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Date.....February 2025

Review.....February 2026

Woodford Valley C of E Primary Academy
Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

This school is committed to creating the ethos in which children can grow towards Christian life, learning and love.

'And now I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples.'

John 13 34-35

This policy should be read in conjunction with all school policies and in particular: Teaching and Learning Policies.

The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum applies to children from birth to five, until the end of the Reception year. At Woodford Valley, all children begin school at the start of the Autumn term although arrangements for delayed entry are discussed on an individual basis. The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum forms the basis of the attitudes, values, characteristics and behaviours which prepare children for the remainder of their educational careers. Through our Early Years Curriculum we are emphasising Christian values like kindness, respect, and community, while providing a nurturing and stimulating learning environment for all our pupils. "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19:14

Intent

The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum comprises seven areas of learning and development referred to as educational programmes which shape the experiences and activities that children have in the early years setting, they include; Personal, Emotional and Social Development, Communication and Language, Physical Development, Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World, Expressive Arts and Design. Children's learning, development and interests are regularly monitored and assessed using non-statutory guidance from Development Matters and Birth to Five Matters alongside practitioner knowledge, this is then used to shape new teaching and learning experiences for each child matching their developmental stage and creating a unique curriculum. Impact is then assessed at the end of the Reception Year in June against the 'The Early Learning Goals (ELGs),' using the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP). This reflects each individual's attainment across each of the seven areas of learning. The Early Learning Goals describe the 'Expected' level of attainment for a Reception child at the end of the Reception year. Pupils' progress is assessed under two bands, 'Emerging' or 'Expected' against each Early Learning Goal.

Implementation

During the Reception year, children undertake a mixture of child-initiated, child led, adult-initiated and adult directed play-based learning activities in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage learning programmes. The environment is regularly reviewed and provision and activities tailored and planned to meet the interests and needs of the given cohort. Towards the end of Reception year, there is a greater focus on teaching knowledge and skills in the specific areas of the curriculum to prepare children for a smooth transition into year 1.

Play forms a central part of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, which reflects how young children use play to develop their knowledge, thinking and relationships. It is a powerful vehicle for learning, in that it promotes and enhances: creativity, imagination, problem solving, social skills, motivation and independence. Children develop social skills, relationships and interactions through their ability to play with adults and their peers and their interests and knowledge are strongly reflected through their chosen activities. Play is facilitated and supported by adults in order to promote opportunities for children to demonstrate and develop their understanding across the seven areas of learning in the EYFS curriculum.

1. Intent – Aims and Objectives

At Woodford Valley, we strive to promote learning and development within a welcoming, friendly and secure environment which recognises, compliments and celebrates children's achievements. We intend to ensure that all children receive a positive start to their school education, by:

- Encouraging home-school partnerships, as well as links with local pre-schools, particularly during the transition period as children prepare to start school;
- Understanding children's prior knowledge and experiences and building upon these to support children's ongoing learning and development;
- Recognising that supporting communication through play is key to pupils developing social skills and therefore learning with and from others;
- Respecting each child as unique, and developing a strong understanding of their interests, learning styles and individual needs;
- Valuing and supporting each individual's characteristics of learning in supporting their 'Learning Journey';
- Closely monitoring pupils' progress, interests and development.
- Valuing the role of parents as partners and recognising all stakeholders, including the child themselves in celebrating achievement and in identifying and supporting the next steps in their learning;
- Understanding how pupils' individual needs and interests support planning, provision and assessment for their ongoing development;
- Providing a broad but balanced curriculum across the seven areas of learning;
- Gathering observational evidence on children's progress, using: transcripts, annotations, children's work, photographs, videos, commentary and evidence from home;
- Encouraging and promoting children's independence in valuing and guiding child-initiated and encouraging child-led learning through play;
- Involving pupils in planning for activities and resources used in their environment to stimulate their interests and further their learning;
- Valuing the development of the whole child, socially, emotionally, spiritually and academically, celebrating individual differences;
- Promoting equal opportunities for all children, including children with Special Educational Needs.

2. Implementation and Impact - The Value and Purpose of Play

It is through play that young children are best able to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, pursue opportunities for social interaction, and has impact on their understanding about the world around them.

Play encourages them to work collaboratively and think creatively, further pursue an idea or theme, solve problems, demonstrate their needs and interests and to interact effectively with others.

