

TATWORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE POLICY

Reviewed by Premises and Curriculum Committee 3 March 2016

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Introduction

This policy outlines the purposes, nature and management of Early Years education at Tatworth School. The term Early Years is used to describe the children of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) who are in the Reception Class.

“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.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children’s ‘school readiness’ and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.”

Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, September 2014, DfE

The Early Years Foundation Stage describes the period from birth until the end of the Reception year. It is distinct and important in its own right and as a preparation for later schooling. Young children need an environment that is safe and secure where they can play, explore, experiment, develop confidence, be curious and learn. At Tatworth School we believe it is our duty to develop a love of learning by being motivated and excited by the opportunity to learn through play and first hand experiences.

Our aims and principles

We aim for all children to settle well into school and to make very good progress across all areas of learning.

- Effective education requires both a carefully structured curriculum and practitioners who understand and are able to implement the curriculum requirements.
- Effective education requires practitioners who understand that children develop rapidly during the early years – physically, intellectually, socially and emotionally.
- Practitioners should ensure that all children feel included, secure and valued and foster positive attitudes towards learning, trust, confidence, curiosity, responsibility and independence.
- To present children with a planned curriculum which develops each child’s knowledge, skills and understanding in all areas of learning in a challenging, imaginative and progressive way recognising what the child already knows and can do.
- To ensure all children work towards and succeed in achieving the best that they can within the Prime and Specific areas of learning.
- To pursue the Aspects of Learning of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum towards the Early Learning Goals.
- To promote the development of the Characteristics of Effective Learning: Playing and exploring, Active learning and Creating and thinking critically.

- No child should be excluded or disadvantaged; special educational needs are identified at an early stage and appropriate arrangements are made for them.
- To establish and maintain good relationships with parents, carers and other child care providers.
- To be effective, an early year's curriculum should be carefully structured (recognising different starting points: relevant to levels of need both indoors and outdoors.)
- There should be opportunities for children to engage in activities planned by adults and those that they plan or initiate for themselves, making choices and becoming independent in their learning.
- To use focused assessment and record keeping, this is based on direct observation and discussion, and used to inform future planning.
- Well-planned, purposeful activity and appropriate intervention by practitioners will engage children in the learning process.
- For children to have rich, challenging and stimulating experiences the learning environment should be well planned and organised.
- Above all, effective learning and development for young children requires high quality care and education by practitioners.

How our work is organised and planned:

Arrangements for admission to Tatworth School are very carefully organised. Children are admitted in the September after their fourth birthday in accordance with County guidelines. The children are mainly drawn from Tatworth Pre-school and additionally the school accepts children from Chard and surrounding villages. Alternatively the children may have attended day care centres and home settings with a child minder, but for others, attending school will be their first experience of a group setting and for this to be a positive experience it is essential that school and parents work closely together. The parents are given a copy of the school prospectus, a guide to the Reception Class 'Starting Together' and a copy of the booklet 'All About Me'; a booklet to be completed by the parents and child together before he/she begins school.

The school implements a Pre-School Integration Programme (P.I.P) during the Summer Term before the children begin school. This aims to provide an easy transition from other settings to the Reception Class. This involves an initial meeting in May with parents, to introduce the school and describe the arrangements for part time education in September. The expectations of the school, curriculum, routines and practical matters are also outlined. The parents and children are then offered visits to the Reception Class where they can experience some of the activities they will be taking part in when they begin school. The children are able to familiarise themselves with their new setting and carers and this gives the Reception teacher and the parent an opportunity to discuss any particular issues. The children are then invited to attend a short session without their parents alongside children from their new class. In addition to this the Reception teacher and Teaching Assistant arrange to visit the preschools in order to meet and play alongside the new children in a setting that is familiar to them. Visits to the Reception by the preschool to take part in joint activity sessions are also organised. In early September prior to starting school the Reception teacher and Teaching Assistant visit children and their parents in their own homes, this provides opportunities for the child and parent to ask any further questions and helps to reduce anxiety in the first few days.

The children start school on a part time basis, gradually building up to full time education by the third week of the first term. Parents are supplied with a clear schedule indicating when their child should attend school. The class start together as a whole group, promoting a cohesive approach and enabling all children to continue to foster friendships which they have developed whilst in their preschool settings. Part time education fulfils many important functions:

- It eases very young children into a new environment and its routines gradually
- It helps adults and children to develop good relationships with each other
- The children are given time to adjust to a full day
- It assists children in adjusting to a larger peer group with fewer adults to support them.

The arrangements are flexible and reviewed annually; part time education may be extended in individual cases.

