

Junior School: EYFS Curriculum Policy

At Colfe's, we believe that Early Years children bring to school a set of unique qualities and characteristics. Each child has a right to develop emotionally and intellectually, and we aim to achieve this by providing an enriching curriculum with a balance of child-led play and adult guided activities, both indoors and outdoors. Our highly skilled early years practitioners are committed to ensuring a high quality of learning and development for each child. Our School Values underpin every part of our day and children thrive in our Early Years classrooms.

INTENT

.At Colfe's Junior School we aim for our Early Years children to:

- Be safe and healthy within our learning environment.
- Develop a sense of belonging and willingness to contribute to our school and wider community.
- Understand themselves as a learner, both at an individual and group level.
- Have positive relationships with the adults that care for them.
- Access a rich curriculum that challenges and inspires.
- Be able to effectively express themselves to others and have clear speech and a rich vocabulary.
- Understand their emotions, have the language to describe them and to be able to manage them at an age-appropriate level.
- Be confident about their abilities as a reader, and have excellent phonic and comprehension skills.
- By the end of the Reception year, make good progress from their starting points in the Specific Areas of Learning (Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World, Expressive Arts and Design).
- Be equipped with the skills and knowledge to enjoy a smooth and meaningful transition into Year 1.

IMPLEMENTATION – How we realise these aims:

We encourage the children to:

Be safe and healthy within our learning environment

We follow the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework (September 2021) which sets the standards for learning, development, and care for children from birth to 5 years. We actively safeguard and promote the welfare of all our children and know that they will learn most effectively when they are healthy, safe, and secure. We provide a setting that encompasses a safe and stimulating environment where children can enjoy learning and grow in confidence and independence.

Develop a sense of belonging and willingness to contribute to our school and wider community

This is achieved through involving our families in school activities so that children see a connection between home and school, fostering a sense of belonging. Cultural inclusion is achieved through individual form teachers incorporating cultural elements and languages from the children's backgrounds into the learning environment; for example, by inviting parents into school to talk about significant religious festivals or through school events such as 'Heritage Day'. We encourage the children to understand the importance of rights and responsibilities by establishing classroom rules and also involving their parents in community projects such as garden planting, harvesting in Forest School and recycling responsibly.

Understand themselves as a learner at both an individual and group level

We immerse our Early Years children in our Core Values (Love of Learning, Kindness, Honesty, Resilience, Team, Effort, Respect) which are at the heart of every experience we offer and drive our pastoral and academic provision. These Values assist us in embedding a language of learning and help the children to understand and talk about their learning experiences. We recognise that every child is a unique and competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident, and self-assured. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others and the restorative approach of our behaviour policy reflects this; we use praise and encouragement at all times.

Have positive relationships with the adults that care for them

We work in partnership with parents to provide the best possible start to school and a lifelong love of learning. As their child's first educator, we involve parents and carers at every stage in their child's learning in school, encouraging them to join in regularly with their child's activities and support them with learning sent home. Regular opportunities are planned across the year for parents to attend performances, come into school to share their own skills and experiences and to be involved in school life. We keep parents thoroughly up to date on their child's progress through first-hand and digital means, and we rely on parents for information about their child's home experience.

Access a rich curriculum that challenges and inspires

We have designed a curriculum that builds on what our children already know and can do, ensures that no child is excluded or disadvantaged and matches the needs of young children, with activities that provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors. We provide a rich, play based and stimulating learning environment, and one that is systematically planned to ensure all learning is rehearsed, applied and revisited whilst being relevant to our unique context and ambitious for each child:

- It builds on what our children already know and can do;
- It ensures that no child is excluded or disadvantaged;
- Its content matches the needs of young children, with activities that provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors;
- It provides a rich, play based and stimulating learning environment facilitating the characteristics of effective learning;
- It is systematically planned to ensure all learning is rehearsed, applied and revisited;
- It is relevant to our unique context and ambitious for each child.

