

Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their potential. A child's experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up."

- "Early Years Foundation Stage Profile"

Department for Children, Schools and Families 2012

1. The Early Years Foundation Stage

Our Early Years Curriculum begins when the child reaches the age of three and continues until the end of the Foundation year. We recognise it as a crucial stage in education, both in its own right and in preparing children for learning in Key Stage 1. We believe that all children should be given the best possible start to their education. We therefore place great value on the quality of our provision in the Foundation Stage.

2. Our Ethos

At Riverside we believe that children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure and by being actively involved in their learning, through first hand experiences and their senses. We believe that children thrive when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them and when their individual needs are met. We believe that play underpins all development and learning for young children. We firmly believe that if a child is excited and motivated by learning, especially in the early days at our school, then we are already helping that child to become a lifelong learner.

3. Our Aims

- 3.1** To foster positive attitudes to learning including confidence, curiosity, responsibility and independence.
- 3.2** To promote an inclusive ethos and approach to learning for all our children to ensure that none are excluded or disadvantaged.
- 3.3** To provide children with a well planned curriculum which fosters enthusiasm for learning and is challenging and progressive within a stimulating environment.
- 3.4** To develop children's knowledge, understanding and skills in all areas of learning through first hand experiences.
- 3.5** To provide opportunities for children to make choices and become independent in their learning in a variety of safe and stimulating environments both indoors and outdoors.
- 3.6** To establish and maintain a close partnership with parents/carers, families and pre-school providers in our community.

- 3.7 To use focussed assessment and record keeping based on direct observation of children and discussion with them. To use this to inform future planning, monitor progress and build on children's prior learning.
- 3.8 To provide a planned curriculum that helps children to strive to achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage.

4. The Early Years Curriculum

In order to achieve our aims we support and follow the EYFS Curriculum. The Foundation Stage is based on four main principles that are broken down into four commitments describing how each principle can be put into practise:

- 4.1 **A Unique Child** - we recognise that every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. The commitments are focussed around child development, inclusion, keeping safe and health and well being.
- 4.2 **Positive Relationships** - we acknowledge that children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person. The school is committed to developing with the children respect for each other; accepting parents as partners; providing a secure base to support learning and establishing the role of keys workers within the setting.
- 4.3 **Enabling Environments** - the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning. The best practice is established through observation, assessment and planning; supporting every child; providing a rich learning environment and exploring the wider context.
- 4.4 **Learning and Development** - recognises that children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. All areas of learning and development are equally important and are inter-connected.

The Foundation Stage Curriculum is divided into 3 Prime Areas of Learning and 4 Specific areas of Learning. In the Nursery our main focus is on the 3 Prime areas but all areas are considered as equally important and is delivered through planned, purposeful play. Throughout the day there is a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities, focusing on a skill in each area:

- 4.5 **Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED)**
This area has three sub sections. These are Making Relationships, Self-confidence and Self-awareness and Managing Feelings and Behaviour. The outcomes focus on children learning how to work, play, co-operate with others and function in a group beyond the family. They cover important aspects of personal, social, moral and spiritual development including the development of personal values and an understanding of self and others.

4.6 Communication and Language (CL)

This is broken down into three sub sections. These cover Listening and Attention, Understanding and Speaking. These outcomes cover important aspects of language development and provide the foundations for literacy. The Early Years Policy places a strong emphasis on children's developing competence in speaking and listening and understanding. Other areas of learning also make a vital contribution to the successful development of literacy.

4.7 Physical Development (PD)

This covers both fine and gross motor development and keeping healthy. Physical development is implicit in all areas of the EYFS framework. Children are provided with opportunities to develop physical control, coordination, movement, awareness of space and manipulative skills in both the inside and outdoor environment. Children engage in 'Funky Fingers' 3 times a week and 'Write Dance' weekly to develop their muscles to help throughout the curriculum. Positive attitudes are encouraged towards a healthy and active way of life.

