

ELEANOR PALMER PRIMARY SCHOOL

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE POLICY

Aims

- To give each child a happy, positive and fun start to their school life in which they can establish solid foundations on which to expand and foster a deep love of learning;
- To offer each child a wide range of new and exciting experiences and give them the opportunity to consolidate, explore and test them out along with their own, individual experiences;
- To enable each child, through encouragement and high expectations, to develop, to the full, socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally;
- To offer a structure for learning that has a range of starting points and unlimited opportunity for development;
- To encourage children to develop independence within a loving, secure and friendly atmosphere;
- To support children in building relationships through the development of social skills such as cooperation and sharing;
- To help each child to recognise their own strengths and achievements through experiencing success and developing the confidence to work towards personal goals.

The Curriculum

The Nursery and Reception follow the curriculum guidelines outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) document, which is available from the school office or to download at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_t_data/file/596629/EYFS_STATUTORY_FRAMEWORK_2017.pdf

This policy outlines how we bring to life the statutory framework Eleanor Palmer.

The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development, all of which are important and interconnected however three areas are seen as particularly important for igniting

children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, for building their capacity to learn and form relationships and thrive (DfE 2017: 1.3), they support children's learning in all other areas, they are known as the prime areas.

The prime areas are;

- **Communication and Language** - Listening and Attention, Understanding and Speaking
- **Physical Development** - Moving and Handling and Self care
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** - Making relationships, Managing feelings and behaviour and Self-confidence and Self-awareness.

The specific areas of learning develop essential skills and knowledge and it is through these areas that the Prime areas are strengthened and applied (DfE 2017: 1.4),

The specific areas are;

- **Literacy** - Reading and Writing
- **Mathematics** - Numbers and Space, Shape and Measures

- **Understanding the World** - People and communities, The world and Technology
- **Expressive Arts and Design** - Exploring and using media and materials and Being Imaginative

Characteristics of Effective Learning

Underpinning all teaching in the EYFS are **the characteristics of effective learning**, which highlight the importance of a child's attitude to learning and their ability to play, explore and think critically about the world around them. All activities taking place within Nursery and Reception classes are planned with the 'Characteristics' in mind.

The three characteristics 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 within their learning, and develop their own strategies for doing things.

Play

Learning through play is an essential part of our Early Years' classrooms. We believe children learn best through a play based curriculum which interests and inspires them. Play gives our children the opportunity to pursue their own interests and provides opportunities for children to practise skills, build upon and revisit prior learning and experiences at their own level and pace. Through play children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions.

The role of the adult

We ensure there is a balance of adult led and child initiated activities across each day. For much of the time children self-select from carefully planned activities, the interaction between the adult and child is essential as the adult's response to children scaffolds their understanding and therefore supports new learning. The adult's role is continually to model, demonstrate, comment on and sensitively question what the child is doing. Sometimes the adults will ask a child to come and complete a task or game with them, and at other times the adult will participate in a child's game, extending it and developing the learning. **We seek to achieve a balance of open-ended activities which are child-initiated and then extended by the adult, alongside those which are adult initiated but followed up and extended by the child.**

By the Summer term in Reception the children will experience more adult directed tasks as they prepare for a gentle transition to Year 1.

Teaching

In addition to independent child initiated activities, we also have adult led experiences for children in the form of short structured carpet sessions, as well as adult led focus activities both inside and outside.

Each day we follow a timetable with strong routines in place. This looks quite different in the Nursery and Reception classes. We set aside times each day when the children come together to be taught in the more traditional sense, gathered together on the carpet as a class. In these

slots we focus on our topic work, maths, literacy, phonics, and stories. As well as the overt learning objective of each session, these sessions also help to develop good learning behaviour: learning as a group, listening to the teacher, taking turns to answer, sitting still etc. Reading and story play a vital part of every day. We want to make sure our children have a love of books and will leave the EYFS with a core of both traditional and modern classic stories they know really well. We make sure there is always a whole class story at the end of the day as well as many opportunities to enjoy books at other times. Every child has their own book bag and has a designated day when they will have one-to-one time sharing books with an adult (although it is fine for others to listen too!) or, in Reception, group reading sessions.

Planning

We believe topics fire the imagination and are a great starting point to learn new things. We have developed a two-year topic cycle where both Nursery and Reception classes are working together on the same theme. Each yearly cycle covers all areas of the curriculum and our topics range from 'Up in the Air and Down in the Deep', to 'Dragons and Dinosaurs' and 'Traditional Tales'. Topic planning is always flexible to ensure we also follow the children's interests, school themes and local or national events e.g. World Book Day.

