



Early Years & Foundation Stage Policy

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Owston Park Primary Academy

EARLY YEARS AND FOUNDATION STAGE POLICY

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage
3. The Early Years Foundation Stage framework
4. Learning through Play
5. Assessment
6. Planning
7. Parents as Partners
8. Admissions and Induction
9. Equal Opportunities
10. Special Educational Needs

1. Introduction

Early Years education is the foundation upon which young children build the rest of their schooling. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. 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 Owston Park Primary Academy.

At Owston Park Primary Academy, we believe that Early Years education is important in its own right and should not be viewed simply as preparation for the next stage of children's education. We believe that the EYFS framework allows a natural progression into the National Curriculum at the beginning of Year 1.

The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of practitioners working in the EYFS setting, including both teaching and learning support assistants.

In the policy the term 'setting' refers to the Early Years educational provision at Owston Park Primary Academy. It outlines the provision offered to pupils aged three to five years within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

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

2. Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage

At Owston Park Primary Academy 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.
- 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 the practitioners looking after them value them.
- Fostering and nurturing children's self-confidence and self-esteem through 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, 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 different 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 that 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. Being outdoors offers opportunities for learning in an alternative way and on a larger scale to the classroom. It offers the children the opportunity to explore, use their senses, be physically active and work on a larger, more exuberant scale. We plan activities and resources for children to access the outdoors across all areas of learning during all weathers. Not only do our children use our well-resourced indoor and outdoor spaces, they are also given the opportunity to learn in our Forest School area for the full day every Friday.

3. The Early Years Foundation Stage framework

Teaching in the EYFS setting at Owston Park Primary Academy is delivered in accordance with the government's statutory document 'The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage' (September 2025). This document is a principled approach to Early Years education, bringing together children's welfare, learning and development requirements through the four themes listed below and recognises that 'Children learn in different ways and at different Rates.' All children in the EYFS have access to a broad, rich topic based curriculum both indoors and outdoors.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is based around four Key Themes

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

Areas of Learning

The framework outlines 7 areas of learning which underpin learning;

3 Prime areas of learning:

Communication and Language

The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children's language effectively. Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, story-telling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.

Physical Development

Physical activity is vital in children's all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives. Gross and fine motor experiences develop incrementally throughout early childhood, starting with sensory explorations and the development of a child's strength, co-ordination and positional awareness through tummy time, crawling and play movement with both objects and adults. By creating games and providing opportunities

for play both indoors and outdoors, adults can support children to develop their core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination and agility. Gross motor skills provide the foundation for developing healthy bodies and social and emotional well-being. Fine motor control and precision helps with hand-eye co-ordination, which is later linked to early literacy. Repeated and varied opportunities to explore and play with small world activities, puzzles, arts and crafts and the practice of using small tools, with feedback and support from adults, allow children to develop proficiency, control and confidence.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Children's personal, social and emotional development (PSED) is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives, and is fundamental to their cognitive development. Underpinning their personal development are the important attachments that shape their social world. Strong, warm and supportive relationships with adults enable children to learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others. Children should be supported to manage emotions, develop a positive sense of self, set themselves simple goals, have confidence in their own abilities, to persist and wait for what they want and direct attention as necessary. Through adult modelling and guidance, they will learn how to look after their bodies, including healthy eating, and manage personal needs independently. Through supported interaction with other children, they learn how to make good friendships, co-operate and resolve conflicts peaceably. These attributes will provide a secure platform from which children can achieve at school and in later life.

Providers must also support activities through four specific areas which strengthen the prime areas. These are:

Literacy

It is crucial for children to develop a life-long love of reading. Reading consists of two dimensions: language comprehension and word reading. Language comprehension (necessary for both reading and writing) starts from birth. It only develops when adults talk with children about the world around them and the books (stories and non-fiction) they read with them, and enjoy rhymes, poems and songs together. Skilled word reading, taught later, involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words. Writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing).

Mathematics

Developing a strong grounding in number is essential so that all children develop the necessary building blocks to excel mathematically. Children should be able to count

confidently, develop a deep understanding of the numbers to 10, the relationships between them and the patterns within those numbers. By providing frequent and varied opportunities to build and apply this understanding - such as using manipulatives, including small pebbles and tens frames for organising counting - children will develop a secure base of knowledge and vocabulary from which mastery of mathematics is built. In addition, it is important that the curriculum includes rich opportunities for children to develop their spatial reasoning skills across all areas of mathematics including shape, space and measures. It is important that children develop positive attitudes and interests in mathematics, look for patterns and relationships, spot connections, 'have a go', talk to adults and peers about what they notice and not be afraid to make mistakes.

