

Principles for Early Years Education: Teaching and Learning Policy

Effective education requires both a relevant curriculum and practitioners who understand and are able to implement the curriculum requirements. Effective education requires practitioners who understand that children develop rapidly during the early years – physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially.

Children are entitled to provision that supports and extends knowledge, skills, understanding and confidence, and helps them to overcome any disadvantage. Practitioners should ensure that all children feel included, secure and valued. They must build positive relationships with parents in order to work effectively with them and their children.

Early years experience should build on what children already know and can do. It should also encourage a positive attitude and disposition to learn and aim to prevent early failure.

No child should be excluded or disadvantaged because of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, special educational needs, disability, gender or ability.

Parents and practitioners should work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect within which children can have security and confidence. **We operate according to safer working practices (see safer working practices for those working with children, May 2019).**

To be effective, an early years curriculum should be carefully structured. In that structure, there should be three strands:

- Provision for the different starting points from which children develop their learning, building on what they can already do
- Relevant and appropriate content that matches the different levels of young children's needs
- Planned and purposeful activity that provided opportunities for teaching and learning, both indoors and outdoors

There should be opportunities for children to engage in activities planned by adults and also those that they plan or initiate themselves. Children do not make a distinction between 'play' and 'work' and neither should practitioners. Children need time to become engrossed, work in depth and complete activities.

Practitioners must be able to observe and respond appropriately to children, informed by knowledge of how children develop and learn and a clear understanding of possible next steps in their development and learning. Well planned, purposeful activity and appropriate intervention by practitioners will engage children in the learning process and help them to make progress in their learning.

For children to have rich and stimulating experiences, the learning environment should be well planned and well organised. It provided the structure for teaching within which children explore, experiment, plan and make decisions for themselves, thus enabling them to learn, develop and make good progress. Above all, effective learning and development for young children requires high quality care and education by practitioners.

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Early Year's Philosophy

As nursery staff we believe we need to share a clear philosophy and understanding of the nature and needs of young children in order to formulate and develop early year's policies. Each child will enter the nursery with a range of experiences and abilities and an understanding of the world unique to themselves. However, they will all share characteristics which will need to be addressed in the nursery.

Physical Development

Nursery aged children are physically active and energetic and it is important to remember that this is a necessary part of their development. We believe that they need space indoors and outdoors to move freely and spontaneously, and a safe environment in which they can practice fine and gross motor skills. A wide variety of equipment is needed to provide challenging and stimulating experiences.

Intellectual Development

Nursery aged children are mentally active. They have an abundance of natural curiosity, enjoy solving problems and have an enthusiasm for mastering new skills. They need an attractive, well resourced and well organised environment offering a wide range of first hand experiences and activities through which to investigate the world. They need time to explore and experiment and to practise the same skills in different contexts. They need a rich variety of materials to encourage imagination and creativity. Language development needs to be fostered through close interaction with other children and staff. Children need the opportunity to question, explain, discuss and develop their language skills in a variety of situations. We believe that the adult's role in planning the curriculum to meet the needs of all the children is crucial. It should be based on structured play and encourage the children to become independent learners.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Nursery aged children are very dependent on adults, socially and emotionally. They need pattern and order in their day and a calm and caring atmosphere. They need to be in a safe and secure environment which is sensitive to their needs. Within that environment they need to be allowed to exercise choice, make decisions and to develop independence. They need to experience a variety of social contexts and be given opportunities to lead, follow, co-operate and develop self-confidence and self-esteem. We aim to help them become aware of the needs of others and develop their own social skills. They must be given time, space, encouragement, support and attention by adults.

The Needs Of Young Learners And The Implications For Good Practice

A secure ethos

- Careful induction, anticipating potential sources of anxiety
- Good links with parents
- Attractive, safe, welcoming environment

Positive role models

- Calm, respectful relationships
- High expectations for all
- Positive discrimination against stereotypes

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Challenge and high expectations

- Good knowledge of curriculum, the Early Learning Goals and beyond
- Rigorous assessment procedures
- Activities matched carefully to prior attainment
- An atmosphere free of pressure, but with a degree of pleasurable intensity

Relevant experiences

- Activities that link with and extend the children's experience
- Activities that interest and stimulate young children
- Activities that value their background and culture

Language rich environment – oral, gestural, written

- Good modelling of social conventions in language
- Demonstrations of pleasure in reading and writing
- High quality books, well labelled displays and resources

Interactive learning – supportive adults

- Activities that require social interaction
- Adults deployed effectively with clear teaching goals
- Guidance for adults to extend children's language competency

Time to explore and develop perseverance

- A timetable that enables children to practise some aspects of learning with a degree of independence
- Clear expectations of behavior
- Well organised, orderly classrooms
- Resources stored and labelled to enable children to develop some independence

