

Policy for Early Years in Skelton Primary School

Introduction

This document is a statement of the aims, principles and strategies for Early Years in Skelton Primary School. It was developed during the Spring term 2004 following discussion within the Early Years Department.

It was approved by the governing body on

/ / 2004

The policy will be reviewed as scheduled in the S.D.P

Definition of Early Years and the Early Years Curriculum

In Skelton Primary School we aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum, which reflects the value and importance of early years education and recognises that the quality and success of learning in this phase has a profound impact on the effectiveness of all learning that follows from it.

We aim to provide a caring, stimulating environment, which encourages problem solving, collaborating and experimenting and enables the whole development of each child, developing strengths and helping any weaknesses.

In Skelton Primary School we recognise that younger children need a great deal of attention, time and care. In order to learn they need to feel safe, secure and happy and need to be able to trust the adults who care for them. We recognise that young children need first- hand experiences, which are self- initiated and planned. They need to be given time to make sense of their environment, to build on previously gained knowledge and skills and they do this most effectively through play. We believe that play supplies the foundation upon which learning is built and, bearing this in mind, our early years classrooms are divided into working areas which allow for both child initiated learning and teacher directed activities, each area focusing on a particular aspect of learning, helping to provide a broad and balanced curriculum.

By the term “Early Years” we are referring to the period from age three to the end of the reception year. This foundation stage is a distinct stage and important both in its own right and in preparing children for later schooling.

Aims

The aims of the school are to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum which encourages self-discipline, responsibility, respect and good behaviour within a caring, friendly environment.

Our aims for Early Years and the Early Years Curriculum are: -

- that the children will develop a positive image of themselves as confident, competent learners.
- all children will be provided with opportunities to meet and overcome challenges, to make decisions and to work co-operatively with other children and adults.
- all children will feel safe and secure in a well ordered, attractive and stimulating environment.
- children will show a lively interest in all practical and problem solving activities and participate in purposeful play, both self-initiated and planned.
- to develop a partnership with parents.
- to work as a team with others, including specialist agencies, to provide the best possible education according to the needs and characteristics of each child.
- to provide the necessary guidelines and training to Early Years staff and others e.g. parents, to enable them to work effectively and happily as part of the Early Years team.
- to ensure that Early Years is an integral part of the whole school community.

The aims of the school for Early Years agree with the aims of the foundation stage in Q. C. A's Early Learning Goals.

The Principles of Early Years

Principles and values are the cornerstones from which all relationships, procedures and provision in early years education are shaped. They reflect a shared vision of children's needs and entitlement and the means by which educational objectives will be achieved.

The principles and values underpinning Skelton Primary School's policy statement for early years education are that:-

- each child is valued as a unique individual.
- each child is entitled to equal opportunities which are not hindered by stereotyped views about social or cultural background, gender or special needs.
- early years experience should build on what children already know, understand and can do.
- the child's past experiences are appreciated.
- practitioners must be able to observe and respond appropriately to children, informed by a knowledge of how children develop and learn.
- each child is entitled to a rich and varied curriculum which successfully combines care, support, inspiration and challenge. The curriculum for early years is an intentional curriculum which cannot be left to chance.
- to be effective, an early years curriculum needs to be carefully structured to ensure continuity and progression.
- activities should be planned and purposeful, to provide opportunities for teaching and learning both indoors and outdoors.
- children should be given the time to become engrossed, work in depth and complete activities.

- there should be opportunities for children to engage in activities planned by adults and also those which they plan or initiate themselves.
- a well planned and well organised environment gives children rich and stimulating experiences and provides the structure for teaching within which children explore, experiment, plan and make decisions for themselves.
- children need to feel secure, included and valued. In order to work effectively with parents and their children positive relationships need to be built with parents. Children, parents and practitioners must work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

The Learning Environment

The combination of ethos, relationships, provision and opportunities creates an intricate context for learning. Together they influence and shape children's personal and social development, attitudes and approaches to learning. They have a profound effect on its quality and success.