4.8 Mathematics (M)

This is broken down into two sub sections. These are Number and Shape, Space and Measures. These outcomes cover important aspects of mathematical understanding and provide the foundation for Mathematics. They focus on achievement through practical activities and using and understanding language in the development of simple mathematical ideas. Once children are confident in the basics of counting and number they will begin to follow the Visual Maths programme.

4.9 Literacy (L)

This area of learning has two sub sections; Reading and Writing. The objectives ensure success in early reading and writing skills. Phonics plays a big part in this area, and the ability to blend for reading and segment for spelling are skills that are promoted daily in the Early Years using RWI and Letters and sounds within Nursery.

4.10 Understanding the World (UW)

This area focuses on children developing knowledge skills and understanding that help them make sense of the world around them. Their learning is supported through offering opportunities for them to use a range of tools safely; encounter creatures, people, plants, technology and objects in their natural environments and in real-life situations; undertake practical experiments and work with a range of materials. We also go on 'Welly Walks' around the local environment each week and Nature Nursery sessions are held for a group of children in termly blocks.

4.11 Expressive Arts and Design (EAD) - Through art, music, design technology, dance, imaginative and role play activities children develop their creativity and curiosity. They are given opportunities to explore and share their thoughts, ideas and feelings.

4.12 Characteristics of Effective Learning

Planned and guided children's activities will reflect on the different ways that children learn. We support children in using the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning. These 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 between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

(Taken from statutory framework for the EYFS 2012)

5. Key features of our Foundation Stage

The features of good practice in our school that relate to the Foundation Stage are:

- 5.1** We ensure that children have plenty of opportunities to play in a secure environment with effective support from caring adults. We use the classrooms and our outdoor area to enable children to access both planned, structured play activities and self-initiated, spontaneous play activities. Our excellent Early Years unit offers children the opportunity to play both indoors and outdoors and develop intellectually, creatively, physically, socially and emotionally.
- 5.2** The Foundation and Nursery stages work very closely as a Unit. This enables the older children to become good role-models for the younger children and allows different learning opportunities for all abilities. It also means we can provide activities for all developmental levels and needs.
- 5.3** We provide a range of activities which are interesting, enjoyable, challenging and fun! Through these, we encourage our children to explore, experiment, question, investigate, discover, create, practise and consolidate their developing understanding, knowledge and skills.
- 5.4** We recognise that children learn in different ways and at different rates, therefore, we provide time for children to make choices and explore ideas and interests in depth.

- 5.5 We have a strong partnership between teachers and parents, so that our children feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement. This also ensures that parents are fully informed on their child's progress.
- 5.6 We have excellent knowledge and understanding of current pedagogy in the Early Years and the way in which young children develop, learn and grow. We particularly understand the importance of maintaining current knowledge in speaking and listening development.
- 5.7 We ensure equality of access to all areas of learning in a high quality environment and that this is provided for all children.
- 5.8 We encourage the children to communicate and talk about their learning and to develop independence and self-management.

6. Assessment

Assessment is a key part to ensuring our ethos and aims are met. We do this by:

- 6.1 We make regular assessments of children's learning, and use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment takes the form of observation which is then added to the child's online Learning Journey (Tapestry) and involves all adults in the Unit. The identification of the progress and future learning needs of children through observations are then placed in Learning Journeys for parents to review regularly.
- 6.2 During the Foundation Year, a Foundation Stage Profile will be completed for each child. This will detail each child's progress and achievement across the ELGs.
- 6.3 During the first term in Nursery children are observed and given a base-line age in all areas of the EYFS. This is then used to inform the planning and activities needed to encourage all children to meet their potential. This is updated each term to ensure good progression is being made.
- 6.4 Once children enter Foundation the parents/carers will be introduced to the Foundation Stage Profile. During the Autumn term, the Profile will be used to assess baseline achievement, and the parents advised during an individual consultation meeting. Targets are also given to parents at this meeting to work on at home. A further review meeting takes place in the Spring term.
- 6.5 The Foundation Stage Profile is continuous and on-going and assessments are made mainly by observations of children at activities. These observations are placed in individual children's Learning Journeys (Tapestry), which parents can access from home. Parents are also encouraged to place any wow moments or comments online to give us a holistic view of each child.
- 6.6 Each term a summary is written and shared with parents, this includes a child's personal comment about their learning. In July, parents are given a report about their child, highlighting strengths and areas of development and identifying targets for the following year.

