



DOWNSEND
SCHOOL

Pre-Prep

Early Years Policy

DOWNSEND PRE-PREP EARLY YEARS POLICY

Rationale

'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.'

(Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, DfE 2014:5)

We aim to provide the highest quality care and education for all our children, thereby giving them a strong foundation for future learning. We create a safe and happy environment with motivating and enjoyable learning experiences that enable children to become confident and independent.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (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 guardians; and
- **children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates**. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.

(Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, DfE 2014:6)

Aims

The welfare and education of the children in our school is at the very core of everything that we do. We aim:

- To provide a safe, caring and stimulating environment where children feel included, secure and valued.
- To ensure that children are happy and enthusiastic by providing a well planned purposeful play-based curriculum where experiences will build on what children already know and do.
- To ensure that each child receives a broad and balanced education through rich and stimulating play based activities which match the different levels of children's needs.
- To promote children's intellectual, social, spiritual, emotional, physical, cultural and moral development.
- To prepare children to meet future challenges throughout the school, through adult-led and child-initiated experiences.
- To provide effective learning and development for young children through high quality care and education through play based activities by practitioners.

Purposes/ Outcomes

We consider that the children in the EYFS need:

- An appropriate play based curriculum which offers continuity and progression.
- To be responded to as individuals.
- To be helped to develop confident attitudes and relationships.
- Support and encouragement when faced with new experiences.
- Time and space for active exploration both indoors and out.
- A meaningful context for learning which is well planned and resourced.
- A high adult/child ratio with sensitive adults that understand the importance of play, who get enjoyment from playing alongside children and who learn from it.
- Qualified/experienced adults, who foster curiosity and enjoyment, observe, assess and listen to them, respond appropriately and have high expectations.
- Parents/Guardians and Early Years staff who work together in partnership.
- A stimulating environment with easily accessible resources.
- Opportunities and support to become independent learners and to develop their creativity and imagination.
- Experiences which enable them to appreciate the multicultural society in which they live.

- Appropriate good quality materials and resources which reflect careful planning, enabling children to interact at their own level of development and allow for progression.
- Adults who respect and value children's play/learning and are able to interact sensitively.
- Adults that have the time to observe children and monitor their development in all areas of the curriculum to inform future planning.

The Curriculum

The curriculum received by the children in the EYFS is broad, balanced, meaningful and fun. It promotes children's development in all areas, reflecting that play is how young children learn most effectively. Learning takes place indoors and out in most weathers. The curriculum includes a mixture of adult directed and child initiated experiences. The continuity and progression in the EYFS curriculum provides children with experiences and opportunities which form the foundations of learning.

Planning

Planning is based on the statutory framework for the EYFS which is divided into the four key themes:

A Unique Child

We recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways, at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration/ good work assemblies and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Positive Relationships

We recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships and therefore aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families. We regularly inform parents of their child's progress and ways in which they may support.

Enabling Environments

We aim to create an attractive and stimulating learning environment where children feel confident, secure and challenged. Play based learning is paramount and children direct their own learning from carefully planned opportunities provided by staff. Staff will also enhance play and extend as needed to further individual learning. The children have daily access to an indoor and outdoor environment that is set up in discrete areas of learning with planned continuous provision. Resources are organised so that children can access them independently and take responsibility for tidying away.

An acknowledgement that children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates

We meet the needs of all 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.

We recognise that effective learning builds and extends upon prior learning and takes into account children's interests. Planning experiences includes learning intentions linked to the areas of learning but also allows play to arise from children's ideas. Planning takes account of time, space, provision of resources and adult interactions. Children are encouraged to use materials creatively and imaginatively and to reflect on their experiences.

Learning and Development

There are seven areas of learning and development of which three are “prime areas,” and four “specific areas.” The prime areas are:

Communication and Language

This is broken down into three sub sections. These cover Listening and Attention, Understanding and Speaking. These outcomes cover important aspects of language development and provide the foundations for literacy. The Early Years Policy places a strong emphasis on children’s developing competence in speaking and listening and Understanding. Other areas of learning also make a vital contribution to the successful development of literacy.

Physical development

This covers both fine and gross motor development and keeping healthy. Physical development is implicit in all areas of the EYFS framework. Teaching concentrates on children’s developing physical control, mobility, awareness of space and manipulative skills in indoor and outdoor environments. Positive attitudes are encouraged towards a healthy and active way of life.

Personal, social and emotional development

This area has three sub sections. These are Making Relationships, Self-confidence and Self-awareness and Managing Feelings and Behaviour. The outcomes focus on children learning how to work, play, co-operate with others and function in a group beyond the family. They cover important aspects of personal, social, moral and spiritual development including the development of personal values and an understanding of self and others.

