

Early Years and Foundation Stage Policy

1. Introduction, Purpose and Scope

This policy is intended to set out our principles and intended practices for the definition and delivery of the curriculum to our pupils in the Early Years and Foundation Stage. Please read this policy in association with the following policies and documents:

- Curriculum Policy
- Assessment, Reporting and Recording Policy
- Behaviour and Discipline Policy
- Ambitious about Autism Model of Practice
- TreeHouse Group Skills Framework
- Personalised Curriculum documents e.g. current programmes checklists, Individual Education Plans (IEPs), individual lesson plans.

This policy and our practice are informed by the **Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage** (the **EYFS Framework**). The Early Years Foundation Stage covers children from birth until the age of five years. At TreeHouse pupils can be admitted from the age of 3 years and this policy applies to pupils from the time of their admission until the end of the school year in which they have their fifth birthday. The framework supports an integrated approach to early learning and is designed to be flexible so that staff can follow each child's unique interests and needs. It gives professionals a set of common principles and commitments to deliver quality early education and childcare.

The changes to SEND legislation in 2015 put a much clearer emphasis on offering help to children and young people with SEN and their parents at the earliest possible point and TreeHouse welcomes the opportunity to work with pupils from a young age so that they can realise the benefits of early intervention.

We ensure that parents and carers are fully involved in decisions about their children and work together with them to agree ambitious targets and set clear progress criteria, informed by outcomes defined in their child's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

We aim to be clear and transparent about the curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment tools and strategies and use of resources to support each pupil to achieve the defined outcomes. Staff use a range of strategies to meet each child's needs.

Our philosophy is to work collaboratively with parents and to keep them fully involved in discussions about their child's progress, the effectiveness of the provisions we put in place to achieve the agreed outcomes and plans to adjust them based on analysis of the evidence.

We believe that, as much as possible, our pupils are entitled to enjoy the same opportunities and learning experiences that their peers in mainstream schools enjoy. Our practice is based on whole-hearted commitment to ensuring that every child receives their entitlement to a broad, balanced curriculum, differentiated to ensure that:

- it is accessible to them and relevant to their needs
- they have the opportunity to experience success and achievement and the positive feelings that this can engender.

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2. The TreeHouse EYFS Curriculum

In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) we aim to provide a broad, balanced, differentiated curriculum which addresses each child's social, emotional, physical, intellectual, moral and cultural development within a safe, secure, stimulating, environment.

Our curriculum enables each child to learn and develop skills, attitudes and understanding in the seven areas of learning and development defined in the **EYFS Framework**. The three prime areas, which are particularly important to building a child's capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive are:

- Personal, Emotional and Social Development (PSED)
- Communication and Language (CL)
- Physical development.

The four further areas, through which learning and development related to the specific areas are strengthened and applied, are:

- Mathematics
- Literacy
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Art and Design.

Throughout the EYFS we plan activities to give children learning experiences and opportunities to work towards the Early Learning Goals and prepare them for the National Curriculum. Teaching and learning will take place within the classroom and outdoors. Within these areas children will participate in a variety of activities, both adult and child initiated and led.

We believe that play, both indoors and outdoors, is the fundamental way in which young children learn. Play can be both enjoyable and challenging and through engaging in play, children will be developing skills across all the Prime and Specific areas of learning, working towards achieving the Early Learning Goals.

In a secure environment with effective adult support, children are able to:

- explore, develop and represent learning experiences that help them make sense of the world
- practise and build up concepts, ideas and skills
- learn how to control impulses and understand the need for rules
- be alone, be alongside others or co-operate as they talk to rehearse their feelings
- take risks and make mistakes
- think creatively and imaginatively
- communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems
- express fears to relieve anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.

3. Staff and environment

Our Early Years Staff Team aims to:

- give each child a happy, positive and enjoyable start to school life
- build upon prior learning and generalise learning in school to the home by working in partnership with parents and carers, previous settings and external professionals
- support each child to establish solid foundations for future learning and development, particularly with regards to functional communication, independence and self-care
- provide each child with a wide range of new and exciting experiences, give them opportunities to consolidate existing skills and learn new ones
- support children's learning, including developing children's language and communication,

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- through planned play and extending and supporting children’s spontaneous play
- listen to all forms of children’s communication and their ideas and using them to inform planning
- support each child to develop socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally through high expectations, praise and positivity
- celebrate each child’s personal successes and achievements and share them with their families.

In common with all pupils at TreeHouse School, our pupils in the EYFS will be supported by a transdisciplinary team including Qualified Teachers, Behaviour Analysts, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists and a Play Specialist.

Our EYFS classrooms and outside area are located within the Primary School area of the building. There is a separate entrance to the Primary School. We recognize that the environment plays a key role in enabling and supporting children’s development and we aim to provide an environment which is safe, stimulating, fosters learning, creativity and independence and provides pupils with opportunities to learn individually and together, indoors and outside. We work to provide an outstanding environment through effective and creative planning and resourcing on a weekly and daily basis and through long term planning to develop our infrastructure and facilities.

4. Planning, teaching and learning, assessment, recording and reporting

Our practice is informed by the document *Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)* (non-statutory guidance material supporting practitioners in implementing the statutory requirements of the EYFS).

Planning is structured to ensure coverage of the three *Prime* and four *Specific* Areas of Development as identified in the Early Years Outcomes for each term and is done on a half-termly basis. Topics are informed by the children’s interests and all curriculum areas are covered whenever a topic or activity is planned.

Adult led, independent and child-initiated activities are planned on a weekly basis. Children have the opportunity to work in each of the learning areas within the classroom and outdoors. Learning opportunities are delivered through a mixture of one-to-one and small group-based learning activities, informed by the needs of each child and the context of the learning.

A variety of strategies and tools are used to remove barriers to learning and to promote and support learning and communication including use of Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS), Makaton (sign language), strategies informed by the principles of Applied Behaviour Analysis as well, of course, as techniques informed by outstanding teaching practice.

Pupils are assessed using P Scales and the Early Years Outcomes. Assessment is carried out through a mixture of informal observation, interaction with the child, the use of the information on record sheets and regular discussions with all staff. We observe the children working independently both indoors and outdoors.

Records of such observations are made on the class and individuals record sheets. Children are assessed during adult focused activities against the objective for that activity. Note is made of those children achieving above or below the objective. These are updated on a regular basis to monitor progress and inform planning. Samples of the children’s work are kept in each child’s record of achievement and/or in their Special Book, which contains lots of evidence (e.g. photos and adult

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notes) of their work, learning and achievements throughout the year. Qualitative and quantitative assessment and progress data is shared with parents on a regular basis.

Home-School Communication and Partnership

All children have a Home School Diary to facilitate two-way communication on a daily basis and this is frequently augmented by phone calls or e-mails. We hold meetings between staff and parents on a termly basis to discuss longer term issues. Parents are encouraged to contact staff at any time should they have any queries or concerns.

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