



# FCIS

# Early Years Policy

This policy was adopted: September 2021

This policy is to be reviewed: September 2024

## **Aims**

To give each child a happy, positive and fun start to their school life in which they can establish solid foundations on which to expand and foster a deep love of learning;

- To offer each child a wide range of new and exciting experiences and give them the opportunity to consolidate, explore and test them out along with their own, individual experiences;
- To enable each child, through encouragement and high expectations, to develop, to the full, socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally.
- To offer a structure for learning that has a range of starting points and unlimited opportunity for development;
- To encourage children to develop independence within a loving, secure and friendly atmosphere;
- To support children in building relationships through the development of social skills such as cooperation and sharing;
- To help each child to recognise their own strengths and achievements through experiencing success and developing the confidence to work towards personal goals.

## **The Curriculum**

The Nursery and Reception follow the curriculum as outlined in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which is available to download at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/974907/EYFS\\_framework\\_-\\_March\\_2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974907/EYFS_framework_-_March_2021.pdf)

This clearly defines what we teach. The following policy details the specifics of our setting. The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development, all of which are seen as important and interconnected but three areas are seen as particularly important for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, for building their capacity to learn and form relationships and thrive, they support children's learning in all other areas, they are known as the prime areas.

The prime areas are;

- Communication and Language – Listening, Attention and Understanding, Speaking
- Physical Development – Gross Motor Skills and Fine Motor Skills
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development – Self-Regulation, Managing Self and Building Relationships

The specific areas of learning develop essential skills and knowledge for children to participate successfully in society. The specific areas are;

- Literacy – Comprehension, Word Reading and Writing
- Mathematics – Number and Numerical Patterns
- Understanding the World – Past and Present, People, Culture and Communities and The Natural World
- Expressive Arts and Design – Creating with Materials and Being Imaginative and Expressive

### **Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning**

The EYFS also includes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. The Nursery and Reception teachers plan activities within the Nursery and Reception classrooms with these in mind. They highlight the importance of a child's attitude to learning and their ability to play, explore and think critically about the world around them. The three characteristics 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
- Creating and Thinking Critically – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

### **Teaching strategies**

We ensure there is a balance of adult led and child initiated activities across the day. Although much of the time is spent with children self-selecting tasks, the interaction between the adult and child is essential as the adult's response to children builds understanding and therefore guides new learning. The adult's role is to continually model, demonstrate and question what the child is doing.

In some cases, the adult will ask a child to come and complete a task or game with them; at other times they will participate in a child's game, extending it where possible. By the Summer term in Reception the children will experience many more adult directed tasks as they prepare for their transition to Year 1.

### **Play**

Learning through play is an important part of our Early Years classrooms. We believe children learn best from activities and experiences that interest and inspire them. Using children's interests as a starting point, we provide children with stimulating, active play experiences in which they can explore and develop their learning to help them make sense of the world. They have opportunities through their play to think creatively and critically alongside other children as well as on their own. They are able to practise skills, build upon and revisit prior learning and experience at their own level and pace. Play gives our children the opportunity to pursue their own interests and inspire those around them. The children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions. We believe it is important that adults take an active role in child initiated play through observing, modelling, facilitating and extending their play. Getting the balance right between child initiated play, which is controlled, and adult led activities is very important to us.

### **Teaching**

We include direct, carefully planned, adult led experiences for children in the form of structured adult led teaching and adult led group activities. These are particularly important in helping children to learn specific skills and knowledge and it is often through children's play that we see how much of this learning children have understood and taken on.

Each day we follow a timetable with set routines in place. This looks quite different in the Nursery and Reception classes. We set aside times each day when the children come together to be taught in the more traditional sense, gathered together on the carpet as a class. In these slots we focus on our topic work, mathematics, literacy, phonics, and stories. These sessions help to develop vital habits of learning: learning as a group, listening to the teacher, taking turns to answer, sitting still etc.

