

Rockcliffe First School



Early Years Policy: *A baseline for outstanding practice*

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The Early Years department at Rockcliffe First School is very much part of the school and as such is considered and included in every school policy. The following policy outlines the practice that is specific to the Early Years.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Teaching at Rockcliffe is 'Learning Centred', meaning that each element of whole school and classroom practice is designed with an understanding of how children learn best at its heart.

At Rockcliffe we believe children learn best when:

- *learning activities are well planned, ensuring progress in the short, medium and long term*
- *teaching and learning activities enthuse, engage and motivate children to learn, and foster their curiosity and enthusiasm for learning*
- *assessment informs teaching so that there is provision for support, repetition and extension of learning for each child, at each level of attainment*
- *the learning environment is ordered, the atmosphere is purposeful and children feel safe*
- *there are strong links between home and school, and the importance of parental involvement in their children's learning is recognised, valued and developed*

These key principles are developed in our Teaching and Learning Policy. Their specific application to the teaching and learning of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is described here.

AIMS OF THE POLICY

We aim to support all children to become independent and collaborative learners. We will provide a broad and balanced curriculum that will enable each child to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually to their full potential.

At Rockcliffe First School, we will:

- ✓ Provide a happy, safe, stimulating and challenging programme of learning and development for the children to experience as they begin their journey through school.
- ✓ Provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for further learning and development in Key Stage 1 and beyond and enable choice and decision making, fostering independence and self-confidence.
- ✓ Use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress.
- ✓ Develop excellent relationships with parents and carers to build a strong partnership in supporting their children.
- ✓ Provide a caring and inclusive learning environment which is sensitive to the requirements of the individual child including those who have additional needs.

Key Principles

The Early Years education we offer our children is based on the following principles:

- It builds on what our children already know and can do;
- It ensures that no child is excluded or disadvantaged;
- It offers a structure for learning that has a range of starting points, content that matches the needs of young children, and activities that provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors;
- It provides a rich and stimulating environment;
- It acknowledges the importance of a full working partnership with parents and carers.

Background to the Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage is based on four themes:

1. A Unique Child
2. Positive Relationships
3. Enabling Environments
4. Learning and Development

A Unique Child

At Rockcliffe First School we recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to

learning.

We give our children every opportunity to achieve their personal best and planning is adapted to meet the needs of all groups and abilities. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when we are planning for their learning.

We work closely with parents, carers and other outside agencies to ensure all children's needs are met so they can access the curriculum and make good progress.

Positive Relationships

At Rockcliffe First School we recognise the value of secure relationships and strong attachments when encouraging children to be confident and independent. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

We recognise that parents and carers are a child's first and most enduring educators and we value working with them in their child's education through:

- Talking to parents/carers before their child starts school at visits, open evenings and induction meetings;
 - Providing starter information packs for both Nursery and Reception Classes;
 - Providing an induction meeting for Nursery/Reception parents/carers to meet with staff to discuss school routines, expectations and to answer any questions parents/carers may have;
 - Ensuring that parents/carers are able to discuss any queries or concerns, either face to face at the school gate, or by telephone/email;
 - Written contact through the school newsletters;
 - Recording 'WOW' moments on Seesaw;
 - Encouraging parents/carers to share family time on Seesaw and allowing time for the children to share experiences in class;
 - Publishing a half-term overview detailing the areas of learning;
 - Offering two parent/teacher consultation meetings per year at which their child's progress is discussed;
 - Ensuring there are regular opportunities for informal discussion between staff/children and parents/carers.
- Nursery** parents are in the class each day at pick up time. **Reception** classes are open 3.30 – 4pm once a week to allow children to pop in and show their parents/carers 'their space';
- Offering a summer open afternoon to celebrate the success of the children;
 - Sending home a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of their time in Nursery or Reception;
 - Inviting parents/carers to a range of activities throughout the school year such as Christmas productions and Sports Day;
 - Offering opportunities for parents and carers to visit the school on a volunteer basis to assist with Beach School sessions, etc.

Enabling Environments

At Rockcliffe First School we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. We want the children to feel secure, confident and challenged. The children have daily access to an indoor and outdoor environment that is set up in discrete areas of learning with planned continuous provision. Play-based learning is paramount and children have opportunities to direct some of their own learning, as staff closely observe and build on their interests.

We plan a learning environment indoors and, when possible, outdoors that encourages a positive attitude to learning and reflects the individual's interests, passions and abilities. We encourage the children to make their own selection of the activities on offer, as we believe that this encourages independent learning. Children are not only given time to explore an activity but also to revisit learning. Sometimes they will be encouraged to explore materials prior to any explicit teaching, then given the opportunity to revisit the materials post teaching. Staff also adapt the environment according to the children's play, interests and development.

We ensure that resources and spaces are safe to use and are checked regularly.

Learning and Development

Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum

There are seven areas of learning and development that shape educational provision in early years settings. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. None of the areas of learning can be

delivered in isolation from the others. Our children's learning experiences enable them to develop competency and skill across a number of learning areas.

There should be a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities in order for most children to reach the Early Learning Goals at the end of EYFS. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The three Prime areas are:

1. Personal, Social and Emotional Development
2. Communication and Language
3. Physical Development

Staff will also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

Specific Areas:

4. Literacy
5. Mathematics
6. Understanding the world
7. Expressive arts and design

Children's development levels are assessed and, as time progresses in the Foundation Stage, the balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning, as children grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas.

