

## **Early Years at Old Park**

### **Why Do We Teach EYFS?**

At Old Park we believe 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.

Education is the key to every child's future success. It has been recognised that the Early Years are critical in children's development. Children develop rapidly during this time-physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially. We believe all children should be given the opportunity to experience the very best possible start to their education. 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.

At Old Park Primary School, our Early Years curriculum is designed to be flexible, personal, creative, inspiring, challenging, memorable and to provide all children with opportunities where doors are opened to dream for the future. We strive for children to be curious and develop a love of learning. We strive to make the curriculum as relevant to the children's own lives such as inviting members of the community to talk about their jobs such as firefighters, police and nurses. We hope this will raise the children's aspirations for their own future.

Encompassed within our vision, is the need for pupils to be exposed to a range of experiences that broadens their understanding and equips them with the skills needed to be successful, confident, life-long learners who reach their full potential and demonstrate 'School Readiness'.

At Old Park we want children to develop a good level of development demonstrating a secure grasp of the basic skills of reading, writing and maths and develop the prime skills needed to be successful life-long learners. At Old Park we believe that developing children's communication and language skills are crucial to ensure success in all other areas. We also strive to deliver a wide ranging curriculum which can foster and develop children's interests and talents.

We value the diversity of individuals within the school and do not discriminate against children because of 'differences'. All children at Old Park Primary School are treated fairly regardless of race, religion or abilities. All children and their families are valued within our school.

### **How Do We Support EYFS at Old Park?**

Our curriculum is carefully organised to build on skills and knowledge using Birth to 5 Matters, Development Matters and the Statutory Guidance for Early Years Foundation Stage as a document to help us build on children's skills and knowledge based on robust child development.

We have carefully mapped themes that will capture the children's interests and fascinations and ensure our curriculum is flexible enough to cater for all children.

Nursery and Reception staff work closely to identify the needs of individuals and groups of children in each area and plan learning opportunities based on the children's needs, interests and fascinations. Much of the planning in Early Years is short term as children change and develop at such a rapid pace.

We aim to prepare children for school and endeavour to teach the skills required for 'School Readiness'. We follow many of the schemes adopted by KS1 and 2 such as Penpals handwriting

scheme, Jigsaw well-being and White Rose Maths. This ensures that children are ready to move to their next stage of learning with the skills needed to succeed.

In Nursery we place greater emphasis on securing skills in the prime areas of communication and language, personal social and emotional development and physical development. As the children master these prime skills in Reception we move towards a greater balance of all seven areas of learning.

At Old Park we believe play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals and solve problems. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults. We decide what we want children to learn, and the most effective ways to teach it. We stimulate children's interests, responding to each child's emerging needs and guiding their development through warm, positive interactions coupled with secure routines for play and learning. As children grow older and move into the reception year, there should be a greater focus on teaching the essential skills and knowledge in the specific areas of learning. This will help children to prepare for year 1. At Old Park we teach through a mix of formal planned adult led activities, child initiated learning and play based opportunities. The learning spaces both indoor and outdoor are organised to allow children to be safe, inquisitive, confident and independent learners.

We also plan activities and experiences to allow the children to develop the characteristics of effective 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.

At Old Park Primary School 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. We also value that children need to develop many key skills to ensure they are ready to start a more formal education at the end of the Foundation Stage.

We consider the individual needs, interests, and development of each child and must use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all areas of learning and development.

Throughout the early years, if a child's progress in any prime area gives cause for concern, practitioners discuss this with the child's parents and/or carers and agree how to support the child. Practitioners must consider whether a child may have a special educational need or disability which requires specialist support. They should link with, and help families to access, relevant services from other agencies as appropriate. For children whose home language is not English, providers must take reasonable steps to provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in play and learning, supporting their language development at home.

We recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make.

We recognise the role that parents have played and their future role, in educating the children. We do this through:

- Talking to parents about their child before their child starts in our school.
- Offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress, sharing Learning Journey information on a regular basis and encouraging a two-way dialogue through the child's online learning journey.
- Encouraging parents to talk to the child's teacher if there are any concerns. There are formal meetings for parents to discuss the child's progress in private with the teacher, twice a year. Parents of Foundation children receive a report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each school year.
- Arranging a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents: Family Learning, Inspire Workshops, Class assemblies and Sports Day.
- Regular communication via Tapestry, letters and email.

Although some of these events have been unable to take place more recently due to Covid we endeavour to involve parents throughout the children's time in EYFS. We used Google Classroom to deliver live lessons and set work successfully during lockdown and use this as a platform for sharing homework. We also used Tapestry to share information and celebrate the children's successes.

At Old Park Primary School, we track each child's individual progress in all areas of learning to check if children are 'on track' with their learning and development overall.

Reception children will be assessed against the Early Learning goals at the end of their Reception year. This information will be shared with parents and the child's next teacher. The ELGs should not be used as a curriculum or in any way to limit the wide variety of rich experiences that are crucial to child development, from being read to frequently to playing with friends. Instead, the ELGs support teachers to make a holistic, best-fit judgement about a child's development, and their readiness for year 1.

Reception teachers will be responsible for writing a short report about each child's characteristics of learning. This report will be shared with parents and with year one teachers to ensure a smooth transition into KS1. Regular transition work is carried out between the Reception and Year One Teachers to ensure smooth transition between EYFS and KS1, including moderation, observations and discussions.

### **Does Our EYFS Curriculum Influence Our Children?**

Children's learning journey, work books and folders demonstrate that children have made good progress and have acquired the basic skills and knowledge to prepare them for year one. They have developed a good foundation on which to build.

Lesson observations will demonstrate eager, resilient and inquisitive learners who have a thirst for knowledge and a grasp of the basic skills appropriate at the time.

Year one teachers will report that children have a sound knowledge of the basic facts and skills in reading, writing and maths and are 'school ready'.

Children will enter year one ready to phase in more formal learning.

Assessment data such as Wellcomm screening and PPM data will demonstrate good progress from the children's starting points. Teachers will have clearly identified individual and group strengths and weaknesses and addressed this in practice.

The level of children meeting a good level of development will remain above or at nationally comparable level, based on the individual child and cohort's capabilities and needs. Internal data will demonstrate good progress from the children's starting points. Parents will be directly involved and supported to help their child succeed in school.

The EYFS cohorts from 2020 and 2019 have been impacted more greatly from lockdown as the younger children are less independent and therefore remote learning relies heavily on adult support within the home, which is mixed dependent upon capacity. Equally, remote learning is not comparable to live classroom learning. Our attendance levels when we were able to open to all were positive, with minimal bubble closures. This allowed our teachers to deliver for sustained periods allowing them to consistently assess and respond immediately to the needs of their children.