



Early Years Policy

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Next review April 2027

Signed by Chair of Governors *D. Skibell*

Early Years Policy

At Sutton Park Primary, we acknowledge the statement that....

"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 experience between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is the vital component for life-long wellbeing. Good parenting and high-quality learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up".

Our Aims...

- Value and respect each learner as a unique individual;
- Recognise and celebrate each learner's strengths and achievements;
- Promote high levels of self-awareness, self-esteem, confidence and independence;
- Foster understanding and compassionate attitudes towards others;
- Personalise provision so that it meets the needs and stretches each learner;
- Communicate proactively and openly with parents and carers and all other stakeholders;
- Provide a wide range of memorable, enjoyable and fun learning experiences for all our learners;
- Inspire and motivate our learners to be curious about the world around them;
- Offer a happy, safe and secure environment;
- Fully utilise all the resources in school and the local community to create and sustain a positive and stimulating learning environment that meets the needs of all our learners;
- Work in close collaboration with professional partners, Governors, the Local Authority, OFSTED and other organisations that will benefit learners.

Our vision:

As individuals and as a school we take pride in being the very best that we can be and aim for the highest standards in all that we do. We have high expectations of ourselves and others, this means that all pupils achieve their potential and acquire the skills, attitudes and characteristics to be happy and successful citizens.

We are a school where everyone is warmly welcomed and valued. There is a deeply caring and positive attitude towards all children, parents, carers, staff, governors and the wider community. Relationships with everyone associated with the school are nurtured so that every member of our school community can feel safe, happy and empowered to make a beneficial contribution. We all support and encourage one another; are sensitive and understanding, and have an open and honest approach working together to build effective partnerships. We strive to offer the excellent quality of support and provision our children and local community deserve.

Our Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is a place where every child is unique and can begin a lifelong love of learning supported by a curriculum which lays solid foundations for the rest of their learning journey.

Our Values:

We aim to teach our children the value of the following qualities:

- Successful
- Unique
- Tolerant
- Thriving

- Optimistic
- Nurturing
- Persevering
- Aspirational
- Resilient
- Kind

Organisation

Our EYFS Unit comprises of Little Sparks Nursery and our Reception class. The Nursery is split in two groups – 'Fireworks': Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday AM and 'Sparklers': Wednesday PM, Thursday and Friday.

The EYFS staff team comprises of three qualified teachers (QTS) and three achievement assistants. Mrs Helen Digger is our Early Years Lead across the unit, with Mrs Nicola Clerehugh and Mrs Liz O'Connell teaching in the Nursery.

Intent:

Within the EYFS, we understand that young children are powerful learners and set a broad range of learning opportunities to fulfil their curiosities. As they explore and learn, children are naturally drawn to play, which is why it is at the heart of our EYFS curriculum. We believe that the appropriate mix of adult-led and child-initiated play ensures the best outcomes for our pupils. Warm and positive relationships are fostered through quality time with the children and through developing strong relationships with Parents/Carers. Developing each child's interests features in our daily practice and we use a Thrive Approach to support our pupil's self-regulation skills. Our staff have high expectations for all children and work hard to help them develop the skills and knowledge to become respectful, independent, resilient and creative learners.

Implementation:

We believe that the Early Years is essential in providing the fundamental building blocks to all aspects of learning. Therefore, we provide a broad curriculum across all seven areas of the Early Years and believe that the four principles are all equally important; the **unique child**, building **positive relationships** with each unique child and providing the **enabling environments** for their **learning and development** to flourish.

It is during these first years that children develop the skills to recognise numbers, count objects, read and write letter sounds and use these to blend to read and write simple words. Reading begins in Little Sparks Nursery, with books being central to learning.

To develop pupils' fluency, confidence and enjoyment in reading, we ensure there is a rigorous and sequential approach to the reading curriculum. This begins in the EYFS and remains a priority throughout the school. We follow the same Read, Write Inc phonics scheme as the whole school and deliver phonics daily.

Every EYFS staff member is a 'key worker' who has identified children to focus upon, enabling staff to gain an in-depth knowledge of the children.

Our children will:

- develop and explore their vocabulary and interest before learning to read using Parental Assisted Immersive Reading (PAIR) books, encouraging parental structured discussions.
- learn to recognise letter sounds (phonemes).
- learn how to accurately form each letter.

- learn how to identify how sounds are created (graphemes).
- learn how to segment and blend phonemes to read words accurately using the Read, Write Inc. (RWI) program.
- read matched books, either through RWI books or PAIR in Little Sparks Nursery.
- share a love of books through our Parent/Carer reading sessions.
- be exposed to a wide range of texts for all seven areas of our curriculum including sharing class texts, which are voted for by the children.
- develop and improve their communication and language through speaking and listening activities.
- gain a deep understanding of numbers to 10 and explore numerical patterns.
- learn outdoor skills in our Forest School.
- spend time with their Key Worker and build positive relationships.
- be provided with opportunities to develop their emotional literacy skills through a Whole School Thrive Approach.
- develop self-confidence with their own physical development.