A balanced timetable of rest and active movement

- A daily timetable that balances active and more restful sessions
- Teaching sessions that include a variety of learning styles
- Opportunities taken to work outdoors, not only for physical development

High self esteem as individuals and as learners

- Positive feedback
- Carefully planned, achievable learning challenges
- Clear instructions and support
- Time to discuss activities and solve problems
- Celebration of success

Teaching And Learning

Staff aim to nurture and build upon children's natural energy, enthusiasm, and curiosity in order to help pupils learn and achieve. Our aim for our children is that they should be 'interested, excited and motivated to learn'. We aim to develop children's self confidence and belief in themselves so that they see themselves as positive, confident learners.

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Children's growth is very individual at this stage and children vary greatly in their maturity in different areas of development. Their educational experience is therefore designed to take account of individual achievements and needs. We also believe that children need time to experiment, explore and to practice the same skills in different contexts. Such learning always involves first hand experiences and activities. Skill and confidence in using language is encouraged by providing a setting in which there is much to talk about, accessible, interested and interesting people to talk with, enough time to develop conversations satisfactorily, and an environment which is organised with thought given to fostering talk.

Play is the natural medium through which children learn and therefore play is the medium through which the curriculum is experienced. Classroom play is structured, observed and recorded, in order to ensure progression. Within this structure children will be encouraged to make choices, decisions and to develop independence. Staff have high expectations and plan to develop children's knowledge, concepts and skills through the pursuit of cross curricular themes. Our collaborative approach to planning encourages sharing of staff expertise and ideas.

Ethos

In order to fulfil our aims we create an ethos that is: positive, purposeful, patient, respectful, stimulating, challenging, builds self esteem and the confidence to try new things and encourages thinking skills.

Different Learning Styles

Some children find particular types of task easier or more difficult; they have individual learning styles. Most children learn readily through a mixture of learning styles, but some children have strong preferences that may affect their attainment if we do not recognise them. We need to be aware of preferred learning styles, and seek to accommodate the different ways in which children learn by planning to meet the same learning objectives through a range of different activities.

Visual	<i>Based on images</i> ; what children see for example, numbers on a 'washing line', use of artefacts
Auditory	<i>Based on sounds</i> ; what is heard for example, singing rhymes, discussions
Kinaesthetic	<i>Based on body movements and rhythms</i> for example, action rhymes, larger scale activities outdoors in maths

Practitioners should:

- Choose teaching styles that are most appropriate to the learning needs of children
- Use a balance of types of activity
- Plan for different ways to meet the same or similar learning objectives

Partnership with Parents

Partnership with parents is more important in the foundation stage of learning than at any other time. For some children starting nursery school may be the first time the child has been away from home. Even if a child has attended other forms of childcare, starting school is a big step that can be made much easier if the school works closely with parents.

When there is a two way flow of information between home and school, there is likely to be a positive impact on children's development and learning. Our effectiveness in communicating with parents is very important to us. We aim to inform parents not only through our induction programme but also through our brochure, newsletters, noticeboards, on-line photographic

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learning journals, home learning activities, sharing information about our planning and regular daily contact. We aim to discuss children's needs, interests and competencies when they start school and throughout the year with regular feedback, information exchange and progress reports. We value parents' knowledge about their child and seek to share that knowledge on a regular basis throughout their time at Flagg either in person or by adding to the on-line learning journal.

We encourage parents to be involved in their child's learning by welcoming them into school. Parents are given opportunities to work with staff, to share their expertise and knowledge with the children, to help in the classroom and on visits. Learning activities are also continued at home by sharing books, collecting items for projects and enjoying story sacks together.

Classroom Management And Resources

The environment is seen as a learning tool. A rich and varied environment is set out both indoors and outdoors. It is constantly changing to maintain stimulus and encourage exploration and learning. This varies daily, weekly and with each topic. We link play opportunities and activities with our theme wherever possible. Our displays communicate our curriculum and ethos as well as celebrating children's achievement. Well cared for and appropriate resources are part of our caring ethos. Each member of staff ensures that all the children are given access to a variety of enjoyable, well planned practical play activities. In order for children to participate fully a variety of groupings are organised. Children have the opportunity to work as a whole group, in small groups or individually. Staff have developed a well resourced and thoughtfully organised environment which offers a wide range of planned play and practical activities. Equipment offers challenging and stimulating experiences and takes into account all areas of learning, individual interests and developmental needs. Our aim is to organise resources so that they are available, labelled and accessible, thereby maximising children's independence, autonomy and use of teacher time.

