

EARLY YEARS
FOUNDATION STAGE
POLICY

MERRYDALE INFANT SCHOOL



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1. Introduction:

Early Years education is the foundation upon which young children build the rest of their schooling. It is a holistic education that encompasses all learning and development.

This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at Merrydale Infant School.

The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of practitioners working in the EYFS setting, including both teaching and non-teaching adults.

In the policy the term 'setting' refers to the Early Years educational provision at Merrydale Infant School and the term 'practitioner' refers to the members of staff working with children within the setting.

2. Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage:

In the EYFS setting at Merrydale Infant School we believe that all children are entitled to the best possible start in their school life, both intellectually and emotionally, in order to enable them to develop their full potential.

We aim to support each child's welfare, learning and developmental needs by:

- Recognising that all children are unique and special.
- Understanding that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates - physically, cognitively, linguistically, socially and emotionally.
- Providing a safe, secure and caring environment where children feel happy and know that they are valued by the practitioners looking after them.
- Fostering and nurturing children's self-confidence and self-esteem through their developing awareness of their own identity and role within the community.
- Teaching them to express and communicate their needs and feelings in appropriate ways.
- Encouraging children's independence and decision-making, supporting them to take risks and learn through their mistakes.
- Developing children's understanding of social skills and the values and codes of behaviour required for people to work together harmoniously.
- Supporting children to develop care, respect and appreciation for others, including those with beliefs, cultures and opinions that differ to their own.
- Understanding the importance of play in children's learning and development.
- Providing learning experiences in play which reflect children's personal interests and areas of curiosity in order to encourage and develop their natural desire, interest, excitement and motivation to learn.
- Providing experiences which build on children's existing knowledge and understanding in order to challenge, stimulate and extend their learning and development.
- Providing effective learning opportunities in a range of environments, inside and outside.

3. The Early Years Foundation Stage framework:

Teaching in the EYFS setting at Merrydale Infant School is delivered in accordance with the government's statutory document 'The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage' (March 2012). This document is a principled approach to Early Years education, bringing together children's welfare, learning and development requirements through four themes: 'A Unique Child',

‘Positive Relationships’, ‘Enabling Environments’ and ‘Children Learn in Different Ways and at Different Rates.’.

The curriculum is centred on 3 prime areas of learning: (See Appendix 1 for more detailed information)

1. Personal, Social and Emotional Development
2. Physical Development
3. Communication and Language Development

Providers must also support activities through four specific areas which strengthen the prime areas. (See appendix 1 for more detailed information). These are:

1. Literacy
2. Mathematics
3. Understanding of the World
4. Expressive Arts and Design

The seven Areas of Learning and Development address children’s physical, reasoning, language, social and emotional development and all Areas of Learning and Development are equally important, closely interlinked and dependent on each other. This ensures the delivery of a holistic, child-centered curriculum which allows children to make lots of links between what they are learning. All Areas of Learning and Development are given equal weighting and value.

At Merrydale Infant School, we believe that Early Years education is important in its own right and should not be viewed simply as preparation for the next stage of children’s education. We believe that the EYFS framework allows a natural progression into the National Curriculum at the beginning of Year 1.

4. Active Learning through Play:

At Merrydale Infant School we recognise that young children learn best when they are active. We understand that active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods. Therefore, we believe that Early Years education should be as practical as possible and our EYFS setting has an ethos of learning through play.

We recognise the importance of children’s play. It is an essential and rich part of their learning process, supporting them in all areas of development. Play is a powerful motivator encouraging children to be creative and to develop their ideas, understanding and language. Play is also flexible and able to suit the preferred learning style of the child. It can provide multiple ways for children to learn a variety of different skills and concepts.

In the EYFS setting at Merrydale Infant School practitioners provide both structured and unstructured play opportunities inside and outside. These activities are designed to engage children in practical, first-hand experiences which will support children to discover, explore, investigate, develop their personal interests and areas of curiosity, and help to make sense of the world around them as they begin to understand specific concepts. Play opportunities are also set up to provide children with opportunities to apply newly acquired knowledge, demonstrating their skills and level of understanding.

In providing these active learning opportunities through play we understand the central position of play within the EYFS framework. This is essentially a play based curriculum and pedagogy as the provision of play opportunities underpins its delivery within settings.

