

# EARLY YEARS POLICY

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ESKDALE ACADEMY



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## **Introduction**

Eskdale Academy Early Years aims to provide high quality early years education to make a positive contribution to children's early development, enabling them to build on this foundation throughout their lives, so providing a sound basis for lifelong learning. We provide a broad and balanced curriculum that will enable each child to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creative and intellectually to their full potential. Eskdale Academy Early Years provides a safe, caring and secure environment that aids the transition from home to school and encourages the growth of independence, confidence, co-operation and learning.

## **Learning and Development**

At Eskdale Academy we recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are interconnected. The children have time and freedom to become deeply involved in the activities and their learning.

## **Areas of Learning**

The Early Years is made up of prime and specific areas. All areas of learning and development are underpinned by the Principles of Development Matters.

The **prime** areas begin to develop quickly in response to relationships and experiences, and run through and support learning in all other areas. The prime areas continue to be fundamental throughout the Early Years.

The **specific** areas include essential skills and knowledge. They grow out of the prime areas, and provide important contexts for learning.

The three Prime areas are:

Personal, Social and Emotional Development  
Communication and Language  
Physical Development

Staff will also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

Specific Areas include:

Literacy  
Mathematics  
Understanding the world  
Expressive arts and design

## **Personal, Social and Emotional development**

Children are provided with experiences and support which help them develop relationships, self-confidence and self-awareness and strategies for managing feelings and behaviour.

Activities are planned daily to promote emotional, moral, spiritual and social development.

## **Physical Development**

Children are provided with opportunities for them to develop moving and handling skills to encourage them to be active and interactive to improve their skills of co-ordination, control,

manipulation and movement on a daily basis. Health and self-care also encourages the importance of physical exercise, good health and a healthy diet.

### **Communication and Language**

Children are provided with experiences and support which help them develop competence in speaking, listening and attention and understanding. Children participate in story sharing, nursery rhymes and phonics activities on a daily basis.

### **Literacy**

Children are provided with experiences and support to develop reading and writing of simple sentences. Daily phonic sessions develop their ability to decode, read and write regular words and some common irregular words.

### **Mathematics**

Children are supported in developing their understanding of problem solving, reasoning and numbers in a broad range of contexts in which they can explore, enjoy, learn, practise and talk about their developing understanding. Opportunities are provided daily for children to practise and extend their skills to help them gain confidence and competence in their use.

### **Understanding the World**

Children are supported in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding that help them to make sense of the world, people and communities and technology. Opportunities are provided daily to allow children to use a range of tools; encounter creatures, people, plants and objects in their natural environments and in real life situations; undertake practical 'experiments' and work with a range of materials.

### **Expressive Arts and Design**

Creative activities are provided daily to extend the curiosity, exploration and play of the children. They are encouraged to explore and share their thoughts, ideas and feelings through art, music, movement, dance, imaginative and role play activities and design and technology.

Children's development levels are assessed and as the year progresses, the balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning, as children grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas. However, if a child's progress in any of the prime areas gives cause for concern, staff will discuss this with the child's parents/carers and agree how to support the child.

### **Play**

Play is vitally important in the Early Years. It reflects the wider ranging and varied interests of each child. This allows the practitioners to plan and provide opportunities for individuals to support their interests and extend their learning as children learn at their highest level during sustained play.

### **Characteristics of Effective Learning**

A child's individual learning characteristic will determine the way they respond to both the teaching and learning taking place in the environment. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning identified by the EYFS 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; and

- **creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

The focus of the CoEL is on how children learn rather than what they learn i.e. process over outcome.

Through play, our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, learn how to control themselves 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.

Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence, they learn to make decisions. It provides children with a sense of satisfaction as they take ownership of their learning.

Children should be given the opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning. Adults can support children's thinking and help them make connections by showing interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open ended questions. Children can access resources and move around the classroom freely and purposefully to extend their learning.

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

- every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;
- children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**;
- children learn and develop well in **enabling environments**, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers;
- children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.

### **A Unique Child**

We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best and acknowledge that all children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. The activities, equipment and resources we use are accessible for all abilities of children. The starting point and outcome may be individual to each child.

In the Early Years we set realistic and challenging expectations to meet the needs of the children. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of boys, 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 from diverse linguistic backgrounds. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their personal best and planning is adapted to meet the needs of all groups and abilities. We do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when we are planning for their learning. Planning for children with additional needs is in line with the Special Educational Needs & Disability policy. In the Early Years the children begin to learn to take responsibility for their learning and begin to understand the concept of challenge.