7. Resources and staffing

Our excellent facilities allow us to meet the needs of all children and fulfil our aims and ethos. The Early Years Unit includes 3 classrooms and a nursery which includes 2 small rooms, creative area and an excellent outside facility. The area is staffed by 3 teachers, 1 EYP and at least 10 other key people at any given time. We also have a HLTA and SEN TA to support children or groups of children with specific needs. We plan a learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, that encourages a positive attitude to learning. We use materials and equipment that reflect both the community that the children come from and the wider world. We encourage the children to make their own selection of the activities on offer, as we believe that this encourages independent learning.

The Foundation team is managed by the Early Years co-ordinator. This involves planning the curriculum in consultation with the Head Teacher, Senior Teachers and all other staff in the unit. There is liaison with other agencies including governors and the Local Authority. The role includes administration of the Foundation stage, resourcing, assessing and monitoring in line with school policies.

8. Admissions

Our school arrangements for children settling into our school are flexible, so that children are given enough time to feel secure in their new environment. Parental involvement is valued and welcomed with plenty of opportunities for co-operation and collaboration. We follow the Plymouth School Admission Arrangements as set out in the annual admissions booklet given to the parents of prospective pupils in the Autumn term. In our school we aim to offer children a part-time nursery place in the term after they turn three and children enter full-time Foundation in the year following their fourth birthday.

9. Parents

We agree that 'Parents are the first and most important teachers. Effective and meaningful partnerships are the best guarantees of children's successful learning.' (Framework for a Foundation Curriculum for Under Five's.) We believe that all parents have an important role to play in the education of their child. We therefore recognise the role that parents have played, and their future role, in educating the children. We do this through:

- 9.1** Talking to parents about their child before their child starts in our unit. This happens at a introduction meeting for children not attending the nursery.
- 9.2** Opportunities are given to the children to spend time with their teacher before starting school, which gives parents an opportunity to discuss issues.
- 9.3** Inviting all parents to an induction meeting during the term their child starts school and in the spring term.

- 9.4 Offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress throughout our Unit and to add information into their own child's Learning Journey.
- 9.5 Encouraging parents to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns.
- 9.6 Arranging for children to start school gradually over the first three weeks of term, so that the children feel secure and settled.
- 9.7 Encouraging parents to stay if there are problems with the child's admission into Nursery or foundation.
- 9.8 Offering a range of activities, throughout the year, that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents.
- 9.9 Parents are invited to become directly involved in school life through volunteering to help in the classroom, attending the PTFA meetings and becoming a Governor.

10 Inclusion and Equal Opportunities

We provide a safe and supportive learning environment at our school where the contribution of all children is valued. We also employ a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's experiences, interests, skills and learning needs. Children with special educational needs will be supported as appropriate to enable them to access the curriculum fully. This includes children that are more able and those with specific learning difficulties and disabilities. Individual Education Plans identify targets in specific areas of learning for those children who require additional support as included within the school's Special Educational Needs Policy. The school's SEN Co-ordinator is responsible for providing additional information and advice to staff and parents and for arranging external intervention and support as necessary.

In line with the school's Equal Opportunities Policy, we will provide all children, regardless of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability with equal access to all aspects of school life to ensure that every child is valued as an individual. All staff are role models and are aware of the influence they have in promoting positive attitudes and use that influence to challenge stereotypical attitudes.

In addition, we select our resources, equipment and materials thoughtfully, choosing those which positively reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping. We also work closely with the school SEN Team and other agencies in meeting individual and group needs.

Nicola Sharp
Early Years Co-ordinator

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