Ethos

A positive ethos in nursery and reception enables children to flourish. It has as its basis, warmth, care, mutual respect and high expectations. A positive ethos is characterised by:-

- adults who provide a good role model .They demonstrate qualities of warmth, sensitivity, self control and respect for others. They show appreciation of children's achievements, background and culture.
- pupils who have a strong sense of security and self-esteem. They have the confidence to express themselves, to make mistakes and to develop their own ideas. They emulate the positive attitudes and qualities demonstrated by others.

Personal and Social Development

Personal and social development encompass the processes through which young children gain a sense of themselves, their relationships and the ways in which they co-exist with others. It strongly influences children's capacity for learning how to learn.

Roles and Responsibilities of Adults

Young children see themselves largely through the eyes of adults. Adults help to determine each child's personal growth and progress in learning.

All those involved in the education of young children should develop relationships of trust so that children can confidently build on success and cope with minor failures. In particular, they should:-

- respect the rights and equality of children.
- value what each child brings, their experiences, ideas and feelings.
- empathise with children and enjoy their company.
- promote children's feelings of self worth.
- know and understand each child's needs and abilities.

Environment and Opportunities

An effective environment promotes opportunities for learning. It should not be viewed as something static or inert, but as a means through which children engage in sustained, purposeful activity and make progress across all areas of the curriculum. An appropriate and effective environment should be:-

- safe, secure and stimulating.
- reflect all curriculum areas of learning.
- reflect children's abilities, needs, interests, culture and languages.
- provide children with opportunities for independence and taking responsibility.
- support children's need to observe, explore and try out ideas.
- support children's need to concentrate and persevere.
- support children's need for consistent daily routines.

Teaching and Learning

The quality of early years' education depends ultimately on the ways in which adults interact with children and use both the curriculum and environment as instruments of learning. The emphasis of our teaching and learning in early years is based on an ability to:-

- share and understand the aims, objectives, principles and values of early years education.
- understand how young children learn.
- communicate effectively through listening, discussion and questioning.
- provide appropriate role models.
- have well informed, high expectations of all children.
- provide high quality experiences that motivate and inspire children to achieve.
- observe and interact with children in order to plan for, monitor and assess their needs and progress.
- identify the next steps of learning.
- liaise with parents, colleagues and other agencies so that education becomes a continuous process.
- continue to develop their knowledge and expertise in early years education.

How Children Learn in Early Years

Learning should be a rewarding, pleasurable experience, embedded in what is familiar. Children should enjoy coming to school.

The Importance of Play

Well planned play, both indoor and outdoor, is a key way in which young children learn with enjoyment and challenge. Play is children's work, helping them to explore ideas, roles and relationships. It is a major vehicle for learning. Appropriately planned and structured play in a secure environment, supports and develops children's need to :-

- socialise – learn how to control impulses and understand the need for rules.
- imagine – think creatively and imaginatively.
- express ideas, thoughts, feelings.
- observe, explore and try things out, making sense of the world.

Appropriate, well timed support from adults in children's play will help to :-

- extend thinking and ideas.
- pose problems to be solved
- broaden children's knowledge
- convey values
- develop and provide models of language and communication.

The Importance of Talking and Listening

Developing oracy skills should be central to all activities and provision in early years education.

The term 'oracy' describes the interdependence of talking and listening. It is the major instrument of social communication and intellectual development. Talk introduces children to different ways of thinking and, combined with first hand activity, helps them to construct meaning from what they observe and do. Talking with and listening to children gives adults vital insights into their understanding and needs.

Partnership with Parents/Carers and the Wider Community.

In Skelton Primary School we acknowledge the valuable role parents play in the education of children and welcome their support and help within the school. We seek to work in partnership with them, communicating effectively and frequently. Partnership with parents implies a two way process with knowledge, information and insights being shared. For this to be effective there must be a continuing dialogue, mutual understanding, trust and respect. In order to be able to participate fully and appropriately in their children's education in school, parents need to know about:-

- school, class arrangements, systems and routines
- policies
- curriculum
- their children's progress, difficulties, achievements
- ways to support their children's learning in school and at home.

