



The Acorns

Primary and Nursery School

The Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

March 2023

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Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statement of Practice

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. At The Acorns Primary and Nursery School, children can join our Caterpillar Room (Two-Year-Old Provision) after their second birthday. Parents/carers can choose from 2-5 sessions per week. In our Butterfly Room (Nursery class) children join in the term after their third birthday. In the September of the year that children turn five, they then attend our Reception class.

In partnership with parents/carers, we enable the children to begin the process of becoming active learners for life. We endeavour to ensure that children have: “the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop well and are kept healthy and safe.” Our three provisions provide learning through teaching and experiences that give all pupils a: “broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.” (Statutory Framework for the EYFS 2021)

The EYFS is based upon four overarching principles:

- every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured
- children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**
- children learn and develop well in **enabling environments with teaching and support from adults**, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- importance of **learning and development**. Children develop and learn at different rates. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

A Unique Child

We recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Children’s attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use frequent specific and descriptive praise and encouragement, as well as celebration and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning. Staff use strategies from SSTEWS, ITERs and ECERs to make sure that their interactions support and extend language and communication, so that children are encouraged to talk, actively listen, turn take and collaborate with others.

Inclusion/Special Educational Needs (SEND)

Children and their families are valued at The Acorns Primary and Nursery School. Children are treated as individuals and we strive to offer access to all provisions available. All children are encouraged to achieve their personal best and planning is adapted to meet the needs of all groups and abilities. Assessments take into account contributions from a range of perspectives to ensure that any child with potential special educational needs is identified at the earliest possible opportunity. Early identification of special needs is crucial to enable staff to support the development of each child. Most referrals are made during time spent in the Caterpillar and Butterfly rooms, therefore advice from specialists can be used to personalise and tailor the curriculum for individual pupils as early as possible and before starting Reception. Concerns are always discussed with parents/carers at an early stage and consent is given prior to any referral.

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- Providing a trauma informed approach, so that children can find ways to manage their emotions and feelings and maintain the capacity to learn, despite difficult events that may occur. The well-being of all is of the highest priority.
- Creating an environment of safety, connection and compassion in which the contribution of all children is valued;

- Planning opportunities that build upon and extend children’s knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence;
- Using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children’s learning needs;
- Providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively;
- Using diverse resources, which are thoughtfully and sensitively added and planned for, as permanent features in our continuous provision. These resources reflect our ‘Rights Respecting Schools’ and ‘No Outsiders’ approach and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- Planning challenging activities for children whose attainment and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills;
- Monitoring children’s progress and taking action to provide support as necessary.

Welfare

It is important to us that all children in our school are ‘safe’. We aim to educate children about boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all our children.

“A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high-quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.” (Statutory Framework for the EYFS 2021)

Positive Relationships

At The Acorns Primary and Nursery School we recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families, by regularly encouraging parents/carers to come into provision to engage with their child and key person.

Parents/Carers as Partners

We recognise that parents/carers are a child’s first and most enduring educator and we value the contribution they make. We recognise and value this by:

- Offering home visits as part of our transition process.
- Inviting parents to engage in our continuous provision with their child/ren.
- Inviting parents/carers to observe and participate in phonics lessons. As a result, parents/carers develop a deeper understanding of phonics and of how to use pure sounds in every day play with their child. Parents/carers are given a pack of resources to take and keep at home. These can be used when playing, reading and mark making with their child.
- Uploading video clips to support phonics onto the school website for parents/carers to refer to pure sounds at home.
- Displaying and sending home fun activities to promote talk (Talk Listen Communicate - TLC bags).
- Holding a range of informal meetings for parents/carers throughout the year.
- Asking parents/carers to complete an admissions form, a medical form and to inform us of their child’s likes, dislikes and any concerns they may have.
- Asking parents/carers to sign permission slips for local visits out of school, photographs of their child for assessment purposes and using the internet at school.
- Encouraging parents/carers to talk to their child’s teacher if there are concerns.
- Ensuring children have the opportunity to spend time with their teacher before starting. At the Acorns we see transition as a process - not an event.
- Holding a formal meeting for parents/carers twice a year at which the teacher and the parent/carer discuss the child’s progress in private. Parents/carers receive a report on their child’s attainment and progress at the end of each school year.
- Having the opportunity to spend time in provision through ‘Stay and Play’ sessions.
- Regularly inviting parents/carers to ‘Stay for a Story’.
- Having bedtime stories, read by staff, available for children to listen to at home.

