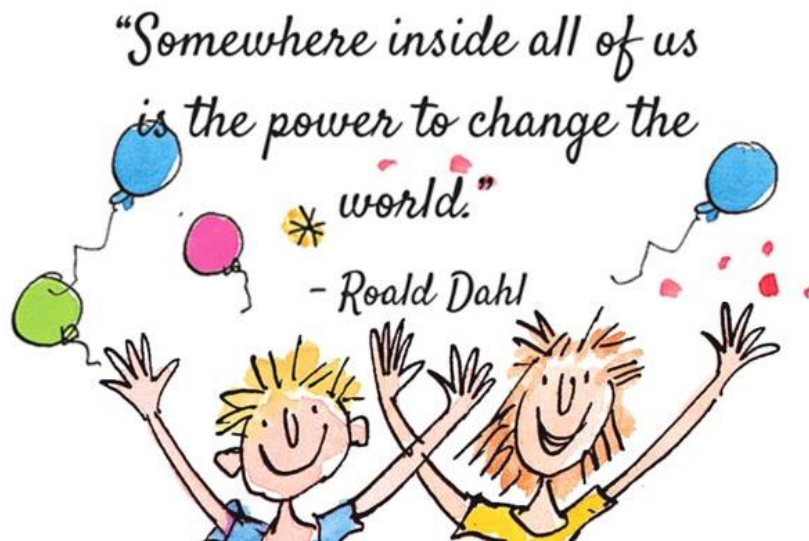




Early Years Policy



Curriculum Statement

Intent

At Ouston Primary School, we believe in nurturing, celebrating and developing children's individual interests and skills. Our school motto is 'Trying our best and achieving success'. This acknowledges the needs of our children through our aim to develop resilience in pupils and the confidence to always 'give it a try'!

We understand that the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) plays a pivotal part in this through the speed with which children develop and learn during their first five years. Because of this, we promote and hope to instill a love of learning within children that will inspire and challenge them through a balance of child-initiated, adult-guided and adult-led activities. Many of these activities are play-based and practical, and children can access them across both indoor and outdoor environments. Allowing children the opportunity to pursue their own interests, and explore independently, ensures that they know that their own ideas are valued and it also helps them to become independent thinkers, problem-solvers and risk-assessors. This helps to provide them with the best possible start to the rest of their journey through school, and beyond!

In developing our EYFS curriculum and practice, we are guided by the four main principles of:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

This ensures that we are continuously providing activities, tasks, resources and interactions that are matched to the changing needs of our children. We approach all learning opportunities in this way to ensure we are providing an inclusive environment with open-ended opportunities. (Please see ‘Appendix 1; Characteristics of Effective Learning’.)

Our main aim, throughout EYFS, is to provide children with the best possible start to school. For us, this means ensuring they make good progress against all areas of learning and development (please see ‘Appendix 2; EYFS Early Learning Goals’ for full details of each of these), as well as enjoying coming to school. It is this enjoyment, which allows children to develop confidence and independence and helps them to continue being enthusiastic, curious learners as they move into Year 1 and beyond. (Please see ‘Appendix 3; Curriculum Ambitions’ for a short summary of our ultimate aims in EYFS.)

We believe in developing the ‘whole child’ and therefore recognize the importance of building skills, knowledge and confidence in each of the areas of learning. These are:

- ~ **Communication and Language**
- ~ **Personal, Social and Emotional Development**
- ~ **Physical Development**
- ~ Literacy
- ~ Mathematics
- ~ Understanding the World
- ~ Expressive Arts and Design

Although we recognize the importance of all of these areas, we understand that reading is of paramount importance in order for children to continue to progress in all subjects, throughout EYFS and beyond. Because of this, we aim to provide a language-rich environment where reading is promoted and available in all environment areas, wherever possible. Sharing books, stories, songs and rhymes are a daily part of our practice.

We also understand that the prime areas of learning (those above in bold) are so named because of their significance to children’s development across all other areas and therefore must be prioritized in our day-to-day practice. This is particularly important in Nursery to ensure that children are ready for the greater focus on the specific areas of learning that occurs in Reception.

Implementation

Teaching and Learning

The Early Years Foundation Stage environment is play-based, with a variety of different areas that children access independently and which help to develop children’s skills across the areas of learning. Continuous provision is provided which allows for open-ended learning opportunities. However, these areas are also adapted and enhanced to meet the changing needs of children within the class, or to provide a new exciting stimulus to engage and interest children. These types of activities are referred to as **child-initiated**, meaning that they are activities that the child chooses independently and are led by their own interests. E.g. a child accessing art materials to make a picture/model based on their own interests or a child choosing to use farm animals, and supporting materials, to create their own farm small world scene to play with.

Other activities within the Early Years environment are referred to as **adult-guided** as these are activities, or games, that may have been introduced or modelled by an adult and have a more specific outcome. E.g. a number board game or a writing template.

Children will also work on **adult-led** activities. These are activities that have a specific learning objective and will involve the direction or support of an adult. As the children become more confident in developing

their skills, they may be able to work on adult-led tasks independently but they are still classed as 'adult-led' because they have been set by an adult with a specific learning intention and outcome expected. The number of adult-led tasks increases as the children progress from Nursery to Reception.