The Curriculum:

There are seven areas of learning and development which must shape educational programmes in early year's settings. All areas of learning and development are important and inter connected. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. These three areas, the prime areas, are:

- Communication and language development involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations.
- Physical development involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food.
- Personal, social and emotional development involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities. The school puts a particular emphasis on developing social skills and supporting children's emotional literacy. The children will be expected to work cooperatively and develop their social skills as they move through the school.

Providers must also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The four specific areas are:

- Literacy development: involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children must be given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems, and other written materials) to ignite their interest.
- Mathematics: involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces, and measures.
- Understanding the world: involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.
- Expressive arts and design: involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

Attention is given to meeting the four guiding principles which shape practice in the early years these are:

- every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;
- children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**;

- children learn and develop well in **enabling environments**, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers; and
- **Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.** The framework covers the education and care of all children in early year's provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Our curriculum is planned through a series of themes and topics, which provide experiences across all seven areas of learning. We plan a mixture of child and adult led activities and staff ensure that all children are encouraged to experience all areas of the curriculum during the week, although they may not experience them all each day. The structure of the day is gradually directed by staff, as children get older and mature, so that as they approach the transfer to Key Stage 1, they are prepared for the more formal curriculum.

Initially, the children are separate from the rest of the school whilst they settle into their new environment and learn about the expectations and routines of the school. They are introduced to Key Stage 1 via shared lunchtimes and assemblies when the class teacher feels that it is appropriate, usually towards the end of the first half term. After this they are sensitively integrated into whole school activities such as school assemblies and performances from visiting groups.

Fast Phonics:

Phonics is taught on a daily basis through a whole class approach. Each phonics session lasts 15 minutes and is delivered through a mix of aural, verbal and visual techniques in order to develop the child's listening skills, recognition of sounds and ability to segment and blend sounds within words. As the child progresses the phonics scheme is adapted to focus on key areas of development and to develop a deeper understanding of Fast Phonics before moving into Year 1 and starting the Part 1 programme of phonics.

For children who may require additional teaching or support with their understanding of the phonics programme a second session of phonics teaching is provided each day during the late morning. This intervention work is delivered throughout the week and may be as part of a group or on a 1-1 basis depending on the individual needs of the child.

Learning to read is a key skill which all children need to be able to succeed in in order to fully access the EYFS, the National Curriculum and to achieve their full potential in life. It is therefore essential that children in Reception class are provided with the tools that enable them to develop a firm understanding of the skills required in order to become fluent readers. Children learn to identify and 'hear' the sounds in words within the Fast Phonics programme and this is supported in school through regular reading opportunities. This may include reading to the teacher on a 1-1 basis, reading to a volunteer helper or reading within a small group. Parents are encouraged and promoted to listen to their child read several times a week and each child's home reading book must be changed twice weekly.

It is important that children have access to listening to stories which contain a broader and richer vocabulary than found in their own books. This is achieved through daily teaching opportunities, stories being read to the class, 1-1 reading and most importantly by parents reading to their child on a regular basis. Educational experts have suggested that by 5 years old a child's vocabulary will predict their educational success and outcomes by the age of 30 (P Tassoni, 2015).

The importance and focus on the teaching of phonics and reading is explained to parents during the Autumn Curriculum evening at the start of each academic year. This enables the teaching team and parents to discuss aspects of reading and to answer questions parents may have as a result of their child's initial weeks

within school. Opportunities for further support and discussion are offered throughout the year during parent's evenings or after school.

Handwriting:

Children in Reception are taught to form letters using cursive style. Initially this is introduced through the use of whiteboards, sensory play using shaving foam, sand and paint, tracing over patterns and fine motor skills activities which help to strengthen the child's hands and fingers in order for them to gain pencil control. Funky Fingers activities take place three times a week. These activities focus on the child experiencing a variety of finger strengthening activities which are accompanied by music and the child must complete them by the time the music finishes. The teacher ensures that all children's pencil grip is assessed on a regular basis in order for them to be provided with activities which are suited to strengthen their individual skills.

From the beginning of the Spring term the children are taught short structured handwriting sessions twice a week. The teacher supports a small group of children to develop their formation of letters and promote correct pencil grip. During this time the Teaching Assistant supports the rest of the class to complete fine motor skills and literacy activities.

