



EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS) POLICY

“Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their potential. A child’s experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe & happy childhood is important in its own right, and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.” (DFE, 2012).

“When we succeed in giving every child the best start in their early years, we give them what they need today. We also set them up with every chance of success tomorrow.” (Development Matters 2020)

At RMI, as part of our best practice, we aim to:

- Provide a secure environment where all children have the right to feel safe and happy.
- Provide a stimulating environment where learning is fun and play is valued.
- Follow and promote the safeguarding and welfare requirements to keep children safe and promote their welfare.
- Provide a high quality, well thought out curriculum so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind.
- Structure learning so it matches the needs and interests of the children, with activities that provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors.
- Provide a well-balanced curriculum for each child to develop socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually.
- Promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice so that all children, including SEND and those in other vulnerable groups, can make good progress and achieve their potential.
- Establish strong partnerships with parents for the education and well-being of their children.
- Ensure a smooth transition from home / previous settings to F2 and into Key Stage 1.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum

The Revised Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage is effective from September 2021. Development Matters is the non – statutory guidance material which guides our curriculum and supports our practitioners in implementing the statutory requirements of the EYFS.

“Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil 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.” (Development Matters, 2020).

The 4 **overarching principles** of the EYFS are:

- 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 with teaching and support from adults**, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- Importance of **learning and development**; recognising that children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.

Our practice is based on the '**Seven Key Features of Effective Practice**', as set out in Development Matters 2020:

1. The best for every child
2. High-quality care
3. The curriculum: what we want children to learn
4. Pedagogy: helping children to learn
5. Assessment: checking what children have learnt
6. Self-Regulation and executive function
7. Partnership with parents.

How these features translate into practice at RMI is identified and shared / reviewed with staff regularly.

The 7 areas of Learning and Development:

All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. They are split into **Prime** Areas of Learning, which are fundamental and run throughout the EYFS. The areas of learning and development (in blue) and the aspects of learning are:

- **Communication and Language**
 - Listening, Attention and Understanding
 - Speaking
- **Personal, Social and Emotional development**
 - Self-Regulation
 - Managing Self
 - Building Relationships
- **Physical Development**
 - Fine Motor Skills
 - Gross Motor Skills

The **Specific** Areas include essential skills and knowledge. They grow out of the prime areas and provide important contexts for learning. These are:

- **Literacy**
 - Comprehension
 - Word Reading
 - Writing
- **Mathematics**
 - Number
 - Numerical Patterns
- **Understanding the World**
 - Past and Present
 - People, Culture and Communities
 - The Natural World
- **Expressive Arts and Design**
 - Creating with Materials
 - Being Imaginative and Expressive

The Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning further underpin learning and development across all areas: These are:

- Playing and exploring (*engaging*)
- Active learning (*motivation*)
- Creating and thinking critically (*thinking skills*).

Children's achievement in these areas is reported to the child's next teacher at the end of the Foundation Stage.

Teaching and Learning

Foundation Stage staff aim to make each child's time fun as well as educational. The curriculum is structured to provide a blend of 'Child Initiated' activities as well as 'Adult Initiated' and 'Adult Directed' activities. The daily routine provides opportunities to teach, practise and apply knowledge and skills through short focused teaching sessions throughout the day. In Reception, discrete phonics and maths sessions are taught daily. The routine also offers opportunities for small group work (guided sessions) where activities are initiated and led by an adult. The prime areas of learning are practised and support learning throughout these sessions.

During continuous provision, teaching staff adopt our agreed 'TALPOP'* approach (Teaching and Learning at the Point of Play), when appropriate, to engage, enable and challenge individuals and small groups. Good social skills and vocabulary development are encouraged at all times. We have a free-flow system, where children are given opportunities to access the continuous provision activities in both classrooms as well as the outside area during most sessions.

**This model derived from research and practice from several early years specialists, including Alistair Bryce-Clegg, Anna Ephgrave and Greg Bottrill and has been shared with the EYFS Team. Regular CPD will be given throughout the year to develop the effectiveness of the model.*

Our curriculum maps are updated regularly and identify key knowledge and skills to be taught and remembered. Enrichment activities and links are planned to enhance experiences and learning and build on children's unique **cultural capital**. Although we have a thematic approach, this remains flexible and is adapted in response to our observations and assessments of the children, including responding to their interests.

