

Early Years Curriculum Intent

The intent of the curriculum provided in our Early Years is rooted in a solid understanding of child development. We offer our children a flexible Early Years curriculum which adapts to their needs, interests and starting points on their own individual learning journey.

We have a practical and playful approach through which we teach and develop children's characteristics of effective learning. We deliver high quality direct teaching in phonics, reading, writing and maths, where we develop their knowledge and skills and give them the confidence to apply these within their independent learning. Through our engaging environment and high quality adult interactions, we encourage all our children to explore and develop their curiosity. We recognise the value of child-led learning experiences as high quality teachable moments. Children take their learning where they want to, explore their own interests and make connections in their ideas.

We want our children to be the best that they can be, both for themselves and to support the development of successful communities in the future.

1. Introduction

The Early Years refers to the time in a child's life from birth to the age of five, which at Priory CE Primary School, refers to children aged 3 to 5 (Nursery and Reception Classes).

All children begin school with a wide variety of experiences and at a variety of starting points and it is the privilege of the adults working in the Early Years to accept the task of building upon that prior learning experience. The Early Years (EY) is important in its own right, and in preparing children for later schooling. The EY sets out the statutory requirements, including welfare requirements, and its principles inform our practice. Children joining our school have already learnt a great deal. Many have been to one of a range of settings that exist in our community. The early year's education we offer our children is based on the following principles:

- It builds on what our children already know and the experiences they have had.
- 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.

Children in Early Years are taught within mixed Reception and Nursery Classes. All children have a designated Key Worker to support their links and development of relationships with staff within the school.

2. Statutory Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years holds its own statutory requirements which were amended in September 2021. Evidence of the adherence to those requirements can be found embedded within daily practise and within a number of policies throughout the school i.e. Safeguarding, First Aid, Behaviour, Health and Safety and within the EY Safeguarding folder. In addition to the safeguarding guidelines set out in the safeguarding policy regarding the use of mobile phones and cameras, staff and visitors working within the EY will be asked to store their mobile phones or any personal cameras in one of the storerooms and will only be able to access them when children are not around (i.e. break times- or in case of emergency to contact office etc). School cameras are to be used to take images of the children and these should remain in school, unless staff and children are off the premises on a visit. Cameras should be stored in a safe place in school when not in use.

Risk assessments are held for resources and activities within Early Years. As we want children to access to real-life learning and activities, as such, we hold risk assessments for activities with 'Meaningful Risk' such as using tools, woodwork and circuit building.

3. Aims of the Foundation Stage

The curriculum of EY underpins all future learning by supporting, fostering, promoting and developing children's:-

- **Personal, social and emotional development**
 - I. Self- Regulation
 - II. Managing Self
 - III. Building Relationships
- **Physical Development**
 - I. Gross Motor Skills
 - II. Fine Motor Skills
- **Communication and language**
 - I. Listening, Attention and Understanding
 - II. Speaking

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- **Literacy**
 - I. Comprehension
 - II. Word Reading
 - III. Writing
- **Mathematics**
 - I. Number
 - II. Numerical Patterns
- **Understanding the world**
 - I. Past and Present
 - II. People, Cultures and Communities
 - III. The Natural World
- **Expressive arts and design**
 - I. Creating with Materials
 - II. Being Imaginative and Expressive

Achievement in these Prime and Specific Areas of learning is demonstrated through the Characteristics of Effective Learning;-

- Playing and exploring (being hands on and explorative- **hands**)
- Active learning (persistence and perseverance-**heart**)
- Creating and thinking critically (critical thinking, having own ideas and choosing different ways of doing things-**head**)

4. Teaching and Learning Style

Our policy on teaching and learning defines the features of effective teaching and learning in our school. These features apply to teaching and learning in the EY just as much as they do to the teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2. The more general features of good practice in our school that can relate to the EY are:-

- *The partnership between teachers and parents, so that our children feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement and so that parents feel that they know how their child is doing in all aspects of school life and they feel well equipped to further their child's learning;*
- *The understanding that teachers have of how children develop and learn, and how this affects 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 to achieve*
- *The provisions 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, facilities and equipment;*
- *The identification of the progress and future learning needs of children through observations, which are regularly shared with parents;*
- *The good relationships between our school and the settings that our children experience prior to joining our school;*
- *The clear aims for our work, and the regular monitoring to evaluate and improve what we do; The regular identification of training needs of all adults working within the EYFS*

5: The Early Years Curriculum

The curriculum for the Early Years in our school reflects the areas of learning identified in Development Matters.

We promote knowledge based learning which the children can then apply in their independent learning time (Choose Our Own Learning – COOL Time). Our children have access to a highly enabling environment which allows them to demonstrate high will (high levels of engagement) along with high skill (application of a range of skills to allow them to achieve their aims) in purposeful play experiences. Our children have access to a range of real-life experiences such as using real tools for woodwork, exploring electrical wires and circuits. These activities with 'meaningful risk' lead to deeper understanding.

The children spend time each day learning in a whole class context, in small groups and accessing COOL Time. Phonics and key maths skills are taught daily in Early Years in both targeted groups and whole class situations. We aim for all pupils to be active within these sessions. Guided reading, writing and maths lessons take place each week. Children have the opportunity to access 'Chilli Challenges' where they can demonstrate their application of learning, this may be independent or collaborative.

6. Play in the Early Years

Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. When playing, we aim to provide experiences which allow children to display the “Characteristics of effective Learning” which are: “Playing and exploring – finding out and exploring, playing with what they know, being willing to have a go”, “Active Learning – being involved and concentrating, keeping trying, enjoying achieving what they set out to do” and “Creating and thinking critically – having their own ideas, making links, choosing ways to do things”. 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.

