

BRIGHT SPARKS NURSERY

ST MARY'S COLLEGE EARLY YEARS DEPARTMENT

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE CURRICULUM POLICY



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Date of Policy- October 2015

Date of Review-October 2016

Date of Review- July 2018

Date of Review- September 2019

Date of Review – 24 February 2020

Date of Review – March 2021

Date of Review- September 2021 (Subject to change with new EYFS)

Date of Review- January 2024 (New EYFS: Group and school based providers)

POLICY FOR THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE.

Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to statutory guidance and legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- Childcare Act 2016
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Education Act 2011
- Equality Act 2010
- Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework: For group and school based providers
Published: 8 December 2023 Effective: 4 January 2024

Statement of Intent

All children from Babies to the end of their Pre-school year will follow the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework Published: 8 December 2023 Effective: 4 January 2024

Our aim is to ensure that all children who attend our setting learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. We will ensure our children are challenged through effective teaching and that “school readiness” is promoted. We will achieve this aim through following the four guiding principles that shape our practice as directed by the EYFS statutory framework. We ensure that the educational programmes are well planned and resourced to have depth and breadth across the seven areas of learning. They will provide interesting and challenging experiences that focus on the interests of the individual child and meet the needs of all children. Planning is based on a secure knowledge and understanding of how to promote the learning and development of young children and what they can achieve.

Development Matters and Birth to 5 Matters are both Non-Statutory curriculum guidance for the EYFS. Our setting has decided to use both of these documents to support our delivery of the EYFS learning and development requirements. We are also referencing the “Seven Features of Good Practice” which are:

1. The best for every child
2. High Quality Care
3. The Curriculum- what we want our children to learn
4. Pedagogy- helping children to learn
5. Assessment- checking what children have learnt
6. Self-regulation and executive function
7. Partnership with Parents

Additionally we will consider Leuven’s Scales for Well-Being and Involvement.

Well-being focuses on the extent to which the children feel at ease, act spontaneously, show vitality and self-confidence. It is a crucial component of emotional intelligence and good mental health

Involvement focuses on the extent to which pupils are operating to their full capabilities. In particular, it refers to whether the child is focused, engaged and interested in various activities.

Seven Features of Effective Practice

- 1 The best for every child**
 - All children deserve to have an equal chance of success.
 - High-quality early education is good for all children. It is especially important for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
 - When they start school, children from disadvantaged backgrounds are, on average, 4 months behind their peers. We need to do more to narrow that gap.
 - Children who have lived through difficult experiences can begin to grow stronger when they experience high quality early education and care.
 - High-quality early education and care is inclusive. Children's special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are identified quickly. All children promptly receive any extra help they need, so they can progress well in their learning.
- 2 High-quality care**
 - The child's experience must always be central to the thinking of every practitioner.
 - Babies, toddlers and young children thrive when they are loved and well cared for.
 - High-quality care is consistent. Every practitioner needs to enjoy spending time with young children.
 - Effective practitioners are responsive to children and babies. They notice when a baby looks towards them and gurgles and respond with pleasure.
 - Practitioners understand that toddlers are learning to be independent, so they will sometimes get frustrated.
 - Practitioners know that starting school, and all the other transitions in the early years, are big steps for small children.
- 3 The curriculum: what we want children to learn**
 - The curriculum is a top-level plan of everything the early years setting wants the children to learn.
 - Planning to help every child to develop their language is vital.
 - The curriculum needs to be ambitious. Careful sequencing will help children to build their learning over time.
 - Young children's learning is often driven by their interests. Plans need to be flexible.
 - Babies and young children do not develop in a fixed way. Their development is like a spider's web with many strands, not a straight line.
 - Depth in early learning is much more important than covering lots of things in a superficial way.
- 4 Pedagogy: helping children to learn**
 - Children are powerful learners. Every child can make progress in their learning, with the right help.
 - Effective pedagogy is a mix of different approaches. Children learn through play, by adults modelling, by observing each other, and through guided learning and direct teaching.
 - Practitioners carefully organise enabling environments for high-quality play. Sometimes, they make time and space available for children to invent their own play. Sometimes, they join in to sensitively support and extend children's learning.
 - Children in the early years also learn through group work, when practitioners guide their learning.
 - Older children need more of this guided learning.
 - A well-planned learning environment, indoors and outside, is an important aspect of pedagogy.
- 5 Assessment: checking what children have learnt**
 - Assessment is about noticing what children can do and what they know. It is not about lots of data and evidence.
 - Effective assessment requires practitioners to understand child development. Practitioners also need to be clear about what they want children to know and be able to do.
 - Accurate assessment can highlight whether a child has a special educational need and needs extra help.
 - Children in the early years also learn through group work, when practitioners guide their learning.
 - Older children need more of this guided learning.
 - Assessment should not take practitioners away from the children for long periods of time.
- 6 Self-regulation and executive function**
 - Executive function includes the child's ability to:
 - hold information in mind
 - focus their attention
 - regulate their behaviour
 - plan what to do next.
 - These abilities contribute to the child's growing ability to self-regulate:
 - focus their thinking
 - monitor what they are doing and adapt
 - regulate strong feelings
 - be patient for what they want
 - bounce back when things get difficult.
 - Language development is central to self-regulation: children use language to guide their actions and plans. Pretend play gives many opportunities for children to focus their thinking, persist and plan ahead.
- 7 Partnership with parents**
 - It is important for parents and early years settings to have a strong and respectful partnership. This sets the scene for children to thrive in the early years.
 - This includes listening regularly to parents and giving parents clear information about their children's progress.
 - The help that parents give their children at home has a very significant impact on their learning.
 - Some children get much less support for their learning at home than others. By knowing and understanding all the children and their families, settings can offer extra help to those who need it most.
 - It is important to encourage all parents to chat, play and read with their children.