5. Assessment and Record Keeping:

Ongoing assessment is an essential aspect of the effective running of the EYFS setting at Merrydale Infant School. Regular, planned and focused assessments are made of children's learning and individual needs. A record of each child's progress in all areas of their learning is kept by retaining and filing their assessment data using the development matters statements as a guide. This record is updated at least once each term to track individual progress. Baseline assessment is carried out during the child's first six weeks upon entering the setting.

The Birth to 5 document is used to support assessments. The main EYFS assessment method is through practitioners' observations of children in different teaching and learning contexts, including both adult focused activities and child initiated play. Observations take place on a daily basis (both formally and informally). Practitioners make time to carry out planned observations of individuals and groups of children regularly. They also make spontaneous observations in order to capture significant moments of children's learning.

Observations are recorded in different formats (e.g. narrative style, post-it notes, whole class grids, photographs). All practitioners are involved in observing children. Practitioners use observations to support their developing knowledge of individual children. It informs them of children's abilities, needs, interests, play schemas and learning styles. Observations are evaluated, children's learning priorities are identified and relevant learning opportunities are planned to support children to make the next steps and progress.

Other methods of assessing children in the EYFS setting include engaging alongside children in their play, annotation of children's written work, talking with children about their task or play and in Learning Journeys.

Learning Journeys record children's progress over the academic year in all Areas of Learning and Development of the EYFS framework. Samples of children's work are gathered, along with photographic evidence and observations through the use of iPads.

At the end of the EYFS, assessment of each child's development is completed using the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. At the end of the year the EYFSP provides a summary of every child's development and learning achievements. This data is reported to the local authority to be used for local and national data statistics.

6. Planning:

All Areas of Learning and Development are planned for and available to access within the setting. The learning opportunities provided include a range of adult focused and child initiated activities both indoors and outdoors. We have an outside learning space which children have access to each day. We require children to bring in clothing and footwear suitable for all weather conditions so children are protected and there are no barriers to learning. The outside area is an extension of the classrooms and there is a variety of resources to facilitate learning. In this area EYFS staff provide planned activities for children as well as giving opportunities for them to make their own choices.

At the beginning of the year parents/carers are asked to give permission for their child to be

photographed/videoed during their time at school. We use these images in the classroom, on displays, in the children's individual record books and on the school website (Children who are 'looked after' will not have their photograph put on the website or any public flyers etc)

Educational visits within the local community and further afield are also planned to support children's learning within the classroom.

7. Parents as Partners:

At Merrydale Infant School we recognise the importance of establishing positive relationships with parents, as highlighted by the EYFS framework. We understand that an effective partnership between school and home will have a positive impact on children's learning and development. So, practitioners endeavour to encourage the regular sharing of information about the children with parents.

We value the role of parents as children's primary educators. Through regular, planned contact with parents and informal chats at the beginning and end of the day, practitioners encourage parents to share their unique knowledge of their child, providing further insight into the child as an individual (e.g. characteristics, interests, experiences, likes, dislikes). This supports practitioners in establishing interesting and stimulating learning experiences, responding to children's needs and interests.

Parents are kept informed of what is happening in the setting through regular letters, reading records and informal conversations at the beginning and end of the day. This also gives suggestions of how parents can support their children's learning at home; consolidating and building on what has been covered in the setting. Whole school newsletters are also sent home on a monthly basis.

Parents are invited to attend parents' evenings during the course of the academic year. The first of these takes place during the Autumn term to allow practitioners and parents to discuss how children have settled into the setting. Another parent evening takes place during the Spring term where practitioners will feedback on children's learning and development progress.

Other opportunities for practitioners to share children's learning, development and well-being with parents include Learning Journeys, end of year reports and celebration assemblies where children's achievements are recognised.

Parents are also invited to get involved with school life. There are opportunities for them to help with activities such as educational visits and reading to support children's learning. Parents may be invited into the setting on other occasions such as open afternoons where children show them their work and special events for parents for example a Mothering Sunday celebration.

The setting has a friendly, open-door policy and practitioners are available to talk to parents at the beginning and end of the day. Parents are always welcomed into school and encouraged to discuss any concerns they might have.