As the children access independent learning, there is the need for a facilitator. The role of the facilitator is to further learning through questioning, providing additional materials and supporting the development of language and relationships through positive role modelling and encouragement.

7. Outdoor Learning

At Priory we strongly believe in the value of outdoor learning. Accessing activities in the outdoor area gives children the opportunities to explore in different ways and on a larger scale. The children are able to explore, use their senses, develop their language skills, explore the natural environment and be physically active.

In the outside area, children have continuous access to explorative and creative materials that encourage them to be curious and work cooperatively, apply learnt skills and take their leaning and interests where they wish to. Staff support this further by facilitating their play and adding resources if needed to. Some learning opportunities are planned and supported by an adult, but have been created out of a child’s expression of interest in that area.

8. Inclusion in the Early Years

In our school we believe that all our children matter and that all children have the right to make good progress whatever their starting point. 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 (see our policy on school inclusion)

In the Early Years we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children, so that children achieve expected levels towards the early learning goals and some exceeding them at the end of the Reception year. 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 from diverse linguistic backgrounds. The progress and attainment of all individual’s groups is monitored closely each term so that we are able to put appropriate interventions in place to ensure good progress for all.

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 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. This involves speech therapy for some of our children, additional support sessions or SEN referrals as required.

9. Early Years Pupil Premium and Pupil Premium

“The pupil premium is additional funding given to publicly funded schools in England to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and close the gap between them and their peers.” (.gov.uk)

In a pilot study beginning in January 2015 and as statutory from September 2015, children in the Nursery class, who are eligible, are now able to receive Pupil Premium Funding just as their peers in Reception and the rest of the school do (though the rates of funding may vary). The money allocated to those children to which the pupil premium applies are monitored closely to assess the impact that the money has had on the progress and attainment of those pupils and the interventions it is used for may be adjusted accordingly to ensure that the Pupil Premium is closing any gaps between those children and their peers.

10: Assessment

We make regular assessments of children's learning, and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the EYFS mainly takes the form of observation, individual pupil tracking, photographs and post it notes for those "WOW" learning moments. Teachers also make assessment notes on each adult led activity, guided reading and writing. These all go together to form a picture of a child's level of achievement. This process involves the teacher and other adults as appropriate.

We use an individual tracker to log the development of each child. The document is taken from the "Development Matters" guidance issued in 2021 and uses "age-related expectations" to assess a child's attainment. Using the document, we conduct a baseline assessment on entry to the Nursery and complete the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) on entry to Reception. Profile assessments are then made termly through a child's time in the EYFS with a judgement against the ELG's made at the end of Reception in accordance with the Statutory Assessment requirements. This judgement is shared with parents at each parents evening. In addition, each term, parents receive a Record of Achievement stating progress and next steps. It is here where parents get the opportunity to make a written comment on how they feel their child is developing in our setting.

Each term, trackers, which hold the information about the attainment of individuals and groups are completed by the class teacher and these allow the attainment and progress of individual children and groups to be monitored closely by the EY Lead and the SLT. Data driven instruction (DDI) takes place each term to allow teachers to spot patterns in attainment or where gaps may be appearing. Each term class teachers are required to attend a Pupil Progress meeting where support for the children or the teachers is discussed and are actioned by the class teacher or SLT to improve progress for all children. Expectations on progress are clear and staff can seek support from the EYFS Lead or other members of SLT where they have concerns about the progress of a pupil or groups of pupils.

This EY Profile document passes with the child into Key Stage 1, and if still appropriate, will continue to be used as an assessment tool until the goals have all been reached, or we know the reason why they have not. Close liaison with our Inclusion Hub will ensure appropriate provision continues with P Scales where appropriate.

EY staff and teachers take part in regular moderation of EYFS judgements, both in school, between year groups and within the Local Authority. This is to quality assure the judgements made.

11: The role of parents

We believe that all parents have an important role to play in the education of their child. We recognise the role that parents have played, and their future role, in educating the children. We do this through:-

- Inviting all parents to induction meetings during the term before their child starts school;
- The children have the opportunity to spend time with their teacher and class before starting school;
- Offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress and having an open door policy.
- Encouraging parents to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns. There is a formal meeting for parents in the Autumn and Spring term at which the teacher and the parent discuss the child's progress in private with the teacher. Parents receive a report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each term;
- Having flexible admission arrangements and a phased induction for the Nursery children, that enable children and parents to become secure, and by allowing time to discuss each child's circumstances;
- Arranging a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents such as open afternoons.
- Regular communication with home through the child's school diary, Class Dojo app, termly newsletters and homework.
- Voluntary sessions where parents come into school to play and work with the children in the setting.
- Up to date information about Early Years and how parents can get involved is kept on the school website www.prioryceprimary.org
- To enrich the curriculum, we take the children on regular visits, invite guests into school, and provide lots of opportunities for "hands on" experiences, which underpins the principles of the EY.

12: 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 selection of the activities on offer, as we believe that this encourages independent learning.

A phase budget for Early Years is provided by the school and staff choose how to allocate the budget according to any resources which need updating or replenishing or where staff want to invest in the development of an area of learning. This budget is overseen by the EY Leader, Head Teacher, Business manager and the Governing Body.

13. Monitoring and Review

All staff working in the Early Years and all adults in contact with Early Years pupils have a responsibility for upholding this policy. This policy will be monitored and reviewed every two years or earlier if necessary.

14. Related Policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Intimate Care
- Behaviour
- Teaching and Learning
- Assessment
- Homework
- All Subject Policies
- Sun Safety
- Lost Children

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Date due for review: June 2024