The early years curriculum is comprised of seven areas of learning and development that are equally important and interconnected. The Prime Areas are:

- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development

These Prime Areas are strengthened and applied through four Specific Areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understand the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

Equally important are the Characteristics of Effective Learning, which ensure children develop the skills they need to be engaged, motivate and curious, and able to make sense of the world around them whilst setting them up to become life-long learners:

- Playing and Exploring

- Active Learning
- Thinking and Creatively and Critically

We plan our curriculum using a topic cycle that repeats every other year. Our 'free flow' provision is planned to include opportunities for extension and child requested activities as well as planned adult led learning. Outdoor learning mirrors the topic and learning for that term or week. We strive to use high quality texts and enticing experiences to 'hook' children into their learning and a range of educational visits, (including those within our local community), bring learning to life. Teachers identify and respond to children's interests and expertise when planning activities. This may include finding books of a particular type, or resources to inspire the children to develop their learning through their own interests and fascinations.

The progression of skills and learning is shown in our 'Colfe's Skills Ladders' and these have developed to ensure a progression of skills and learning in Literacy and Mathematics. Teachers use the Skills Ladders alongside the non-statutory document, Development Matters (2021), to ensure that activities meet the needs of our children. In planning activities, we reflect on the different ways that children learn and the Characteristics of Effective Learning guide us in providing a breadth and depth of experiences as well as targeted questioning, modelling and personalised observations.

Subject knowledge of the EYFS curriculum is strong amongst our practitioners and is used to plan a broad, balanced, and progressive learning environment and curriculum for all our pupils. We use resources which reflect the diversity of our EYFS cohort as well as the wider society, and which are free from discrimination and stereotyping.

Be able to effectively express themselves to others and have clear speech and a rich vocabulary

We give a high priority to our provision for Communication and Language development. Teachers introduce exciting and ambitious vocabulary through regular opportunities for rhyme, song, stories, word play and talk. They plan weekly opportunities for story telling through the Tales Toolkit programme. Building further on our oracy focus, children are encouraged to employ subject specific language and terminology in foundation subjects, and this vocabulary will be modelled by supporting practitioners. In Nursery, children have a word or words of the week based on the topic or a particular word that has been of interest to the children. Children have the opportunity to practise these words in context and are praised for extending their vocabulary or suggesting new words.

Understand their emotions, have the language to describe them and to be able to manage them at an age appropriate level

We give a high priority to the Early Years child's Personal, Social and Emotional development. This area of learning is an important part of our whole school pastoral provision. Just as we teach children to read, write and be numerate, so we also support them in forming positive relationships with adults and their peers, self-regulating and managing their emotions, building their confidence and self-esteem and empowering them to make their needs known.

Be confident about their abilities as a reader, and to have the necessary phonic and comprehension skills

Reading is at the heart of our curriculum and our aim is to encourage a love of reading from the start of entry to the Junior School. Our planning centres on exposing the children to a core range of books that have been specifically selected to develop their oracy, vocabulary, and comprehension. These core texts are embedded in our provision through activities, story sessions and within classroom displays for children to access independently. Through these means, the children begin to internalise new vocabulary and language structures and begin to retell stories. Our approach here moves the children gradually from dependence towards independence, with the teacher using shared and guided teaching to develop the ability to write creatively and powerfully.

We follow the Read, Write Inc Phonics programme and this follows the children through to Key Stage 1, ensuring a consistent approach to learning phonics. Children from Reception onwards are assessed each half-term and assigned to phonics groups which match their current level of phonics ability. Each EYFS and KS1 class teacher and teaching assistant has been trained in delivering the programme, allowing the formation of small groups split across each year group and more targeted teaching. Our emphasis in Nursery is to get children attuned to the sounds around them and ready to begin developing oral blending and segmenting skills; we use Phase 1 of Letters and Sounds to develop listening and speaking skills by focusing on sound awareness, laying the foundation for later phonics learning by introducing concepts such as environmental sounds, rhythm, rhyme and oral blending and segmenting, all without directly teaching letter-sound correspondences. Within our phonics teaching, our aim is for children to 'keep up' rather than 'catch up', and one to one tutoring can be put into place for individual children where appropriate from Reception onwards.