Our role is to:

- Value what children already know and can do
- Provide an environment where learning can take place
- Enable, support and extend children's learning
- Plan the curriculum to meet the learning needs of each child
- Observe in order to make judgements about how children's learning is progressing
- Review and evaluate planning and provision in the light of assessments of children's progress and needs

The role of the adults

Our activities fall mainly into two categories. These are adult led and child led.

Adult Led - Focus Activity

Each day a 'focus' activity is provided. This is planned and led by the adults and small groups of children will access it at one time, at an appropriate level. All children will have equal access to it. The focus can have an emphasis on a particular curriculum area but will undoubtedly cover many. Small Group Time comprising of snack, singing, story time and games are the other adult led activities.

Child Led Activities - The Adult as 'Scaffolder'.

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For a large part of each session the children move freely around the Nursery choosing to explore from the variety of activities that has been planned and made available that day. To maximise learning from this free play one member of staff acts as 'scaffolder' to support but not lead the children in their play. This role has many facets and includes: observing and standing back, interacting, playing alongside, questioning, aiding negotiations, modelling, questioning, and providing additional resources.

Organisation Of The Curriculum And Planning

Our school curriculum, based on the Early Years Foundation Stage (2012) refers to all the experiences we provide which promote the development of the whole child. Learning encompasses many different areas of the curriculum and, although staff plan in 'areas', learning is not compartmentalised by the young child. Skilled planning plays an important part in our teaching and learning. We acknowledge the need to share clear aims and learning intentions, and all staff are involved in planning the environment, routines and the curriculum. The progress of children can then be assessed within that framework and their individual needs met. Some experiences need to be provided weekly, some daily, some termly. Only by careful long, medium and short term planning can the breadth of experiences required be provided.

Long Term Planning

The new EYFS framework is based upon 3 characteristics of effective learning : Playing and Exploring, Active Learning and Creating and Thinking Critically. There are 7 areas – 3 prime areas (PSED, Physical Development and Communication and Language) and four specific areas (Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding of The World and Expressive Arts and Design) Our long term planning consists of a two-year topic cycle. Every topic focuses on specific areas of learning as well as repeating and consolidating a broad base of ongoing skills and knowledge. Our aim is that our children will be motivated, challenged, and that their experiences will be broadened.

Medium Term Planning

This covers one half term and is divided into weeks. A 'grid' format is used so that the provision in each curriculum area can be seen. Every theme focuses on specific curriculum areas of learning as well as repeating and consolidating a broad base of ongoing skills and knowledge.

Short Term Planning

This covers one or two weeks and is divided into focus objectives. Areas of curriculum and type of play activities are covered for each week. It is developed using ongoing observations and informal assessment of the children. Activities and experiences are designed to promote new learning or to consolidate or apply things just learned. Short term plans are often adjusted to take account of the interests and needs of our children and to capitalise on unplanned events, particularly those initiated by the children.

Weekly planning and focus activity sheets are the 'fine tuning' of the curriculum and it is at this level we clarify learning objectives and ensure balance is maintained and challenge and support appropriately provided. During every session the children will experience a wide variety of: play opportunities, areas of the curriculum and teaching and learning styles.

Continuity And Progression

Children come to Flagg Nursery School from a variety of backgrounds. Each child will bring a diverse range of experiences and abilities to the school setting. This learning has taken place in

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the home and the wider community, in real life contexts and through children's first hand experiences. It is important for us to acknowledge the wealth of learning children have acquired. The experiences and interests which children bring with them to school need to be the starting points for their learning, and should be extended in such a way that complements their previous experiences and stimulates further learning. By building on the children's experiences and planning for the next steps to be taken, we are emphasising the essential part continuity and progression play in children's learning.

Monitoring of each child's progress is essential to ensure that they are making progress and that particular concerns in any of the areas of learning, whatever the cause, are identified and addressed. This process needs to start before the child starts nursery, with practitioners listening to parents' accounts of their child's development and noting any issues. Prompt and appropriate action at this stage could help to prevent children from developing learning difficulties later in their school career. There will be a small number of children who have special educational needs or disabilities that will require specific provision, such as specialist teaching, adapted equipment or support from an adult, for particular activities. It is essential that these children are identified as soon as possible and appropriate support provided. Other children may be more able and need activities that offer an appropriate challenge. Monitoring of each child's progress throughout the foundation stage will also ensure that their achievements can be celebrated.

Progression and continuity can be ensured by:

- Regular opportunities to liaise with parents
- Assessing the stage at which each child is at and building on this
- Careful planning, evaluation and review of teaching and learning
- Long, medium and short term planning
- Planning for differentiation
- Recording achievements
- Liaison with the primary phase by working together, visiting and passing on records

Record Keeping and Assessment

Assessment is an important and integral part of the work of the nursery. It provides the means by which individual children's needs are planned for, and early specific needs are identified. Assessments and record keeping are part of the planning cycle. Our records help us to plan for continuity and progression. All staff are continually engaged in the assessment of pupils, whether formally or informally, thus enabling work to be matched to the needs of the child. Staff make observations, question, discuss and collect work samples. All staff also keep records of achievements and experiences as well as contributing to group records.