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

Literacy

This area of learning has two subsections of Reading and Writing. The objectives ensure success in early reading and writing skills. Phonics plays a big part in this area and the ability to blend for reading and segment for spelling are skills that are promoted daily in the Foundation Stage.

Mathematics

This is broken down into two subsections. These are Number and Shape, Space and Measure. These outcomes cover important aspects of mathematical understanding and provide the foundation for Mathematics. They focus on achievement through practical activities and are using and understanding language in the development of simple mathematical ideas.

Understanding of the world

This covers the subjects Geography, Science, DT, History, RE and ICT. This is a major area of learning and enquiry focussing on children's developing knowledge and understanding of their environment, other people and features of the natural and made world. It provides a foundation for historical, geographical, scientific and technological learning.

Expressive arts and design

This covers art, music, and drama. This area of the EYFS framework focuses on the development of children's imagination and their ability to communicate and to express ideas and feelings in creative ways.

Through careful assessments and observations, including information provided by parents and other settings, children's development levels are assessed. Observations are recorded in the children's individual learning profiles. 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 prime area gives cause for concern, staff will discuss this with the child's parents and/or guardians and agree how to support the child. This may also include a discussion with the Special Educational Needs teacher.

We support children in using the following three characteristics of effective teaching and learning:

- **Playing and exploring –**

Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, and 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. They have the opportunity to express fears or re-live anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations. We deliver learning for all of the areas through, purposeful play and learning experiences, with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities.

- **Active learning –**

Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need to have 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.

- **Creativity and thinking critically –**

Children should be given an opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning, not just through the arts. Adults can support children's thinking and help them to make connections by showing genuine interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open questions. Children can access resources freely and are allowed to move them around the classroom to extend their learning.

'Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity. Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults. There is an ongoing judgement to be made by practitioners about the balance between activities led by children, and activities led or guided by adults. Practitioners must respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction. As children grow older, and as their development allows, it is expected that the balance will gradually shift towards more activities led by adults, to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for Year One.'

(Statutory Framework for EYFS 2014:9)

Long Term Plans

Teachers set broad topics to be covered for the academic year. The children's interests and experiences are taken into account based on information gathered from parents and the children themselves. Teachers also plan one child initiated topic each year based on the specific interests of the children.

Medium Term Plans

Medium term plans identify specific learning intentions and ideas for activities. This planning is flexible and is constantly being added to and adapted to suit the children's needs and development.

Short Term Plans

Short term plans which are completed on a daily/weekly basis and ensure a balanced curriculum. Weekly team meetings in each year group ensure that the children's individual needs, interests and abilities are well planned.

These plans individualise focused activities with a learning outcome. Differentiation is planned for across the curriculum to ensure that all the children's individual needs are met.

Observation, planning and Assessment

Assessment in the Foundation Stage takes the form of both formal and informal observations. These observations are recorded in a variety of ways, and contribute to the child's individual 'Learning Journey' profile, e.g. photographs, teacher comments, teaching assistant comments, 'Wow' moments, and parental contributions. At the end of the reception year in school, the child's progress is recorded on to the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. This shows each child's level of development against the 17 Early Learning

Goals. Upon entry, every child has a baseline assessment and their development in months is recorded against the EYFS profile. They are then assessed at the end of Autumn, Spring and Summer terms to track their progress and inform the teacher of their development

Progress Check at Two

Where children are aged between 24 and 36 months parents will be supplied with a short written summary of their child's development in the three prime areas of learning and development of the EYFS: Personal, Social and Emotional Development; Physical Development; and Communication and Language. This will be based on the Early Years Outcomes and EYFS Principles.

Self Assessment and Evaluation

Opportunities for self assessment and evaluation may be evident in planning or may be used during lessons when relevant. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage Reception classes use a success criteria checklist, for example, when self-assessing their writing. Once pupils understand how to assess their current knowledge and the gaps in it, they will have a clearer idea of how they can help themselves to progress. Pupils will be taught what they need to learn and why, and then actively assess their understanding, gaps in their own knowledge and areas they need to work on. Children in Reception are set individual targets by their class teacher, which are shared with each individual and reviewed termly. Children in First Steps and Rising Reception are encouraged and supported to evaluate their own progress through sensitive questions and responses from members of staff. Staff give children the opportunity to express their own preferences, interests and abilities including what they enjoy doing and what they found challenging.

Peer Assessment

Peer assessment will be used when relevant. Pupils will be encouraged to clarify their own ideas and understanding of both the learning intention and the assessment criteria while marking other pupils' work.