Children are encouraged to read from home and are listened to regularly in school. They take home reading books that match their current level of phonic knowledge in order for them to apply their learning and become successful, confident and fluent readers. Children receive a reading book to take home from the Summer term in Nursery. Weekly library sessions are timetabled from the start of Nursery, during which the important skills of browsing and retrieving texts are taught. These sessions are aimed at fostering a love of reading and handling 'real' books. The Junior School Book Vending Machine also fosters a culture of reading for pleasure across the school, and is situated in Junior Office.

By the end of the Reception year, to make at least good progress from their starting points in the specific areas of learning (Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World, Expressive Arts and Design)

Alongside the teaching of literacy skills, Mathematics is also taught as a further Specific Area of Learning. In Nursery, children develop a love of Mathematics through games, songs, rhymes, and play using concrete manipulatives. Nursery children have small group sessions three times a week and a further focus session to allow the children an opportunity to apply their learned skills.

In Reception our Mathematics teaching follows the White Rose Maths Scheme, which adopts a problem solving and reasoning approach. High quality learning environments and meaningful interactions with adults support our children in developing mathematical thinking and discussion. There is a focus on the counting principles of 'one-to-one correspondence', 'stable order' and 'cardinal order'. The children learn through games and activities using concrete manipulatives and pictorial structures and representations which are rehearsed, applied and recorded within their own child led exploration. Mathematics sessions are delivered four times a week in Reception, and a 'table top' activity forms part of the continuous and specific daily provision.

Personal and Social and Emotional Development

This Prime Area of Learning is an important part of our whole school pastoral provision. Our Junior School Behaviour Policy, based on restorative practice, has been developed with an understanding that EYFS children need time to develop strong relationships with adults in school. EYFS staff understand that consistency of language is crucial in supporting children's decisions and choices, and positive statements are always used; for example, encouraging children to think about their choices, (using 'kind hands' and 'kind words', having 'good listening ears' and demonstrating 'good walking feet'). References are made to relevant class charters to reinforce the importance of keeping everyone safe, happy and learning. Staff *respond* rather than *react* to less than expected behaviours, understanding that these can be a primary way for EYFS children to communicate and share their feelings and concerns, whilst working on 'using our words' to navigate difficult situations. There is a focus on talking about emotions and feelings ('name it to tame it'), as well as co-regulation and modelling of healthy ways to manage difficult situations. The aim is for our youngest children to gain strategies for controlling their emotions; for example, talking a situation through, ("I'll get a chance soon"), or changing their goals so that they turn to another activity whilst waiting for the one that was their first choice.

Wider Curriculum

Our wider curriculum is taught through 'Understanding the World' and 'Expressive Arts and Design'. Through these areas, exciting, purposeful and contextual activities are planned to build on children's natural curiosity and could involve them thinking like a 'scientist' or 'engineer' as they explore a range of materials and test out their ideas whilst grappling with challenges such as making a hat or boat for their favourite toy. Opportunities for the children to explore and share their thoughts, ideas and feelings are planned for through a variety of art, design and technology, music, movement, imaginative and role play activities. Outdoor and adventurous play and learning alongside twice weekly PE sessions delivered by specialist coaches, develop the children's physical skills as well as personal attributes of teamwork and cooperation. Weekly 'Big Draw' whole class lessons guide children to produce artwork far beyond that expected within the pre-schematic stage and, whilst developing the creative skills and attitudes of all children, has a positive impact on those exceeding in this area of learning.

