

Elmwood Infant and Nursery School

Early Years Policy

Spring 2016



*Article 29 'Education must develop every child's personality, talents
and abilities to the full'*

Article 3 'The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all actions concerning children'



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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. Young children need an environment which is healthy, safe and secure, where they are able to grow in confidence and fulfill their potential. Each of our Early Years Foundation Stage [EYFS] classrooms across nursery and reception provide a stimulating environment where pupils can play, explore, experiment, develop confidence, be curious, and learn. We believe it is our duty to develop a joy of learning within our pupils, enabling them to feel motivated and excited by the opportunity to learn through play and first hand experiences. This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at Elmwood Infant School & Nursery. The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of practitioners working in the EYFS setting, including both teaching and non-teaching staff.

Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage

In the EYFS setting across Elmwood Infant School & Nursery, we believe that all children are entitled to the best possible start in their school life, both intellectually and emotionally, spiritually and morally 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 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 which differ from 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.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework

Teaching in the Early Year 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:

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

Practitioners must also support activities through **four specific areas of learning** which strengthen the prime areas.

These are:

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

These areas of learning and development address children's physical, cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional development. No one aspect of development stands in isolation from the others as all the areas of learning are closely interlinked. This ensures the delivery of a holistic, child-centred curriculum which allows children to make lots of links between what they are learning. All areas of learning are given equal weighting and value.

The Characteristics of Effective Learning

The characteristics of effective learning and the Prime and Specific areas of learning and development are all interconnected. A child reaches out to relate to people and things through the characteristics of effective learning, which are:

- **Playing and Exploring** - engagement. Children investigate and experience things and 'have a go'.
- **Active Learning** - motivation. Children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties. They enjoy achievements.
- **Creating and thinking critically** - thinking. Children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things.

These characteristics underpin learning and development across all areas of the EYFS curriculum. They also support a child to remain an effective and motivated learner, as children develop in the

context of the environment around them. Our Super Skills also encourage the characteristics of effective learning.

At Elmwood 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.

Active Learning through Play

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 Early Years practitioners provide both structured and unstructured play opportunities both inside and outside. These activities are designed to engage children in practical, first-hand experiences which will support them 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. The EYFS curriculum is essentially a play based curriculum, and pedagogy as the provision of play opportunities underpins its delivery within settings.

Outdoor Learning

At Elmwood we believe that learning outdoors is just as important as indoor learning. We plan for outside learning opportunities, which enable children to experience activities on a larger scale. We ensure that they are different from indoor learning by planning 'real' outside experiences, such as through our mud kitchen and building zone. Children have the opportunity to access the outdoor learning environment both in the morning and in the afternoon. They are able to work alongside children from other classes and they have free-flow opportunities.

Assessment and Record Keeping

Ongoing assessment is an essential aspect of the effective running of the Early Years. 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 recorded in our Learning Journals, which are implemented across the Foundation Stage. Observations are recorded in different formats and these include using the 2Simple software package, sticky labels, photographs and longer narrative style notes. At Elmwood we believe that a Learning Journal should represent the child as a unique individual, reflecting their specific interests and learning styles.

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) inside and outside.

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.

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 schemes 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 adults engaging alongside children in their play and talking with them about their tasks or play. Children's written work is assessed in accordance with our Marking Policy. Children are given specific feedback about their writing linked to our differentiated marking strips. Next steps are shared verbally, and children also have the opportunity to practice them immediately if appropriate.

Learning Journals record children's progress over the academic year in all areas of learning. Samples of children's work are gathered, along with photographic evidence and observations and provide a valuable journey of the learning that has taken place for each child. Parents/carers and children are encouraged to contribute to these journals over the course of the year on Proud Clouds. Parents/carers are invited to make a comment about something they are proud of in relation to their child's learning and achievements at each parent consultation evening. The children have the opportunity to look through their journals and write a comment in response to their work throughout the year.

Baseline assessment is carried out during the children's first two to three weeks upon entering the setting. Judgements made on children's development are based on practitioners' evidence of children's behaviour observed independently and consistently in their self-initiated activities across all areas of learning and development. There is continuous monitoring and assessment of each child's development using the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (2012). This is updated at least once each term using OTrack to monitor individual progress. At the end of the year it provides a summary of every child's development and learning achievements.

Planning

The EYFS framework provides a long term plan to follow by ensuring that all Early Learning Goals are covered throughout the academic year. Two weekly planning is developed across the Early Years Foundation Stage, involving both the Nursery and Reception teaching staff. Our planning takes into account individual children's learning and developmental needs. All areas of learning and development are planned for and available to access across the setting. The learning opportunities provided include a range of adult focused and child initiated activities both indoors and outdoors. Planning is reviewed as a team, and is recorded fortnightly for taught indoor learning, independent indoor learning and

outside learning. Planning is monitored each term by the Senior Leadership Team, as well as by the Early Years Team Leader.

Key Workers

Each child within Nursery and Reception must be assigned a Key Person. The role of the Key Person is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs, to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents. When a child starts attending Elmwood Infant School, practitioners must inform parents and/or carers of the name of the key person, and explain their role.

Admissions

Nursery - Parents are encouraged to apply for a Nursery place for their child when they have reached their third birthday. Application forms for admissions are available from the school office and Nursery places are usually allocated after the Easter holidays. Parents who are unsuccessful at gaining a place are placed on a waiting list.

Reception - Parents of children who require a Reception place must apply to the Local Authority where the school is located. Details of this process can be found on our website and at www.croydon.gov.uk/school-admissions.

All prospective parents are invited to visit the school throughout the Autumn term and are taken on an informal tour by our Head/Deputy Teacher or the Early Years Team Leader. A prospectus is available to all prospective parents. Once pupils have accepted a place they are invited to a New Parents evening which is held towards the end of the summer term; separate meetings being held for children starting in Nursery and in Reception.

Before children start Nursery or Reception, they will be invited to visit their class with their parents. Staff use the visits as an opportunity to start pupils' profiles and gather important information about the pupil.

Parents as Partners

At Elmwood 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. 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 questionnaires 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 and informal chatting 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.

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's evening takes place during the Spring term where practitioners will feedback on children's learning and development progress.

Parents are also invited to get involved with school life. There are opportunities for them to help with activities such as reading, as well as offering their particular skills (e.g. cooking, art, music) to support children's learning. Elmwood is committed to nat the beginning and end of the day. Parents are always welcomed into school and encouraged to discuss any concerns they might have.

Equal Opportunities

All practitioners 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, Special Educational Need, ethnicity, culture or religion, and social circumstances, have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development within the EYFS settings across Elmwood Infant Nursery and Infant School.

Monitoring

At Elmwood, monitoring takes place in a variety of ways. Planning is monitored each term by the Early Years Team Leader and the Senior Leadership Team and Learning Journals are routinely scrutinized. There are half-termly progress meetings to discuss pupil progress and attainment. Lesson observations take place throughout the year which are linked to the requirements of the school development plan.