Every half term (and occasionally termly) staff plan the next topic, and arrange visits and visitors that will enhance the learning.

Staff plan in more detail on a weekly basis using their daily notes, observations and interactions with children to inform where the learning journey should move to next. Weekly plans are summarised in the weekly class newsletter. Although class teachers are responsible for writing up the plans, the EYFS plan as a team, with Teachers, Nursery Nurses and Support Staff all attending planning meetings and giving an input whenever possible.

Visits and visitors

Visits and visitors play a key part of the curriculum at Eleanor Palmer and this begins in the Early Years. We aim to build up to three visits in the Summer Term; these can range from a visit to the local City Farm to travelling to Kew Gardens and the National History Museum. We actively seek parental support on trips, aiming for a ratio of one adult for two children in Nursery and a minimum of 1:5 in Reception. For safety reasons we say no to younger siblings coming along on school trips.

Visitors also really enhance a topic too and we like to have 'experts' coming in to talk to the children, a doctor for example. We often ask parents if they are able (and brave enough!) to share knowledge or a skill, be it cooking, bathing a baby, painting mehndi patterns on hands or playing guitar.

Classroom organisation

Our Early Years classrooms have defined areas with labelled, readily available resources to ensure children can access them easily. Each classroom is organised to provide children with experiences and activities in all of the seven areas of learning and, very importantly, to foster the children's developing independence. Although many activities are cross curricular, the classrooms have distinct areas for writing / mark-making, maths, creative activities, role play, construction, a book corner and a carpeted teaching area, as well as their own outdoor garden space. Each day a variety of activities are planned and set up in the different areas. The adults are based with their focus activity for the session and ensure that they cover the whole range of the areas during the week.

The outdoor area is an important part of the learning environment with many children choosing to learn outside for much of the day. We ensure that the activities on offer outside also cover the range of curriculum areas, but often in different ways, for example a maths game to practise addition skills inside might be set up inside on a table top with small dice, whereas outside the game might involve throwing bean bags through a hoop and recording the scores. Similarly, reading is always on offer inside the classroom's well-organised and resourced book corner, but outside it might be a basket of books in a quiet corner or inside a tent.

In Nursery particularly, physical activity is an important feature of the outside space, with climbing, running, cycling and other active games being key. The Reception class has a smaller outdoor area but the children are able to engage in more physical activities during play time in the Infant playground, class P.E. sessions and their own special treehouse / bog garden time.

Each child has their own labelled peg and box in the cloakroom. We encourage children to become responsible for looking after their own clothes, book bag and work and keeping them safely in the right place.

Assessment, observations and portfolios

Assessment is an essential part of planning for learning and development. In the EYFS, it involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and then developing learning experiences for each child reflecting the observations made. To ensure we have evidence of each child's progress throughout the EYFS, we use a range of strategies all of which come together in the children's personal portfolio. **Every child has a large book (the portfolio) containing a collection of their work, photos and observations.** This provides a detailed picture of the child's learning journey and follows them from entry to Eleanor Palmer until they move up to Year 1. Both the children and adults are very proud of the portfolios!

Staff use tablets to capture photos and note their observations. Observations include 'next steps' for the children's learning, which are discussed by the EYFS team during informal meetings after school each day, as well as in the weekly planning meeting. It is these 'next steps' that inform planning for the next day and the week ahead.

Children and parents always have access to the portfolio books which are stored in the classroom and we welcome parents to spend time sharing the portfolio with their child. **Parents are encouraged to contribute by writing a WOW card to record significant events or aspects learning that happen at home, such as being bridesmaid, learning to swim without armbands, ride a bike without stabilisers or getting themselves dressed.** Spare Wow cards are sent home with the newsletter periodically and are always available in the classroom. The portfolio is given to parents when their child enters Year 1 or leaves our setting.

On entry to Nursery and Reception we carry out baseline assessments to understand what each child currently understands in order to plan for the next steps in their learning. Children's progress is discussed formally with parents at individual Parents' Evenings each term and informally throughout the year. Each term the Early Years classteachers submit assessment data to the Head Teacher tracking each child's development across the seven areas of learning. In line with statutory requirements, at the end of Reception the class teacher assesses each child against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELGs) noting whether their development within each

ELG is either 'emerging', 'expected' or 'exceeding', as well as commenting on their progress within the Characteristics of Effective Learning. This information is communicated to parents and carers in the Reception child's end of year report and discussed in the final Parents' Evening in Reception.

