

THOMAS GRAY PRIMARY SCHOOL

EARLY YEARS POLICY

LEARNING FOR LIFE



Date Written: November 2023
Review Date: November 2025

Purpose of the Policy

"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 provides 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, DCSF, 2017.

All children begin school with a variety of experiences and learning. It is the privilege of the practitioners working in the Foundation Stage to take on the task of building upon that prior learning and experience. This is done through a holistic approach, ensuring that parents/carers and the staff work effectively together to support children's learning and development. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

Principles

The EYFS principles, which guide the work of our practitioners, are grouped into four distinct but complimentary themes, as listed below:

- **The Unique Child** - every child is a competent learner from birth, who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. The commitments are focused around development, inclusion, safety and health and well-being.
- **Positive Relationships** - how children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships, with parent and/or a key person. The commitments are focused around respect, partnership with parents, supporting learning and the role of the key person.

- **Enabling Environments** - states that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning. The commitments are focused around observation, assessment and planning, support for every child, the learning environment and the wider context - transitions, continuity and multi-agency working.
- **Learning and Development** - recognises that children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates, and that all areas of learning and development are equally important and inter-connected.

Learning through play

'Children's play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. In their play children learn at their highest level. Play with peers is important for children's development.' -Early Years Foundation Stage, DCSF, 2017.

'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'. - Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage 2021

At Thomas Gray we do not make the distinction between work and play and work on a model of Continuous Provision. We support children's learning through free and planned play activities in the indoor and outdoor environment. Adults support and facilitate the children's learning; working alongside them, through child -initiated play and planned focus activities.

Care

'Effective early years provision pays as much attention to children's care as it does to play and learning as these are intertwined and impact equally on children's development and overall well-being'. - *Birthto5Matters 2021 p.12*

'Respectful caregiving requires respectful interactions'. Birthto5Matters 2021 p.13

Using a respectful caregiving approach, we as practitioners at Thomas Gray recognise that we work in a co-operative partnership with each child where the adult does everything with the child rather than to the child. This ensures that each child in our care feels competent, recognised and valued as an individual.

Transition

'High quality transitions recognise the importance of feeling "known". Key to a high-quality experience for all children in the early years is ensuring continuity between home, key people and all the settings that make up children's individual learning journeys'. *Birthto5Matters- 2021 p.16*

Transition for children who are more vulnerable is effectively supported when they are given additional times and opportunities to make the necessary readjustments to the changes ahead, and when their emotional development and wellbeing is prioritised. Practitioners at Thomas Gray, help by being warm and responsive to individual needs.

Admission and induction procedures

Two-year Room (Elmer)

In order to check whether the criteria has been met for attendance in our Elmer room, please call 0151 933 6021 or click on the link below

<https://search3.openobjects.com/kb5/sefton/directory/fel.page>

Parents who accept a place in our 2 Year Room Nursery are invited to a welcome meeting where information is given about the setting. Parents and carers can visit their child's new classroom, meet their teachers and ask any questions they may have.

Three/Four Year Room (Forest)

Prospective parents can visit the school before, or when registering their children. Parents who accept a place in our Nursery are invited to a welcome meeting where the admissions procedure is explained and information given about the setting. Parents and carers can visit their child's new classroom and meet their teachers.

The current process for admissions into Nursery is that usually children are invited to start after their third birthday. Transition arrangements are made to suit individuals and may be on a phased basis initially to help the child settle.

Liaison with first educators (Parents and Nurseries)

A Home Visit is made for all children starting Nursery and those new to the school in Reception. Two staff members visit the child and parents at home. This is an opportunity for us all to meet, in each child's own environment, and engage in some simple 'getting to know you' play activities. Parents are asked to provide information about the child's likes, dislikes, any concerns and their developmental milestones, to enable us to work together to plan the transition process and the coming weeks in school. This is also an opportunity for parents to discuss with staff the needs of their child as well as to ask any questions they may have.

As a school we have built up close links with local childcare settings to ensure a smooth transition for children who have not attended our nursery previously. Staff liaise with the child's Key Person and gather important information about their previous experiences, learning styles and current attainment. We regularly invite the children and staff from local settings to important events such as Christmas productions and Sports Day in order to foster good relationships and to provide settings with an overview of the positive and nurturing ethos of our school. A knowledge of the school enables staff from different settings to help to prepare children who will be making that transition to us.

Induction for Reception children

The current process for admissions into Reception is that all children will be eligible to start school full time, regardless of their birth date, from September of the academic year they turn 5 years old. Whilst we have a large number of children who feed into our Reception class from our Nursery, we also have a number of children who have attended other settings.

As we are a unit, the children who attend our nursery are already familiar with the Reception staff. This familiarity enables children to build up positive relationships with their new teachers and provides a safe and secure environment in which to begin the next stage of their educational journey. During the previous summer term the Nursery children will take part in transitional activities, for example, listening to a story in what will be their new classroom and spending some time with Reception staff. We hold a full transition morning where children are invited to spend a morning in the new classroom. There will also be an induction meeting for parents where information will be provided about the coming year. Children attending other Nurseries who will be coming into our Reception class are also invited on this day. All children will be invited to stay for a school lunch and to sample some of the food that the school provides.