Understanding of the World

Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community. The frequency and range of children's personal experiences increases their knowledge and sense of the world around them – from visiting parks, libraries and museums to meeting important members of society such as police officers, nurses and firefighters. In addition, listening to a broad selection of stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems will foster their understanding of our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world. As well as building important knowledge, this extends their familiarity with words that support understanding across domains. Enriching and widening children's vocabulary will support later reading comprehension.

Expressive Arts and Design

The development of children's artistic and cultural awareness supports their imagination and creativity. It is important that children have regular opportunities to engage with the arts, enabling them to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. The quality and variety of what children see, hear and participate in is crucial for developing their understanding, self-expression, vocabulary and ability to communicate through the arts. The frequency, repetition and depth of their experiences are fundamental to their progress in interpreting and appreciating what they hear, respond to and observe.

4. Learning through Play

At Owston Park Primary Academy, 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 able to suit the preferred learning style of the child. It can provide numerous ways for children to learn a variety of different skills and concepts.

In our foundation unit and in our forest school, practitioners provide both structured and unstructured play opportunities inside and outside. These activities are designed to engage children in practical, first-hand experiences that 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.

Experiences are planned 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.

5. Assessment in the Foundation Stage

At Owston Park Primary Academy, we assess and track the progress and attainment of our children through daily, ongoing observations in all seven areas of learning plus the characteristics of effective learning. We make professional judgements through observations of children as they engage in the learning environment. Practitioners play alongside children to enhance and develop their language skills, social skills and build on their own ideas. Adults target any misconceptions that are picked up on through the adult-led sessions during the children's child-initiated play. This method of evidence gathering is consistent throughout our EYFS. All our evidence is moderated between staff and is used to provide constantly challenging and relevant next steps for children, based around their interests.

Other methods of assessing children in our EYFS setting include annotation of children's written work and discussions with children about their task or play.

Children's achievements and learning are shared with parents and practitioners through Class Dojo.

National Expectations

By the end of the year the national expectation is that the children will be working within the 17 Early Learning Goal descriptors:

The end of year judgements made will then form the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile for each child and the annual report to parents will state whether the child is:

Emerging – working below national expectations

Expected – working at national expectations

Children will be defined as having reached a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage if they achieve at least the expected level in the three prime areas of learning:

Personal, Social, Emotional Development, Physical Development and Communication and Language in addition to Literacy and Mathematics.

6. Planning

Foundation stage staff plan together using our 'Curricular Goals' as a starting point. This is to ensure children's interests and needs are built upon.

Our 'Curricular Goals', which provide a stimulus for the children and underpin our planning, are as follows:

- Be a friend
- Be a storyteller
- Be an outdoor explorer
- Be expressive
- Be physical

Children are taught both phonics and mathematics in Nursery and Reception following recognised schemes. In Nursery, children are introduced to phonics through activities, which expose them to various sounds, rhythm & rhyme activities, alliteration, and instruments activities. This then leads onto the early stages of our whole school phonics programme, 'Read, Write Inc'. Children in Nursery begin 'Read, Write Inc, the term before they move up into reception class 'Read, Write, Inc', is then followed through into Reception class.

Through the 'Read, Write, Inc.' programme children are taught to:

- decode texts and to comprehend what they read
- spell effortlessly so that their efforts can be concentrated on composing their writing
- and to read with expression and fluency.

In reception, pupils work within ability groups, which are defined by their performance in phonics assessments. Pupils are re-tested every half term as individuals and the groups are reorganised accordingly. Skills taught within these sessions are consolidated through both continuous provision and guided activities.

In Nursery, maths is taught through daily 'Maths Meetings'. Their purpose is to consolidate key areas of mathematics and introduce new topics to the children. In EYFS the 'Maths Meetings' cover all aspects of the number and numerical patterns.

In Reception, children take part in daily 'Maths Meetings' but are also taught mathematics, building up to include a six-part 40-50 minute daily lesson. This session focuses on key learning for the unit. Adults then plan the continuous provision to enable pupils to explore the key learning from the unit through child-initiated learning at a different time in the day. Misconceptions are addressed through this child initiated play.