The school recognises the important role that parents play as the child's first educators. The school needs to know and respond to:-

- all aspects of each child's development, progress, learning and experiences at home.
- the role and contribution of the community in children's learning.

Links with the Community and other Agencies.

The early years team is committed to working with and alongside individuals, organisations and groups within our local community We use the opportunities offered by the local community in the following ways:-

- people in the locality come to talk to the children – fire men, lollipop lady, police etc.
- the children extend their learning with visits to local businesses and places of interest – shops, library, castle, post office etc.
- local transport is used to give experiences of different forms of travel.
- school trips are organised to places of interest.
- the children experience the arts and other cultures through visits from musicians, artists, theatre groups, etc.

Links with other schools and establishments catering for early years children

The early years staff regularly attend courses and meetings organised by the Local Education Authority.

The early years team benefits from close links with staff from other schools and attend support group meetings.

Professional Services

Early years benefits from close links with professional and local services, which makes an important contribution to our policy and care for each individual child. We have strong links with the following:-

- the school psychological service
- school health and health visitor
- speech therapy
- education welfare department
- social services
- paediatric and other hospital outreach
- learning support
- behaviour support.

The Requirements for Effective Learning

The provision of a broad and balanced curriculum and a stimulating environment are not sufficient to ensure successful learning. Careful consideration must be given to the factors that influence children's ability to learn effectively.

Children need:-

Relevant experiences • to be involved in first hand experiences which are relevant, worthwhile and meaningful to them and to have activities which are challenging but achievable.

Opportunities • to talk about their own ideas, experiences, needs, uncertainties, fears and joys and to plan, try things out and make mistakes

• opportunities to reflect upon their choices, activities, behaviour, successes and difficulties.

Language and Learning • to observe and ask questions about what they see and hear.

Responsibility and Independence • to make choices about their activities and about the materials and equipment they need. To develop self help skills.

Conceptual Understanding • opportunities to build upon and consolidate prior learning.

• to develop enquiry and learning skills.

• to develop concentration and perseverance.

• to learn from their mistakes.

Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to become absorbed in an activity and to see it through to completion.
Positive Attitudes to Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • approach learning with curiosity, interest and enthusiasm.
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to work effectively alone and alongside others in small and large groups. • to come to terms with social and emotional conflict and understand what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.
Equal opportunities Positive Valuing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to be valued and supported as an individual member of the school community • to have their efforts and achievements recognised and celebrated • to have their past experiences appreciated • positive images of gender, race, disability and cultural diversity
Recognition of and Provision for Individual Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to engage in activities that are well matched to their needs and abilities • to have their needs and abilities monitored and assessed from time of entry
Continuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to be supported in making the transition from home to school • to have their need for consistency recognised and built in to routines and provision • to be supported when encountering changes

- to be able to use familiar learning strategies as they move from setting to setting, class to class
- Progression**
- to engage in learning which builds on existing knowledge, skills and understanding
 - activities in which there is increasing yet manageable challenge
- Resources**
- appropriate, good quality materials and equipment

The Curriculum

The curriculum is the framework of experiences which serve to develop each child's talents, intellectual, physical and creative abilities. Children's personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are central to all aspects of progress and learning. The quality of early years education depends ultimately on the ways in which adults interact with children and use both the curriculum and environment as instruments of learning. In order to do this effectively we aim to provide a curriculum which reflects the aims of the school and forms the first stage in the whole school curriculum plan. We aim to ensure that the curriculum

- Is broad, balanced, differentiated and relevant
- Takes account of the assessment of children's progress
- Promotes equal opportunities
- Responds effectively to special needs promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural and physical development of children
- Prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

Our Early Years Curriculum is based on six areas of learning which embody the skills, knowledge, concepts and attitudes to be acquired and developed within an early years education.(The foundation stage.) They are set out in the document "Early Learning Goals." (Q.C.A.) as:-

Language and Literacy – talking, listening and encouraging children to become readers and writers.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development – learning how to work and play, co-operate and function in a group, develop personal and moral values, understand themselves and others.

Mathematical Development – mathematical understanding and the foundations of numeracy with a focus on practical activities.