We pride ourselves on having outstanding relationships with parents/carers and other parties. We have an 'open door' policy whereby we have daily discussions with parents/carers regarding their children and actively encourage parents/carers to take part in their child's learning experiences. Parents/carers inform staff of WOW moments at home through purple post its which are then recorded into Learning Journals. Both parental/carer voice and child's voice are valued and evident in all Learning Journals.

Enabling Environments

The Infant and Toddler Environmental Rating Scale, ITERs, in Caterpillar Class and the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale, ECERs –R in Butterfly Class and ECERs-E in Reception, have supported us in critically evaluating our provisions and practices. Outcomes from these assessments have enabled us to create an attractive and stimulating learning environment where children feel confident, secure and challenged. The children have daily access to an indoor and outdoor environment that is organised into discrete areas of learning with planned continuous provision. The continuous provision is enhanced according to prior learning and carefully considers children's interests whilst maintaining narrative immersion. Effective planning is informed by observations of the children to ensure we follow their current interests and experiences. Play based learning plays an important part of the EYFS curriculum. Children direct their own learning through access to the continuous provision and enhanced opportunities provided by staff. Staff will enhance play and extend as needed to further individualised learning and support their concept development and higher order-thinking, as suggested by SSTEWEW (Sustained Shared Thinking and Emotional Wellbeing).

Learning and Development

Teachers and Early Years Practitioners provide the curriculum in the Caterpillar Room for 20 children every morning from 8:40-11:40. Our Butterfly setting caters for up to 50 children (including 30 hours, am and pm sessions). Children who are entitled to 30 hours funding stay for both sessions. We have a maximum of 15 places for 30 hour children, parents/carers are charged £2.00 per day for the additional 30 minutes at lunchtime. In Reception, we have a maximum of 45 children (2 classes of 22 and 23).

There are seven areas of learning and development of which three are "prime areas," and four "specific areas."

The prime areas are

- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development.

The specific areas are

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World and
- Expressive Arts and Design

Through careful assessments and observations, including information provided by parents/carers and other settings, children's development levels are assessed. The balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning as children grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas. However, if a child's progress in any prime area gives cause for concern, staff will discuss this with the child's parents/carers and agree how to support the child.

At The Acorns Primary and Nursery School: "Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals and solve problems. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults." In provision, the balance between adult led and child-initiated activities are dependent on the children and the needs of the individuals. Teachers and Teaching Assistants ensure that teaching approaches meet the needs of all pupils. No specific approach is prescribed in the Statutory Framework. "Practitioners must stimulate children's interests, responding to each child's emerging needs and guiding their development through warm, positive interactions coupled with secure routines for play and learning. As children grow older and move into the reception year, there should be a greater

focus on teaching the essential skills and knowledge in the specific areas of learning. This will help children to prepare for year 1.” (Statutory Framework for EYFS 2021)

Planning and guided children’s activities will reflect on the different ways that children learn. At The Acorns Primary and Nursery, we support children in using the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning (CoEL). These are:

- **Playing and Exploring** - children investigate and experience things, and ‘have a go’;
 - **Active Learning** - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements; and
 - **Creating and Thinking Critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.
- (Statutory Framework for the EYFS 2021.)

Staff also support and extend children’s schematic behaviours, especially in the Caterpillar room. By supporting children’s abstract thinking, staff develop a greater awareness of the ways in which children are approaching their learning and the complexities, and connections, in every individual child’s play.

At The Acorns, we use Development Matters as checkpoints, rather than a checklist, when assessing ability and progress in the 17 areas of learning. A statutory reception baseline is completed within the first 6 weeks of Autumn 1 and in the final term of EYFS the Profile is used to assess all children against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELGs). Our on-going observations and assessments focus on what is having an impact: sensitive feedback and scaffolding. “Assessments should not entail prolonged breaks from interaction with children, nor require excessive paperwork,” and indicates whether children are meeting expected levels of development, or if they have not yet reached expected levels (‘emerging’). “Practitioners draw on their knowledge of the child and their own expert professional judgement and should not be required to prove this through collection of physical evidence.”

(Statutory Framework for the EYFS 2021.)

