

A Parent's Guide to Play-Based Learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)



What is the 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, and is periodically reviewed and updated.

So, what does this mean for your child?

Research has shown that children who are introduced to formal schooling later, generally achieve more academically. This is because these early experiences 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 Key Person System allows for every family to build strong relationships with specific members of staff within the Nursery, who will take on the everyday care of your child, answer any questions you may have and with whom every family can build a positive relationship. Please see our Parent Guide on The Key Person System for more information on how this system operates.

The EYFS places emphasis on a 'principled play-based approach to learning and development'. It is through play, both 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 them with appropriate play and learning experiences for their stage of development to 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, and these are known as the 'Prime Areas' of learning.

The 3 prime areas are:

- **Communication and Language Development:** this 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:** this 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:** this 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:** this 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:** this 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:** this 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:** this 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 a child's progress, understand their needs, and to plan activities and support to further progress their learning and development. 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 their progress and observations that parents and practitioners share.

How the Nursery monitors development

Every child is unique and each brings with them 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 to build a picture of your child during their time at Nursery. Staff then 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 they may need additional support. The Learning Journey and development records remain with your child through the entire Early Years Foundation Stage and form part of the ongoing assessment process.

When your child is 2

At some point after your child turns 2, we will give you a written summary of how they are progressing against the 3 prime areas of learning. **This is called the progress check at age 2.**

This check will highlight areas where your child is progressing well and any where they might need some extra help or support – and how mums and dads and other family members or carers can work with the Key Person to help. You might find it useful to share the information from the check with other professionals such as health visitors (who can use it as part of the health and development review).

Parents as partners

We recognise that parents are a child'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. This can then be used for further planning of play and learning experiences.

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 provide a firm foundation for children to continue into adulthood with a natural curiosity and love of learning.

You can find the Early Years Foundation Stage which includes the early learning goals at www.foundationyears.org.uk. The foundation years website also includes a range of resources and contacts.