Knowledge and Understanding of the World – finding out about the world around them, other people and features of the natural and man-made world, these become a foundation for history, geography, technology and science.

Physical Development – physical control, mobility, awareness of space and manipulative skills in indoor and outdoor environments. Establishing positive attitudes towards a healthy and active way of life.

Creative Development – the development of imagination and the ability to communicate and express ideas and feelings in creative ways.

Our curriculum is planned through a series of themes and topics, each of which offer experiences in all six areas of learning. The objectives set out in the National Literacy Strategy and the National Numeracy Strategy for the reception year are also taken into account as is the R.E. document for Redcar and Cleveland.

Planning follows a two year programme in Nursery and a 1 year programme in Reception. Each topic is flexible and emphasis is given to parts of the topic that the children either enjoy or need so a topic is never identical at each delivery and the older child covers a topic in much more detail. Topic work and planning is continually improved in order to meet the children's interests and needs.

Teachers, nursery nurses and auxiliaries plan together to provide a linked series of activities over each term, week and day, with clear learning objectives and outcomes.

Staff ensure that all children are encouraged to experience all areas of activity, although they may not experience them each day.

We plan a mixture of directed and free choice activities and children's choices are carefully monitored to ensure a balanced programme.

There is no specialist teaching in early years, all teachers teach all areas of knowledge to their children.

Planning sets out the ways in which different activities and the roles of adults can contribute to achieving curricular objectives.

Differentiation

The initial main aim with the 3 year olds, generally, is to feel safe, secure and happy within the nursery environment. Once this is achieved the programme of work can begin, not necessarily when the child is 4 years old, but when the child is ready.

By the beginning of year 1, some children will have exceeded the early learning goals, whereas others will be working towards some or all of the goals, particularly younger children or those with special educational needs.

Continuity and Progression

Continuity and progression are interlinked concepts relating to the nature and quality of children's learning experiences over time.

The structure of the curriculum will be designed so that there is a developmental sequence of learning activity that meets the full range of children's current and expected future needs and helps them to progress step by step.

The Next Steps in Learning

Decisions about the next steps in learning can only be made when they are based on accurate assessment and where the progression of skills, knowledge and understanding is clearly identified in all required areas of learning.

Special Needs

Any problems that may affect learning eg. physical defects such as hearing, sight, or emotional / social / behavioural are identified at this early stage.

The close relationship we have with parents and daily contact, enables us to discuss any problem on an informal basis, offering help and support and sometimes advising about outside agencies eg. speech therapist. In the first 5 years, children's emotional, physical and psychological development progress at a greater rate than at any other time in their development, but the rate is different for each child. Because of this we are usually reluctant in early years to register a child as having special needs but would rather specify a cause for concern. Records help to identify any areas of concern. The staff meet regularly to discuss these and the S.E.N. co-ordinator is kept informed. (See Special Needs policy.)

Resources/ Areas of Experience Within the Classroom

Classroom/Nursery resources in early years are the responsibility of the teachers, who should ensure that they are safe, well kept and stored neatly and safely. Dangerous/worn or unused equipment should be removed. Replacement equipment and new resources are bought either through a school order or school funds. Nursery helps in raising funds throughout the year with weekly contributions, raffles and social events.

Resources include:-

- a comfortable reading area with a range of books
- a mark making / writing area with a variety of writing implements and paper
- sand with equipment
- water with equipment
- mathematical equipment and games
- scientific equipment
- an imaginative play area
- an art area
- materials for technology
- cooking area
- dough / clay with tools
- small and large construction equipment

- computers and interactive whiteboards (refer to I.T. policy)
- an interest table
- language games
- taped stories and music
- musical instruments
- Language Master
- jigsaw puzzles
- outdoor play plus equipment
- indoor P.E. equipment

Monitoring, Assessment and Record Keeping.

Monitoring, assessment and record keeping are essential parts of an effective curriculum. In particular, they help to:-

- identify children's progress, needs and abilities.
- identify special needs and to diagnose specific difficulties.
- inform planning
- provide parents and teachers with a rounded picture of children's achievements, progress, strengths and weaknesses
- contribute to an overview and evaluation of policy, practice and provision.

