

Richard Cloudesley School

EYFS Policy

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Principles

Early Years practitioners work to build on what a child has already learned at home and in the community. Our partnership with parents, and their knowledge about their children, underpin and inform all our work. We know that our youngest children need to be active learners: involved, engaged and motivated. They will each learn in a variety of different ways.

Our curriculum for the Early Years Foundation Stage recognises that we are developing the whole child and aims to meet all their learning needs. Our approach to learning emphasises first hand experience, play and independence.

The Early Years team works closely together with families, therapists and medical staff. In this way, we best meet the needs of the children.

We plan our curriculum based on the Curriculum Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage, modified to meet children's individual strengths and needs.

Aims

1. To ensure that children with physical disabilities, medical needs and associated special educational needs are engaged in the learning process and become confident, competent learners during and beyond the Early Years Foundation Stage.
2. To provide a broad, balanced, stimulating, purposeful and relevant curriculum, delivered by staff who have a sound knowledge and understanding of the development of young children and who can:
 - support and extend children's knowledge, skills, understanding and confidence;
 - set realistic and challenging expectations;
 - enable each child to participate to the best of their ability, whatever their needs.
3. To provide a safe and stimulating learning environment where, through play, children develop skills and understanding, and learn to co-operate with others.
4. To provide structured learning experiences which build on what children already know and can do, and which encourage positive attitudes to learning and prevent early failure.
5. To provide for the health and well being of children by tending to their physical, emotional and nutritional needs.
6. To help children develop independence through appropriate support for language development and communication skills, physiotherapy and occupational therapy input.
7. To recognise, value and support the relationships of children with family and wider community, and to work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect which fosters security and confidence in each child.
8. To provide opportunities for inclusion with a wider peer group and to foster inclusion links with other early years settings.
9. To identify and endeavour to remove barriers to learning and participation for all our children.

Play

We know that play enhances every aspect of children's development and learning. Our children's complex physical, medical, communication and learning needs affect both how they play and their ability to develop and generalise skills and concepts in their play.

- Children's physical difficulties restrict their independent movement towards materials or play areas as well as their ability to manipulate materials.
- Difficulties with speech and language mean that children often have difficulty entering into or initiating play with others, as well as expressing desire for or dislike of play materials and activities.
- Children with visual impairment need support to orientate to play areas and materials. They often need to develop exploratory skills and knowledge about the use of materials and objects.

The environment and experiences that we offer children are key. We work to model exploratory and play skills. Our children benefit from repeated opportunities to observe, imitate and learn specific play skills before they can use them independently and effectively. We use a range of Alternative and Augmentative Communication systems (AAC) to support children to develop their understanding and ability to express themselves, including their ability to initiate in play and become more independent learners.

Planning, Recording & Assessment

Long term planning is based on the Curriculum Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

<http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/eyfs-statutory-framework/>

Topic planning takes place half-termly, exploring all 7 areas of the curriculum through a story book with activities tailored to children's interests. At the end of the half term or term, a personalised class version of the book is created and shared with families. This celebrates children's work and enables them to re-visit the topic at home.

The weekly timetable is planned so that each child has every opportunity to work on their own individual goals. Whole group, small group and individual activities are integrated into the day. Children's physical, communication, medical and sensory needs demand that all practitioners are skilled in their use of strategies to ensure that individual children are ready for learning opportunities. Therapy programs are integral to our curriculum and we use a total communication approach, where children are immersed in an AAC rich environment. The pace of activities and interactions is led by the needs of the children. Repetitive structure of the timetable and activities is important to enable children to anticipate and make connections in their learning.

Assessment is carried out through a mixture of informal observations, discussions with parents and multi-disciplinary discussions as well as more formal analysis in line with whole school systems, eg Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) and P levels. The Early Years team also use an electronic system, EyLog to record achievement in the 7 areas of the Curriculum for the EYFS.

Information gained through recording and assessment is shared with parents, other school staff, therapy team and outside agencies as appropriate. Progress towards the goals on each child's EHCP is shared with families each term. Parents are children's first educators; their contributions are highly valued and sought throughout the year.

Equal Opportunities

- We believe that all children should be able to fulfil their aspirations.
- We aim to develop each child's self-confidence and positive attitude towards self and others.
- We recognise that discrimination against children or families on grounds of disability, gender, race, culture, religion or sexual orientation would be an unacceptable barrier to children's achievement and well-being.
- We acknowledge people's uniqueness and value their individuality.
- We encourage children to know about, value and respect the similarities and differences between themselves and others.
- We recognise that children bring to school different experiences, interests, skills and knowledge that all contribute to the way in which they learn and develop.
- We aim to meet children's diverse needs and help each child make the best possible progress.
- We aim to foster in all children a sense of joy in learning, for life.