Working as one unit

We open the doors linking our Nursery and Reception classrooms to become a whole EYFS Unit during our child-initiated time. This is when the children can choose to learn in either Reception or Nursery environment, supported by adults who scaffold new learning and support recently developed skills and understanding.

The benefit is that the children have a secure sense of belonging from an early age and transition from Nursery to Reception is seamless.

Children access a curriculum and learning environment which covers a 36-to-60-month age range working at their individual developmental stage. There is no ceiling to what children can achieve; they can extend learning in one area if they are ready, but also spend more time consolidating skills in another area of learning if this is required.

We ensure clear progression in the planned curriculum and resources provided from Nursery into Reception.

All children can choose to learn through their play outside too, with both classrooms having direct access outside. Outdoor play is important because this allows children to develop self-confidence, independence and self-esteem. They also develop an awareness of risk taking and new challenges in their play. It's a fabulous way to connect with the natural world also.

During the course of the year, we invite our Parents/carers in to read. This enables them to ask any questions they have about their child's progression with early reading and for us to have an opportunity to offer advice on how our Read, Write Inc phonics works and how they can support their child at home.

There are times when we learn separately, such as phonics, snack time, key worker time and story time. This is because, due to the children's differing ages, we are working to separate end goals. In Reception we are working towards 'Early Learning Goals', whilst in Nursery we are working towards expectations in the Development Matters guidance, which is more age appropriate. Working independently as two classes provides opportunities to collaborate in smaller groups where we can focus and concentrate more effectively.

Our Curriculum:

We plan an exciting and challenging curriculum for our children in Early Years. We plan and deliver the same concepts across the EYFS unit, adapting them using age-appropriate texts. The seven areas of learning and development (from the EYFS framework) are all important and interconnected. Three areas are particularly important for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, for building their capacity to learn and form relationships and thrive.

The three areas are known as the **prime areas**. These are:

1. Communication and Language – Listening, Attention and Understanding, and Speaking
2. Physical Development – Gross Motor Skills and Fine Motor Skills
3. Personal, Social and Emotional Development – Self-Regulation, Managing Self and Building Relationships.

Specific areas of learning develop essential skills and knowledge for children to participate successfully in society, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

The **specific areas** are:

1. Literacy – Comprehension, Word Reading and Writing
2. Mathematics – Numbers and Numerical Patterns
3. Understanding the World – Past and Present, People, Culture and Communities and the Natural World
4. Expressive Arts and Design – Creating with Materials and Being Imaginative and Expressive.

We believe a balance of adult led learning and child-initiated play provide our children with the best possible start to their education. During children's play, our Early Year's practitioners interact with the children to stretch and challenge them further.

We place a high importance on the 'Characteristics of Effective Learning'. These highlight the importance of a child's attitude to learning and their ability to play, explore and think critically about the world around them.

The three **characteristics of effective learning** are:

1. Playing and exploring – children investigate and explore things through experiences and are willing to 'have a go'.
2. Active Learning – children concentrate and persevere if they encounter difficulties and enjoy achievements.
3. Creating and Thinking Critically – children develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

Impact:

Little Sparks Nursery children will work towards the 3 and 4 year old expectations of the Development Matters document. Our Reception children will work towards achieving the 17 Early Learning Goals by the end of their Reception year. These judgements are based on a combination of adult-led and child-initiated learning.

At the end of the Reception year, children will also be assessed on their achievements against the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning. The school's most recent OFSTED report states that:

"The overall effectiveness of Early Years Provision at Sutton Park is outstanding."

"The curriculum from early year to year 6 is well organised with quality guidance and resources."

“The quality of this excellent and inclusive curriculum is reflected in the rapid progress that children make in Early Years and Key Stage 1.”

Assessment

Observations and Planning:

We use the EYFS supporting document 'Development Matters', to guide observations, assessment and planning. The prime areas of learning are central to all teaching and the specific areas of learning provide children with a broad curriculum and with opportunities to strengthen and apply the prime areas of learning. This is particularly important in developing language and extending vocabulary.

Planning within the EYFS consists of a yearly planning overview to ensure coverage and progression, medium term planning is based around half termly themes which follow a two-yearly rolling programme. This moves into short term and weekly planning.

These plans are used by the EYFS teachers as a vehicle of interest to deliver the children's next steps in learning, however, the teacher may alter these in response to the needs, achievements, and interests of the children.

Staff are skilled at observing children to identify their achievements, interests and next steps for learning. Practitioners consider the individual needs, interests, and development of each child in their care, and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all areas of learning and development. These observations and discussions with children then lead the direction of the planning. All staff are involved in evaluating provision and planning changes or enhancements to support or extend children's learning.

Staff share 'Wow' moments of children's progression with Parents/Carers through Seesaw, our online learning platform.

