

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

At Courthouse Green we follow the EYFS framework (2021). Within this framework there are four guiding principles which shape our practice. These are:

1. **Every child is a unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident, and self-assured.
2. Children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**.
3. Children learn and develop well in **enabling environments** with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
4. Children **develop and learn at different rates**. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

At Courthouse Green our **vision** for Early Years is to support children to become lifelong resilient learners with a positive attitude and the ability to work with others.

Our **aims** are to provide exciting and meaningful learning opportunities for children that support the development of the early skills needed to be a successful learner throughout school. Learning is practical and play based, taking place both indoors and outdoors. Children have choice and independence in resourcing and initiating their own learning, taking responsibility for their own resources and actions within a safe and supportive environment. Open ended opportunities encourage children to investigate and explore, asking questions and developing possibilities. Adults play and learn alongside the children, skilfully moving children's learning on through questioning and sustained shared thinking strategies.

In the Early Years we form the foundations to develop the school's **core values**. These are:



Intent

We use the school's core values as well as the Thrive programme to help achieve our vision for our Early Years children at Courthouse Green. A growth mindset is promoted throughout.

Alongside the Early Learning Goals we have some key outcomes that we want our children to leave the Foundation Stage with. These are what we would like the children to be able to say at the end of their Reception Year;

- I am independent
- I am unique
- I am a part of my community.

Across the foundation stage we provide a broad, balanced, differentiated curriculum which addresses the children's social, emotional, physical, intellectual, moral and cultural development within a safe, secure, stimulating environment. A Good level of Development at the end of the foundation stage is a child achieving the early learning goals in PSED, CAL, PD, Mathematics and Literacy.

The children who typically attend Courthouse Green are working well below expected standards, particularly in Communication and Language. This has led us to focus our curriculum and provision around **high quality books** and provide a **language rich environment**.

The Curriculum

Our curriculum encompasses seven areas of learning and development. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected.

Three areas are particularly important for building a foundation for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, forming relationships, and thriving.

These are called the prime areas:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social, and emotional development.

Four areas help children to strengthen and apply the prime areas.

These are called the specific areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

Throughout their time in the Reception Year our children partake in an ambitious curriculum which is designed in a sequential way to ensure progress towards the end of reception goals. These goals are defined as Early Learning Goals (ELGs).

As previously outlined our curriculum incorporates learning through play, learning by adults modelling, by observing each other and through guided learning and direct teaching. It is also important to highlight that our plans are flexible to allow us to respond quickly to children's new interests and/or needs.

Weaving throughout the EYFS curriculum at Courthouse Green are three **Characteristics of Effective Learning**.

- **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

These elements underpin how we reflect on each child's development and adjust our practice accordingly.

Supporting children in their individual learning behaviour and observing the context of children's play is essential.

Implementation

The curriculum is planned around exciting books and themes to capture children's interests whilst developing key skills. Progression in knowledge, skills and learning behaviours is mapped out which will enable the children to achieve the key outcomes and the Early Learning goals. This is found in the **Progression document for Early Years**. We aim for the highest quality of teaching and learning and achieve this through CPD and continuous monitoring. A balanced cycle of observations, assessments and planning leads us to provide high quality provision in Early Years; where we ensure the needs of the children are met and promote parental engagement to support learning.

Impact

Leaders consider the outcomes children achieve as a result of the curriculum they have designed and implemented. When we are evaluating the impact of the curriculum we have provided the focus will be primarily on what children have learnt and the progress made.

A focussed systematic approach of observations, monitoring, data analysis and Pupil Progress Meetings take place to ensure effective impact of teaching and learning.

Observation, Assessment and planning in the Foundation Stage

Observation

Children are observed as they play and learn in the Foundation Stage. The following forms of observation are carried out:

On entry to Nursery and Conkers an initial observation sheet is completed for all children by October half term. This includes information from the home visit, how children have settled in, the relationships they are forming, levels of language and communication and what their main interests are. This enables staff to plan for the following half term based on children's needs and interests.

In Nursery and Conkers each week key children are identified to be a focus for the week; each child will be a focus over a half term. During this week the key worker carries out **focussed observations** of the children. The key worker writes a summary of what the observations are showing about the child's learning and next steps and shares these with the team.

On entry to Reception children complete a range of learning tasks to enable teachers to complete baseline assessments across all areas of the curriculum. Teachers use observations alongside these learning tasks to make secure judgements against the development matters.

WOW moments are photographs accompanied by short observations made at any time by any member of staff when they observe something significant in a child's learning or development. These are recorded on Ipads using the Seesaw app. Anybody working with the children should be encouraged to make observations of the children's learning, students, parents, child minders, these can be written or verbally passed on to the child's key worker. Key workers monitor the range and number of observations each child has and to ensure children make progress across all areas of the curriculum.