Talk for writing:

Talk for writing is a key part of the curriculum within Reception class and is taught over a three week period. Each half term the children will learn both a fiction and a non-fiction text. Each three week cycle starts with a WOW moment which inspires the children to become fully engaged in the text. The children learn to retell the text through a combination of pictorial visual aids, written text and physical actions. Throughout the process the children learn to explore the meanings of new words, gain an understanding of vocabulary, the structure of differing texts and the ability to tell a story of their own creation. The in depth exploration of texts throughout the Reception year enables the children to build a broad bank of stories which they are able to retell and use as a basis for their own independent writing whilst strengthening their understanding of the 'language' of writing.

Staffing:

The Reception Class is staffed by a full time class teacher and a full time Teaching Assistant. In addition, effective use is made of voluntary help. Parents of children within the school are invited to come in and assist with a variety of tasks which may include listening to children read, assisting with outdoor learning afternoons, accompanying visits and helping with cooking activities.

Outdoor play:

The outdoor play space is securely fenced and provides a safe play space where children can develop their physical skills and learn to share with others through structured and informal play. Outdoor play is a very important part of children's development and children enjoy using the play trail, bikes, hoops, balls and take part in problem solving activities such as den building. In addition the children use the courtyard facilities extensively too.

Assessment and record keeping:

For whole school aspects of assessment recording and reporting please refer to the school policy on assessment.

Baseline Assessment:

The Reception teacher carries out a Baseline Assessment on each child during the first half term. This assessment is not statutory and is used by the Reception teacher to plan effective learning opportunities, which extend skills, knowledge, confidence and understanding in the seven areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Consideration is also given to the Characteristics of Effective Learning which reflect each child's learning style:

- **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; and
- **Creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile:

Children's progress is charted throughout the year through on-going formative assessments such as observations and planned assessment opportunities. This information is entered onto the Tapestry online system which provides the teacher and parents with the opportunity to update the child's progress and achievements throughout the Reception year.

In the final term of the year in which the child reaches age five, and no later than 30 June in that term, the EYFS Profile must be completed for each child. The Profile provides parents and carers, practitioners 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 must reflect: on-going observation; all relevant records held by the school; discussions with parents and carers, and any other adults whom the teacher, parent or carer judges can offer a useful contribution.

Each child's level of development must be assessed against the Early Learning Goals.

The teacher must indicate whether children are meeting expected levels of development, or if they are exceeding expected levels, or not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging'). This is the EYFS Profile.

Tapestry Online Learning Journal:

Tapestry online learning journal provides Reception staff with an online tracking tool with which to track children's progress throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. Each child has their own online learning journal which is used as the prime method which the Teacher and Teaching Assistant use to record observations on each child within the class. Observations may be entered on individual children or as part of a group observation. I pads are used by the staff to photograph or video children whilst they are participating in activities throughout the day, these can then be annotated and links made to the seven Areas of Learning and the Characteristics of Effective Learning. Each child's learning journal can have individual accounts set up for parents to access and to enable parents to enter their own observations on their child based upon activities which they participate in out of school. It is important to note that additional observations and assessments are also undertaken during the course of the academic year which when combined with the online journal helps to inform the Teachers planning and teaching to meet the needs of each individual child.

Other assessments:

Each term –

- The children provide a piece of independent writing or storytelling which is collated in an assessment book.
- Children's phonic knowledge is assessed using Fast Phonics and progress is measured through half termly assessments. These then form the basis of the next half terms teaching and enables the teacher to offer targeted intervention where required.
- Mathematical understanding through shape, space, measure and numbers is assessed.

On-going –

- Reading records and the class reading record is updated regularly.
- Word recognition is assessed termly with a final summative assessment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Letter formation, language development, investigative work, problem solving skills, creative activities, personal and social development, and physical development are assessed through on-going observation during normal classroom activities and recorded on the Tapestry online observation system.

The teacher and teaching assistant support children with special needs and review observations to identify the needs of individual children. Where appropriate the Senco will undertake additional observations and provide support in order to gain further support for the child.

At transfer to Key Stage 1 the class teachers meet to discuss the needs of each child.

Parental involvement:

Parents are partners in childrens learning. We value their opinions and the information they can give us and involve them whenever we can. The following opportunities for contacts with parents are:

- Parent consultations and advice both formal and informal.
- Support and advice for parents of children with special needs via the SENCO.
- Parents help on school visits and sometimes share special skills.
- Social and fundraising activities.
- Parents are invited to help with classroom activities such as reading.
- Reception parents support their children by reading with them at home.

Links with the community and other agencies:

We use the opportunities offered by the local community in the following way:

- Visiting local parks, shops and other attractions
- People in the locality who come to talk to the children (police, fire service, dentists)
- Local interest groups such as the church, hobbies, experts.
- We maintain close links with Tatworth Preschool and other feeder preschools.