Assessment

In Reception, children are assessed on entry (within the first few weeks) as part of the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA). We also do our own assessments of the children to ensure we know the children's starting points. This is primarily done through observation and playing alongside the children so that we can get a more reliable picture of the whole child.

All children are then assessed again at the agreed data points in the year, (November, March and June), which is in line with other schools in Nova Trust and therefore enables us to moderate as part of a team. These assessments are made on the basis of observations, discussions with children and parents, children's work, photographs, phonic /reading assessments as well as our knowledge of the whole child and are used to inform planning /the children's next steps in their learning.

At RMI, we recognise that assessment of the children's progress is a continuous journey and we use assessment for learning to respond and provide feedback at the point of learning.

At the end of each assessment cycle, the EYFS phase leader creates a data report which is shared with all EYFS staff and the senior leadership team. The findings from the report are used to support planning for individual and groups of children, e.g. interventions, as well as to adapt our learning environment (using the Gaps and Strengths analysis).

Children's progress is further monitored through progress meetings with the head of school, after each assessment point.

At the end of the Foundation Stage (in June), children will be assessed in each of the 7 areas of learning as being either

- Emerging (working towards expected standard)
- Expected (meeting the expected standard)

Although there is no longer an 'Exceeding' judgement, we will identify children who are working at the higher end of 'Expected' and with the potential to gain GDS in KS1. This will be shared with the receiving Y1 teachers as part the transition process.

Parents/carers receive a report at the end of the year that gives details of the child's progress and attainment and commentary on their progress towards the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning. It highlights the child's strengths and development needs and next steps are given for Maths and Literacy. Children are given a voice and their comments are also included on the report.

Inclusion

In the Foundation Stage, we set realistic but challenging expectations matched to the needs of our children, so that most are meeting expectations by the end of the stage. We help them to do this by planning to meet the needs of girls and boys, more able children, children from different social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds and children with special educational needs. We achieve this by:

- quality first teaching that utilises a variety of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs;
- offering a safe and supportive learning environment, in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- employing resources that reflect diversity, and that avoid discrimination and stereotyping;
- early identification of difficulties and intervention to support this;
- planning challenging activities for more able children;
- monitoring children's progress and providing support from within school and outside agencies as appropriate.

Partnership with Parents/Carers + Transition into school

We believe that all parents have a vital role to play in the education of their child. We value parents as partners and aim to develop respectful and trusting relationships with them. We do this through:

- A strong programme of transition from pre-school into school, enabling children to settle quickly and develop good relationships with staff. This includes staff visits to pre-school settings, a Stay and Play visit for children and parents, and transition afternoons for children.
- Hosting a 'Welcome Meeting' for parents before the children started school in September.
- Providing information packs with key information about the school and the children's first year;
- Scheduled parents' meetings as well as daily, personalised, meet and greets before and after school.
- Workshops to support parents with knowledge of the EYFS curriculum, including phonics workshops in the first half term.
- Tapestry – an online learning journey so that we can share the children's learning and parents can share experiences from home with us.
- Support for our most vulnerable children and their families, accessing involvement from outside agencies where appropriate.
- Half-termly class newsletter to parents informing them of key learning in each week.
- Operating an informal 'open-door' policy where parents are encouraged to pass on information / share concerns when they drop off / collect the children.

Health and Safety and Safeguarding

The health, safety and well-being of the children is at the heart of what we do. 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. We follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements detailed in the EYFS Statutory Guidance (2021) and the 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' statutory guidance. We also adhere to the school / Trust safeguarding policy.

We aim to be a healthy school and educate children about the importance of keeping healthy and ways they can do this as part of our curriculum. We participate in the free milk and fruit for under-fives scheme and provide the universal free school meals for infants. The catering team and teaching staff are aware of children's special dietary requirements and work closely with parents on this.

Fresh water is readily available for all children and we encourage children to bring only water in their water bottles. Children are taught about the importance of washing their hands correctly, keeping clean and good oral health.

We encourage parents to toilet train their children so that they start school without nappies but will support any children struggling with this. A record of intimate care is kept in the disable toilet, including for children with particular medical issues or special needs.

Kelly Ryan - EYFS Phase Leader

Date: September 2021

Review: September 2022

NB: This policy is effective from September 2021. Due to COVID restrictions, some of the statements in this policy have not been able to happen in the previous two years, e.g. transition arrangements