



## **EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE POLICY**

### **Aims**

This policy is intended to support and encourage staff in meeting the statutory requirements and in the delivery of high-quality experiences for children's learning and development. It is also how we inform parents and carers about what is delivered in Wheatley Nursery School. It is underpinned by the Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage 2024 (EYFS), a Government framework for children aged birth to five. At Wheatley Nursery School we use the non statutory document 'Development Matters' updated 2023 to guide our bespoke curriculum. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/development-matters--2>

*"Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfill their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up. (Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage page 5 DFE 2024)*

The EYFS has four guiding principles which shape our practice at Wheatley Nursery

- School:
- 1) Every child is a unique child
  - 2) Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships
  - 3) Children learn and develop well in enabling environments
  - 4) Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates

### **A Unique Child**

#### **Child development**

At Wheatley Nursery School we recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self assured. We also recognise that each child develops in individual ways, at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by both their home background and feedback from others. We use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration/ sharing circle times and reward incentives, to encourage children to develop positive attitudes to learning.

#### **Inclusive practice**

We value the diversity of individuals within our school and do not discriminate against any child. All children and their families are valued and all our children matter. We aim to give each child every opportunity to become their best self. We do this by taking into account our children's range of life experiences and what they know and can do when planning for their learning.

In Wheatley Nursery School we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of every child including: those 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 from diverse linguistic backgrounds. We liaise closely with all relevant professionals in order to provide early support for those children and their families who need it.

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 on 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 contributions of all children are valued,
- Assigning a key person to each child who makes links with children's home experiences through

parents/carers,

- Using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping,
  - Planning challenging activities for children whatever their age and stage of development, ●
- Monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary.

### **Keeping safe**

It is important to us that all children feel safe and are safe within the nursery school. We help children become familiar with boundaries, rules and limits and how they can learn to take risks within a safe environment. Our children are allowed to take risks and are taught how to recognize, minimise or avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical, emotional and psychological well being of all children. (See our Safeguarding Policy)

*"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."*

(Statutory Framework for the EYFS pg. 21 DFE 2024)

The EYFS has within it a number of *Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements* that the nursery school must meet.

These include requirements to

- Promote the welfare and safety of children
- Provide each child with a key person
- Meet adult: child ratios of 1:4 for children aged 2 and 1:13 for children aged 3 and 4
- Provide healthy snacks and access to drinking water
- Promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill or have an accident
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs
- Ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so
- Ensure all staff have access to regular Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and supervision
- Ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment are safe and suitable for purpose
- Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children

### **Health and well-being**

Children's health is an integral part of their emotional, mental, social, environmental and spiritual well-being. We promote healthy snacks and offer foods from different cultures to develop their taste preferences. We provide children with access to fresh drinking water. Activities relating to the food cycle are interwoven in planning such as planting seeds, gathering, preparing and eating! We ensure that children can rest during the day and have quiet areas indoors and places outdoors where children can relax alongside space for vigorous free movements.

### **Positive Relationships**

#### **Respecting each other**

At Wheatley Nursery School we recognise that children learn to be strong and independent through forming secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

#### **Parents as partners**

We recognise that parents and carers are children's first and most enduring educators and we highly value the contribution that parents make. We recognise the role that parents play in supporting their child/ren's development. We do this through:

- Talking to parents/carers about their child before they start in our school
- Offering visits to meet each child in their home prior to starting
- Offering parents/carers regular opportunities to talk about their child's development and progress and

allowing free access to their child's Learning Journal

- Encouraging parents/carers to talk to their child's key person about any concerns they may have
- Offering various activities throughout the year that involve parents/carers in the life of school for example, community events
- Supporting parents/carers whose first language is one other than English

### **Supporting learning**

We believe effective teaching is rooted in the child's own interests and ideas and involves the child learning through play. Effective teaching involves:

- Engaging and stimulating each child
- Regularly reviewing each child's progress towards learning outcomes
- Varying what we provide to match children's interests and needs
- Maximising opportunities for children to explore and learn in different ways including independently and in groups of different sizes.

Routines are an important way that children feel secure and can make sense of all the opportunities offered throughout their time in school. Our routines are structured yet flexible. Children play and learn through our continuous provision indoor and outdoor throughout their day where they are supported by different adults according to their needs and interests. We have small group time and whole group time providing adult-led activities.

### **Key person**

At Wheatley Nursery School each child has a key person who knows the child and their family well. The key person builds confidence, gives children opportunities to express their thinking and use their initiative. We believe children learn and develop effectively when the key person provides:

- First-hand experiences
- Individual and collaborative learning experiences
- Appropriate pace
- An environment where children can take risks
- Innovative delivery
- Clear expectations
- Opportunities to review and reflect
- Thinking time
- Thorough preparation and organisation
- Activities building on prior learning
- Open-ended, thought provoking challenging questions
- Support for children with differing needs
- Support for parents and carers

All staff involved with children in the EYFS aim to develop good and warm relationships, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen.

