

## Early Years Policy

### Introduction

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. At the Baird Primary Academy we offer an Early Years Village Approach to learning where children are fully supported on their journey. This journey begins with children from three years of age within our nursery. Then children may choose to move to our Reception classes in the academic year after they have turned four (currently compulsory schooling begins the term after they have become five).

### Aims

We believe The Foundation Stage is a unique phase in a child's life and is crucial to successful future learning.

At The Baird Primary Academy, we seek to provide each pupil with the best possible start to their school career and believe that each unique child should be at the very heart of our teaching and learning approaches.

Through this policy we aim to ensure a consistent approach where parents, carers, teachers and practitioners work together to give children the best possible start.

In order to achieve this we ensure that

- all pupils are recognised as individuals;
- all pupils feel happy, safe and cared for;
- all pupils develop an understanding of social skills and positive behaviour expectations;
- all pupils develop independence and the ability to make guided and informed choices.

Our curriculum takes into account and responds to the pupils' developmental needs and allows them to make good progress related to their differing abilities.

In order to achieve this, we ensure that:

- we provide quality, play-based learning experiences which use children's interests and curiosities to motivate and foster learning
- we provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum which promotes the 'Early Learning Goals'
- we create effective partnerships with parents and carers to support and enhance the development of pupils
- we create a curriculum that tailors learning to children's unique needs, abilities and interests while providing appropriate support and challenge

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is the statutory framework which sets standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well; and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children are ready for school; and stimulates the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the foundation for good future

progress through school and life. All children within the Baird Academy Nursery and Reception classes work within this framework.

It details four key principles which shape our practice:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

## A Unique Child

We recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We understand that children develop in individual ways, at varying rates and join us on their own learning path. All children are included and valued equally.

## 'Settling-in' and transitions

In our nursery, parents of new pupils meet with nursery staff to share important information related to their child's needs, interests, routines, as well as any health and medical concerns. This is achieved through both discussion and by completing a written record of the key points discussed.

In a similar way, transitions between age phases are planned carefully, supported with social and photograph stories and enhanced to meet individual needs. A transition programme is provided for children entering our Reception classes. This consists of parent information meetings, a Teddy Bears' picnic for parents and children, and further 'taster' afternoons where pupils meet their class teacher and can explore their new classroom and learning environment. Additional visits are arranged for children who require them. In addition to these events and before starting Reception in September, staff organise an induction meeting with parents to share and record important information about their child. There is a short staggered start at the beginning of the autumn term which lasts for a week and helps to welcome children into Reception and to embed routines in a calm, positive and nurturing way.

## Inclusion in the Foundation Stage/Special Education Needs and Disability

All children and their families are valued at the Baird Primary Academy. Children are treated as individuals and have equal access to all provision available. All children are encouraged to 'fly high' to achieve their full potential and planning is in response to the child's observed needs through the 'next steps' of all individuals and abilities.

Assessments take into account contributions from a range of perspectives to ensure that any child with potential special educational needs is identified at the earliest possible opportunity. Early identification of special needs is crucial to enable staff to support the development of each child.

Concerns are always discussed with parents/carers at an early stage and further support can be accessed through the EYFS Leader, the SEN Teacher, the Nursery Lead Practitioner, the Academy SENCO and the Inclusion Team, which includes a Speech and Language Therapist.

In the Foundation Stage we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children so that they make good progress from their starting points.

We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of children with special educational needs, children who are more-able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds. In order to accommodate each individual's particular learning style, provision will be planned wherever possible in a multi-sensory way so that the various experiences can be accessed by all in the spirit of inclusion.

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- Providing an Early Year's Village approach where Reception and Nursery staff work closely to best promote the needs of every child
- Providing a communication friendly environment through the use of visual aids, Makaton etc
- 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

### Pupil Premium

We ensure that we quickly identify children who are entitled to both Pupil Premium and Early Years Pupil Premium. Through baseline assessment, we ascertain in which areas children are attaining and how we can further support through resources, expertise or intervention the areas where progress is slower. This provision is planned on an individual basis to meet the needs of the individual child. Progress is rigorously monitored and tracked. For higher attaining children, entitled to Pupil Premium, we plan additional activities and support to challenge them to achieve more highly.

### Safeguarding and Welfare

*"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."* Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2017

At The Baird Primary Academy, all children have the right to feel and be safe. The safety of our children is paramount. We encourage the children to take risks in a safe learning environment by helping them to recognise and avoid or manage hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children within the Early Years.

We ensure that our current practice and provision complies with the welfare requirements as stated in the Ofsted Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage.

Our team works collaboratively to:

- promote the welfare and safeguarding of children.
- promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill.
- manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs.
- ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.
- ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment are safe and suitable for purpose.
- ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs.

## Positive Relationships

At The Baird Primary Academy, we recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families. Families are given clear guidance on the staff that they will meet and their role in the setting.

## Key Persons

To enable children to make secure attachments to practitioners and to develop positive relationships, we operate a Co-Key Person system in the Nursery. In Reception classes, the Class Teachers and Teaching Assistants also take on this role. This allows two practitioners to work in partnership to implement an effective Key Person system which ensures strong relationships with high quality communication and support through the range of attendance patterns.

## Working in Partnership with Parents and Carers

At The Baird Primary Academy, we understand parents and carers 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 their children and believe that high quality communication is integral to a child's achievement.

