



## **Early Years Policy**

## **Introduction**

“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 Early Years for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.”

- “Early Years Early Years Stage Profile”

Department for Children, Schools and Families 2012

## **Principles**

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

- A unique child. We recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Children’s attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement as well as celebration and rewards to encourage and develop a positive attitude to learning.
- Positive relationships. We recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships and aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families.
- Enabling environments. We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children’s development. Through observations we assess the children’s interests, stages of development and learning needs before planning challenging and achievable activities and experiences to extend their learning.
- Learning and development. The Early Years Unit is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet and rest. The unit is set up in learning areas where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently.

Early childhood is the Early Years on which children build the rest of their lives. At Millfields Community School we greatly value the importance that the EYFS plays in laying secure Early Years for future learning and development. However, we also believe that early childhood is valid in itself 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 for children is from birth to five years of age. All children begin school with a wide variety of experiences and learning and it is the privilege of the adults working in the Early Years stage to accept the task of building upon that prior learning experience. This is done through an holistic approach to learning ensuring that parents and guardians, support staff and the Early Years Stage team work effectively together to support the learning and development of the children in their charge.

## **Aims**

It is every child’s right to grow up safe, healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and with economic well-being. The overarching aim of the EYFS is to help young children achieve these five outcomes. We will provide a broad and balanced curriculum that will enable each child to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually to their full potential. Each child is valued as an individual and teaching and learning is based on the understanding that children develop at different rates.

### **At Millfields Community School, we aim to:**

- Provide a safe, challenging, stimulating, caring and sharing 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 Early Years for further learning and development in Key Stage 1 and beyond.
- 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 and guardians and value their contributions ensuring that all children, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability.
- Provide opportunities whereby children experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development.
- Provide experiences for all children, whatever their needs, which are inclusive rather than parallel.

### **Learning and Development**

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

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

Additionally there are four specific areas of learning:

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

### **Characteristics of effective learning**

The characteristics of effective learning underpin achievement of these prime and specific areas of learning. They describe factors which play a central role in a child's learning and in becoming an effective learner and are vital elements of support for the transition process from EYFS to Year 1. The characteristics represent processes rather than outcomes. Information describing the child's characteristics of effective learning will provide Year 1 teachers with vital background and context when considering the child's next stage of development and future learning needs.

#### Playing and exploring – engagement

- Finding out and exploring
- Playing with what they know
- Being willing to 'have a go'

#### Active learning – motivation

- Being involved and concentrating
- Keeping trying
- Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

#### Creating and thinking critically – thinking

- Having their own ideas
- Making links
- Choosing ways to do things

## **Observation, Assessment and Planning**

At Millfields Community School planning is divided into long term, medium term and short term. Long term plans state the topics to be covered for each year. Medium term plans illustrate the objectives being taught each term. Short term or weekly plans, show specific activities planned to achieve the objectives. Staff ensure that all children are encouraged to experience all areas of activity during the week, although they may not experience them each day. A mixture of directed and free choice activities are planned and children's choices are carefully monitored to ensure a balanced programme. The children begin Early Years by having free choice of activities for most of the sessions. This free programme is gradually directed by staff as children get older and more mature, so that as they approach transfer to Key Stage One, they are prepared for the Key Stage One framework.

Good planning is the key to making children's learning effective, exciting, varied and progressive. Effective learning builds on and extends what children know and can already do. Our planning shows how the principles of the EYFS are put into practice and is always informed by observations we have made of the children, in order to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning needs. All staff who work in the Early Years Stage are involved in this process.

The planning within the EYFS is based around the children's interests. These plans are used by the EYFS team as a guide for weekly planning. However, we may alter these in response to the needs of the children. This fostering of the children's interests develops a high level of motivation for the children's learning.

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 long, short and recorded observations and this involves the teacher and other adults as appropriate. These observations are recorded and used to inform the Senior Leadership Team. The parents and guardians are given the opportunity to meet with the Early Years Stage Team each term and, at the end of the third term, we provide a written summary in relation to the children's early learning goals to parents and guardians.

## **Learning Through Play**

At Millfields Community School, we do not make a distinction between work and play. Children learn through planned play activities and staff will decide when child-initiated or adult-led play activities would provide the most effective learning opportunities.

## **The Learning Environment**

The Early Years classrooms are organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, quiet, creative etc. Each classroom has defined learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. The Foundation Stage has enclosed outdoor areas, and children are able to free-flow between the indoor and outdoor spaces. Being outdoors offers the children opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. They are able to explore, use their senses, develop their language skills and be physically active. We plan activities and resources both inside and outside enabling the children to develop in all the areas of learning.

## **The Outdoor environment**

Learning outside the classroom supports the development of healthy and active lifestyles by offering children opportunities for physical activity, freedom and movement, and promoting a sense of well-being. It gives them contact with the natural world and offers them experiences that are unique to outdoors, such as direct contact with the weather and the seasons. Outdoor play also supports children's problem-solving skills and nurtures their creativity, as well as providing rich opportunities for their developing imagination, inventiveness and resourcefulness. And, of course, the outdoor environment offers more space than indoors and therefore is particularly important to those children who learn best through active movement. Which is why at Millfields families are asked to provide their children with appropriate all-purpose clothing (Wellington boots /rainproof macs with hoods) so we can learn outside whatever the weather!