Transition also includes moving from EYFS to KS1. As children move from the EYFS into KS1 they need continuity of experience, with the ways in which they learn successfully in their Reception class continued into Year 1. This does not mean that **what** they will learn will be the same, but **how** they learn should be very similar and familiar.

Learning and Development

The Foundation Stage Curriculum begins from birth and continues until the end of Reception Year. The curriculum is split into seven areas of learning. All areas of learning are important and inter connected.

The 3 Prime areas

- . Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED)
- . Communication and Language (CAL)
- . Physical Development (PD)

The 4 Specific areas

- . Literacy (L)
- . Mathematics (M)
- . Understanding the World (UTW)
- . Expressive Arts and Design (EAD)

Planning

The Nursery and Reception teachers plan in consultation with all other practitioners that are involved with the children.

Long Term

Yearly plans provide a termly overview, ensuring curriculum coverage across the year, whilst also being flexible enough to allow time for practitioners to follow the children's interests.

Medium Term

We address particular aspects of the curriculum in more detail for each term. Resources, activities and experiences for each area of learning and development are identified.

Short Term

Each class team meets during a dedicated weekly slot to discuss the learning and development that has taken place. This enables the team to share observations and assessments made for each child and to plan for the coming week, using current and relevant information.

When planning and guiding children's activities, the staff reflect on **HOW** the children learn as well as **WHAT** they learn. The three **Characteristics of Effective Learning** support this and are:

- . playing and exploring - children investigate and experience a variety of things and 'have-a-go'(**engagement**);
- . active learning - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy their achievements (**motivation and resilience**); and
- . creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things(**thinking**).

Differentiation

We understand that children are individuals and develop at different rates, therefore, activities and experience are carefully planned to stimulate and challenge children at different levels. Differentiation is outlined in the planning. We differentiate by task, resources used, support given, targeted questioning and outcome.

The learning environment

'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'-

EYFS Statutory Framework DfE, 2021

We create an attractive, welcoming and stimulating learning environment, relevant to all children's cultures and communities, which will encourage children to explore, investigate and learn through first-hand experience. We aim to provide places where children feel secure and confident, and are challenged to develop their independence and to take some responsibility for their own lines of enquiry and investigation. Activities are planned for inside and outside and children have the freedom to move between them during sustained periods of time, dedicated to play and playful teaching.

Key Person System

The Foundation Stage runs a key person system. Each Key Person has special responsibility for working with a number of children. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care in their key group is tailored to meet their individual need, to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents.

The Role of the Parent/Carer as the child's primary educator

We aim to develop this by:-

1. Ensuring that all parents/carers as well as children are welcomed in a warm and accepting way, operating an 'open door' policy whereby parents/carers can come and discuss any concerns and developments in an informal manner.
2. Endeavouring to support any vulnerable parents, putting them in contact with agencies who can give them the appropriate support and advice they need.
3. Providing information about the EYFS curriculum to parents/carers during new parent meetings and home visits in September and throughout the year via open days, transition meetings and parental workshops.
4. Sharing children's progress with parents/carers and encouraging them to contribute to their child's learning journey.
5. Providing, advice and encouragement for parents/carers to support their children at home. We provide resources, activities and books for parents/carers to share with their children.
6. Providing parents with other information about events taking place in school.
7. Listening to parents/carers voice by analysing parental questionnaires, parent/carers meetings and informal chats.
8. Requesting parents/carers complete a '*Home School Agreement*' so that everyone is aware of the shared responsibility for every child's educational journey.

SEND

Equal Opportunities and Inclusion (See school Equality and SEND policies)

We aim to provide a safe and supportive learning environment where the contribution of all children is valued and where racial, religious, disability and gender stereotypes are challenged. We use a wide range of teaching strategies, differentiate the curriculum to meet children's individual needs and carefully monitor children's progress. Early identification of any additional needs ensures that we can work together with parents and other relevant agencies to provide appropriate support for individuals.

Pupil Premium and Early Years Pupil Premium (See school Pupil Premium Policy)

The 'Pupil Premium' grant is funding provided to help schools support specific groups of children who may be in danger of making less progress than others. Its aim is to '**close the gap**' between how well children from low-income and other disadvantaged families do compared to their peers.

Pupil Premium partly funds the following within the Early Years:

- Early Intervention, Family Support and Counselling delivered by the school SENCO, Pastoral Officer and counsellor
- Staff CPD and the drive to continue the push to consistently outstanding teaching
- Adult/Pupil Ratios: Continued commitment to retaining high level of Teaching Assistant support in EYFS
- ICT: The use of digital technologies to support learning, increasing engagement and creativity.

