

# Early Years

## **Introduction**

The Early Years applies to children from three years of age to the end of the reception year. At The Willows, children can join our nursery class in the September following their third birthday. They move into reception in the September of the school year in which they are five.

The quality of children's early learning experiences is very significant as it essentially provides the basis for a love of learning that will underpin all future achievement. The Early Years is important both for providing children with developmental opportunities as well as preparing the foundations for later learning. At The Willows, we work hard to ensure that each child is motivated and equipped to achieve their personal high aspirations in whatever area they may be.

## **Aims**

The Early Years is underpinned by four main themes and at The Willows we aim to build upon each child's individual strengths and knowledge by:

- ❖ Remembering that each child is **A Unique Child**. We welcome and value each child as an individual, ensuring that no child is excluded or disadvantaged and supporting and providing for those with Special Educational Needs.
- ❖ Supporting children in developing **Positive Relationships** with all adults and other children in the setting. Through these positive relationships children learn to be strong and independent.
- ❖ Providing **Enabling Environments**. We aim to create an environment which is warm, caring, engaging, challenging and relevant to the children's cultures and communities. Rich learning experiences are provided based on children's developing needs.
- ❖ Facilitating effective **Learning and Development**. We aim to foster the characteristics of effective early learning including; playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically in all curriculum areas.

## **Parents as Partners**

Effective and meaningful partnerships between parents and educators are the best guarantee of children's successful learning. The curriculum provided at school can only be part of the child's learning experiences. Therefore good links between parents and school are essential and highly valued by The Willows Primary School. We encourage parents to take an active part in their child's education by:

- ❖ Informing them of the learning activities/topics to be covered through newsletters specific to the children in the Early Years.
- ❖ Inviting parents into the classroom to see their child in the learning environment.
- ❖ Organising a range of activities throughout the year which encourage collaboration between child, school and parents. These are often linked to our topic learning. Brainbuilder homework activities are sent home every other week.
- ❖ Providing library books and reading books for children to share with their parents to foster a love of reading.
- ❖ Encouraging parents to share 'WOW' moments of new things that their child may have demonstrated or learnt at home. This information is then displayed and celebrated in school.
- ❖ Throughout the year, parents are invited into school for a number of workshops and coffee mornings which focus on a range of topics to support the learning that takes place in the home e.g. reading, songs and rhyme, maths, outdoor learning.
- ❖ Parents are invited into school as mystery readers to come and read a story.

We aim to develop parental trust and support by:

- ❖ Listening to and respecting parents.
- ❖ Ensuring parents always feel welcome in school and are received well by both staff and children.
- ❖ Communicating on a daily basis through personal contact thus giving them an opportunity to discuss any issues on a regular and informal basis.
- ❖ Providing parents with a report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each school term.
- ❖ Making a home-school agreement which clearly illustrates everyone's responsibilities.

### **Organisation of the Early Years**

The Early Years consists of one nursery and three reception classes, each led by a Qualified Teacher. Each reception class has a full time Teaching Assistant working alongside the teacher. The nursery children are divided into four keyworker groups of 15 with an Early Years Practitioner working in each group. Continuity and progression throughout the age phase is ensured through the following means:

- ❖ The Early Years Leader has an overview of Nursery & Reception provision and planning.
- ❖ Training and development of skills is undertaken by the whole team.
- ❖ Planning is done jointly by all Early Years staff who meet as a team to plan interesting and engaging activities following the Early Years curriculum.
- ❖ Planning, Assessment and Record Keeping documents are in an agreed format.

- ❖ Transition from Nursery to Reception is planned jointly, with children who are new to reception being specifically planned for to ensure a positive beginning.

At The Willows we also ensure smooth transitions by liaising closely with other settings and Early Years providers during the summer term.

### **The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum**

The curriculum in the Early Years is taught according to the statements identified in the 'Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage' document. The curriculum develops skills and knowledge in small steps in order to work towards the achievement of the seventeen Early Learning Goals.

The curriculum promotes, supports and develops learning in the following seven key areas:

#### **Three prime areas**

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Physical Development

Communication and Language

#### **Four specific areas**

Literacy

Mathematics

Understanding the World

Expressive Arts and Design

### **Planning**

Our planning documents are designed to ensure that children get a wide breadth of experience across the seven curriculum areas and that learning activities are specifically related to learning outcomes. Planning also reflects the need for a variety of teacher directed and child initiated experiences. Where possible, we make sure that the children themselves are involved in the planning of their activities and that their individual interests are taken into account.

We make regular assessments of children's learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the Early Years takes the form of both formal and informal observations.

'Wow' days and trips are planned to support learning in topics each term or half term.

Long Term Planning takes the form of a Long Term Overview which splits the school year into six half termly topics. These topics enable the children to have a wide and varied basis for their learning activities.

### **Medium Term**

The Development Matters document is used for Medium Term Planning to ensure that all of the seven areas of learning are covered each term.

### **Short Term**

Short term planning consists of:

- ❖ Indoor and outdoor weekly plans which ensure that the continuous provision is challenging and engaging.
- ❖ Differentiated weekly lesson plans outlining daily, differentiated class activities for the different areas of learning.

## **Assessment and Recording**

Assessment is used to assess children's individual areas of strength and areas needing further development. Assessment informs future planning. All staff record children's progress across the seven areas of learning, progress is closely monitored so that activities can be planned to address the needs and interests of the children. Nursery and Reception use 'Evidence Me' to assess individual children. This gives us a record of an individual child's development and progress in all areas of the EYFS curriculum throughout their time in the Early Years and if necessary is carried on into KS1. It begins immediately a child enters the Nursery and is updated regularly in order to track progress and target teaching and resources appropriately. These are available for parents to look at during parents' evenings.

## **Reporting to Parents**

Teachers and parents of Early Years children are in daily contact and are therefore able to discuss progress/concerns/targets on a regular and informal basis. In addition to this, the following procedures also apply.

- ❖ In the Autumn and Spring Terms, parents are invited to parent's evenings and are given the opportunity to make comments about their child's progress.
- ❖ In the Summer Term, parents are invited to make an appointment to discuss their child's progress throughout the year. Parents are given a full written report and are able to discuss their child's progress towards the Early Learning Goals.

Parents are invited to coffee mornings where they can meet other parents, staff and ask any questions about their child's education in the Early years.

End of Reception data is reported to the LEA and is also available to parents. Where a child is identified as having Special Educational Needs, parents are invited to regular meetings where they are informed of their child's progress.

## **Inclusion**

At The Willows we believe that all children matter. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We set realistic but challenging expectations to help children reach their potential. We aim to make learning an enjoyable experience for all children irrespective of gender, ethnic grouping, social background, Special needs or disability.