ACE Learning



Early Years Policy

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Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy

Introduction

At ACE Learning our aim is to provide a secure and caring learning environment in which all children feel eager and motivated to learn. It is one which seeks to promote the developing skills, concepts, confidence and independence of the individual child. We aim to provide effective provision which will enable children to achieve to their full potential.

Rationale

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

- A unique child – developing resilient, capable, confident and self-assured individuals
- Positive relationships – supporting the children in becoming strong and independent
- Enabling environments – where opportunities and experiences respond to the individual needs of the child by developing a strong partnership between practitioners, parents/carers and the child
- Learning and developing – an acknowledgement that children learn in different ways and at different rates

These four guiding themes work together in a holistic manner to underpin our high-quality delivery of the EYFS Curriculum.

Equally, as practitioners, we adhere to and value the principles of the Statutory Framework and the revised EYFS Guidance and aim to provide children with the opportunities to:

- Use their senses as a means of exploring the world
- Resolve conflicts, both intellectually and socially
- Learn through direct experience
- Develop confidence in their own ability to make sense of the world
- Extend skills/abilities by testing them out in a range of situations
- Initiate, carry out and review their own projects
- Draw on a range of resources to achieve their intentions, developing a flexible and open-ended approach to problems
- Take risks and learn from mistakes
- Progress by building on existing knowledge and understanding
- Express ideas and feelings
- Enjoy fun and laughter with others
- Recreate what they have felt and experienced

The Early Years Guidance for The Foundation Stage

The EYFS Guidance provides the curriculum framework for all practitioners working with children from birth to the end of Reception year or until the early learning goals are completed. This guidance is inclusive of all practitioners working within the foundation stage.

The Foundation Stage is valued as a stage in its own right and should not be seen as preparation for Key Stage 1. The Foundation Stage establishes expectations for most children to achieve by the end of the Reception Year.

Inclusive Practice

We aim to ensure that all children should be guaranteed equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, culture, class or disability. All resources are carefully selected to reflect positive images of all groups. Our planning aims to foster an appreciation of each other's cultures and beliefs along with the promotion of a healthy and positive self-image. All practitioners will aim to avoid stereotypical language, actions and situations.

Strong ongoing communication and relationships with our feeder nurseries/pre-school setting ensures continuity of strategies to support those children with a greater diversity of needs e.g. speech and language programmes already in place and continued use of Makaton signs and symbols.

Health, Wellbeing and Safety

We aim to provide a happy, stimulating environment where the children's wellbeing and safety is paramount; incorporating good quality care and consistency. We follow the Leuven Scale to monitor the child's emotional, mental, social, environmental and spiritual wellbeing.

It is the class teacher's role to ensure that all new entrants are made aware of important issues such as fire drills, first aid and safety rules. Extra assistance may be needed for some children but all practitioners should always seek to promote developing the children's independence. Many issues will be approached through the topic activities during the Reception year.

Parents as Partners.

We value the contributions of parents as the child's first and most enduring educator. Opportunities are provided daily for liaison. We value parental contribution and aim to work in partnership to maximise the child's physical, intellectual, emotional and social development.

Admissions.

We take pride in our comprehensive admissions procedures. We begin our induction timetable each September allowing prospective families up to a year to develop a working partnership with staff before the children are admitted to school (see Appendix 1).

The Reception Year

Entry Assessments

On entry, each child is allocated a key person who, during the first term, focuses on ensuring that each child feels secure, safe, happy and stimulated within the new school setting. Observational, audio and photographic evidence is collated to create an up-to-date accurate picture of the stage each child is at when entering Reception. Ongoing assessments inform planning, resourcing and target setting for individual children.

General Planning

We aim to provide children with a broad and balanced curriculum that is carefully matched to their needs. When planning the curriculum for the Foundation Stage, practitioners will take into account the different strategies for teaching and learning within the Foundation Stage.

Learning

Play-based activities are at the heart of learning in the Foundation Stage. As curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage states:

'Learning for young children is a rewarding and enjoyable experience in which they explore, investigate, discover, create, practice, rehearse, repeat, revise and consolidate their developing knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes. During the Foundation Stage many of these aspects of learning are brought together effectively through play and talking'.

We believe that well-planned play is the key to how young children learn. Providing children with opportunities to take part in a variety of play-based activities is at the core of our teaching.

The curriculum is planned to provide a balance between the following:

Child Initiated Activities: where the child makes choices from within the learning environment to meet his/her own outcomes for learning. Skilful adult interaction supports and extends play to enable the child to make progress.

