



Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Phoenix Community Primary School

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Introduction

This document outlines the philosophy, aims and principles of early years learning and teaching in Phoenix Community Primary School. The document underpins practice in all areas of provision.

*'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 Children, Schools and Families, 2007)*

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At Phoenix 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 its self, 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 applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year.

Aims

Each child is valued as an individual and learning and teaching is based on the understanding that children develop at different rates. At Phoenix we aim to:

- Provide a safe, challenging, stimulating and caring environment which is sensitive to the needs of the child, including children with additional needs;
- Provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for future learning and development;
- Provide opportunities for children to learn through planned, purposeful play in all areas of learning and development in the indoor and outdoor environment;
- Use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress;
- Enable choice and decision-making, fostering independence and self-confidence;
- Work in partnership with parents/guardian and value their contributions;
- Ensure that all children feel valued, respected and included and that classroom resources and activities reflect the culture and language of their homes

The EYFS Is Based Upon Four Principles

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

A Unique Child

All children and their families are valued within our school. We believe that children should be treated as individuals but they should have equal access to the EYFS curriculum. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We help them do this by planning to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities and children from all social and cultural backgrounds. We strongly believe that early identification of special needs is crucial in enabling staff to support the development of each child and fully meet their needs. Concerns are always discussed with parents/carers at an early stage in an open, honest and sensitive manner and we will

always seek their support and involvement. The school's SENCO is responsible for providing additional information and advice to practitioners and parents, and for arranging external intervention and support where necessary.

For further information, see our Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Gifted and Talented policies

It is important to us that all children in the school 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 develop this important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards.

For further information, please see our School Safeguarding policy.

Positive Relationships

At Phoenix we recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families.

We recognise that parents/carers are the child's first and most enduring educators. When parents/carers and Early Years staff work together, the results have a positive impact on the child's development. We feel a successful partnership needs to be a two-way flow of information, knowledge and expertise and so we aim to provide a variety of opportunities to support this, through:

- Talking to parents about their child before their child starts in our school.
- The teacher offers to visit all children in their home setting prior to their starting school.
- The children have the opportunity to spend time with their teacher before starting school during transition events.
- Offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress in our reception class and allowing free access to the children's 'Learning Journey' booklets.
- Encouraging parents to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns. There is a formal meeting for parents each term at which the teacher and the parent discuss the child's progress in private with the teacher. Parents receive a report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each school year.
- Arranging a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents: Craft workshops, Seasonal events, Class assemblies, Sports day etc.
- Providing an opportunity for parents to comments on their child's achievements at home to be recorded in the 'learning journey'

We use praise and encouragement as well as celebration and rewards to encourage and develop a positive attitude to learning. For further information please see our Behaviour for Learning Policy.

Enabling Environments

At Phoenix we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. 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 classroom throughout the school day.

Learning and Development

At Phoenix we recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development (within the Foundation Stage curriculum) equally and understand that they are interconnected.

Learning and Teaching

Effective learning and teaching is supported through:

- The partnership between staff and parents that helps our children to feel secure at school, and to develop a sense of wellbeing and achievement.
- The understanding that staff have knowledge of how children develop and learn, and how this must be reflected in their teaching.
- The range of approaches that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions, and extend and develop the children's play, talk or other means of communication.
- The carefully planned curriculum that helps children achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage.
- The provision for children to take part in activities that build on and extend their interests, and develop their intellectual, physical, social and emotional abilities.
- The encouragement for children to communicate and talk about their learning, and to develop independence and self-management.
- The support for learning, with appropriate and accessible space, facilities and equipment, both indoors and outdoors, including the effective use of ICT.
- The identification, thorough observations, of children's progress and future learning needs, which are regularly shared with parents.

Effective Early Learning

The curriculum is underpinned by three characteristic of effective learning, which move through all areas of learning. These are

- Playing and exploring
- Active learning
- Creating and thinking critically
- Play and Exploration

'The ways in which the child engages with other people and their environment- playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically- underpin learning and development in all areas and support the child to remain an effective and motivated learner.' (Development Matters in EYFS, 2012)

We support children's learning through planned play activities known as 'challenge time', through observation of child-initiated or adult-led play activities and then provide the most effective learning opportunities. We believe that it is important for adults to support children's learning through play, by getting involved in the play themselves and modelling by example.