We engage and encourage collaboration by:

- arranging parent and teacher/practitioner meetings before a child starts in the setting
- arranging settling-in and transition programmes before beginning Reception
- having a staggered start in September which lasts for a week and allows teachers to welcome children into Reception and embed routines
- encouraging parents to complete 'Wow' slips which inform planning, provision and assessment
- creating home learning challenges, linked to the class topics, which encourage parents and children to work together on different learning activities. These are then shared and celebrated in school

- making the EasyPeasy learning app accessible to all parents. This provides learning activities linked to Development Matters and parents/carers and teachers are able to comment on a child's progress, as well as their likes and dislikes
- ensuring 'parent voice' is captured at key times during the year, which include Parents' Consultation Evenings and more informal occasions like 'Play and Stay' sessions
- inviting parents/carers to fortnightly 'Play and Stay' sessions
- inviting parents/carers to termly Celebration Afternoons where they can share in and celebrate pupils' achievements
- inviting parents/carers to our Friday Celebration Assemblies when their child is awarded a Gold Award for demonstrating one of the academy's core values
- encouraging parents/carers to attend workshops around the curriculum and supporting at home
- sending home a termly Curriculum Newsletter that explains which aspects we will teach during that term
- sending home weekly newsletters to update parents/carers on the focus for learning that week and to remind them of upcoming events

## Enabling Environments

We aim to create an attractive and stimulating learning environment where children feel confident, secure and challenged. The children have daily access to an exciting indoor and large, well-equipped outdoor environment that is set up to provide development within all areas of learning.

## Free Flow

We operate a free flow approach which includes the sharing of our outdoor as well as our indoor spaces when possible across the age phases. In this way children can access a range of self-initiated challenges alongside structured adult-led learning experiences.

Learning spaces are clearly defined and resources are easily accessible so that children can develop as independent learners by following their own schemas and fascinations. We recognise the importance of open ended experiences to promote purposeful and challenging play. Practitioners observe and extend this play as appropriate, use inspiring language to promote 'Sustained Shared Thinking'. They further use these observations to enhance provision and extend individual learning

## Learning and development

We recognise that children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. At the Baird Primary Academy, we understand that young children achieve well when learning is engaging and well matched to their interests and previous learning. Learning is often play based with increasing challenge and expectations as a child develops.

## Curriculum

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
- Physical Development
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development

The specific areas are -

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding of the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

The Prime Areas are essential for fostering early learning skills and are promoted heavily through our planning and provision. Successful mastery of these skills supports children to achieve well in Specific Areas of learning. Across all of these areas we promote the Characteristics of Effective Learning where children develop their abilities to play and explore, take an active role in their learning and think creatively. We observe and monitor these skills and report them to parents.

Curriculum mapping is in place to promote a wide ranging and progressive curriculum where children are challenged with new experiences. It is made up of a range of broad topic themes which are linked to our core books and rhymes. These are also sometimes linked to seasonal changes and/or events, whilst being flexible to respond to observed needs and current interests.

Long term, medium term and weekly plans are prepared carefully to ensure a thorough coverage of skills to be taught. Our planning identifies intended learning, with outcomes, for children working towards the Early Learning Goals.

## Assessment

*“Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise children’s progress, understand their needs and to plan activities and support”*  
Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2017

The Development Matters Bands and Early Learning Goals provide the basis for assessment throughout the Foundation Stage. Children are quickly assessed at their entry point to the Foundation Stage to establish a baseline. Progress is monitored and tracked consistently through electronic learning journeys and an electronic tracking system (Target Tracker).

In Reception, children’s progress in Mathematics and Literacy are recorded in books alongside Target Tracker. Practitioners, teachers and teaching assistants make regular assessments of children’s learning and these high quality observations are key to the assessment and planning cycle. Next Steps are planned in response to these.

In nursery, ‘next steps’ are also presented on a display so all practitioners have an awareness of ways forward. In Reception, next steps are shared by staff and communicated to parents during Parent Consultations.

There are different summative assessment points throughout the Foundation Stage:

- Children entering both Nursery and Reception undertake Baseline Assessment during the first term, this is completed by the end of Week 3
- Children's progress is tracked on a termly basis
- A 'Good Level of Development' measure is made at the end of the Reception Year

## Letter and Sounds

Phase 1 of the Letters and Sounds Phonic Programme begins in the Nursery. This is a daily programme of interactive experiences that promote phonological awareness and key skills for reading and spelling. Further phases continue throughout the Foundation Stage and into Key Stage 1 (see phonics policy).

## Home Learning

At The Baird Primary Academy, we understand the impact of high quality liaison between home and school and strive to ensure that our pupils are keen to learn and are supported at every opportunity.

For our younger children, Key Persons may suggest ways to support at home in particular areas of learning. A termly newsletter offers learning experiences at home and outlines what the children have been learning in Reception and Nursery. Weekly updates keep parents and carers informed of next week's learning focus.

In the Reception classes, activities to support early reading and writing skills are sent home regularly. On a termly basis, a topic challenge web is sent out to inform and engage parents and carers in their child's learning. Daily reading is encouraged at home and this should be recorded in a Reading Journal. Nursery runs a 'borrow a book' programme.

See Academy Home Learning Policy

## British Values

The fundamental British values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs are embedded in the Early Years Foundation Stage. We actively seek to promote these values through modelling behaviour, challenging stereotypes and ensuring that our children receive a rich and varied curriculum.

When appropriate we demonstrate democracy in action, and support the decisions that children make and ensure they are given opportunities to develop enquiring minds in an atmosphere where questions are valued. We provide opportunities for children to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and increase their confidence in their own abilities.

We allow children to explore the language of feelings and responsibility, reflect on their differences and understand we are free to have different opinions.