

Heartwood Church of England Academy Trust



Early Years Policy

Policy Owner: Local Governing Body

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Sign off signatory: Chair of Local Governing Body

Introduction

The Foundation Stage applies to all children from three years of age until the end of the Reception year. In the Heartwood Academy schools children join us in the September following their fourth birthday, and at Newton Regis Nursery they may join the term following their third birthday or once they turn 2 ½ years old. Key Stage 1 for our children begins in Year 1, their second year in school.

The Foundation Stage is important in its own right, and in preparing children for later schooling. The Early Learning Goals set out what is expected of most children by the end of the Foundation Stage.

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

- It builds on what the 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 activity that provides opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors
- It provides a rich and stimulating environment

Aims of the Foundation Stage

The curriculum of the Foundation Stage underpins all future learning by supporting, fostering promoting and developing:

Characteristics of learning

- Playing and exploring,
- Active learning,
- Thinking critically.

Prime Areas of Learning and Development

- Personal, social and emotional development – making relationships, self-confidence and self-awareness, managing feelings and behaviour.
- Physical Development- moving and handling, health and self-care
- Communication and Language – listening and attention, understanding, speaking

Specific Areas of Learning and Development –

- Literacy – reading, writing
- Mathematics – Numbers, Shape, space and measure
- Understanding the World – people and communities, the world, technology
- Expressive Arts and Design – exploring and using media and materials, being imaginative

Teaching and learning style

Our Teaching and Learning policy defines the features of effective teaching and learning in our schools.

Specific good practice that relates to the Foundation Stage is:

- The partnership between teachers and parents, so that our children feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement
- The understanding that teachers have of how children develop and learn, and how this impacts upon their teaching
- The range of approaches used that provide first hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions and extend and develop play and talk or other means of communication
- The carefully planned curriculum that helps children progress through Development Matters with the aim to achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage
- The provision for children to take part in activities that build on and extend their interests and develop their intellectual, physical, social and emotional abilities
- The encouragement for children to communicate and talk about their learning, and to develop independence and self-management
- The support for learning with appropriate and accessible indoor and outdoor space and equipment
- The identification of the progress and future learning needs of children through observations, which are frequently shared with parents
- The good relationships, and effective liaison, between school and pre-school settings ensure a smooth transition between settings
- The clear aims for our work, and the regular monitoring to improve and evaluate what we do
- Regular training and updates for all adults working within the Foundation Stage

Play in the Foundation Stage

Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, and learn about self-control and 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. They express fears or re-live anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.

Inclusion in the Foundation Stage

In our schools we believe that all our children matter. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning.

In the Foundation Stage we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children, so that most achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of Reception. Some children progress beyond this point. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those whose first language is not English.

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- Planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence
- Using a wide range of teaching strategies based upon children's learning needs
- Providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively
- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued
- Using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping
- Planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills
- Monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary

The Foundation Stage Curriculum

The Development Matters Age and Stage document provides the basis for planning the curriculum throughout the Foundation Stage. There is a focus on Play Based Learning with periods of Continuous Provision based on objective led activities informed by gap analysis and pupil interest. There are planned adult led focussed activities which include a daily phonics session.

The planning shows the learning intentions as the children work toward the Early Learning Goals

Assessment

We make regular assessments of children's learning, and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects the needs of the children. The majority of assessment in the Foundation Stage takes the form of observation, and this involves the class teacher and other adults as appropriate.

The EYFS staff complete a 'Learning Journey' for each child which will contain a wide range of evidence which is shared with parents at each parental consultation meeting.

At the end of the Foundation Stage parents receive an annual report that offers brief comments on each child's progress in each area. It highlights the child's strengths and development needs and gives details of the child's general progress.

Parents of children in Newton Regis Nursery attend twice yearly parent's evenings and receive a written report at the end of each academic year. A 'learning journey' is completed by the child's key worker which will contain a wide range of evidence which is shared by parents.

A progress check is completed for children aged between 2 and 3 years old and shared with parents. If there are concerns regarding a child's development this will be shared with other agencies, such as Health Visitors, with the parent's permission.

The role of parents

All parents have a continued role to play in the education of their child. We recognise the role parents play, and their future role, in educating the children. We do this through:

- Talking to parents about their child before they start school
- Giving children the opportunity to spend time with their teacher before starting school
- Inviting all parents to an induction meeting during the year before their child starts school
- Offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress
- Encouraging the parents to talk through any concerns
- Having a planned transition from pre-school settings and a short induction period in September to enable the children to settle quickly
- Inviting parents into school regularly for assemblies and other events as well as curriculum information meetings
- Asking parents to share with us the learning experiences their children have outside of school

Resources

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 choices from the range of activities on offer, as we believe that this encouraged independent learning.