Adult Initiated Activities: experiences where the practitioner provides the resources to stimulate and consolidate learning. These experiences may not always require the direct involvement of an adult.

Adult Directed Activities: experiences which are planned and supported by practitioners and which aim to meet specific learning outcomes.

Outdoor Provision

Aims

At ACE Learning our aim is to provide a stimulating, secure and safe outside learning environment where all six areas of Foundation Stage Curriculum are provided for. Children will be encouraged to actively explore the world around them, developing their creativity, independence, thinking skills and ability to solve problems across the curriculum.

Principles

Movement is essential to learning for young children. Through a range of play-based curriculum activities in the outside area, children explore and develop further skills that will include coordination, language development, problem solving, social skills, investigation and observation. As children acquire these skills, their sense of well-being and self-confidence increases.

Planning

Planning for the outside reflects the long term and medium-term planning and directly links to short term planning and children's interests. The children are given opportunities to visit both the outside and inside areas during child-initiated activity. During directed and initiated teaching the outside area is used daily. Resources in

the outdoor area are provided to stimulate, challenge and inspire children to engage in learning and provide well for both the planned and unplanned curriculum.

Role of the Adult.
The adults prepare the outside learning environment at the beginning of the session and are responsible for ensuring the equipment is stored appropriately at the end of the session. However, as the children take more ownership of the outdoor environment, they are more involved in the collection and tidying of resources,

During the sessions the adults will:

- Build in the challenge by asking open questions
- Extend talk
- Extend vocabulary/knowledge skills etc
- Challenge
- Add resources
- Demonstrate/model
- Help children see links in learning
- Support and encourage
- Re-direct the play if necessary
- Referee/help children to negotiate
- Supervise/be a safety officer/risk assessor
- Administer first aid
- Counsel when needed
- Observe and assess learning
- Record judgements and plan next steps for learning
- Provide feedback to child/other adults/parents

Transfer information

Close links have been made with the local Pre-Schools. The Early Years team visit feeder nurseries and playgroups during the term before the children start school. They meet the new children and liaise with their teachers and key workers gaining invaluable insight into the needs of the children and families who are to become part of ACE Learning.

The Nursery and Playgroup teachers ask for parents' permission to discuss individual children with the Head of School and Reception class teacher so that Special Educational Needs provision and records can be shared.

The Preschool teacher may also meet with the class teacher to discuss the Record of Transfer for each child. This ensures progression and continuity in learning throughout the child's Foundation Stage. This information is used to inform planning for the next steps in the child's learning and the first entries in the Foundation Stage data recording system.

Long and Medium Term Planning

There are seven areas of learning and development of which three are 'prime areas' and four are 'specific areas'.

Prime areas are fundamental, work together and move through to support development in all other areas. The prime areas are:

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

Specific areas include essential skills and knowledge for children to participate successfully in society. The specific areas are:

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

Through careful assessments and observations, including information provided by parents and other settings, children's development levels are assessed. The balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning as children grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas. However, if a child's progress in any prime area gives cause for concern, staff will discuss this with the child's parents and/or carers and agree how to support the child. This may also include a discussion with the SENCO in order to access Special Educational Needs support.

The guidance also identifies 'stages of learning' which state the knowledge, skills and attitudes children need to achieve the Early Learning Goals.

Individual children may be working at different levels within each of the seven areas of development.

As effective early years practitioners we aim to plan a broad and balanced range of play activities which are suited and carefully matched to the needs of the children in the setting. The Curriculum Guidance is used to support our planning.

At ACE Learning each term a topic is chosen which tries to reflect the children's interests. A balance of adult initiated and adult directed activities are often linked to these themes. A long-term plan has been drawn up to consider the environment (indoors and outside) the routine and the topic related activities. Each medium-term plan covers one topic and is separated into the seven areas of learning within the Foundation Stage. This specifies the Early Learning Goal activity, resources, key vocabulary and assessment opportunities. This has been designed to be a working document and evaluations made at the end of each block of work may result in plans being updated or modified.

Short Term Planning.

Short terms plans cover weekly activities. This is where objectives become more focussed and differentiated. The language that is to be promoted is specified along with the role of the adult.

Much of the timetable is allocated to child-initiated activities. This time is central to an early years setting as it allows children to develop many skills when supported effectively by practitioners. The way in which this cycle of plan-do-review is organised develops over the year. Children are supported by adults in the setting making their choices and understanding the rules and routines of the setting. By the end of Reception the children will be confident in selecting their own resources within the environment. The adults will work alongside the children, interacting, questioning, responding to questions. All of the activities and routines planned aim to reflect the Principles for Early Education as stated in the Foundation Stage Guidance.