A Principled Approach

A Unique Child.

We will recognise that every child is a unique child who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. Our commitments are to their development, inclusion for all, safety, safeguarding and health and well-being. Our aim is to support all children attending the nursery to attain their maximum potential within their individual capabilities.

Positive Relationships.

We will recognise that our children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and securing relationships. We will liaise with parents and use their knowledge to help our children build a positive and loving relationship with their key person in accordance with the EYFS guidelines on suitable person/s. Our commitments are to nurture respect, partnership with parents, supporting learning and the role of the key person.

Enabling Environments.

We will place great emphasis on the children's learning environment and we recognise that it plays a key role in extending the children's learning and meeting their individual needs. Children learn and develop well in enabling environments with teaching and support from adults. We will respond to children's individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Our commitments to this principle will be based around observations, on-going assessment and planning a challenging and enjoyable learning experience for each child.

We will ensure strong partnerships between practitioners and parents and/or carers alongside a child's wider family community where applicable. We plan learning experiences to ensure, as far as practical, there is equality of opportunity for all children and a celebration of diversity.

Learning and Development.

We recognise that every child learns and develops in different ways and at different rates. In accordance with the EYFS framework, we will be inclusive of the education and care of all children in our Early Years setting, including children with Special Educational needs and Disabilities (SEND).

There are 3 prime areas:

Communication and Language

Physical Development

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

There are 4 specific areas:

Literacy

Mathematics

Understanding the World

Expressive Arts and Design

The prime areas are the main basis behind building the children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for developing their ability to learn, form positive relationships and thrive physically. Practitioners working with our youngest children are expected to ensure a strong foundation for children's development in the three prime areas.

The specific areas will strengthen the skills the children need to further embed the prime areas. This is particularly important in developing language and extending vocabulary.

The EYFS does not prescribe a particular teaching approach. Play is essential for children's development. All of the above areas will be delivered through planned, purposeful play with a balance of adult led and child-initiated activities, warm, positive interactions along with secure routines for play and learning. Our practitioners will consider a child's individual needs, their interests and the stage they are at in their development.

Key Person

Every child in our setting will be assigned a key person. It is their role to plan for each of their individual key children and to ensure their needs are met. They will plan around the children's routines, assisting in their becoming familiar with our nursery, planning and assessing activities for the children to become engaged in and to build positive relationships with each child's parents.