However, if a child's progress in any of the prime areas gives cause for concern, staff will discuss this with the child's parents/carers and agree how to support the child.

Children in the Foundation Stage also participate in a daily phonics sessions, following the school's chosen scheme "Little Wandle Letters and Sounds".

Characteristics of Effective Learning

We ensure that our environment and delivery of the curriculum incorporate the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning:

Playing and exploring – children will have opportunities to investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'. Through play, our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems.

Active learning – children will have time and space to concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy their achievements.

Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence, they learn to make decisions. It provides children with a sense of satisfaction as they take ownership of their learning.

Creating and thinking critically – we encourage and support children to have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

Children should be given the opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning. Adults can support children's thinking and help them make connections by showing interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open ended questions. Children can access resources and move around the classroom freely and purposefully to extend their learning.

Planning

Teaching staff consider the needs, interests and development of each child in order to plan challenging and enjoyable experiences in all areas of the EYFS framework. With the help of non-statutory guidance 'Development Matters' and 'Birth to 5 Matters', children work towards achieving a set of Early Learning Goals by the end of their Reception year. These goals, defined in the Statutory Framework, support teachers to make holistic judgements about children's development and their transition to Year One.

The planning is based upon broad themes that allow staff the autonomy to build on children's interests, needs and achievements.

- Phonics planning is from "Little Wandle Letters and Sounds";
- Mathematics planning is from 'Maths Mastery Planning';
- Writing Planning is based on "Drawing Club" by Greg Bottrill.

The medium-term planning identifies the intended learning, with outcomes, for children working towards the Early Learning Goals. This medium term planning is shared with parents and carers via the school website.

Observations

Foundation Stage staff are trained to use observations as the basis for planning next steps for learning. Staff discuss their observations with each other on a daily basis. Relevant and significant observations are recorded in classroom displays and on Seesaw.

Assessment

During the first six weeks in Reception, children will take part in a short, task-based assessment called the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) to check early literacy, communication, language and maths skills. It is statutory for all schools and is a way of measuring the support that schools give to pupils in order to help them progress between reception and Year 6. These assessments also allow us to identify patterns of attainment within the cohort, in order to adjust the teaching programme for individual children and groups of children. The Foundation Stage Profile is the nationally employed assessment tool that enables teachers to record their observations at the end of the Foundation Stage, and to summarise pupils' progress towards the Early Learning Goals. It covers each of the seven areas of learning contained in the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage.

We record each child's level of development against the 17 Early Learning Goals as 'On track' or 'Not on Track'. We make regular assessments of children's learning, and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs.

Assessment in the Foundation Stage takes the form of both formal and informal observations, photographic evidence and through planned activities. Assessment is completed regularly and involves both the teacher and other adults, as appropriate. The collection of assessment data in the Foundation Stage Profile is a statutory requirement.

In Reception, phonics assessment is carried out every six weeks.

We also keep a record of children's progress (against 17 areas) each term. We use the data to identify trends and any need for extra support/intervention.

At the end of the final term in Reception we send a summary of these assessments to the Local Authority. Parents and carers also receive this information in their child's end of year report. The child's next teacher uses this information to make plans for the year ahead.

Transition

Starting school can be a difficult time for children and their carers; we therefore plan carefully to support everyone and ensure it is as smooth as possible for every child.

Transition into Nursery includes –

- Parents visiting before applying to Nursery
- Information and 'meet the team' meetings
- Pop in visits to become familiar with the environment
- Stay and play sessions to meet classmates
- A Nursery booklet to give parents/carers information needed prior to starting
- A Nursery profile to give staff a broader picture of each child
- Adaptations to timings / length of day to suit needs of individual children

Transition into Reception includes –

- Parents visiting before applying to school
- Information and 'meet the team' meetings
- Summer picnic with current Reception children
- "Sample a school lunch" day – independently for children at Rockcliffe Nursery
- "Sample a school lunch day" for all pre-Reception children, including those from other Nurseries
- Rockcliffe staff contacting current settings and where possible visiting non- Rockcliffe children in those settings
- Stay and play sessions (for those children not at Rockcliffe Nursery) to meet classmates
- A Reception booklet to give parents/carers information needed prior to starting
- A Reception profile to give staff a broader picture of each child

- Information pack from school re lunches, school milk, uniform supplier and OOSC
- A very brief, two day 'staggered start' to enable the staff to build good relationships with the children.
- All children to stay for full days, including lunch, by day 3 of the Reception year.
- Adaptations to timings / length of day to suit needs of individual children

Transition into Key Stage 1 (Year 1) Throughout the Reception year, each child's involvement in whole school life will have been built upon; many of the teaching and support staff will already be familiar people to them. They will have taken part in whole school assemblies as well as other whole school events. However, there are also other activities designed to help with transition. These are –

- Story sessions with new teachers
- Outdoor play sessions in the Key Stage 1 play area.
- Information and 'meet the team' meetings

Some children will need an Individual Transition plan. This will be carefully planned, decided and agreed by staff (the child's current setting staff who will know and understand the child best), school SENDCO and parents/carers.