



“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.” DfES, 2021

Rationale

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives.

The Early Years curriculum promotes children’s social, emotional, spiritual, moral, physical and intellectual (cognitive) development and provides a sound basis for later education. At Devonshire Primary School, the Early Years Policy relates to children in both the Nursery and Reception classes, and the children making the transition into Year One, as defined by the Foundation Stage.

Aims

Our aim is to provide the highest quality care and education for all our children thereby giving them a strong foundation for their future learning.

We:

- promote all round development through a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum, which responds to the needs and interests of the child, and has an emphasis on learning through play;
- promote the importance of developing speaking and listening skills, and encourage the children to be able to express their needs and feelings;
- provide a safe, secure and stimulating environment with motivating and enjoyable learning experiences that enable children to become confident and independent;
- establish and maintain partnership between the home and school and acknowledge the important role of parents/carers in their child’s education;
- help children to develop their self- esteem and confidence, and to encourage the development of self- discipline and independence;
- develop children’s early knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes;
- ensure continuity of approach for all Foundation Stage children in all Early Years classes
- provide a caring and inclusive learning environment which is sensitive to the requirements of individual children, including those with additional needs.

Broad Guidelines:

At Devonshire we believe that parents and carers are the children's first educators and therefore we aim to work closely with them to ensure they are involved in their children's learning at school. The induction period into school is a very important time in building those initial relationships.

Starting School - Partnership with Parents

Transition -Nursery

1. We hold an afternoon 'welcome meeting' during the summer term before the child is due to start, and provide information to all parents. The Nursery staff offer and plan home visits to exchange information with parents and to ensure smooth transition for the child as s/he joins the school. These visits are also important in forging home – school partnerships. These are carried out at the beginning of the Autumn term, shortly before the child is due to start.
2. Parents/carers are invited to visit the classroom with their child and spend some time familiarising themselves with the classroom, staff and equipment. This 'Stay and Play' visit precedes their first full session in school.
3. Nursery staff take into account the child's individual level of confidence, knowledge and competencies in order to plan the curriculum. Ongoing observations are made of the child's abilities and needs and these are recorded in individual records of progress, which are maintained throughout the child's time in Nursery.
4. Staff regularly meet with parents, sharing information relating to the child's health, well-being and happiness as well as formally reporting on progress and achievement at the end of their time in Nursery.
5. To keep the parents informed and so that they can better support their child at home, Parent Workshops and Stay and Play sessions are planned.

Transition - Reception

1. We hold a 'welcome meeting' during the summer term before the child is due to start, and provide information to all parents. This includes the start dates, uniform, arrangements for medical concerns, and a brief introduction to the Reception curriculum. Parents have an opportunity to ask questions and chat informally to the staff.
2. Children are invited to visit the classroom to meet their teacher. This visit takes place towards the end of the summer term. New children to the school are invited to meet their new peers and teacher. All children at Devonshire's Nursery will have regular opportunities to explore the Reception classrooms.
3. Reception staff arrange the entrance procedure in order that each child has their first experience of Reception class in small groups. For the first day of term, the summer born children from each Reception class attend in the morning and stay for lunch. On the second day of term these children are joined by the Spring- born children. On the third day, the Autumn- born children join for half a day and lunch. After this, the children will stay all day, unless they need more support to settle. This can be discussed on an individual basis. Our settling in procedures allow the children more time to familiarise themselves with their teachers, classmates, classroom and equipment.

4. Reception staff take into account the child's individual level of confidence, knowledge and competencies in order to plan the curriculum. They liaise with Nursery staff to discuss the children's needs and obtain information on children joining the school from feeder Nurseries and playgroups. The Reception staff offer and plan home visits for all children starting in Reception. This gives the parents the opportunity to outline their child's interests and needs.

Observations are made of the child's abilities and needs throughout the year as defined by the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile.

5. In the Autumn and Spring terms we hold parent consultation meetings to discuss the child's progress and development towards the Foundation Stage Profile Outcomes. Within the final term of Reception, we provide parents with a report based on their child's development against each of the Early Learning Goals and the characteristics of their learning. The parents are then given the opportunity to discuss these judgements with the Reception teacher in preparation for Year 1.

Safety

Children's safety and welfare is paramount. We know that "children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them." (DFE Statutory Framework for EYFS 2021). We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We allow children to take risks and provide them with the skills to recognise and avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children. Safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our safeguarding policy.

We promote the good health of the children in our care in numerous ways, including the provision of nutritious food and following set procedures when children become ill or have an accident.

Curriculum Planning

The Early Years Foundation Stage applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. This policy adheres to the Statutory Framework of the EYFS and the four guiding principles that shape practice within Early Years settings.

- 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.
- The importance of learning and development. Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.

We use the non-statutory guidance Birth to 5 Matters to support our daily planning.

Principles into practice

As part of our practice we:

- Provide a balanced curriculum, based on the EYFS, across the seven areas of learning, using play as the vehicle for learning.
- Promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.
- Provide early intervention for those children who require additional support.
- Work in partnership with parents and within the wider context. We welcome and actively encourage parents to participate confidently in their child's education and care.
- Plan challenging learning experiences, based on the individual child, informed by observation and assessment.
- Provide opportunities for children to engage in activities that are adult-initiated and child-initiated, supported by the adult.
- Provide a secure and safe learning environment indoors and out.

1. Activities are planned by the staff working together, based on the understanding that young children learn best through first-hand experience and purposeful, worthwhile play. This planning and philosophy is underpinned by the Early Learning Goals, which are statutory for children throughout the Foundation Stage.