Each week, staff carry out a **summary of learning and progress** for the focus children. This includes :

- Monitoring the learning journals; looking at the range of evidence across the curriculum (evidenced on monitoring sheet) and checking the progress the journal shows.
- Analysing the significant observations
- By looking at this wide range of evidence staff will verbally share a **summary of characteristics of effective learning; a summary of new learning and progress and identify the next steps in a child's learning** to feed into the following weeks planning.

All observations are used to:

- Carry out ongoing assessments of the children to ensure they making progress in their learning.

- Inform future planning so it meets the children's needs, interests and next steps.
- Complete a termly summary of children's achievements against the development matters record sheets to identify the development bands the children are working in.
- Complete the foundation stage profile in reception.

Assessment

The children's learning journals are an ongoing form of assessment. A child's key worker is responsible for the updating of the learning journals. The photo observations are kept on the Seesaw app whilst any pictures, writing or other significant pieces of work are filed in the child's journal. Parents and carers are encouraged to upload any photographs or work from home or other settings. Children, staff and parents can access the learning journals at any time.

Key features of learning journals are:

- Journals reflect the unique child by celebrating their achievements and showing their interests.
- All observations are learning focused and clearly comment on the skills the children are developing, the use of a development matters sticker is used.
- All work is dated
- The level of support given is identified by marking work with T/LSA (supported) and the level of support (1, 2 or 3) or I (independent)
- All pieces included will demonstrate the progress a child is making across the curriculum.
- All work is annotated to either explain the significance of the piece or to add the children's words and comments.
- Teachers/ keyworkers will regularly add sticky labels to observations or pieces of work that mark significant achievements in a child's learning journey.
- In Reception all writing has a visual success criteria that teachers mark using green and pink.
- In Reception, children respond to feedback and marking by practising the skill 3 times.
- **Key features of floor books are:** showing how language is developed through exciting experiences, celebrates the diversity of all children, captures language samples and provides an emotional hook for children to retrieval past knowledge.

During the focus week Key workers spend time looking through the journal and the class floor book with the child and are encouraged to make reflections on their learning. Parents are encouraged to add home learning or comment on photographs from school.

Each term staff use the observations and knowledge of their children to summarise children's achievements and record them on Tiny tracker. Staff are asked to use the **key milestones** children are expected to have achieved by a certain point in the year and then make a judgment as to whether a child is working on track (expected) or not on track (below or well below) age related expectations in each area of learning. These milestones have been identified and an **assessment grid** produced to ensure consistency across Early Years. A moderation session each term in school and across the network ensures consistent judgements across the setting and network.

Staff complete detailed **data analysis** to look at the trends of the cohort and different groups to ensure future planning meets the needs of all groups. Termly data is shared across the whole team so that all staff are aware of the levels of development the children are working at to target support appropriately.

Children in Reception are assessed against the Read, Write Inc. assessment criteria throughout the year and are grouped according to ability. Children's progress is tracked as they move through the Read, Write Inc. scheme.

If assessments show children are not making progress in a particular area or are working significantly below their expected age they will be discussed with the SENCO and may have an individual action plan written for them which will identify additional support or be referred to outside agencies.

Children's assessments and achievements are shared at termly parents meetings and all children receive an end of year report.

Planning

Planning is produced from the observations and assessments of the children and supports the next steps in their learning and development.

The Read, Write Inc. programme is started at the beginning of Reception and planning is based on the stage the children are working at. Children are grouped according to their individual assessments. In Nursery, staff familiarise the children with the speed sound picture poster and ensure they have the vocabulary to access the pictures. Nursery children play lots of games encouraging listening skills, sound discrimination and sound talking and blending to prepare children for formal phonics teaching in Reception.

Long term planning ensures that all the commitments and principles of the EYFS are addressed and met through the provision and organisation.

Each area of provision has **continuous provision** plans written that identify resources, development matters and possible learning in child initiated activity and include sustained shared thinking prompts and questions to support staff interactions.

Medium term planning is completed in line with the curriculum map for the foundation stage. Medium term plans are written as skills grids by the year teams and are based on the knowledge and assessments of the children; they provide possible activities to cover across the areas of learning ensuring all identified key skills are addressed through a balance of adult led and child initiated learning.

Short term planning is a weekly plan of activities and resources to support the children's development. The planning identifies specific development matters statements that will be focussed on through adult led, adult supported and child initiated activities. The weekly planning includes the identified next steps activities from the previous week's observations. All planning is adapted and evaluated from the observations of the children.

Meeting the needs of all children

Each child in the foundation stage is observed, assessed and planned for as individuals. Through pupil progress meetings and ongoing staff discussions all members of the team are aware of children's needs and levels of ability. Activities are planned for children to choose independently but particular children may be identified to take part in activities that are going to support or extend them in an area of their learning such as maths challenges for our more able mathematicians, turn taking games for children who need support with their personal, social and emotional skills or language based activities that will support our EAL learners. At times specific intervention programmes will be run to support particular needs that have been identified.

Reviewed – March 2022

To be reviewed – September 2025