Throughout the year, the early year’s practitioners and class teachers use their assessments to plan the week around what we want the children to know and do. Planning is done on a weekly basis and covers all specific areas of learning - whether this is through the continuous provision, specific enhancements or adult led tasks. Although we plan weekly, staff are skilled at planning spontaneously and ‘in the moment’ to ensure that no learning opportunity is missed. Planning is based on children’s interests, observations and assessments, and gaps in development. In the EYFS at The Acorns, continuous assessment is taking place. Observations of the child are made through photographs, post its, and a longer more detailed narrative assessment takes place once a term. Each child has their own Learning Journal which is shared with the children and parents/carers regularly throughout the year. Next steps are recorded in Learning Journals to extend and steer children towards new learning. The following codes are used:

- Next Step** → New learning is recorded after the arrow.
- Ev → NS** This highlights that there is evidence towards the next step.
- NSA** This code indicates that the next step has been achieved.

Equal Opportunities

As a Right’s Respecting School, all members of the school are treated as individuals. We aim to meet the needs of all, taking account of gender, ability, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, special educational needs, disability and social circumstances. All staff are aware of the need for the curriculum to reflect cultural diversity and the need to prepare pupils for life in a diverse and multi-faith society.

Health and Safety

- Fresh drinking water and fruit is available at all times.
- Children’s dietary needs are recorded and acted upon when required.
- Milk is available during snack times.

- Rolling snack is available at all times for all three settings.
- Caterpillars have an additional formal snack everyday where children sit with their peers and their key person to develop communication, relationships and health and self-care.
- Butterflies have an additional formal snack everyday where children take it in turns to be monitors and serve the children on their designated table.
- A first aider is accessible at all times and a record of accidents and injuries are logged.
- A fire and emergency evacuation procedure and policy are in place with named Fire Marshalls in each setting.

The Learning Environment

All of the EYFS settings are organised as a result of ITERs and ECERs assessments to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active or take things more quietly. The classroom covers all learning areas, where children are able to find and located equipment and resources independently. All settings have their own large enclosed outdoor area. This has a positive effect on the children's development. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. It offers the children the ability to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. We plan activities and resources for the children to access outdoors that help the children to develop in all areas of learning.

Transition

From Home to Caterpillars

On receiving the details of our September intake, prior to a child's entry into the Caterpillar Room, the following arrangements are in place:

- Home visits are arranged prior to pupils joining. Two members of staff visit the family home to meet and observe every child in an environment that is comfortable and familiar to them. Staff talk to parents/carers and share information that will support the child's transition. Parents/carers are provided with an Information booklet and an 'All About Me' booklet is completed with the family to help plan activities to meet the child's interests and needs from their very first day.
- Stay and Play sessions also take place and contribute to a smooth transition. These sessions encourage parents/carers to interact and play purposefully with their children and promote awareness of children's learning, behaviour and development. Parents/carers also get to meet with their child's key person during these sessions.
- During these transitions, parental/carer preference is always taken into account when discussing the most appropriate process for 'settling in.' We discuss the benefits of our recommended 5 step settling in procedure, but we are flexible to meet the needs of all pupils and parents/carers.
- Staggered start times are planned to reduce anxiety and help transition within the first week.

From Caterpillar to Butterflies

- For any new children, who did not attend our Caterpillar Room, we repeat the above process of home visits.
- Stay and Play sessions and a staggered intake also take place in July and September.

- The Caterpillar and Butterfly classes have strong links, staff meet regularly to moderate and share good practice. Throughout the year opportunities are planned for Caterpillar's to engage and access the Butterfly setting.
- In the summer term, transition takes on an even higher priority. Butterfly staff attend Caterpillar visits and lead Caterpillar sessions. This provides opportunities for the children to meet their new teacher and staff that work in the Butterfly Room.
- Caterpillar children also visit the Butterfly class for Stay and Play. In small groups the children play and take part in planned activities in their new classroom.

From Butterflies to Reception

- Strong links continue from Butterfly to Reception, staff meet weekly and share good practice. Throughout the year staff plan collaboratively to ensure that there are regular opportunities for children to engage and access both settings. All of the above stages are repeated.
- In the summer term children are invited to a 'Meet the Teacher' sessions.
- Parents/carers are invited into school to attend a 'Starting Reception' presentation. School routines, uniform, expectations and the EYFS curriculum and assessment are explained. Parents/carers are given the opportunity to ask questions and are given a tour of the Reception classes 'in action.'
- Outside entry pupils are visited at home using the procedures highlighted previously.
- Transition meetings are held during July which provide opportunities for teachers to discuss each individual child.