2. We value all our children as individuals, irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability or gender. Curriculum planning takes into account and meets the needs and interests of the individual child, including Special Educational Needs and disabilities, (SEND) and English as an Additional Language (EAL), as well as promoting equal opportunities and diversity. We strongly believe that early identification of children with additional needs is crucial in enabling us to give the child the support that they need and in doing so, work closely with parents and outside agencies. (Please refer to our Special Needs Policy and Equality Policy)

3. Knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes are developed through an exciting and challenging curriculum which is based on our observation of the children's needs, interests, and stages of development across the seven areas of learning and enables them to achieve and exceed the early learning goals. All the seven areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. They frequently overlap to reflect the holistic way that children learn.

Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

These three areas are the prime areas:

- Communication and Language
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development

Staff working with the youngest children in Nursery will focus strongly on the three prime areas, which are the basis for successful learning in the other four specific areas. The three prime areas reflect the key skills and capacities all children need to develop and learn effectively, and become ready for school. The balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning as the children move through the Early Years and grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas.

Children are also supported through the four specific areas, through which the prime areas are strengthened and applied.

Specific areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

We acknowledge that each child is unique and that they learn in different ways. Our teaching reflects the three characteristics of effective learning:

- playing and exploring- children investigate and experience things and have a go
- active learning -children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties
- creating and thinking critically- children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things

The Early Learning Goals and Educational Programmes provide a basic curriculum structure, through which knowledge, understanding and skills are developed. The Early Learning Goals link into the Key Stage One curriculum. In the second half of the Summer Term, the children are prepared for the transition into Year One.

4. In the Nursery long-term plans and half-termly themes are uploaded onto the website for parents' information and reference. Regular newsletters, the 'Week Ahead' keep parents informed about topics, activities within the class and events.

In Reception, parents are regularly updated by newsletter about topics, sounds, words and maths activities that the children are undertaking.

We acknowledge that parents are the primary educator of their child and have a huge impact on their learning. We value parents' contributions to their child's learning journey and encourage them to supplement our observations with information from home, which provides us with a valuable insight into their child's learning at home.

The Learning Environment

A well-planned and carefully organised learning environment, indoor and outdoor, is essential in the delivery of an effective curriculum. The Early Years areas are designed to be welcoming, attractive and aesthetically pleasing and to provide safe areas for play and learning. We are fortunate that both Nursery and Reception have access to large, enclosed Outdoor Learning Environments which all Foundation Stage children can access throughout the day. There is also a woodland area and field which the children have access to at certain times. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in a different way and on a different scale. The children are able to be physically active and exuberant. Staff plan activities and resources for the outdoors in all areas of learning. The EYFS classrooms are set up in learning areas where the children can locate equipment and resources independently. The Reception children also access the shared Resource Area where children can extend their learning through activities such as role play, sand and water play, large construction and being creative.

All areas of the curriculum are delivered through a balance of adult- led and child-initiated activities.

At Devonshire, we use a wide range of equipment and materials planned in a way to stimulate and advance children's physical, intellectual, emotional and social growth. When resources are purchased, care is taken that they reflect today's multicultural society and are consistent with the school's values and our equal opportunities policy.

Children are encouraged to be independent in their self- help skills and routines, to be confident and to progress at their own rate. The environment is planned to stimulate learning and promote enquiry. Equipment is generally accessible so that children learn to select and put away materials. It is regularly checked for cleanliness and safety.

Opportunities for learning are continued at home.

In Nursery, children are encouraged to bring in items from home to enhance our theme-based curriculum. The Nursery library provides opportunities for the children to change books weekly. The children also have the opportunity to borrow maths games on a weekly basis.

In Reception, children are encouraged to bring in artefacts to develop our topics, and favourite items are shown and discussed at our daily showing time. At home, children reinforce their learning through weekly homework to practise sounds and handwriting. They participate in the Home/School reading scheme and have the opportunity to borrow books from the school library.

Learning through play

Much of the children's learning is through play- based activities – some of which are always available (continuous provision) and some based around a topic. As well as adult- led activities, children will explore and experiment with materials and equipment in order to discover how the world works for themselves in child- initiated activities. Staff will provide activities based around a child's interests to ensure they are motivated to learn through their choice of play/ activity. We aim to provide a wide range of first- hand experiences.

The Role of Adults

In the nursery classes, the ratio of trained adults to pupils is at least 1:13. In the Reception classes, the ratio is 1:15, reflecting our commitment to providing a sound foundation and enhanced learning opportunities for children's educational development.

All staff are involved to a greater or lesser degree with the planning and delivery of the Foundation Stage including:

- planning the classroom and weekly activities
- selecting equipment
- making home visits and communication with parents
- working with children in all areas of the curriculum
- observing and assessing children and recording their progress
- liaising with main school staff and taking an active part in whole school meetings.

The class teachers have overall responsibility for ensuring the effective delivery of the Foundation Stage curriculum.

Observation, Assessment and Recording of Pupil Progress

Baseline Observations: During the first half term in Reception, the school will conduct the statutory DFE baseline. This is a short, interactive and practical assessment of the child's literacy, communication, language and mathematical skills when they begin school. Alongside this, we have a transition period of getting to know the children and conduct initial observations to inform their learning priorities and discover how best to support every individual child.

Children's learning is assessed through observation and through everyday adult/child communication and interaction. Observation enables staff to establish what children know; what they understand and what they can do; and identify next steps in their learning.

At Devonshire, the children's' work and observations are kept in their learning journey.

Through assessment and record keeping, the Early Years staff provide children, parents and future teachers with a systematic record of each child's achievement and progress. In Reception Classes this is recorded in accordance with the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile.

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