We observe how each child learns to gain an understanding of the characteristics they develop to become effective learners. We use questioning, praise and encouragement to develop a positive attitude to learning and high self-esteem. The children are taught to be observant, investigative, curious, determined, imaginative, adventurous, co-operative and to use reasoning.

In the Early Years we have realistic and challenging expectations and 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 through a creative curriculum and learning environment
- 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 each child's contribution is valued
- 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

### **Enabling Environments**

At Eskdale Academy we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development, where the children feel confident, secure and challenged. Planning in the Early Years starts with observing the children in order to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning to plan challenging but achievable activities and experiences to extend the children's learning.

We have an open plan learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, that encourages a positive attitude to learning. The indoor environment has a Reception area, a Nursery area and a 2 Year Old Nursery area. Children also have the opportunity to use resources in all of the areas at a set time during the session. We use materials, resources 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 activities on offer during child initiated time and encourage children to extend their learning from planned activities by providing resources and activities to support and encourage this. We also provide activities, resources and equipment that come directly from the interests of the children.

### **Positive Relationships**

We acknowledge that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and when parents and practitioners work together, the results have a positive impact on children's development and learning.

We value being partners with them in their child's education through:

- talking to parents about their child before their child starts our school during home visits and nearly nursery sessions;
- inviting the children to spend time with their teacher in the classroom before starting at school during 'nearly nursery' sessions;
- inviting all parents to an induction meeting during the term before their child starts school to meet with staff to discuss school routines, expectations, and to answer any questions parents/carers may have.
- Providing a handbook of information about commencing Nursery and Reception at Eskdale Academy.
- Encouraging parents to attend consultation meetings in the first two terms to discuss their child's settling in and progress.
- Operating an open door policy for parents / carers with any queries or concerns. Conversely, if Foundation staff have concerns about the progress of a child, they will immediately approach parents/carers to discuss them.
- Providing parents with a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each school year.

- Sharing the children's 'Learning Journal' during parents evening and on request throughout their time in the Early Years.
- Publishing a topic web on the website detailing the areas of learning and the overarching theme of the half-term.
- Parents are invited to a range of activities throughout the school year such as assemblies, workshops, Christmas productions and sports day etc.
- Planning is displayed in the corridor.
- Home school contacts books are given to Reception children for parents to use to note any information, concerns or questions they may have. It is also used for staff to communicate with parents if they are not able to speak with them.
- A comment book is also placed in the Parent Room for parents to use if they wish.

### **Key Person**

Every child in the setting has a nominated key worker. The key worker has a special responsibility for giving the child the reassurance to feel safe and cared for and for building up a relationship with their parents. The key worker is the class teacher and teaching assistant and this role is swapped throughout the year.

### **Health and Safety**

The health and well-being of every child in the setting is an important part of our day. Toast is offered when children arrive to school and fresh fruit is provided each day during snack time. For those children who do not have a water bottle, fresh drinking water is provided throughout the day and milk is offered to all Nursery age children. Breakfast and snack time is used to develop social skills and speaking and listening skills. On entry to the school parents inform staff about allergies or special dietary requirements. A whole school approach is taken towards safeguarding a child from any specific allergy he/she may be at risk from i.e. nuts.

Cooking and food preparation is also an important part of our curriculum. The children are encouraged to participate in cooking and food preparation activities linked to healthy eating and planned activities. Cooking activities may also be carried out from a child interest topic. We use the Early Years kitchen for all cooking activities.

Security of each child in the setting is of paramount importance. The outdoor area has a padlocked gate which is locked throughout the day. The entrance gate is only unlocked at the beginning and end of each session. Nursery children are brought into the Early Years and collected from the Early Years by their parents. Reception children are brought to the entrance door and collected from the same door at home time. There is a practitioner at the entrance area on arrival and at collection times each day. If children are being collected by someone other than their parent or carer, a member of staff must be informed by phone call or in person. All 2 year old children are signed in and out of each session. Both entrance/exit doors have a bolted lock.

We recommend that all children bring a suitable coat with them every day. We also suggest that during wet weather each child has a pair of Wellington boots and during warmer weather a sun hat. Wellington boots and rain coats are available for all children.

Risk assessments are completed on all areas in the Foundation Stage setting. They include all areas indoors and outdoors and are updated on a yearly basis and during the year when needed.

We encourage children to take risks and highlight the importance of keeping themselves safe by teaching them how to recognise and avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children.