*"The best kind of teacher is one who helps you do what you couldn't do for yourself but doesn't do it for you" (Child aged 8, quoted in "Teaching Children to think" by Robert Fisher, Nelson Thornes 1990)*

### **Enabling Environments**

#### **Observation, assessment and planning - supporting every child**

At Wheatley Nursery School we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending each child's learning and development. This begins by observing the child and assessing their interests and needs before planning challenging, but achievable, activities and experiences to extend their learning and development. Assessment of their achievements helps us plan the next steps for the child and helps to ensure they make the appropriate progress.

Observation is key to planning an appropriately challenging and exciting curriculum. The recording of observations is practicable, organised and well-managed. We use Tapestry, an online recording and assessment system and the

Oxfordshire Early Years Development Tool to help us record our observations and assess children's progress. We use information provided by the child's key person, other practitioners, parents and other professionals where appropriate.

We hold weekly planning meetings to enable all staff to contribute towards each child's learning and development, based on their observations. Children also play an important part in planning their own learning.

### **Long term planning**

In our school we use themes appropriate to the interests of our cohort of children and the community to which they belong and review these annually. We also plan for continuous provision. This is a core range of resources that children can use each day throughout the school year.

### **Medium term planning**

Our medium-term plans can run for a few weeks, month or half termly and are based on the needs and interests of the children for all areas of learning and development. Planning details the focus for learning, gives an overview of possible enhancements to continuous provision, the adult focused activities, resources, display and visits/visitors to school. Often themes are used as a vehicle for delivery.

### **Short term planning**

These are written in alternate weeks and detail adult focused and child-initiated learning experiences. It outlines the elements of development, effective learning for children and details prompts for staff linked to observation as well as key language/questions and resources.

Evaluations and next steps determine our planning for subsequent weeks. Where appropriate, reference will be made on short term planning for children with Special Educational Needs or disability linked to their SEN Outcomes Plan, EHC and Individual Learning Plan Personal Education Plan (PEP) or for children we care for (CWCF) linked to their Personal Education Plan (PEP) where appropriate.

### **Assessment**

Staff's on-going assessments form the basis for gathering holistic information on pupil progress. This information is analysed termly and highlights areas for future development. We also work with parents during the year to promote 'School Readiness' which focuses on some basic skills and emotional readiness to learn in a primary school environment.

### **The learning environment**

A high quality environment is key to success. It is the shared responsibility of staff and children to care for the environment both indoors and outdoors. Staff take pride in developing areas of continuous provision and displays which enhance and broaden opportunities.

The EYFS learning environment is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely indoors and outdoors. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet and rest. The environment is organised into continuous provision areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. Our outdoors provision offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. It offers our children the opportunity to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant.

## **Learning and Development – Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning**

### **Play and exploration**

At Wheatley Nursery School we recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. They develop their skills through a variety of processes. These include:

- Investigation
- Experimentation

- Listening
- Observing
- Talking and discussing
- Asking questions
- Practical exploration and role play
- Retrieving information
- Imagining
- Repetition
- Problem solving
- Making choices and decision-making
- Making predictions

We use the 'Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning' to shape our practices . The EYFS sets out 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

We provide opportunities for children to become engaged, motivated and to think critically. Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practice and build up ideas and learn how to control their behaviour 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. They can express fears or re-live anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations. Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. This happens best when children have some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence they learn to make decisions. It provides our children with a sense of satisfaction as they take ownership of their learning. Children's learning is extended through accessing resources freely and being allowed to move them around our school.

Children are given the opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning and development, not just through the arts. Staff support children's thinking and help them to make connections by showing genuine interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open- ended questions.

### **Areas of Learning and Development**

The EYFS sets out seven areas of learning and development set out as prime areas,.

There are three prime areas (particularly important for building a foundation for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, forming relationships and thriving):

- communication and language
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development

There are four specific areas which require more direct teaching and through which the prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are:

- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design

None of these areas can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are equally important and depend on each other. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult focused and child initiated activities. In each of the seven areas there are Early Learning Goals (ELGs) that set out the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS (end of the reception year). We plan our intentions, implement and review the impact as part of our two-weekly planning cycles. Each cohort of children may have very different needs and we plan according to that need, having high aspirations for all children.

Children are taught how to use all resources safely through focused activities. The adult's role within continuous

provision areas encourages our children to interact with resources and the environment with care and respect; and with regard for health and safety. We offer a range of resources both natural and man-made. We have a range of multi-sensory, multicultural and non-stereotypical resources which are reviewed and replenished regularly.