Parents/ carers will be informed of the name of their child's key person. The key person's role will be explained to parents/ carers when their child starts at the setting. The key person will ensure that every child's learning and care takes into account their individual needs. At St Mary's Early Years Department, we also ensure that all staff get to know all of the children and their families so that if a member of staff is absent it does not cause too much upset for their key children. All staff with a key person role will engage with and support parents/ carers in guiding their children's development at home. Where appropriate the key person will assist parents/ carers to engage with outside agencies/ specialist support if necessary.

On-Going Assessment (Formative Assessment)

Our nursery practitioners (key person and support staff) will all involve themselves in on-going assessment. This is an integral part of the learning and developing process as all staff observe the children to gauge their level of development, interests and their individual learning styles. On-going assessment can then be used to inform future planning of activities and experiences. These

then shape the teaching and learning experiences for each child reflecting the practitioner knowledge of their key children.

Our parents/ carers will be updated regularly through our iConnect app with staff using “Moments” linked to day to day activities usually at least once a week and a “Snapshot” observation for achievements and learning developments. “All About Me” sheets are updated regularly. When a child moves to a different room a transition “Learning Story” is completed and on entry assessment is completed after informal observations have been recorded. This will inform staff of the child’s level of progression and will identify any learning and development needs.

The Head of Early Years and the leadership team of the nursery in order to assess coverage of EYFS, effectiveness of planning, observation and assessment and to ensure children who may need early intervention strategies are identified as early as possible monitor the Learning Stories termly. This alongside the Sustained Shared Thinking and Emotional Well-being (SSTEW) scale for assessing practice ensures we measure the impact of our interactions, our “play” and our teaching strategies within our curriculum.

Parents are invited for parent: key person update meetings at least twice a year either by telephone call or face to face. Additionally there are “Pop in for a Nosey” sessions whereby the parents are invited to have a glimpse into the day-to-day routines of the nursery as well as having a sneak peek at their child in their playroom. We invite parents to share their observations and keep us updated on what their child has been up to through the Parent Observation facility on the Parentzone App. This also enables parents to inform planning for their child.

Assessment will not entail prolonged time for practitioners to be away from children nor will they be expected to complete excessive paperwork. Our practitioners will use their professional judgement and their knowledge of each individual child for all on-going assessment.

Age 2 Progress Check

Progress Checks for children aged between 2 and 3 years are completed in our Tots Room usually around 30 months and once the child has settled into the 2-3 Years room.

Once we receive notification that a health visitor or NHS nursery practitioner has completed the check then we will send our 2-year check to the parents. Currently for Sefton LA a health visitor only notifies us if there is an issue for a particular child. Staff are aware that if we believe there is concern for a particular child then we would contact the health visitor and the child’s family. The Head of Early Years and Deputy of Tots department complete a review and highlights to Tots staff if any interventions need to be planned. We would also invite our setting SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) to observe the child and make any recommendations.

If there are any emerging concerns then a targeted ‘play plan’ to support the child will be developed in consultation with the child’s parents and the setting’s SENCOs and other outside agencies as appropriate for example speech and language therapists, health professionals.

EAL

For children whose home language is not English, we may take reasonable steps to;

- Provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in play and learning supporting their language development at home; and
- Ensure that children have sufficient opportunities to learn and reach a good standard in English language during the EYFS; ensuring children are ready to benefit from the opportunities available to them further into their school journey.
- When assessing communication, language and literacy skills, practitioners must assess the children’s skills in English. If a child does not have a strong grasp of English language our practitioners will explore the child’s skills with their home language with parents and/ or carers, to establish whether there is a cause for concern about language delay. With parental permission, we would then complete a speech and language referral form.

Reference should also be made to the following EY policies:

Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

SEND Policy

Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy

Equality and Inclusion Policy

Health, Safety & Welfare Policy

Supervision of Children Policy

Parents and Carers as Partners

POLICY FOR PLAY

“Play is the work of the child.” (Bruner)

The DfE guidance on the Early Years Foundation Stage states that practitioners must reflect on the different ways that children learn and practitioners must reflect these in their practice.

There are three characteristics of effective teaching and learning:

Our Aim for “Playing and Exploration”

To provide a challenging and well-resourced environment.