From Reception Class to Key Stage I

- Transition will start during the Summer Term in which more adult led activities will be planned. Children will also be introduced to their next class teacher for story times and 'Meet the Teacher'. During this time, the EYFS Profile is completed for each child.
- Profile provides parents/carers, staff and teachers with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels, and their readiness for Year I.
- Year I teachers are given a copy of the Profile report together with a short commentary on each child's skills and abilities in relation to the three key characteristics of effective learning. This informs the dialogue between Reception and Year I teachers about each child's stage of development and learning needs and assists with the planning of activities in Year I.
- Transition meetings are held during July which provide opportunities for teachers to discuss each individual child.
- The Year I teacher organises the classroom so that there is some continuous provision available at all times. This ensures that the children who did not meet the ELG at the end of reception have activities that they can independently access at their appropriate level.

Forms of Rewards

1. **Verbal comments and specific praise** are given regularly by all teachers, teaching assistants and other members of staff. We aim for them to be clear and sincere. For our youngest pupils this often is accompanied by a clear sign or visual.
 2. In the Butterfly room (3-4 year-olds), children are rewarded with a 'spot' to add to a ladybird display. This contains a picture of their face and is a visual celebration for all to see.
 3. Reception children collect **Dojos**. These are points that can be earned for anything which is pleasing (good work, good behaviour, manners, etc...). Any adult in school can reward a child with 'Dojo', which are added electronically to the child's individual 'Dojo' avatar and can be seen visually on the classroom and iPad screens. Dojos are never removed from a child.
 4. **Celebration Assemblies** are held weekly in each key stage (Reception & KS1 and KS2), to celebrate achievement and effort in their work, reading and birthdays. Parents/carers are encouraged to attend.
 5. Each week staff in Reception and KS1 choose one pupil from their class to receive a **'Reader of the Week'** certificate in Celebration Assembly. These pupils will receive their certificate and be entered into a prize draw, one of them winning a book during the assembly.
 6. Each week teachers will choose a pupil from Caterpillars to Year 6 who has gone the extra mile and made them proud and reward them using **Squirrel Mail**. This involves a surprise postcard being sent home so that parents/carers receive information from the teacher and can celebrate their child's achievement.
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1. As a trauma informed school we use a conflict resolution approach in EYFS. Staff do not judge or shame a child, as this does not help 2 or 3 year olds to regulate or recognise their emotions: 'kind' and 'nice' are abstract for our youngest children with little life experience. At The Acorns, we focus on acknowledging and verbalising the child's feelings/motivations. We follow 6 steps:
 - 1. Approach calmly at their level (stop hurtful actions)
 - 2. Acknowledge children's feelings – label these for the children: "I can see you are..."
 - 3. Gather information – start questions with 'what' rather than 'why' then ask for facts and details
 - 4. Restate the problem to clarify and validate that you have fully understood: "So the problem is..."
 - 5. Ask for ideas or solutions and choose one together
 - 6. Be prepared to give follow up support
 2. Within the Caterpillar Room (2-3 year olds), unwanted behaviours are dealt with immediately by reinforcing positive behaviours using language, signing and visual prompts. Co-regulation can be used to re-focus children and quiet spaces within the classroom are available to support this.
 3. Within the Butterfly Room (3-4 year olds), when pupils are struggling to self-regulate, they may be given 'Thinking Time'. This is carried out in a quiet space within the classroom with an adult and lasts for no more than 3 minutes (the approximate age of the child). This approach encourages the child to engage in a simple restorative interaction with an adult using signs and/or language.

Leadership and Management

EYFS staff keep well-informed with any changes and attend all local authority training. The head of EYFS monitors teaching and learning across both early years' settings and carries out the performance management of most staff in this department.

Priorities relating to the EYFS will be identified in the school improvement plan as appropriate and a detailed action plan is used as a working document to constantly improve standards. It is expected that all staff and governors are aware of the requirements of the Foundation Stage and the importance of the key stage in relation to the children's learning and its impact on raising standards across the school.