educational visits within the local community and further afield are also planned to support children's learning within the classroom.

Parents as Partners

At Southridge First School we recognise the importance of establishing positive relationships with parents, as highlighted by the EYFS framework. We understand that an effective partnership between school and home will have a positive impact on children's learning and development. So, practitioners endeavour to encourage the regular sharing of information about the children with parents. We value the role of parents as children's primary educators. Through informal chats at the beginning and end of the day,

practitioners encourage parents to share their unique knowledge of their child, providing further insight into the child as an individual (e.g. characteristics, interests, experiences, likes, dislikes). This supports practitioners in establishing interesting and stimulating learning experiences, responding to children's needs and interests. Parents are kept informed of what is happening in the setting through weekly newsletters letters, reading records and informal chatting at the beginning and end of the day. This also gives suggestions of how parents can support their children's learning at home; consolidating and building on what has been covered in the setting and allows parents to have a regular dialogue with children about what they have been learning, exploring and investigating that week at school. It gives staff the ability to suggest ways in which learning can be consolidated and extended at home.

Finally

In conclusion the practitioners at Southridge Early Years were asked to think of key words that reflect their own practice, ethos and vision and this is what they said;