Well-planned play, both indoors and outdoors is one of the key ways in which children learn. It is the process through which children can explore, investigate, recreate and come to understand their world. It is not just imaginative play and role-play but includes spontaneous, self-initiated lines of enquiry and exploration. Play is a vital component of children's lives. It

is an important way skills are developed and practised. Play is essential for physical, intellectual, linguistic, emotional, behavioural and social development.

Principles of High Quality Play

- Play is an intrinsic part of children's learning and development.
- Play has many possible but no prescriptive outcomes.
- Play challenges children and offers them the chance to learn breadth and depth.
- Play draws on what children already know and can do and enables them to master what is new.
- Play enables children to apply existing knowledge and to practise their skills
- Play encourages children to communicate with others as they investigate or solve problems.
- Play offers children opportunities to explore feelings and relationships, ideas, and materials, connections and consequences.
- Play empowers children to make choices, to solve problems and to be independent in their learning.
- Play enables children to express fears or relive anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.
- Play encourages children to struggle, to take risks and to become resilient as learners.
- Play can be supported and extended but not interfered with by adults.
- Play presents no barriers to children because of their language, cultures, abilities or gender.

Role of the adult

- To plan and resource a challenging indoor and outdoor environment.
- To support children's learning through planned play activity.
- To extend and support children's spontaneous/self-initiated play.
- To extend and develop children's language and communication in their play.

Children are able to access equipment and resources independently and there are areas where children can be active or be quiet.

Areas of Learning and Development

Learning and development is categorised into three prime areas of learning:

- Communication and language. Including- listening and attention, understanding and speaking.
- Physical development. Including- moving and handling and health and self-care.
- Personal, social and emotional development. Including- making relationships, managing feelings and behaviour and self-confidence and self-awareness.

Additionally there are four specific areas of learning:

- Literacy. Including- reading and writing.
- Mathematics. Including- number, shape, space and measure.
- Understanding the world. Including- people and communities, the world and technology
- Expressive arts and design. Including- exploring and using media and materials and being imaginative.

Planning

Long Term Planning

The Reception class currently organise the curriculum through agreed termly themes over the period of the academic year. The themes are then broken into smaller areas that are familiar and of interest to young children and also enable us to deliver a creative and balanced curriculum. The long term cycle planning reflects a balance of the seven areas of learning and development from the EYFS.

Medium Term Planning

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

Short Term Planning

The day plan is informed in two ways. Firstly, through ongoing observation of child initiated or spontaneous activity and planned play opportunities (indoors and outdoors). This allows for flexibility in response to individual children's needs and interests and for revision and modification of plans. Through this, learning objectives for the next short term plan are identified. It is informed secondly by referring to the medium term plans containing objectives and activities/experiences in the half/termly topic.

Throughout the day there is a balance of 'teacher directed' (this may be whole class taught activities on the carpet or small group work. It also includes music, ICT and PE time which are sometimes taught by specialist teachers) and 'child initiated' time referred to as 'challenge time' (Play opportunities both indoors and outdoors. Children access their own resources and 'plan, do and review' their learning.)

Phonics Planning

We follow the Read Write Inc programme for phonics by Ruth Miskin. Children begin by learning initial sounds as a whole class. Once children's phonic knowledge is assessed, children are then taught in smaller groups depending on their individual phonetic ability.

Assessment and Record Keeping

We analyse and review what we know about each child's development and learning, and then make informed decisions about supporting the child's progress. This enables us to plan the next steps for individuals and groups of children by providing challenging but achievable activities and experiences to extend the children's 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 and focused narrative observations, other targeted assessments, and annotated examples of work, photographs, and information from parents. We plan for observational assessment when undertaking short term planning.

Summative Assessment

During the Reception year the children are assessed against developmental statements based on age/stage range bands. The age/stage overlap because they are not fixed age boundaries but suggest a typical range of development. All children develop at their own rates and in

their own ways. This is completed on a 6 weekly cycle and all practitioners who interact with the child contribute to the assessment process. Staff review the tracking data with the Senior Leadership Team where they monitor rates of progress and identify strategies that address learning and teaching priorities and next steps. Children who have not made expected levels of progress will be discussed so that interventions can be put into place to support those children.

At the end of the Foundation stage year children are assessed against the EYFS profile in relation to 17 early learning goal descriptor. These are based on the prime and specific areas of learning.

For each early learning goal, staff must judge whether a child is meeting the level of development expected at the end of reception year (expected), exceeding this level (exceeding), or not yet reaching this level (emerging)

The completed profile will also include a short commentary on each child's skills and abilities in relation to the three key characteristics of effective learning.