Role of staff and key worker

The teacher is the key worker for each child in their class although children form strong bonds with all members of the team. All staff work to ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs and to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents. All adults within the Early Years team actively seek to form positive, respectful relationships with the children in their care. The formation of healthy relationships between adults and children is essential in enabling children's well-being. There are rare occasions when usual significant adults cannot be in the class and we make every effort to cover these absences with another familiar adult from the Eleanor Palmer staff team.

Partnership with parents and carers

Parents and carers are a child's first educator and therefore we seek to work together closely and ensure they are involved in their child's life at school. We want parents to feel they can speak to us about their child at any time and feel comfortable in our setting. As well as the Nursery and Reception visit days, we offer a Meet the Teacher session at the beginning of the school year and offer parenting workshops and other sessions for parents, such as our successful maths pack sessions!

When a child gains a place at Eleanor Palmer we ask them to attend a session in the July with their parents at the school alongside other children who will be also be starting. We give each family an 'All About Me' booklet to complete with their child over the summer and this document is the first item in their portfolio. Over the first few days at the school we encourage parents and carers to stay for as long as they wish in the classroom to ensure the transition to the school goes smoothly. We have a slow staggered entry into Nursery and a slightly quicker staggered entry into Reception. In Nursery (and for new children in Reception) we meet with each parent within the first few days to go through their booklet and learn more about the child and their family. Early in the first term parents are also invited to a parents' meeting so the settling in can be reviewed.

Most parents whose children begin the school journey at Eleanor Palmer will be part of the school for the next seven or eight years and we want them to get to know their child's peers and their families, so once all our EYFS families are settled in, we arrange an evening Welcome Party for all parents, children and their siblings. We ask parents to bring food to share and we provide the drink. The EYFS class teams, the Head teacher, Deputy and other school staff attend so we can meet the parents in a more informal setting.

Parents are invited to attend a Parents' Meeting each term and teachers are available most mornings and evenings to talk and to discuss more urgent matters.

Health & safety and safeguarding

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. We follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements detailed in Section 3 of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework (2017)

https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2017/03/EYFS_STATUTORY_FRAMEWORK_2017.pdf

There is a section in our school Safeguarding Policy that directly refers to practice in the EYFS.

It is important to note that members of staff do not use their mobile phones or personal devices in the classroom and are prohibited from taking photographs with their personal handsets. This is in line with Camden and Eleanor Palmer Safeguarding Policy. Members of staff do, however, use school tablets to take photographs as evidence to support the regular observation and assessment cycle in the EYFS. These photographs are used in children's portfolios, class displays and on the school website. All parents are asked to state if they give consent for their child's image to be used on the school website by signing a form included in their child's starter pack.

We are a 'healthy school' and as such our children receive free fruit and milk from a Government scheme. We also ask that parents regularly provide healthy snacks to share; these might be bread sticks, rice cakes or more exotic fruits such as grapes or a pineapple. Our staff model good eating habits by eating alongside the children. **All children in Nursery eat a school lunch but are able to bring a packed lunch from Reception onwards, however the vast majority continue to eat school lunch as they are free until Year 3.**

We have a kitchen in the Nursery which no child is allowed to enter and is secured with a safety door.

We take all accidents seriously and always log and phone home immediately if a child bangs their head. We have ice packs to use in case of bumps or minor injuries which are stored in the Nursery freezer.

We encourage all children to start school without nappies but will support any children struggling with this. We are very aware that young children often have 'accidents' (i.e. wet themselves!) and have stocks of spare clothes and change anyone who needs it. We ask parents to help keep our stocks of clothes full by returning everything their child has borrowed. Children are changed in the open area of the bathroom outside the cubicles.

All large climbing equipment is checked by our site officer and fire drill practice is held regularly, in line with whole school policy. There is an annual external check of external equipment as part of whole school practice.

We follow whole school procedures for child protection. Incidents are consistently logged using the school CPOMs programme (see separate policy). Kate Frood, headteacher, is the named Child Protection Officer and all concerns are discussed with her. We have separate policies for medicine in school and off-site visits.

Helen Holgate
Early Years Leader
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