- monitoring and assessment should :-
- focus on what the child can do and needs next
- be integral to teaching and learning
- recognise that children's needs are interrelated and complex
- be appropriate to the ages and stages of the children
- be linked to criteria for learning in all the required areas of learning.

In the Early Years at Skelton Primary School, assessment is an on going process. Prior to entry each child receives a Home Visit and is invited to participate in the “Sammy Snake Gang,” which involves the child/parents in activities and visits to school and enables the staff to get to know the child.

On Entry

On entry to nursery various aspects of the child’s development are discussed and a picture of the child’s past experiences, abilities and needs are recorded in a “Starting Nursery Questionnaire”. Staff record how each child settles into nursery and begin a profile for each child which is continually updated using information gained from observations, target activities and assessments.

Nursery Records

During the first half term in nursery a child’s capabilities are recorded. A sample of the child’s writing is obtained. “Aspects” base line on entry assessment is completed Each child’s records are continually updated during their time spent in nursery. Relevant pieces of work showing accomplishments, strengths and weaknesses are kept alongside these records as evidence.

Listening to, talking with and observing children in a variety of contexts are the key strategies for gaining an accurate and rounded picture of each child’s progress and development.

On Leaving Nursery

Records are completed to show progress made during the child’s time in nursery. Any gaps in the records denote areas to consider during the next year’s planning. These records, evidence of work and a written report are given to the Reception teacher.

During the first half term in Reception

The “Pips” baseline is completed and used to inform planning and determine the child’s individual needs accurately and appropriately.

Reception Records

Throughout Reception progress is recorded and monitored A Baseline Profile is completed to indicate which Early Learning Goals have been achieved by the end of Reception.

Parents

Parents are informed of their child's progress through informal chats on a daily basis and, more formally, at **Open Evenings** held at the end of the child's term in Nursery and during their time in Reception.

Workshops are held to keep parents informed of policies and methods of teaching and to provide parents with ideas of how to help their child at home.

Reports to parents

Reports are written at the end of a child's time in Nursery and are also completed in Reception.

Throughout the Foundation Stage

Children are observed regularly and evidence or notes pertaining to their particular skills, knowledge, understanding or needs are taken as a record of their achievement and to inform future planning of their development. Several different strategies are used to monitor the children's learning e.g. tracking where appropriate, adult- child interaction.

Staff meet formally and informally to talk about the development and needs of the children, as well as issues relating to the curriculum, activities, strategies, resources, environment, planning, staffing etc.

On going assessment and samples of work are passed onto the next teacher when a child transfers from one year group to another or one school to another.

Evaluation and Quality Assurance

Evaluation and monitoring take place within Early Years using a variety of strategies.

- the Early Years Policy is monitored through observations and discussions.
- the curriculum is evaluated during assessment activities and staff evaluate each lesson as well as weekly and termly planning.
- resources – discussion and observation of children at work indicate under or over used areas, while interaction indicates whether the required activities are being undertaken.
- the staff evaluate statistical information e.g. Baseline Profile results.
- the staff respond to information produced by OFSTED, L.E.A. and the Advisory Service to help to view the achievements of the children in a national context and advise on strategies for improving the service .

Equal Opportunities

Staff monitor areas of the classroom and prepare work and activities so that every child receives his or her entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum.

A variety of groupings e.g. free choice, mixed gender, age, are used.

Consideration is given to resources to avoid gender stereo-typing.

In all aspects of their relationship with the children, staff attempt complete fairness in their thoughts, speech and actions.

The school policy for Equal Opportunities is followed.

Child Protection

Early Years' staff follow the guidelines as set out in the school's Child Protection Policy. The Nominated Person within the school is the Head teacher.

Health and Safety

Health and safety issues are the responsibility of all who work in the school setting. Every effort is taken to provide a safe, secure environment. Correct use of equipment and tools is continuously taught and supervised. Resources are regularly checked and damaged equipment removed or replaced.

(See the school's Health and Safety Policy.)