8. Admissions and Induction:

Merrydale Infant School provides both part time and full-time Early Years education for children in the Nursery and Reception Year.

Before they start in the setting, all children are offered a series of visits during the Summer term. The purpose of these initial visits is for the children to meet their new practitioners and start to become familiar with the setting environment. For Nursery children, home visits are organised as an opportunity to see the child in their own home surroundings. The aim of these visits is to support practitioners develop their knowledge and understanding of each child in order to make the transition period to Merrydale Infant School as smooth as possible.

In the Summer term parents are invited into school to meet the setting practitioners. At this meeting information regarding the induction process and what goes on in the setting is shared. There is also time for informal conversations and parents' questions. School information packs will be distributed to parents at this meeting, detailing school routines and expectations. 'All About Me' induction packs will also be given out to parents as another way to support practitioners' knowledge and understanding of each individual child.

Every effort is made to make children feel safe, secure and happy. There is a relaxed and open ethos in which children can enjoy their first experiences of school. Established routines, a calm atmosphere and encouraging talk are some of the strategies practitioners use to maintain children's positive feelings about school and a developing love for investigatory learning.

Our Admissions Policy is available from the school office.

9. **Equal Opportunities:**

All practitioners at Merrydale Infant School have a responsibility to maintain positive attitudes to diversity and difference, ensuring that inclusive practice is delivered in the EYFS setting.

All children, irrespective of gender, ability, ethnicity, culture or religion, and social circumstances, have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development within the EYFS setting at Merrydale Infant School.

Our Equal Opportunities Policy is available from the school office.

10. **Special Educational Needs:**

Information about Special Educational Needs is available through our Inclusion Manager.

APPENDIX 1

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The school fosters and develops relationships between home, school, children's centres and places of worship in order to make links stronger for the good of the community as a whole. Children are encouraged to learn to work, share, take turns and co-operate with others. They are encouraged to be independent and make choices for themselves. They are also encouraged to be sensitive to the needs of others and to respect other cultures and beliefs. Children are enabled to become confident and develop a positive self-image.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Children are given opportunities to move to music, use equipment, develop and practice their fine and gross motor skills. They develop an increasing understanding of how their body works and what is needed to be healthy. This is done in both indoors and outdoors and by working with a wide range of resources.

COMMUNICATION and LANGUAGE

This covers all aspects of language development and provides the foundation for literacy skills. Children's developing competence in speaking and listening is focused on. We aim to extend and enrich the children's vocabulary through story time, rhymes, role-play and group discussions. Children are encouraged to share their own experiences through speaking and acting out events in imaginative play and talking about their own ideas. They are encouraged to take part in class activities such as working with puppets, participating in music sessions and saying rhymes and singing songs together.

LITERACY

We have a variety of resources for the children to use to help them develop early literacy skills. Children are encouraged to use the mark-making areas indoors and outdoors independently but they also take part in teacher-led activities. These activities include whole class shared reading, phonics sessions and small group guided reading and writing. The pre-writing work encourages correct pencil control, left/right orientation and cursive letter formation. Children have the opportunity to develop their writing skills in accordance with their age, ability and competence. We encourage children to treat books and other resources with respect and they are given many opportunities to listen to stories told by the staff.

MATHEMATICS

We aim for children to achieve mathematical understanding and a firm foundation for numeracy through practical activities and using and understanding language in the development of simple mathematical ideas. Pre-number work is covered through nursery rhymes and number activities. Children are given the opportunity to learn about number, shape, space, position, pattern and measurement. Towards the end of the Foundation stage children start learning to tell the time and are given opportunities to learn about money and simple calculations.

UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD

All children are given opportunities to solve problems, investigate, make decisions and experiment. They will learn about living things, their environment, the world around them and the people who are important in their lives. Children are also given opportunities to develop computing skills and to work with and use modern technology.

EXPRESSIVE ARTS and DESIGN

We provide opportunities for all children to explore and share their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of art, design, technology, music, drama, movement, dance and imaginative play activities. Children are given opportunities to make paintings, drawings, collages, models and use basic musical instruments. Children also learn new songs and rhymes and enjoy singing them with each other. Colour recognition is taught, naming colours, mixing paints, sorting and matching. Through various times during the year children are given the opportunity to participate in school productions and assemblies.