The Role of the Adult

- Staff have a clear understanding of child development and how children learn. They ensure that there is a balance of self chosen and adult directed and initiated activities.
- Staff work directly with children and exploit learning opportunities that occur spontaneously.
- All staff will maintain their own continuous professional development through training/study days.
- Staff will observe children at play in order to make valid assessments of learning and behaviour.

Key Person

All staff involved with the EYFS aim to develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them. In the Foundation Stage, each child's key person is their class teacher, who is supported by qualified teaching assistants.

The key person approach is aimed at enabling and supporting close attachments between children and practitioners. Attachment provides a sense of security so that children can become confident, independent and capable young learners. The role of the key person is to meet the needs of each child in their care and respond sensitively to their feelings, talking to the parents when appropriate, and working in partnership with them. Teaching staff and the Head liaise with other providers to discuss each individual child and their transition process into our school. Parents are required to complete a settling-in document prior to entry.

Equal Opportunities

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.

Special Educational Needs

- All possible provision is made for children with special educational needs. Parents are consulted in the first place and where appropriate, help from outside agencies is sought.
- Differentiated activities ensure that all abilities are catered for.
- No child is excluded from an activity because of a disability.
- Children are able to progress at their own pace and children whose achievements exceed the learning outcomes are provided with opportunities to extend their knowledge, understanding and skills

English as a Additional Language

For children whose home language is not English, staff will 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.

'When assessing communication, language and literacy skills, practitioners must assess children's skills in English. If a child does not have a strong grasp of English language, practitioners must explore the child's skills in the home language with parents to establish whether there is cause for concern about language delay.'

(Statutory Framework for EYFS, DfE 2014: 9)

Continuity of care

- The curriculum for First Steps through to Reception is carefully planned according to children's individual needs. Records are kept to monitor progress. Progress is reported to parents both formally and informally.
- Children and parents meet the new teacher and support staff the term before they join the next year group. New children joining the school are offered settling-in sessions.
- Good practice is shared with regular liaison with all year groups. Children's progress files are passed to their new teacher.
- All staff act in accordance with the behaviour policy. It is important that young children learn to work and play co-operatively and constructively and they relate positively to their peers and adults.

From EYFS to Key Stage One

During the final term in Reception, the EYFS Profile is completed for each child. The Profile provides parents and staff with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels, and their readiness for Year 1. Each child's level of development is assessed against the early learning goals. The profile indicates whether children are meeting expected levels of development, or if they are exceeding expected levels, or not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging'). Year 1 teachers are given a copy of the Profile report together with their Autumn, Spring & Summer term reports. This informs the dialogue between Reception and Year 1 teachers about each child's stage of development.

Health and Safety (refer to First Aid, Medicine and Health and Safety Policies)

- Parents/carers are asked to inform staff in writing of any health problems e.g. allergies, eczema
- All medicines are kept securely or in the refrigerator labelled with the child's name and class and with a completed, signed medication form. Only prescription medication will be administered and will be checked by a member of staff.
- Children with allergies/at risk will be placed on school's Health & Dietary Requirements list – kept in all classrooms, dining room, bathrooms, staff room and office. Medication for allergies / at risk children will be kept in the locked cabinet nearest to the child's classroom and all staff are informed of the location.
- The access gate to the outdoor play area is locked at all times and all areas are fully supervised with the correct adult: child ratios.
- All children are 'handed over' to parents/carers at the end of the day. Parents are asked to inform staff of any changes in collection arrangements.
- If a parent/carer is late for pick up – children will remain with staff until 4.00pm – they will then be placed in our extended day facility (refer to Late Collection policy).

Home/School Partnership

We aim to provide positive relationships within an attitude of mutual trust and support. The induction and admission procedures are designed to welcome and settle children and their families into the school community as quickly as possible.

Sharing Information

We share information with parents/guardians so that we can work in partnership. We also encourage parents/guardians to share information with us so that we can take the best possible care of their child whilst they are in school. This is done primarily through:

- Formal / Informal discussions
- Induction meetings for new families
- Sharing profiles
- Comments in reading record books / message books
- Parents observations
- Written reports
- Telephone calls and emails
- Pre-arranged appointments before and after school

- Notices on notice boards throughout school
- Newsletters
- Class representatives
- Curriculum Packs
- Letters home at the start of each term/new topic

Some year groups display notice boards outside their classrooms, detailing activities the children have chosen or been engaged in each day. The boards are read by adults at pick-up times.

Refer to the following policies:

Key Person
Teaching and Learning
Special Educational Needs
Health and Safety
Late Collection
Equality and Diversity
Behaviour