Each Nursery and Reception child experiences a Forest School session on a weekly basis. The sessions are delivered by a qualified Forest School Leader and offer a unique educational experience using the outdoor environment as a classroom. Sessions instill confidence as the children are given freedom, time and space to learn and demonstrate independence. The gain increased awareness of the impact of their actions on others through team activities such as sharing tools and harvesting their grown produce. The forest school area holds fascination for the children, and they soon develop a keenness to participate, building up their levels of concentration over longer periods of time.

Be equipped with the skills and knowledge to enjoy a smooth and meaningful transition into Year 1

A range of mechanisms are in place to ensure a smooth and successful transition for our Reception children into Year 1. During the final term of Reception, we start to introduce some activities which reflect those that the children will experience the following year; for example, short spelling tests. The children are visited by Year 1 teachers for a story session, and this is followed during the final half-term by a visit to a Year 1 class for a

story session. At the end of the Summer term we hold a 'moving up afternoon', during which the Reception children visit their new teacher and spend half a day with them, experiencing an outside play session in the KSI playground, and finding out about their new classroom as well as which children will be in their new class. During the final week they will have lunch with their Reception teachers in the senior school dining room to familiarise themselves with this space, having spent their time in EYFS eating in the Junior School Hall.

The Year 1 curriculum is one of Continuous Provision, a model that provides children with access to resources and play based learning opportunities throughout the day. Whilst this is a departure from the EYFS 'free flow' experience in which children can move freely between different learning areas, both indoors and outdoors, the Year 1 curriculum is planned maintains the early years emphasis on encouraging children to be independent learners. Forest School sessions continue into Year 1, on a twice per half-term basis.

Early Years children are assessed at point of entry in Nursery and Reception and throughout the school year to identify areas of need and teachers work closely with Learning Support to provide support within the classroom and to signpost external agency support.

IMPACT

Assessment

All children have a baseline assessment on entry to Nursery and at the start of their Reception year. Our baseline assessment reflects our curriculum; it incorporates Development Matters age-appropriate activities for all seven areas of learning and includes Read Write Inc phonics assessments. Class teachers complete baseline assessments in the first three weeks of the Autumn term. Using the baseline assessments, teachers determine which children require support and in which areas, and plan accordingly.

Ongoing assessment is an integral part of our teaching and learning processes. Staff carry out observations of the children to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, using these to inform their future planning and 'next steps' for each child. Observations shared by parents are also used to shape activities planned for.

'In the moment' assessments are often made during activities where children are deeply engaged and which can sometimes lead naturally to periods of sustained and shared thinking, during which levels of cognitive development and self-esteem as well as current schemas, are revealed. Observations are uploaded using Tapestry and can be shared with parents. Nursery staff give high priority to the Prime areas and understand their priority in children's learning and development.

There are a range of additional interventions and support if a child is assessed as not reaching their potential in one or more areas of learning. This might include support in developing speech and language skills, social skills and phonics. Some children will need more help than others and we focus our efforts on making sure that every child can participate in activities at their own level, scaffolding up rather than differentiating down wherever

possible and not offering less challenging learning, but supporting children to access all parts of the rich curriculum on offer. If a child is assessed as demonstrating a greater depth of understanding in one or more areas of learning, and needing further challenge, enriching activities will be planned for.

Parent consultations are held in the Autumn and Spring terms, with the Autumn consultation taking place during the first half-term and forming a 'settling in' discussion. In the final term of their Reception year, the EYFS Profile is completed for each child. The Profile provides parents, current practitioners and receiving Year 1 teachers with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels, and their readiness for Year 1. The Profile reflects ongoing observations, all relevant records held by Reception practitioners and discussions with all those involved in a child's care and education. Each child's level of development is assessed against the Early Learning Goals which indicate whether children are meeting expected levels of development (Expected) or not yet reaching them (Emerging). The majority of children reach an Expected level in their Early Learning Goals by the end of their Reception year.

The overall impact of the EYFS experience at Colfe's is reflected in the well rounded, happy, and confident children that transition into Year 1, where they demonstrate curiosity, independence, resilience, and other characteristics of effective learning.

February 2025