To introduce a balance of the different types of play, unstructured, structured and reflective, discussion, quiet and exploratory.

Our planning and assessment will reflect and show awareness of capability, race, culture and gender.

We will place a high value on play and understand its importance for children’s development.

We will instigate, support and extend play.

We will make allowances for individual differences in play.

We will make full use of learning opportunities that arise during play.

We will provide quality interactions in order to extend play and independent learning.

We will encourage a school/home awareness of the value of play and how it enhances learning.

We will ensure that all play activities will stretch and challenge children and we will assess our children continually in order to provide new activities that encourage their development in all areas of the EYFS.

Our aim for “Active Learning”

We will encourage decision-making.

We will encourage a “can do” attitude. Children will be encouraged to keep trying if they encounter difficulties.

We are committed to personalised learning. The children’s interests will be the focus point of their active learning, they will be able to solve dilemmas, and problem solve as well as reflecting on their own practice.

We will observe and make good use of effective starting points.

We will enjoy and share achievements.

Our aim for “Creating and Thinking Critically”

We will provide all children with new challenges and allow them to “risk take” in their play.

We will encourage problem solving and sustained shared thinking in play.

We will encourage the children to have, express and develop their own ideas.

Through play, discussion and interaction we will encourage the children to make links in their learning and to develop strategies/ plans to fulfil their ideas.

We will provide all children with opportunities to independently create and to explore various creative media.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS POLICY

Aim

It is our aim that our environment will play a key role in supporting and extending our children's learning and development. The EYFS commitments are our focus and our learning environment will reflect our children's right to grow up safe; healthy; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and with economic well-being.

The Essentials

Happy and secure where children can grow in confidence and self-esteem and develop positive attitudes to learning.

Well-organised areas where resources are readily available, clearly labelled, accessible to children and well cared for.

Plenty of space for free movement.

Opportunities for a variety of social groupings among children encouraging a feeling of 'linkedness' and connectivity

Play activities that encourage all EYFS themes and principles.

Our environment reflects and respects the background and culture of children.

The environment presents positive non-stereotypical images of gender, race, disability, class, religion etc.

Children can develop with encouragement to their full potential.

Children's work is respected, valued and displayed to good effect.

Tender Loving Care Always.

Children's behaviour will be managed effectively and always in a manner that is appropriate for their age and their individual needs. Self-regulation skills will be developed and encouraged at all times.

OUTDOOR PLAY POLICY

At St Mary's Early Years Department, we are committed to the importance of daily outdoor play and the physical development of all children regardless of their age and stage of development. We provide outdoor play in all weathers. Where possible and appropriate, we make outdoor activities accessible to children with learning difficulties and disabilities to ensure inclusive use of the outdoor area.

We recognise that children need regular access to outdoor play in order to keep fit and healthy, develop their large and fine motor skills, experience learning in a natural environment and access sunlight in order to absorb vitamin D more effectively.

Our outdoor provision incorporates the prime areas of learning, offering our children the freedom to explore, use their senses and be physically active through:

- The use of natural materials
- Learning about growing and the living world
- Research and experimentation
- Playing with natural elements for example sand, water, soil, wood
- Physical play and movement
- Imagination and creativity
- Construction and den building

The outdoor areas, both within the nursery grounds and in the local community have a wealth of experiences and resources that help children to develop in a variety of ways, including independence, exploration and investigative skills, risk taking and self-esteem, all of which support children to develop skills now and for the future.

We ensure all areas are safe and secure through close supervision and the use of robust risk assessments and safety checks. Where possible and appropriate, we plan and encourage play that helps Children understand and manage risks. This type of play allows children to explore and find their own boundaries in a safe environment with supportive practitioners. Staff are informed of the importance of safety procedures and are trained appropriately to ensure these procedures are followed effectively.

We obtain parental permission before any child leaves the nursery during the day. This includes short outings into the local community. There is more information in the outings policy.

We plan all outdoor play opportunities and outings to complement the indoor activities, provide children with purposeful activities that support, and follow individual children's interests. There is a balance of both adult-led and child-initiated opportunities to enable children to learn and practice new skills, knowledge and behaviours.