In Early Years we firmly believe that effective oracy is the foundation for all learning and so we engage the children in 'Helicopter Stories'. This is a scheme that is designed for 2-7 year olds to improve language and literacy skills through the art of storytelling and acting. It allows children to dictate their stories to an adult scribe. The children then gather around a taped out stage and their stories are acted out by their peers and brought to life. This approach values every child's contribution and, alongside developing the children's communication and language, it creates confidence and supports collaborative and creative learning.

Reading and stories play an important part of the day. We want to make sure our children have a love of books and will leave the EYFS with a bank of stories. We teach Literacy through the 'Power of Reading'. Each half term one high-quality text is chosen to form the basis of the children's learning. A range of techniques such as drama, art, talking about illustrations, partner work, discussion and storytelling are used to explore the text slowly and in depth. These techniques ensure all children have opportunities to develop their vocabulary, increase their confidence in speaking aloud and give enthusiasm for early reading and writing.

The resources and techniques used enable us to:

- Put quality children's literature at the heart of all learning.
- Develop a high quality literacy curriculum and a whole school love of reading and writing.
- Use varied, engaging and effective learning opportunities.

Alongside our Power of Reading texts, we also make sure there is always time for a whole class story at the end of the day. In Nursery all children have the opportunity to join in the story sack scheme and every Reception child has their own book bag and is part of the home reading scheme.

At Farnham Common Village Schools, we teach for mastery in mathematics. In the Early Years this means that we begin by spending time learning in depth about each number up to 10. We explore a variety of representations of each number including money and shape. For example, when we learn about the number 5 we introduce 5p, shapes with 5 sides, different ways of making 5 (5+0, 4+1, 3+2) using numicon, 5 fingers, 5 toes, the 5 pattern on dice, accurately counting out 5 objects etc.

Through repetition and practise children develop fluency with their number facts and confidence in recognising the numbers in different contexts.

Once we have established an in-depth understanding of the numbers up to 10 we then move onto numbers beyond 10 including the 'teen' numbers. At this point it is important to focus on the place value of each digit in the 2-digit numbers. We use concrete resources including numicon to build the numbers as this enables the children to understand the value of each part of the number.

We count forwards and backwards by rote to develop fluency with the number system but we also work on counting out objects and using counting in everyday contexts to ensure that children understand the cardinal meaning of counting.

We work on writing the numerals 0 – 9 making sure that they are not reversed and that they are formed correctly.

### **Planning**

We believe many children need to be given a starting point to learn new things and find topics are a great way to fire the imagination. We choose a high quality Power of Reading text as a hook for our topics and they are flexible to ensure we follow the children's interests, school themes and local or national events. Every half term (and occasionally termly) staff plan the next topic, and book visits and visitors that will enhance the learning. Staff plan in more detail on a weekly basis using daily notes, observations and interactions with children to inform where the learning journey should move to.

### **Visits and visitors**

The part that visits and visitors play in the curriculum at FCIS is given great emphasis, even in the Early Years. We aim to have an off-site visit at least once a term. We actively seek parental support on trips, aiming for a ratio of one adult for four children in Nursery and a minimum of one adult for six in Reception. For safety reasons we say no to younger siblings coming along on school trips.

Visitors also really enhance a topic and we like to have 'experts' coming in to talk to the children, a fireman for example. We often ask parents if they are able (and brave enough!) to share knowledge or a skill, be it cooking, how to bath a baby, painting mehndi patterns on hands or playing guitar.

## **Classroom organisation**

Our Early Years classrooms have defined areas with clearly labelled resources to ensure children can access them easily. Each classroom is set up in a way to provide children with experiences and activities in all of the seven areas of learning. Classrooms have a writing area, mathematics area, creative area, book corner, role play area, construction/small world area, outdoor area and carpeted teaching area. A variety of activities are planned for and set up in the different areas each day. These are often open-ended activities and resources to encourage the children to be independent with their self-initiated learning. The adults move to whichever area their focus for the session/day is.