## The Induction Process

Both Nursery and Reception parents are invited to a workshop in the summer term to provide them with essential information for the next academic year

During the Summer Term prior to starting school the following September the following visits are conducted:

- Your Child's Class Teacher and Class Nursery Officer will visit you and your child in their home environment for a "home Visit"
- Each child and their parents and carers will be invited to a Stay and Play Session so they can spend some time at Millfields Community School in order to familiarise themselves with both the staff and the Early Years environment
- Families are invited to getting ready for Nursery/Reception Sessions run in the Children's Centre over the Summer holidays

When children join the school in September the following procedures will apply in order that they can gradually adjust to their new surroundings:

- Children will start at different times during the first few weeks of term so that they have some one to one time with their new Key worker and their parent/carer on their first day
- When settling your child into Millfields you will be invited to work closely with your child's key worker and all other staff to ensure your child feels safe and secure
- It is expected that you should set aside at least 2 half days for settling your child. Your child is free to stay for the full session as long as you and the Early years team agree that your child is well settled.
- The needs of individuals will be taken into consideration within this period, therefore, you may be asked to stay on the premises during the settling in period and you should only leave when you have reached an agreement with the staff that your child is well settled
- The staff in Early Years are happy to offer advice and support during this period

## Organisation of classes

In Nursery we have 2 classes, each having a maximum of 26 children. We offer Nursery education grant funded (Free) part time places where children can attend for 15 hours per week. There are a limited number of full time places made available, and these will be allocated to the most vulnerable children and those in need. Children can attend each morning from 9.00am-12.00pm or each afternoon 12.30pm-3.30pm for 3 hours per session. All children must be accompanied to and from school by a known adult. Millfields Nursery consists of two rooms and an outside space. It also has links through to the Children's Centre where both day-care and education is also provided. We share the same vision and ethos and we are able to share the facilities on offer within the centre e.g. the garden, the organic roof terrace and the sensory room. Although your child will be registered within a 'base' classroom, they will be able to access activities in all the learning spaces in the nursery.

Reception is divided into three classes. Each class has a maximum of thirty children. The school day begins at 9.00am and ends at 3.30pm. All children must be accompanied to and from school by a known adult.

All Early Years classes have a Class teacher and Nursery Officer, Nursery classes also have a teaching assistant to support. Each child is assigned a **key person**. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs, to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents.

## **Home and School Links –Parents as Partners**

We recognise that parents and carers are a child's first and most enduring educators and we aim for the school and parents and carers to work closely in Early Years. This can have a very positive impact on a child's development but relies on a two-way flow of information and knowledge.

We will develop this working relationship between the school and parents and carers as follows:

- We will outline the school's expectations in a Learning Contract.
- We will hold an Early Years Coffee Morning and an Early Years social evening as parent consultations early in the year to establish how a child is settling into the school environment as well as to build on community cohesion and wellbeing
- We will send home "Home Observation" forms designed to enable parents or guardians to record outstanding achievements and/or any concerns
- We will publish a Parents' Booklet detailing the areas of learning and the overarching theme of the half-term.
- We will operate an "open door" policy that will allow parents and carers to discuss concerns and developments in an informal manner. Conversely, if Early Years staff have concerns about the progress of a child, they will immediately approach parents and carers to discuss them.
- We will conduct workshops for parents and carers to enable them to be familiar with the teaching methods used in school to make it easier to emulate them at home.
- We will provide 3 further parent/carer consultations/ evenings at the end of each term to inform parents and carers formally of a child's overall progress.
- There will be opportunities for parents and carers to visit the school on a volunteer basis to assist with the children's learning for example by assisting with "Reading Through Play" or support on trips and at outdoor school.
- Parents and guardians are invited to termly sharing assemblies where your child will demonstrate some of the things they have learnt over the term as well as give you the opportunity to see their classroom and some of the work they have produced
- You are also invited to an annual Open day to visit the school informally so you can to fully appreciate all of the work and activities that take place on an on-going basis at Millfields

## **Intimate Care**

"Intimate" care is any care which involves washing, touching or carrying out an invasive procedure that most children are able to carry out themselves. However, depending on a child's age and stage of development, they may need some support, for example dressing, wiping their bottom after using the toilet and changing underwear following an accident. In most cases, intimate care is to do with personal hygiene and it is good practise for the school to inform the school nurse of all children requiring intimate care.

Every child has the right to privacy, dignity and a professional approach from all staff when meeting their needs and it is important that staff work in partnership with parents to give the right support to an individual child. No intimate care is to be given without the express written permission of the parent or guardian of that child and all parents and guardians will be asked to provide that permission when their child joins Millfields Nursery.

## **Inclusion and Equal Opportunities**

Children with special educational needs will be supported as appropriate to enable them to access the curriculum fully. This includes children that are more able and those with specific learning difficulties and disabilities. Individual Education Plans identify targets in specific areas of learning for those children who require additional support commensurate with the school's Special Educational Needs Policy. The school's SEN Co-ordinator is responsible for providing additional information and advice to staff and parents and for arranging external intervention and support as necessary.

In line with the school's Equal Opportunities Policy, we will provide all children, regardless of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability with equal access to all

aspects of school life to ensure that every child is valued as an individual. All staff are role models and are aware of the influence they have in promoting positive attitudes and use that influence to challenge stereotypical attitudes.

### **Safeguarding**

The school takes its child protection responsibilities very seriously. Any concerns, which the school has, will be noted and, if deemed necessary, will be reported to the relevant agency. The safety of the child is always of paramount importance. The full Safeguarding Policy is available in school and online for parents to read if they wish.

### **Positive Behaviour Management**

The Nursery follows the same Positive Behaviour Management policy and systems as the rest of the school. Please refer to Positive Behaviour Management Policy for more information.

### **Monitoring and Review**

It is the responsibility of the EYFS staff to follow this policy. The Senior Leadership Team will carry out monitoring on the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring system.

**Revised: January 2015**

**Review: January 2017**