Literacy and Numeracy activities occur across the week. The children receive whole class Literacy and Numeracy input. In addition, children receive phonics teaching. Literacy and Numeracy activities are practical and linked to the topic plans for the term.

The early years practitioners meet once a week to evaluate and plan the framework for teaching for the following weeks work. Further daily informal planning meetings also take place with teaching assistants to discuss activities, observations and special needs support.

Observing, Assessing, Recording and Reporting

At ACE Learning observation is regarded as a powerful tool for assessment. Practitioners meet regularly to plan and discuss observations made in the setting. These observations are used to plan the next steps in each individual child's development.

Practitioners may use their observations to target a specific child, group or activity. During Child Initiated Activity sessions practitioners will observe a specific child and will be focussed on that child's individual development. These observations will take place daily and staff will keep a record to ensure every child will be observed regularly. Observations evolve over the year focussing on the child's achievement in relation to stages of learning or early learning goals. These observations will be recorded in the teacher's recording system. Other observations and assessments occur during the adult-initiated or adult-directed activities. Practitioners will also note down any other incidental observations that may be significant to particular children's development.

Assessments are made regularly and are recorded against a specific learning objective. The teacher reviews these observations and assessments regularly ensuring that each child is being supported and challenged effectively. All observations are collated and next steps for learning identified and fed into planning.

At ACE Learning we support children in using the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning. These 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.

Self Evaluation of the Foundation Stage

At the end of the year, Early Years staff complete a self-evaluation guidance for Foundation Stage, to celebrate areas of strength and development. An action plan is then formulated specifically for the EY team which becomes part of the School Improvement Plan.

From Reception Class to Key Stage 1

During the final term in Reception, the EYFS Profile is completed for each child. The Profile provides parents and carers, staff and teachers with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels and their readiness for Year 1. The Profile includes on-going observation, all relevant records held by the setting, discussions with parents/carers and any other adults whom the teacher, parent/carer judges can offer a useful contribution.

Each child's level of development is assessed against the early learning goals. The profile indicates whether children are meeting expected levels of development or if they are exceeding expected levels or not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging'). Year 1 teachers are given a copy of the Profile report together with a short commentary on each child's skills and abilities in relation to the three key characteristics of effective learning. This informs the dialogue between Reception and Year 1 teachers about each child's stage of development and learning needs and assists with the planning of activities in Year 1.

Assessment

Assessment for learning takes place regularly through observation and assessments of teacher directed and initiated work. Information gained from assessments informs planning.

Summative assessments will support judgements against the Foundation Stage Profile.

Equal Opportunities

The Foundation Stage curriculum is inclusive and facilitates the needs of all children regardless of their age, size, mobility, gender, ethnicity and ability. (This is linked to the school's policies for Equal Opportunities and Inclusion).

Health and Safety

Practitioners are mindful of elements and ensure the children are appropriately dressed and protected. Parents are informed of their responsibilities regarding learning in the outside environment and the provision of appropriate footwear, clothing and sun-creams.

ACE Learning is fully aware of the responsibility to ensure safe access to the outside and that equipment is regularly maintained. Risk assessments are carried out in accordance with guidelines and the outside area is checked before use to ensure safety.

There are clear expectations of positive behaviour. A code of practice for the appropriate use of the environment is negotiated and agreed by adults and children and revisited through the year.

Adults are mindful of the school Health and Safety policy for the moving of equipment.

Adults are encouraged to be vigilant and aware of possible hazards which could affect the children's security and safety (stranger danger).

Appendix 1

A variety of events are planned to develop a positive partnership between parents/carers and practitioners.

Induction Sessions	The children visit the academy for four sessions prior to starting education and have the opportunity to get to know the Reception teachers during these visits. On the last session the children are invited to stay for lunch. This helps the children become familiar with the routine, the learning environment and staff.
New Parent Evening	The Early Years team give a short presentation introducing parents to the routines and daily activities, both teacher-directed/initiated and child-initiated. There is also an opportunity following this to speak informally with Head of School and class teachers.
Story-times	Pre-school children are invited into school for story session with our school staff.
Starting school consultations	Parents are invited to a consultation to discuss their child which will help inform planning for the next steps in the child's learning. They will complete an entry profile of the child, identifying needs, concerns, specific abilities and other general information.
Parent workshops	The Early Years Team organise a variety of activities giving parents ideas on how to support their child at home.