Recording:

On entry to Nursery and Reception, the Early Years practitioners use their professional judgement, based on observations of individuals, to record the starting points for the children's level of development. Ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development process. Children are observed in all areas of the curriculum and significant observations are recorded showing personal achievements.

Assessments are made across the seven areas of learning recording whether a child is at the expected level of development with practitioners drawing on their knowledge of the child and their own professional judgement against age related expectations. This information is used to shape future teaching and learning experiences for each child. We measure the percentage of pupils achieving age related expectations throughout the academic year, putting supportive interventions in place if needed. Class teachers use observations to make formative assessments which inform future planning and ensure that all children build on their current knowledge and skills at a good pace.

Summative assessments compare children's attainment to age related expectations using 'Development Matters'. This is tracked using the school's data system to ensure rates of progress are at least good for all children, including vulnerable groups. Our assessment judgements are moderated both in school and with other schools in our Trust. We also partake in Local Authority quality assurance sessions to ensure our school judgements are informed and validated.

Statutory Requirements:

Children will complete the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) within the first 6 weeks of joining Reception, regardless of when they join the class, unless they have been assessed previously. The RBA is an age-appropriate assessment of mathematics and literacy, communication and language, that is delivered in English. It is clearly linked to the learning and development requirements of the EYFS. The purpose of the RBA is to provide an on-entry assessment of pupil attainment to be used as a starting point from which a cohort-level progress measure to the end of key stage 2 (KS2) can be created.

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile:

In the final term of the year in which the child reaches age five, and no later than 30 June in that term, the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile is completed for each child.

Practitioners must indicate whether children are meeting expected levels of development, or if they are not yet reaching expected levels (emerging) across the seven areas of learning contained in the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage. Each child's level of development is recorded as emerging or expected against the 17 Early Learning Goals.

Additional Support:

We recognise the unique practice of nurturing the learning of young children with specific needs and we are aware of the importance of early intervention for children facing specific developmental/learning challenges.

Early intervention ensures all children can access every aspect of the school curriculum. Intervention can take different forms, such as supporting parents, school-based programs to improve children's learning potential, and additional support at school from appropriate staff (Teachers and Achievement Assistants). Support will be offered as soon as possible for children who have difficulty with their learning

We make differentiated provision for all ability levels within school and, if deemed appropriate after discussion with parents/carers, seek support from other agencies.

The class teacher is responsible for identifying and planning for individual needs with help from the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENDCo). Our experienced SEND Coordinator works closely with staff as well as parents and carers to ensure tailored support is available if necessary.

Inclusion:

All children are valued as individuals at Sutton Park Primary School irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability and gender. We ensure that we meet the individual learning needs of all our pupils through our excellent teaching and learning, providing differentiated work and a personalised approach. We have high expectations for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, ensuring the best possible progress for our pupils through an exciting curriculum.

Safety and Welfare:

Safety and security is a high priority at Sutton Park and it is important that all children in our care are safe. We recognise 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.

We understand that we are legally required to comply with the welfare requirements as stated in section three of the Statutory Framework for EYFS (2021) and have regard to the 'Keeping Children Safe in Education', and 'Working Together to Safeguard Children's statutory guidance and the 'Prevent duty guidance for England and Wales'.

Partnerships with Parents and Carers:

We are always available for our Parents and Carers at the beginning and end of each school day at the classroom door where they can approach us with any questions or concerns. In addition to this our Parents/Carers can contact us through their child's Seesaw account, which is also used for home learning. We strive to develop and maintain effective partnerships with parents and carers as we recognise that together, we can have a more significant impact on a child's learning. We want Parents/Carers to feel they can speak to us about their child at any time and feel comfortable in the setting. Regular communications are sent through Seesaw and Parentmail Apps also.

During the summer term before the children start in Reception, there are transition days where the children can experience the setting and an 'Induction Evening' for Parents/Carers. This is an opportunity to meet the staff, view the classroom, tour the school, make a 'Helping Hand' (see transition) and taste food provided for hot dinners.

Transitions:

When a child gains a place at Sutton Park, we invite Parents/Carers to attend an induction evening, where they will meet the Early Years Team and make a 'Helping Hand' for their child. The "helping hand" is a decorated hand, made by Parent/Carer which the children can access should they be missing their grown-up during the first few days of starting school. We include a photograph of their Parents/Carers on the back of the hand, which helps to settle the children. Staff also talk to both the Parents/Carers and the children's previous setting to learn as much information as possible about the child before they start.

In the final term of Reception, Year 1 teachers will meet with the Early Years staff to discuss each child's development against the Early Learning Goals to support a smooth transition to Year 1. The children will also have several transition sessions in the Year 1 classroom with their new teacher before the end of the summer term.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

It is the responsibility of the EYFS staff to implement this policy. The Senior Leadership Team will carry out monitoring of the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring system. This policy will be reviewed at the start of each academic year and will incorporate the views of all stakeholders. At every review, the policy will be shared with the Local Academy Governing Board.