

# A PARENT'S GUIDE TO PLAY BASED LEARNING IN THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS)

## What is EYFS?

The Nursery adheres to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). This is a statutory framework building a coherent and flexible approach to care and learning. The EYFS has been developed by the Government to support your child's learning and development from birth to five years.

## So, what does this mean for your child?

Research has shown that children who are introduced to formal schooling later, generally achieve more academically because their early experiences are important and give them a solid foundation for later learning. Therefore, the EYFS is not about introducing a curriculum to children or making them read and write before they are ready – quite the reverse.

Within the EYFS, emphasis is placed upon understanding each child and family as unique, with different needs and concerns. Therefore, our paired and shared approach to key caring allows for every family to build a relationship with key persons within the Nursery, who will take on the everyday care of your child, answer any questions you may have and build a positive relationship.

The EYFS places emphasis on a 'principled play based approach to learning and development'. It is through play, indoors and outdoors, that children develop intellectually, creatively, physically, socially and emotionally. By observing your child through play, Early Years Practitioners are able to provide your child with appropriate play and learning experiences for his/her stage of development and so help the development of new skills.

There are 7 areas of learning and development that shape our educational programmes. All areas of learning and development are important and interconnected. 3 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 3 areas, the **prime** areas, are:

- **Communication and Language Development** involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations.
- **Physical Development** involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control and movement. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity and to make healthy choices in relation to food.
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities.

In addition, we also support children in 4 **specific** areas, through which the 3 **prime** areas are strengthened and applied. The **specific** areas are:

- **Literacy Development** involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children must be given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems, and other written materials) to ignite their interest.

- **Mathematics** involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces and measures.
- **Understanding the World** involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.
- **Expressive Arts and Design** involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play and design and technology.

## **Assessment**

Assessment plays an important part in helping parents and practitioners to recognise children's progress, understand their needs, and to plan activities and support. Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations. In their interactions with children, practitioners should respond to their own day-to-day observations about children's progress and observations that parents and practitioners share.

### **How the Nursery monitors development:**

Every child is unique and each brings with him/her a wealth of previous knowledge and experience. Therefore, opportunities offered to each baby/child are geared towards their individual needs.

On entering the Nursery, your child's key person will create a 'Learning Journey' (which will be regularly shared with you). This Learning Journey incorporates observations, photographs, pieces of work, statements made by your child and individual planning documents.

The Learning Journey helps staff build a picture of your child during their time at Nursery; staff use the information to complete development records. The purpose of this is to ensure that your child is making good progress and enable staff to identify areas of strength or where a child may need additional support. The Learning Journey and development records remains with your child through the entire Early Years Foundation Stage and forms part of the ongoing assessment process.

### **Parents as Partners**

We recognise that parents are children's first and most important educators and that emotional security and warm relationships underpin healthy early development.

Therefore, we aim to create a partnership between home and Nursery, which builds a strong, positive and trusting relationship both with you and your child.

We encourage parents to work with the key persons and ask you to share with us home experiences; this may be a family celebration, places visited or simply something your child has said or done. Sometimes this can then be used for further planning of play experiences.

Finally, through partnership, we aim to create an environment that is rich in stimulation for children to explore and actively construct their own knowledge. Play is a child's work and we strive to encourage all children to become strong, confident and independent individuals with a positive approach to learning early in life. This will enable them to have a positive disposition to continue this into adulthood.