We recognise and reflect in our practice the impact of following values of play:

- Play is a natural way for children to learn;
- It teaches and develops social communication and interaction;
- It develops children's physical skills, including gross and fine motor skills;
- Play allows children to develop their confidence and self-esteem;
- Play provides a window into each child's personality, motivations and interests;
- Play is self-motivated and directed;
- Play can be solitary, paired or grouped;
- It encourages use of, and reflection on, first-hand experiences;
- It allows children to adopt roles and responsibilities, exploring roles, ideas, feelings and relationships;
- Play reflects enjoyment;
- It encourages independent pursuit of interests;
- Play encourages independent use of resources, materials and activities;

The following strategies and practices are implemented to show our intent to support, promote and develop children's play as means of developing their knowledge and skills across the curriculum:

- Children are offered both play which is free, independent, self-selected and play which is facilitated and supported by an adult to extend vocabulary and facilitate sustained shared thinking;
- Children are encouraged to pursue solitary, parallel and collaborative play opportunities across the curriculum;
- A range of both resources and equipment are used through play to develop pupils' fine and gross motor skills thus developing pre-writing skills;
- A range of resources and books are provided in our provision to develop early reading, new vocabulary and phonic skills;
- Children are provided with resources to promote communication and language through oral storytelling, poetry, singing familiar songs and rhymes and playing games;
- Children are provided with a wide range of familiar and novel play activities and resources which offer them opportunities to explore a range of roles, ideas and feelings;
- Equipment and resources are safely stored and displayed and are presented clearly and attractively to promote accessibility by all children and independence in self-selecting activities;
- Activities reflect a range of skills, needs, interests and stages of development;
- Resources in our provision are adapted over the year to reflect the children's skill progression;
- Children are provided with equal access to suitable resources that they can use to support their learning through play.

3. Intent - Teaching and Learning Style

At Woodford Valley, we deliver a well-planned and resourced curriculum which allows all children to progress and succeed. This is reflected across the seven areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum, which identifies 'Prime' and 'Specific' Areas of Learning:

Prime Areas

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others. It requires them to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in group. It promotes children to have confidence in their own abilities. We promote an inclusive ethos and ensure every child is a valued member of our school community.

Communication and Language

Giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment in order to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves. It requires them to develop the ability to speak and listen in a range of situations with a range of people.

Physical Development

Providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive. It requires them to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement in a range of situations, using a range of equipment and apparatus to develop their gross and fine motor skills. Children are supported to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food, oral hygiene, exercise and lifestyle.

Specific Areas

Literacy

Encouraging children to hear, say and recognise sounds and link them to begin to read and write independently. Children are provided with a range of materials and resources to promote their phonic knowledge and development which in turn supports their interest and ability to read and write with an emphasis on developing new vocabulary.

Mathematics

Developing a deep understanding of number and numerical patterns through subitising and then counting and calculating, through developing their spatial reasoning skills it enables a deeper understanding of shape, space and measures. Providing opportunities and resources for children to practice and apply these skills is essential in them developing number sense and mastering key skills in counting, calculating and identifying and describing shapes and spotting patterns, relationships and making connections.

Understanding the World

Developing children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them is crucial for them to describe their observations of events and make links in their learning and understanding of processes, phenomena and diversity. It involves guiding children to make sense of the physical world and its communities through opportunities to explore and investigate the environment, people, places and technology.

Expressive Arts and Design

Fostering and developing children's natural creativity and imagination by allowing them opportunities to explore and experiment with a range of media, materials and processes to create planned and spontaneous effects. It encompasses developing their skills and understanding in the areas of: art and design, music, movement, dance, drama, role-play and design technology.

Our teaching and learning practices reflect the four key principles of Early Years development which permeate the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum:

The Unique Child

We recognise that each child is unique and individual in their interests, abilities and learning styles. We reflect this through our planning and provision through evaluating our environment and how our pupils learn within it. We strive to ensure that they become capable, confident, resilient and self-assured learners who feel secure, safe and settled within their learning environment.

Positive Relationships

The relationships that children forge with their peers and practitioners in the setting are vital in ensuring they feel secure and content and that they are able to develop to reach their potential. We recognise that parents and carers are key partners in promoting their child's learning and development and strive to maintain strong links with home. We hope to make children confident, positive learners through the relationships that they build with others in our school community.

Enabling Environments

Children learn best in environments in which they feel secure, settled and confident. We ensure our learning environment reflects the needs and interests of children in order that they progress and develop to their potential. The environment is continually evaluated and developed to reflect children's developing abilities and interests and the children are very much involved in this process. We strive to draw upon as many resources in order to provide an interesting and stimulating learning environment, drawing upon areas throughout the school environment and within the local community.

Learning and Development

Recognising that each child is unique means understanding that each child learns and develops in different ways and at different rates. Children's learning and development cannot be best supported without recognising the impact of the other three key principles above. All areas of learning and development are interconnected in many ways and in reflecting and promoting these links through a stimulating environment and rich curriculum; children are enabled to fulfil their potential as young learners.

In doing so, we encourage pupils to develop positive attitudes and dispositions to learning which motivate them to develop their knowledge and skills across the curriculum in a variety of ways. We strive to ensure that pupils develop positive relationships with adults and peers in our school community and understand, respect and value difference. We teach pupils to understand, recognise and communicate their feelings, ideas and opinions, identify those of others in order that they can communicate and interact with others positively and effectively. We present pupils with appropriate levels of challenge in order that they develop persistence and resilience in their learning.

