

FOUNDATION STAGE POLICY

FOUNDATION STAGE

Introduction

The Foundation Stage applies to children from three years of age to the end of the reception year. In our school, children can join the nursery in the term in which they become three. Children join our reception class in the academic year in which they become five years old.

All children begin school with a variety of experiences and learning. It is our privilege as early years' teachers to take on the challenging task of building upon that learning and experience. Children are our collective future and the foundations for that future are set in the early years education in the nursery and reception classes.

We believe in a holistic approach to learning, which ensures parents and teachers work together to support the child's learning. At Durham High School we aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum which will enable each child to develop emotionally, socially, physically and intellectually to her full potential. Each child is unique and is valued as an individual

Aims of the Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage underpins all future learning by supporting, fostering, promoting and developing children's:

- Personal, social and emotional well-being;
- Disposition and attitudes;
- Social development;
- Attention skills and persistence;
- Communication, language and literacy;
- Understanding and use of number, shape and space and calculating skills;
- Knowledge and understanding of the world;
- Physical development;
- Creative development.

The more general features of good practice in our school that relate to the Foundation Stage are:

- The partnership between teachers and parents, so that our children feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement;
- The understanding that teachers have of how children develop and learn, and how this affects their teaching;

- The range of approaches used that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions and extend and develop play and talk or other means of communication;
- The carefully planned curriculum that helps most children achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage;
- The provision for children to take part in activities that build on and extend their interests and develop their intellectual, physical, social and emotional abilities;
- The encouragement for children to communicate and talk about their learning, and to develop independence and self-management;
- The support for learning with appropriate and accessible indoor and outdoor space, facilities and equipment;
- The identification of the progress and future learning needs of children through observations, which are regularly shared with parents;
- The clear aims for our work, and the regular monitoring to evaluate and improve what we do;
- The regular identification of training needs for all adults working within the Foundation Stage.

Contribution to Every Child Matters

It is our aim that wherever possible, the curriculum should contribute to all pupils' well-being by helping them achieve their potential academically, emotionally, physically, socially and spiritually.

We acknowledge that it is the right of every child to be helped to be healthy and safe, to enjoy and achieve, to make a positive contribution to the community.

Play in the Foundation Stage

Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, and learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. Through role-play the children experience a variety of situations.

Inclusion in the Foundation Stage

At Durham High School for Girls we believe that all our children matter. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of each child's range of life experiences when planning for their learning.

In the Foundation Stage we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children, so that most achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the stage. Some children progress beyond this point. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of the girls; those with special educational needs, those who are more able, those with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- 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;
- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- Using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- Planning challenging activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills;
- Monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary.

The Foundation Stage Curriculum

The Early Years Foundation Stage is the basis for the curriculum in the Foundation Stage and reflects the areas of learning identified by the Early Learning Goals. The experiences that our children meet often enable them to develop a number of competencies, skills and concepts across several areas of learning. This is supported by a caring environment, where they feel valued and in which they can play, learn and succeed.

Meeting the Early Learning Goals is the final step on the Early Years Foundation Stage development ladders. These goals provide the basis for planning through the Foundation Stage. Medium-term planning is completed half-termly and identifies the intended learning for children working towards the Early Learning Goals and beyond. We hope that children will be keen to direct aspects of their learning, so mini-topics based on individual interests and needs as learners will be followed as they arise.

Assessment

We make continuous assessments of children's learning and use this information to ensure future planning reflects the identified needs. In the Foundation Stage, assessment largely takes the form of observation.

In Nursery, prior to arrival, parents complete an 'All About Me' booklet, giving us a picture of their child, her interest, likes and dislikes. Within the first two weeks in Nursery an initial assessment is made, from information gathered mainly by observation. This covers the areas of PSRN, CLL, PSE and PD.

This feeds into the beginning of assessing against the Early Years Foundation Stage profiles, which continues until the child leaves Reception.

In addition, Reception teachers carry out a CLL (and PSRN as of September 2009) baseline assessment. There are also CLL and PSRN assessments in March and June. These are very useful in highlighting areas of the girls' learning which need revisiting.

Profile results are moderated during the last two terms of Reception class and the results are submitted to Durham LEA in June. Results are returned in September for staff to analyse and inform planning for individuals, Reception and Year 1 staff.

Children's assessment results are continuously available to parents in the child's box or tray. Parents receive a written report in the Autumn and Summer term concerning all areas of learning and development. Parents have the opportunity to have a consultation each term.

As part of the smooth transition to Keystage 1, by the end of the Reception year, a daily PSRN or CLL session will take place.

Partnership with parents

We recognise that working with parents is of major value and importance to the setting in enabling us to provide a happy, caring and stable environment for the children and their parents. We aim to form a good relationship with parents so information regarding their child's development (be it developmental, social or health related) can be exchanged easily by staff and parents.

Following ways in which we try to achieve a strong working relationship with parents are;

- Talking to parents about their child before their child starts in our school;
- Parents and child visiting the nursery before starting;
- The children having the opportunity to spend time with their teacher before starting nursery or school;
- We have a comprehensive Foundation Stage handbook which provides families with information they may require regarding staffing, curriculum, procedures and routine;
- Offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their children;
- Topic plans, timetables and general activities are displayed on the parent's notice boards;

- Letters are sent home on a regular basis to keep the parents up to date with events happening in school;
- Encouraging parents to talk to their child's teacher if there are any concerns. Reception and nursery teachers are available on a daily basis for informal discussions. There is a formal meeting for Reception parents in the Spring term at which the teacher and the parent discuss the child's progress in private;
- Parents have continuous access to any assessment information held on their child, so that they can track the learning taking place in school;
- Arranging a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents;
- Offering a range of activities that support the involvement of parents. There is regular communication. We invite parents to curriculum meetings to discuss the kind of work that the children undertake in The Early Years setting;
- Parents are welcome to come into nursery and help on a regular basis;
- Feedback questionnaires are distributed to parents at the end of Autumn and Summer terms;
- Parents have access to details of the complaints procedure should they wish to explore their feelings more formally.

Resources

The Learning Environment and Resources

Children learn best in a stimulating environment where the opportunities for active learning are thoughtful and purposefully provided. We aim to make the environment a place, which should

- Be welcoming to children and parents
- Be a place where children feel happy, secure and confident
- Be stimulating and exciting
- Value children's work and display it attractively
- Encourage talk and questioning

We plan a learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, that encourages a positive attitude to learning. We use materials and equipment that reflect both the community that the children come from and the wider world. We encourage the children to make their own selection of the activities on offer, as we believe that this encourages independent learning.

Teaching and Learning Style

Our policy on teaching and learning defines the features of effective teaching and learning in our school. These features apply to teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage just as much as they do to the teaching in Key Stage 1 and 2.

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