The EYFS statutory framework provides a long term plan to follow by ensuring that all Early Outcomes and Early Learning Goals are covered throughout the academic year.

Nursery and Reception work on an imaginative learning 'hooks'. Within these, children will work on a variety of subjects, learning new skills and will have the opportunity to then consolidate and develop their understanding of what they have learnt or are learning.

Each week the children will engage with the class 'Hook Book'. Children will be 'hooked' in to a story after which practitioners will model a range of 'enhancements' that will challenge the children's thinking, problem solving skills and engage them with different areas of continuous provision.

Engage

A stage of learning that provides children with an inspiring and thought provoking starting point that stirs curiosity and initiates interest in a particular theme or concept linked to the project.

Develop

A stage of learning that provides children with an opportunity to develop and master key skills, subject knowledge, research techniques and independence. Children become industrious learners making sense of information and experiences, leading to sound understanding and progress. Children develop their knowledge, understanding, key and subject skills required to progress their learning and attainment through quality differentiation, focused learning tasks and high quality relevant learning experiences.

Innovate

A stage of learning that challenges children's ability to work creatively, exploring possibilities and finding solutions. Using and applying previously learned skills, knowledge and understanding children work collaboratively to innovate, managing their own learning to achieve given success criteria. Teachers provide an imaginative and relevant provocation or scenario that provides opportunities to observe how successfully children can use, apply and problem solve in creative and imaginative ways.

Express

A stage of learning that empowers children to share, celebrate and reflect with a range of partners and audiences. Children cement their learning through shared reflection with peers and other adults and are able to suggest next steps of learning.

The setting also makes use of the outdoor environment whenever possible. We also use our Forest School for a collaborative EYFS session for a full day each week. Educational visits within the local community and further afield are planned for our reception children to support their learning within the classroom.

7. Parents as Partners

At Owston Park Primary 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 has a positive impact on children's learning and development. 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 and in responding to children's needs and interests. Parents are kept informed of what is happening in the setting through Class Dojo, regular letters, our school website, 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.

Parents are invited to attend parents' evenings during the course of the academic year. The first of these takes place during the Autumn term to allow practitioners and parents to discuss how children have settled into the setting. Another parents' evening takes place during the Spring term where practitioners will feedback on children's learning and development progress. Other opportunities for practitioners to share children's learning, development and well-being with parents include end of year reports, concerts and celebrations where children's achievements are recognised.

Parents are also invited to get involved with school life. There are opportunities for them to help with activities such as educational visits and reading, as well as offering their particular skills (e.g. cooking, reading, play sessions, and arts and crafts) to support children's learning. Parents may be invited into the setting on other occasions such as open afternoons. The school has a friendly, open-door ethos and practitioners are available to talk to parents at the beginning and end of the day. Parents are always welcomed into school and encouraged to discuss any concerns they might have.

8. Admissions and Induction

Owston Park Primary Academy provides full-time Early Years education for children in the Reception Year. This is for children who enter school from September of the academic year in which they will turn five years old. A nursery place will be offered to children the first term after their third birthday. Before they start in the nursery setting, all children receive a home visit and can attend a series of 'stay & play' sessions. Practitioners undertake home visits for all children before they start our school, to meet children and parents in the environment within which they feel most comfortable. The aim of these visits is to support practitioners to develop their knowledge and understanding of each child in order to make the transition period to Owston Park Primary as smooth as possible.

Children attend the nursery setting for three-hour sessions, morning or afternoon, Monday to Friday. We do also offer 30 hours nursery provision for families that are eligible. Our Reception setting is full-time. Every effort is made to make children feel safe, secure and

happy. There is a relaxed and open ethos in the setting. Established routines, a calm atmosphere and encouraging talk are some of the strategies practitioners use to maintain children's positive feelings about school.

9. Equal Opportunities

All practitioners at Owston Park Primary Academy have a responsibility to maintain positive attitudes to diversity and difference, ensuring that inclusive practice is delivered in the EYFS setting. All children, irrespective of gender, ability, ethnicity, culture or religion, and social circumstances, have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development within the EYFS setting.

See Equal Opportunities Policy for more information.

10. Special Educational Needs

See Special Educational Needs Policy.

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of the EYFS teachers and learning support assistants to follow the principles stated in this policy.

The Head teacher, Deputy Head, Senior lead teachers and subject leaders will carry out monitoring on the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.