In addition to the above we offer the following Interventions:

- Targeted small group teaching assistant support, focused on listening and communication skills specifically in EYFS

- Wellcomm: Language screening and intervention support
- Speech and Language: Targeted 1:1 Teaching assistant support focused on specific speech and language programmes as prescribed by Speech and Language Therapists

Safeguarding

All staff within the Early Years are aware of, and follow the school policies for child protection and safeguarding. All staff receive Level 1 training and annual updates on safeguarding and being alert to the signs of abuse. A designated member of the SLT responsible for EYFS is trained at Level 2. It is the responsibility of the Governing Body and the Head Teacher to ensure that all employees are aware of their responsibility to report any allegation or possible concern of a child protection nature. Failure to report may (a) put a child at risk and (b) imply a breach of the employee's contractual duty. Staff must be aware of this procedure, understand their responsibilities and know where in the school a copy of the procedure is to be found.

Allegations against staff

A child who reports that they may have been abused by an employee of the school, must be carefully listened to in all circumstances. 'Listened to' means just that; on no account should suggestions be made to a child as to alternative explanations for their worries; neither should any member of staff attempt to question the child as part of any investigation, as this could lead to primary evidence for any future investigation being compromised.

First Aid and Food Safety

Within the EYFS there are designated members of staff with Paediatric First Aid and Food Safety Certificates. These are reviewed annually to ensure that the required number of staff per class holds these qualifications.

Administering medicines

A policy is in place for administering medicines in school and for managing health conditions. Staff within the Early Years are aware of, and follow this policy.

Health and Safety

See school's Health and Safety Policy.

Intimate Care

See Intimate Care Policy.

Equal Opportunities Policy

At Thomas Gray Primary School we aim to provide all pupils, regardless of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability, equal access to all aspects of school life. We aim to achieve this by taking a positive approach to observation that is child-centred, strengths-based and holistic. This promotes opportunities in practice to follow each child's lead and listen to their voice, recognising that this will be expressed in a range of different ways.

Making sure that early years practice meets the needs of all children means thinking about children in context. As well as making sure that the environment reflects the range of developmental stages of all children, it also means us as practitioners recognising the connections with children's homes, localities and communities, weaving these into practice, and listening to families including parents and carers, siblings, grandparents and others who may be important in the child's life.

Behaviour (see Behaviour Policy)

We encourage the children to be self-serving, independent and to develop a sense of responsibility for themselves, others and the environment. The School's Behaviour Policy is relevant to the Foundation Stage, particularly promoting a positive ethos where good/acceptable behaviour is rewarded by staff so that children learn appropriate codes of behaviour.

Home Time Procedures

Parents/carers collect their children from the classroom doors. Children are only allowed to leave the classroom if an adult that is listed on the child's record is there to collect them. Alternative arrangements can be made with staff where necessary. If a child remains uncollected then parents/carers will be contacted by phone.

Quality Assurance

All members of the Foundation Team have attended training for the Foundation Stage in addition to identifying and attending other relevant courses. The team regularly evaluates their teaching and the learning that takes place in the Foundation Stage, both formally and informally. The advice of SLT, EYFS Consultants and Advisors are regularly sought and welcomed.

Assessment and Record Keeping (See school assessment policy)

All observations and assessments are an integral part of teaching as they inform future planning for the child's needs. All children are assessed during the first term of school to provide a baseline from which we track each child's learning. A judgement is made based on observations of individuals and staff and parent/carer knowledge of the children. The children's progress is then assessed and recorded formally on 'O Track'. Supporting evidence is recorded regularly both in individual Learning Journeys and online via '2 Simple'. Teachers undertake 'in house' and local cluster group moderation to ensure judgements are accurate. In the final term of the year in which the child reaches the age of five, the staff will make a 'best-fit' judgement on whether each child has met the 'Early Learning Goal' for each area of learning. This provides parents and carers, practitioners and teachers with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels, and their readiness for Year 1. These assessments are moderated with the Year 1 Teachers who will continue to build on the children's achievements.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The EYFS Leader and SLT monitor planning, classroom organisation and practice to ensure there is consistency across the year group and that the policy is being implemented. Planning is reviewed constantly to incorporate new ideas and thinking and to improve the quality of learning. The Foundation Stage team have regular meetings where there are regular opportunities to moderate work and review progress across the year group.

Governors

There is a designated Early Year's Governor whose responsibility is to liaise, support and monitor the early year's provision. The current Early Year's governor is **Stacey Robinson**.

Complaints

We take all queries and complaints seriously and will follow the school **Complaints Policy**. This is available both on the school website or in the school office. We would ask that you please speak to your child's teacher or the Early Years Lead or the Head teacher first, as dealing with concerns face to face provides the best opportunity to resolve potential issues and to provide positive outcomes.

Staff development

All EYFS staff attend INSET days and courses to further their professional development. Training needs are identified through the school improvement plan and performance management. Staff engage in team teaching, peer observations and live coaching as appropriate. Staff are supportive of each other and work closely as a team to share ideas and resources and to ensure the highest quality of education for every child who attends our school.

Review date: September 2025

Signed: Chair of Governors

Date:

