

Early Years Policy

Meir Heath Academy



Approved by:

Mrs. M Southern

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Introduction

The Early Years Foundations Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of their Reception year. This policy outlines the provision Meir Heath Academy offers to all its pupils aged four to five years. The Foundation Stage has its own framework and is therefore treated as a separate key stage. Early Years education is the foundation upon which young children build the rest of their schooling. It is a holistic education that encompasses all areas of learning and development.

This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the EYFS at Meir Heath Academy. The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of all practitioners working in the EYFS setting. At Meir Heath Academy, we believe that all children are entitled to the best possible start of their school life and effective learning and development for young children requires high quality care and education by all practitioners.

At Meir Heath Academy we want all children to be engaged in the learning process and for their learning to be relevant and purposeful. Children develop rapidly during the early years; physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially and that play, both indoors and outdoors is an ideal vehicle for young children's learning and development.

Play based activities help children to explore, investigate, communicate and make sense of the world around them. Children are naturally inquisitive and curious, therefore we aim to provide a stimulating and focussed environment. All children in the Foundation Stage should feel included, secure and valued and no child should be disadvantaged.

Aims

At Meir Heath Academy we aim to provide the highest quality care and education for all our children thereby giving them a strong foundation for their future learning. We create a safe, stimulating and happy environment with motivating and enjoyable learning experiences that enable children to become confident and independent. We value the individual child and work alongside parents and carers to meet their needs to help every child to reach their full potential.

We aim to build on what the children already know and develop a positive attitude and enjoyment of learning. We provide a range of opportunities to learn through direct experience, enquiry and active exploration and aim to encourage independence and confidence.

We adhere to the Statutory Framework of the EYFS and the four guiding principles that shape practice within Early Years setting. Meir Heath Academy are committed to underpinning our provision with these four themes: a unique child, enabling environments, positive relationships equals learning and development.

Foundation Stage Curriculum

We plan and implement an exciting and challenging curriculum based on our observation of children's needs, interests and stages of development across the seven areas of learning to enable the children to achieve the early learning goals.

The content of the EYFS curriculum is taught in a logical progression to give children the necessary foundations for the rest of their schooling. All of the seven areas of learning and development are

important and inter-connected. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

These three areas are the prime areas: Communication and Language, Physical Development, Personal, Social and Emotional Development. Children are also supported through the four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are: Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design.

Communication and Language is developed through singing songs, nursery rhymes and play games. All staff will encourage the children's love of reading through reading aloud and the telling of stories and rhymes.

Children are provided with a range of rich, meaningful first-hand experience in which children explore, think creatively and are active. We aim to develop and foster positive attitudes towards learning, confidence, communication and physical development.

Children have whole class and small group times which include daily phonics sessions using 'Supersonics Phonics Friends', teaching aspects of Mathematics and literacy including shared reading and writing. The curriculum is delivered using a play-based approach as outlined by the EYFS. Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities.

We plan a balance between children having time and space to engage in their own child-initiated activities and those that are adult led. During children's play, early year's practitioners interact to stretch and challenge children further. In planning and guiding children's activities, we reflect as practitioners on the different ways that children learn and learn using the inside environments and the outdoor environment.

The EYFS curriculum is taught in a logical progression, systematically and in a way that is explained effectively, so that it gives children the necessary foundations for the rest of their schooling.

Characteristics of effective learning – playing and exploring, active learning and creative and thinking critically

The characteristics of effective learning describes factors which play a central part in a child's learning and in becoming an effective learner. The characteristics of effective learning run through and underpin all seven areas of learning and development, representing processes rather than outcomes. At Meir Heath children demonstrate their attitudes and behaviours through these key characteristics. Development is not an automatic process however, it depends on each unique child having opportunities to interact in positive relationships and enabling environments.

Observations and Assessment

Children entering our EYFS are observed during their first weeks. This provides baseline information. As part of our daily practice we observe and assess children's development and learning to inform our future plans. Monitoring of each child will take place through observations, discussions and planned formative assessments. Children's progress is monitored and updated at the end of each term. At the end of the year individual scores against the ELG are submitted to the Local Education Authority.

During the Autumn and Spring terms, parents are invited to attend a parent consultation evening with a school report issued at the end of the summer term. This report summarises the achievements in relation to the characteristics of learning alongside end of year early learning goal

scores. Profile data is discussed with Year One teachers so that they can continue to help children achieve their full potential and transition is supported.

In Early Years, observations are fundamental. They are used to inform planning and are crucial for making 'next steps' targets. Children give indications of their learning continually through what they say, what they do, how they approach activities, how they problem solve etc. Observations can be recorded in a variety of ways, these include photographs, videos and annotations on independent work.

Continual informal and formal assessments undertaken by staff provide opportunities to identify any additional educational needs a child may have. Children identified with additional educational needs are monitored, which are discussed with parents and the SENCO. Additional advice may be sought from other agencies, e.g. speech and language therapy services.

Organisation of classes

All staff within the EYFS strive to develop excellent relationships with all children by interacting positively and taking time to listen. Our environment enables close attachments between children and practitioners. Attachment provides a sense of security so that children can become confident, independent and capable learners.

Our Reception class has a capacity to offer 60 full time places. There are two Reception classrooms that children are able to free flow between as well as an enclosed playground, entrance and exit for parents to drop off and collect, along with toilet facilities.

Throughout EYFS children have free access to fruit and milk throughout the day.

Admissions

For Reception, please see the Academy Admissions Policy (school website)

Safety

Children's safety and welfare is paramount. We create a safe and secure environment and provide a curriculum which teaches children how to be safe, make choices and assess risks. We have stringent policies, procedures and documents in place to ensure children's safety.

Safeguarding – our school ethos

At Meir Heath Academy our pupil's welfare is our paramount concern and we will always act in the best interests of the child. We recognise the importance of providing a school environment where pupils feel safe and respected. We encourage pupils to talk openly and to feel confident that they will be listened to. We recognise that all adults within the school have a full and active part to play in protecting our pupils from harm and as such they will always exercise 'professional curiosity'. We will work closely with parents and carers to ensure their understanding of the school's responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of their children, which may include the need to make referrals to other agencies in some situations. We work closely with other professionals to ensure our children have the best support in their learning and development. These can include, School Nurse, Health Visitors and School Services. (See Meir Heath Academy's Safeguarding Policy – school website).

Inclusion

We value all our children as individuals at Meir Heath Academy, irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability and gender. We plan a curriculum that meets the needs of the individual child and support them at their own pace so that most of our children achieve the Early Learning Goals. We strongly believe that early identification of children with

additional needs is crucial in enabling us to give the child the support that they need and in doing so, work closely with parents and outside agencies.

Parents as Partners and the Wider Context

We strive to create and maintain partnership with parents and carers as we recognise that together, we can have a significant impact on a child's learning. We have an open door approach where all parents are encouraged to communicate with our staff if they have any concerns about their child and their development. We welcome and actively encourage parents to participate confidently in their child's education. Working with other services and organisations is integral to our practice in order to meet the needs of our children. At times we may need to share information with other professionals to provide the best support possible.

We draw on our links with the community to enrich children's experiences by taking them on outings and inviting members of the community into our setting.

Moderation

Our SLT carry out moderation and evaluation termly through observations and discussion. This is part of the whole school moderation schedule. Moderation also takes place across the St Barts Academy.

Metacognition

Metacognition is acknowledging when and how to use particular strategies for learning or problem-solving. This is an important part of our school ethos and is embedded in our daily teaching to encourage all children in the EYFS to become independent thinkers.

Behaviour

In the EYFS children are encouraged to be motivated and are eager to join in. Through play the children are encouraged to share and co-operate well, demonstrating high levels of self-control and respect for others. Children are encouraged to keep on trying particularly if they encounter difficulties.

At Meir Heath Academy positive behaviour is expected and encouraged. WE operate a reward system and praise good behaviour and attitudes. Age appropriate strategies are used to develop a safe and secure environment for learning (EYFS follow the Meir Heath Academy Behaviour Policy - see website).

Health and Safety

All reasonable measures are taken to ensure the safety of all children in the Foundation Stage. Documentation is signed and approved by parents before staff administer any medicines. No hazardous substances are used within the setting. (See SBMAT (Meir Heath Academy) Health and Safety Policy – school website).

Equal Opportunities

In line with the school's equal opportunities policy, all areas of the provision will be made accessible to all children regardless of age, sex, gender, culture, race, religion, ethnicity, family background, additional education need, disability or ability. At Meir Heath Academy, no child will be disadvantaged or discriminated against.

Transition

Transition is carefully planned for and time is given to ensure continuity of learning. At any transition, we acknowledge the child's needs and establish effective partnerships with those involved with the child and other settings, including nurseries.

Children attend introductory 'Stay and Play' sessions to our Reception class to develop familiarity with the setting and practitioners.

In the final term in Reception, the Year One teachers will meet with the Early Years staff and discuss each child's development against the Early Learning Goals and the characteristics of learning for each child for each child in order to support a smooth transition to Year One. This discussion helps the Year One teacher to plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet the needs of all children.