The 'Characteristics of Effective Learning,' which underpin the EYFS curriculum provide both adults and children themselves an insight into how we learn. They enable children to identify and develop key skills and behaviours, such as: reflection, motivation, creativity and resilience. They allow us to recognise individuals' learning styles and preferences and how we can reflect and support these in our environment and in our interactions.

5. Inclusion in the Early Years Foundation Stage

At Woodford Valley, the ethos that every child matters is central to our practice. We give our children every opportunity to enjoy learning, achieve their goals and reach their potential. In doing so, we take account of each child's life experiences, needs and interests in planning for their learning and progression. This is reflected by challenging expectations which we set for children in line with their age and stage of development. Planning is differentiated to ensure that it reflects the needs of all learners within the group, including children with Special Educational Needs and Gifted and Talented pupils, pupils with English as an Additional Language, as well as children with disabilities or impairments, children from all social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds or from different ethnic groups. This is facilitated through the use of tailored resources, programmes or interventions and adult support, including the support of outside agencies, where necessary.

6. Impact - Assessment and Reporting

Thorough assessment is carried out through the regular use of: observations, transcripts, children's work, photographs and audio/video which reflect each individual child's achievements and interests. This progression is celebrated and documented through each individual's 'Learning Journey' document as well as through the classroom environment in the form of resources, activities, areas of interest and displays. We value the vital role and influence of parents and carers as partners in learning and aim to reflect each pupil's learning and development from the perspective of the pupil, staff, and parents and families.

Children are observed across a range of activities, provision and child-led and adult-initiated activities on a day-to-day basis. On-entry, this builds a picture of children's prior experiences, interests and strengths and enables staff to tailor the environment and provision to best support pupils ongoing learning and development across the curriculum. Within the first six weeks of entry, pupils are assessed using the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment and through targeted observation within the environment in the first term as we get to know the children, we undertake formative assessment three times a year.

Pupils' attainment is tracked throughout the Reception year to reflect every individual's progress across the seven areas of learning. Observations of children's learning can be readily accessed by parents through our secure online Learning Journey format, 'Tapestry'. Parents are also welcomed into the classroom regularly for 'Stay and Play' and information workshop sessions in order to share practice, provision and celebrate learning and achievement. 'Next Steps' targets are linked with regular observations and formally shared termly with parents at Parents' Evenings. Pupils are assessed against the national compulsory EYFS Profile at the end of Reception, judging their attainment in each of the 17 ELGs, identifying whether they have met the national standard, or 'Good Level of Development' that is expected for their age. Individuals' attainment is shared in the format of an end of year report to parents, which also includes a commentary for each individual which exemplifies and celebrates their 'Characteristics of Effective Learning.' These assessments are then used by the Year One teachers to inform their planning and provision on transition into Key Stage One and form the basis of the dialogue between staff in supporting pupils on the transition period.

The role of parents

We highly value the vital role which all parents play in their children's learning and development. We recognise the role that parents have in educating their children, through:

- Parent information meetings, visits to the setting and pre-school visits during the transition period before their child begins at school;
- Pupil visits to the Reception class during the summer term to familiarise them with the environment, routines and staff before starting school;
- Maintaining an open-door policy where parents feel welcomed into the school and classroom at any time to discuss any queries or concerns;
- 'Stay and Play' sessions which invite parents and family members to spend part of the school day with us, playing and working alongside their child, to gain more of an insight into our practice and their child's learning and development
- At-home access to Tapestry online Learning Journey allows parents to share in children's learning and development and is readily accessible
- Offering formal opportunities to discuss their child's progress, through parents' evenings.
- Regular communication with home, through reading records, topic themes and planning on the website, PTA and Head Teacher newsletters

7. Resources

At Woodford Valley, we plan a stimulating learning environment which allows pupils to pursue their interests both indoors and outdoors, encouraging positive attitudes towards learning. We use resources, materials and activities which reflect the children's understanding, interests, local communities and also the wider world to ensure a broad curriculum. The children are encouraged to select resources and activities of interest independently with the support of adults to observe, support and develop their play and learning.

We also endeavour to make use of opportunities for additional resources and activities, such as Wiltshire Library Resources to enable pupils access to novel or varied resources which appeal to their interests. We also recognise the value of using our local area as a resource for additional outdoor learning. The use of visitors, extra-curricular activities and school trips are also used as key opportunities to expand pupils' interests and extend their learning, to support and develop the children's cultural capital and help support our broad and balanced curriculum.

This policy should be read in conjunction with all school policies, in particular: Child Protection, Whole School Learning, Inclusion Policy and alongside the Early Years Risk Assessment.