Organisation, Planning and Resources

Each day, children are shown a visual timetable which sets out our plan, including daily routines and the learning focus for the morning/afternoon. There are specific directed-teaching sessions where the practitioner will deliver the appropriate content and then children will either be directed to work with an adult on an adult-led task, or engage in independent activity time through accessing the environment areas. We aim to have an adult available to observe, support and enhance children's independent play, in order to assess embedded learning, model expectations, engage in back-and-forth interactions, encourage use of new vocabulary, provide further challenge and identify any gaps in learning which will inform future planning and next steps.

In Reception, children will also take part in discrete, daily phonics sessions which are split into differentiated groups, when needed. Phase 1 phonics sessions will begin in Nursery and will progress to Phase 2 when appropriate. This would normally be expected to begin during the summer term.

Planning across the Early Years Foundation Stage involves different themes which run across each half-term. Please see 'Appendix 3; EYFS Long-Term Plan CYCLE A and CYCLE B' for more details. We follow a two-yearly cycle to ensure that key texts and learning activities are not duplicated across Nursery and Reception.

The half-termly themes are based upon common popular interests and annual events, but are also broad and flexible to ensure there are opportunities to follow the children's interests. They are usually linked to a few key areas of learning but are planned in order to allow the development of skills across all of the different areas. Summaries of these themes are shared with parents and available to be viewed on the school website.

Staff plan in more detail on a weekly basis for all directed-teaching sessions and adult-led tasks, which are usually related to Literacy or Maths in Reception, and also include focuses on the Prime areas in Nursery. We recognise the importance of reading and sharing texts with children so we usually have a focus book that provides a stimulus for the learning that takes place each week. This also helps us to introduce and encourage the use of new vocabulary across the Early Years environment. Weekly plans are also produced for Phonics and PE/Physical Development sessions.

Our whole-school phonics scheme is Floppy's Phonics. We use these resources alongside group games and activities that allow children to develop their knowledge of letter sounds, blending and segmenting skills and letter formation.

It is expected that children in Nursery will complete at least one adult-led task each week for Communication & Language/Literacy, Maths and Physical Development. This will increase to two adult-led tasks in Reception for Literacy and Maths. Evidence will be collected in children's individual learning journals, added to our 'Big Books' or posted onto Class Dojo. We do recognise the importance of ensuring our evidence gathering is not burdensome and does not take us away from actively interacting and supporting children's learning. Because of this, we will take a common sense approach to how best to record different activities.

Some child-initiated and adult-guided learning will be evidenced and shared with parents/carers using the portfolio tool on the Class Dojo app. Parents/carers will also be encouraged to add their own evidence to children's portfolios, so that we can be sure we are reflecting a true representation of each child. Again, to ensure that using portfolios does not become burdensome, staff are instructed to focus on stand-out 'wow' moments to share. The expectation is that each child's portfolio will contain at least one piece of evidence for each area of learning. Then, added to when significant new, independent learning is seen.

Environment plans are produced on a fortnightly basis to show enhancements and changes to environment areas, alongside the continuous provision. They also show adult-led or adult-guided tasks within the environment. Sometimes, initials of certain children are added where tasks or learning opportunities have been planned in order to support them with specific next steps in their development. The environment is continuously monitored to ensure it is being used productively and observations are used for future planning.

Assessment

On entry to Nursery and Reception, we have a baseline assessment period. This covers the first four weeks of Reception, and up to this amount, as needed, for Nursery. We use previous assessment data from other settings, alongside our own observations of children from child-initiated, adult-guided and adult-led activities.

Reception children are also required to complete the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) within the first six weeks of starting Reception. We will ensure this is within our four week baseline assessment period.

We use both the Development Matters and Birth to 5 Matters documents to support our ongoing assessment of children's progress throughout the EYFS. Assessments are recorded four times; for Baseline (end of week 4), end of autumn term, end of spring term and finally end of summer term. We use individual tracking documents for each area of learning to record which children are currently 'on track' and 'not on track'. This allows us to plan for the needs of those who are 'not on track' to enable them to make more rapid progress.

Literacy and Mathematics assessments are added onto our whole-school online tracking program, iTrack, at the end of the year.

In Reception, the summer term assessment (EYFS Profile) must be completed no later than 30 June. Teachers make a best-fit judgement against each Early Learning Goal (ELG) as to whether the child is working at the 'expected' level or not. Children that are working below the ELG are described as 'emerging' in that area. EYFS Profile data is submitted to the local authority and shared with parents in their child's end of year report.

To ensure we have evidence of each child's progress, we use learning journals, class big books and Class Dojo. However, the EYFS statutory framework says that 'assessment should not entail prolonged breaks from interaction with children, nor require excessive paperwork'. To this end, we will record only key moments in children's development which are representative of where they are working in each area of learning, rather than evidencing multiple observations.