The outdoor area is an important part of the classroom with many children choosing to learn outside for much of the day. We try to ensure that the range of activities outside reflects the different curriculum areas, for example setting up quiet spaces for a mathematics game, reading and for construction. In Nursery, physical activity often dominates, with running, scooting and other active games being key. The Reception children also so have the opportunity to have more physical play during break time, P.E. and occasional extra sessions on the fort and pirate ship.

Each child has their own labelled peg and tray. We encourage children to take responsibility for keeping their clothes, book bag and work safely in one place!

## **Assessment, observations and portfolios**

Assessment is an essential part of the learning and development of children in the EYFS. 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.

To ensure we have evidence of a child's progress in the EYFS we use a range of strategies all of which come together in their learning portfolio on 'Tapestry'. In Early Years we use Tapestry to capture observations of children's learning. Staff have their own iPad which is used to capture and note observations and next steps for learning. Parents can access their child's portfolio online to see what they have been doing in school. Parents can also upload photographs, documents and notes to share achievements at home with the teacher.

The combined observations create a detailed picture of the child. The learning portfolio can be downloaded by parents when their child enters Year 1 or leaves our setting.

On entry to Nursery and Reception we carry out baseline assessments for each child. Throughout the Early Years the class teacher submits assessment data to the Senior Leadership Team showing each child's development across the seven areas of learning. At the end of Reception, the class teacher assesses each child against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELG) and comments on whether their development within each ELG is either 'emerging' or 'expected'. This information is also communicated to parents and carers in the Reception child's end of year report.

### **Role of staff**

The class teacher's role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs and to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents. All adults within the Early Years setting actively seek to form positive respectful relationships with the children in their care. The formation of healthy relationships between adults and children is essential in enabling children's well-being now and their future successes. There are rare occasions when significant adults cannot be in the class and we aim to be consistent in who covers these absences.

### **Partnership with parents and carers**

We believe that parents and carers are a child's first educator and therefore work very closely to ensure they are involved in what we do with their child at school. We want parents to feel they can speak to us about their child at any time and feel comfortable in our setting. As well as the Nursery and Reception visit days we offer a Home Visit at the beginning of the school year and offer parent workshops.

When a child gains a place at Farnham Common Infant School we ask them to attend a session at the school alongside all other children who will be starting and with their parents.

We have a staggered entry into Nursery and Reception which helps the children to make a smooth and secure transition into school life.



## **Health & safety and safeguarding**

Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them. We follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements detailed in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2021)

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/974907/EYFS framework - March 2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974907/EYFS_framework_-_March_2021.pdf)

It is important to note that members of staff do not use their mobile phones in the classroom and are prohibited from taking photographs with their personal equipment. This is in line with FCIS Safeguarding Policy (See school website.) Members of staff do, however, use school iPads to take photographs as evidence to support the regular observation assessment cycle in the EYFS. These photographs are used in the children's learning portfolio on Tapestry, in class displays and on the school website. All parents are asked to state if they give permission for their child's image to be used on the school website through the paperwork in their initial starter packs.

We are a healthy school and our children receive free fruit and milk from a Government scheme.

Our staff model good eating habits by eating alongside the children. All children in Reception eat a school lunch but are given the opportunity to have a packed lunch from home, although the vast majority eat a school lunch. We take all accidents seriously and always log and phone home immediately if a child has a serious accident. We have first aid equipment in both Nursery and Reception and staff with paediatric first aid training. We encourage all children to start school without nappies but will support any children struggling with this. We acknowledge that young children often have 'accidents' (i.e. wet themselves!) and have stocks of spare clothes and change anyone who needs it. We ask parents to help keep our stocks of clothes high by returning anything their child has borrowed. Children are changed in the open area outside the toilets.

All large climbing equipment is checked by our site officer and there is an annual external check of equipment. We hold regular fire and lock down practises in line with whole school policy. We follow whole school procedures for child protection (see separate policy). David Masters, head teacher, is the named Designated Safeguarding Lead and all concerns are discussed with him. We have separate policies for medicine in school and off-site visits.