The whole school is aware of qualified first aid trained staff. Prescribed medicine is only given once a form has been filled out. First Aid kits are available in the classrooms, main entrance and school office.

Please also refer to intimate care policy.

### **Assessment**

Observations are carried out on a daily basis during adult led and child initiated activities. Observations form the basis for planning. Staff are skilled at observing children to identify their achievements, interests and next steps for learning. These observations then lead the direction of the planning. Relevant and significant observations are recorded in the children's Learning Journeys using Classroom Monitor. These observations are undertaken by teachers and teaching assistants.

Children in the Early Years are assessed using Development Matters. During the first few weeks in Nursery and Reception, the teacher assesses the ability of each child using a variety of baseline activities and observations to determine their starting points.

We continue to make ongoing assessments of children's learning during their time in Foundation Stage, and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Observations, evidence (child initiated, planned activities and photographic) and practitioner knowledge is used to support the assessments. Observations are recorded on Classroom Monitor and a Learning Journal is produced from this. Each child's learning Journal includes planned activities, child initiated evidence, photographs and observations (snap shot and short) linked to all areas of learning. This evidence is shared with parents and is available for them to look at any time they wish.

Classroom Monitor data is analysed each half term and children are identified as working as beginning, developing or secure within the Development Matters age bands. Children working below are identified and strategies and interventions are put in place to support individual children.

The collection of assessment data in the Foundation Stage Profile is a statutory requirement. We record each child's level of development against the 17 early Learning goals as Emerging, Expected or Exceeding and this data is submitted to the local authority for every child in their final term in Reception. The child's next teacher uses this information to make plans for the year ahead. We share this information too at parental consultation meetings and in the end-of-year report.

2 year old Nursery complete the 2 Year Check on entry and then half way through each child's time in the setting. Whole class data for the 2 year olds is calculated 3 times a year. This data looks at children who are typical, below or above for their chronological age.

### **Nursery Admissions**

All parents who wish their child to attend Eskdale Academy Nursery must complete an admissions form. Two members of staff from Early Years carry out a home visit before each child turns three years old. During this home visit, one member of staff will interact with the child and carry out some basic assessments. The other member of staff works with the

parents/carers to complete all of the necessary forms (questionnaire, internet permission, photograph permission, SIMs form, home school agreement and educational visit permission). A brief explanation is given as to the running of the Nursery and the 'Nearly Nursery' sessions and a start date is given. Parents are provided with a booklet outlining the aims and organisation of the Early Years and the child is provided with a photographic booklet. The aim of this visit is to aid the transition from home to Nursery for the child and parent/carer. A place will be offered and a start date will be given. All children must be fully toilet trained before starting Nursery or their start date maybe delayed. This does not include children who are not toilet trained due to medical reasons.

The 'Nearly Nursery' sessions take place the half term the child is due to start Nursery. During the 'Nearly Nursery' sessions all children and a parent/carer are invited for one hour sessions. The children meet the Nursery teacher also spends some time with the parent/carer explaining the organisation of the sessions, behaviour policy, home reading, assessment procedures and any other issues that may arise.

The length of the first Nursery session and whether a parent/carer stays is always agreed with the key worker. This depends upon the child and how they cope with being separated from parents/carers. It also depends upon how they have coped with the routines of Nursery. Some children stay for the full session during their first week and other children may spend a couple of weeks building up to the full session. This all depends upon each child individually and is always agreed between parent/carer and key worker.

### **Transition to School Nursery**

Children attending the 2 year old Nursery will join other children for 'Nearly Nursery' sessions before they transfer into school Nursery. A Home Visit is not necessary for children moving from 2 year old Nursery into school Nursery. A programme of transition is also in place allowing children ready to turn three to join Nursery children for Primary Movement and some outdoor play.

### **Transition to Reception**

The children work in the same setting from Nursery to the end of Reception. The major change they have to deal with is staying for lunch in the school dinner hall. To make this a smooth transition for children and parents/carers they are all invited to stay for a school dinner in the Summer Term before starting school. This has proved a very positive experience and resulted in all children settling into school lunches with little or no problems.

### **Transition to Year 1**

A programme of activities is in place to support the move into Year 1. Reception children attend whole school and key stage assemblies. Over the Summer Term they also join whole school playtimes, begin using the ICT suite and use the Year 1 classroom.

### **Equal Opportunities**

We welcome children and their families/carers regardless of gender, religion and ethnicity. It is our intention to ensure that pupils have the opportunity to be fully included into school life. Our Nursery is open to every family in the community, subject to availability of places.