- Individual work, mainly adult-led tasks, will be recorded in **learning journals**.
- **Big books** will be used to reflect some of the practical learning that has taken place each week (across all areas of learning) and will include brief notes, photos, examples of work and quotes from children across each class.
- **Class Dojo** will be used for individual observations, which may include photos and videos. These will be added to a child's portfolio to create a record of their progress across the areas of learning. We will also use the Class Story page to share some examples of what we have been learning with parents/guardians and the kinds of activities the children have engaged in.

Impact

The success of our Early Years Foundation Stage can be seen through the enjoyment and enthusiasm of our pupils. They are happy coming to school and develop positive relationships with both their peers and staff. Children make good progress across all areas of learning. This results in a big increase of children working at the expected level by the end of Reception and therefore ready to move onto the next stage of their journey through school.

Those children with gaps in their learning or difficulties in some areas, are identified quickly and supported in school to address their needs. Where further intervention or support is needed this is acted upon before they leave the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure support plans are in place to help their transition into Key Stage One. EYFS staff work closely with our SENCO where children's needs are more complex. This includes the use of personalised plans, timetables and curriculum, where appropriate.

Equal Opportunities

Equality means giving everyone the opportunity to reach their full potential and an equal chance to live their life as they choose. In young children this means giving equal chances right from the very start of life and ensuring they are not denied opportunities because of their ethnicity, cultural background, social background, gender, religion or physical or emotional circumstances.

Our Early Years Foundation Stage is well placed to provide a safe environment where children can learn about each other's differences and similarities, and understand the importance of respect from an early stage in life.

Inclusion

Inclusive Early Years practice is the development of positive attitudes, clear strategies and constructive approaches to ensure all children are catered for within our environments.

To develop positive attitudes, children with significant disabilities, or special educational needs, are nurtured in our settings and provision is adapted where needed to ensure it is accessible for all. The differing needs of individuals is discussed with other children openly in a manner that is suitable for them to understand. This ensures that they can also play an active part in supporting their peers and develop a positive attitude and understanding of differences between people.

Clear strategies are implemented through creating support plans for children with special educational needs, in line with our SEN policy. These are updated half-termly with small, achievable targets to develop children's knowledge and skills at a level that is appropriate for them.

We have a constructive approach through aiming to resource our environment in a way which provides open-ended opportunities for play and exploration. This means all children can be supported, or challenged, at a level appropriate for them.

Staff work together as a team and discuss the ongoing progress of children daily to ensure that all staff have a good understanding of every child's needs. During child-initiated play, Staff consider the best time to intervene, support and challenge children through imaginative questioning and language modelling.

Resources are used, where needed, to support the learning of children with additional needs. This includes makaton signs, pictures (including PECS symbols), 'See and Learn' programme and resources to encompass all different learning styles; visual, auditory and kinaesthetic.

We also involve parents in discussions about their child's development and create targets based upon this information.

Role of the Subject Leader

The EYFS Lead must ensure that all aspects of this policy are being met. This means regularly assessing how the environment is being used and making changes where needed. Planning is ongoing and can be adapted and added to every year to meet the needs of each cohort.

The EYFS Lead meets with Nursery and Reception staff each half-term to discuss medium-term plans and to ensure that Reception are building on the skills started in Nursery. Data is also discussed at the end of the baseline period and each term, to identify any gaps in learning or areas that need to be focused on. This then informs planning and the environment for the next half-term in order to address these issues.

The EYFS Lead should attend relevant training annually to stay informed of current trends and changes in Early Years and to address any targets detailed in action plans. They should then disseminate the information to all EYFS staff and make any changes needed as a result.

At the end of every school year, the EYFS Lead should analyse the main areas for improvement and detail these in an 'Action Plan'. These targets, for the next year, should come from observing in the Early Years Foundation Stage, responding to data and discussion with all EYFS staff members.

The EYFS Lead will meet with governors annually to ensure they have a clear picture of what is happening across the Early Years Foundation stage and to share progress in relation to targets from the current action plan.

Working with Parents/Carers

In line with the rest of the school, we have a 'new class' meeting at the start of every year to provide the chance for parents/carers to chat with the class teacher and find out general information. We also have parent's evenings in the autumn and spring terms to update parents/carers about their child's progress. However, because the Early Years Foundation Stage is the start of each child's journey through our school, we also have an additional meeting in the summer term before their child is due to start school. This allows both parents/carers and children the chance to familiarize themselves with the Early Years environment, to meet staff members and to find out key information about our school.

In Reception, an 'Early Reading and Maths' workshop is held at the end of the first half-term to provide additional information about what the children are learning in school, what the expectations are for the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the kinds of activities that are used in school. Parents/carers then have the opportunity to explore some of these activities with their child in school.

Staff are available on the door each morning to speak to parents/carers and again at the end of every school day.

We also use the 'Class Dojo' app to update parents about some of the activities and learning focuses that have been happening in school each week. Parents can send direct messages to the teacher, through this app, when needed and the teacher will always reply as soon as possible.

Reports are shared at the end of the school year to report on each child's attainment across all of the areas of learning.

Policy Review Date: September 2024