Reporting to parents takes the form of informal discussions at parent sessions at the end of the first term and the end of the academic year, as well as termly 'reports' that record children's progress. Work folders, records and photo assessments are shared with parents and their input into assessments encouraged. Primary transfer records are shared with parents at the end of the academic year.

How do we assess:

- By observing, listening, interacting, talking together

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- By using Evidence Me learning journals and taking account of parent's comments on these
- By highlighting specific skills
- Group records to identify progress children are making
- By keeping termly work examples
- By collecting information from parents
- Staff discussion at planning meetings
- By regular monitoring and observation
- Baseline assessments at beginning, middle and end of academic year
- By setting individual and collective targets
- Summative records to share with parents and primary schools

We feel it is important that:

- We build on the learning that children bring with them to school
- Observations and discussions inform future planning
- Our records identify the progression children are making
- Summative assessments are shared with parents and primary schools

Monitoring and Evaluation

Effective assessment and planning for children's learning can only take place within a context of continuous monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. Monitoring involves the collection of evidence about a certain situation. Evaluation implies reflection about the evidence, making decisions and planning future actions as a result. As a school we collect a range of evidence that we feel is good practice and an integral part of our strategy for school improvement:

- Assessment of children on entry and at the end of every term, recorded on the tracker
- Progress and achievement are then tracked and reflected upon
- Monitoring of different groups: SEND, 30 hours, part time, summer born, vulnerable, boys and girls, more able
- Monitoring children's well-being and involvement using the Leuven scales
- Observations of staff termly to monitor the quality of teaching
- Monitoring the environment as part of staff performance management
- Setting targets and interventions

How Flagg Nursery School achieves this:

- Headteacher, teacher and TA performance management
- Collaborative planning
- Governor visits and reports to Governors
- Collecting parents and pupils' views
- External school review: School Improvement Partner

Equal Opportunities

Providers have a responsibility to ensure positive attitudes to diversity and difference – not only so that every child is included and not disadvantaged, but also so that they learn from the earliest age to value diversity in others and grow up making a positive contribution to society. It is not enough to provide a curriculum and leave children to benefit from it. The school's role is to promote access to it and development through it. An accessible curriculum will have elements in

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it that attract all children, because they are recognised and valued by all. This includes planning to meet the needs of both boys and girls, children with special educational needs (SEND), children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social, cultural and religious backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups including travellers, refugees and asylum seekers, and children from diverse linguistic backgrounds. At Flagg Nursery School in order to meet children's diverse needs and help all children make the best possible progress we:

- plan opportunities that build on and extend children's knowledge, experiences, interests and skills and develop their self-esteem and confidence in their ability to learn
- remove or help to overcome barriers for children where these already exist
- are alert to the early signs of needs that could lead to later difficulties and respond quickly and appropriately, involving other agencies as necessary.
- use a wide range of teaching strategies, based on children's learning needs
- stretch and challenge all children
- provide a wide range of opportunities to motivate, support and develop children and help them to be involved, concentrate and learn effectively
- provide a safe and supportive learning environment, free from harassment, in which the contribution of all children is valued and where racial, religious, disability and gender stereotypes are challenged
- use materials that positively reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping
- plan challenging opportunities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills
- monitor children's progress, identifying any areas of concern, and taking action to provide support, for example by using different approaches, additional help or other agencies
- expect that all children, irrespective of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties or disabilities, gender or ability should have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

At Flagg Nursery School we plan for each child's individual learning requirements, including those children who need additional support or have particular needs or disabilities. We work with parents, and where necessary staff from other agencies, to identify learning needs, develop effective strategies to meet these needs and provide the best learning opportunities. We also take specific action to help children with special educational needs by:

- Providing for those who need help with communication and language skills
- Planning for full participation in learning and in all physical and practical activity
- Helping children who have particular difficulties with behaviour to take part in learning effectively

School Management

The Headteacher may need to:

- Liaise with staff and Governors to develop or review policy
- Update colleagues on all issues concerned with policy development
- Attend courses and disseminate information to the rest of the staff
- Advise staff on professional opportunities
- Help to arrange/organise professional development

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- Co-ordinate, organise and arrange the ordering of resources and equipment
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum programme through liaison with staff, observation of teaching and monitoring planning
- Develop relationships with other professionals outside school
- Organise awareness meetings/displays for parents
- Organise and oversee any trips, visitors or school based events
- Liaise with the Governing Body

This policy should be read in conjunction with the curriculum policy.