

Early Years Policy

Meir Heath Academy



Approved by: Mrs M Southern

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The term Early Years Foundation Stage is used to describe children who are in our Reception classes.

This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the EYFS at Meir Heath Academy. The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of all practitioners working in the EYFS setting. At Meir Heath Academy we believe that all children are entitled to the best possible start to their school life and effective learning and development for young children requires high quality care and education by all practitioners.

At Meir Heath Academy, we want all children to be engaged in the learning process and for their learning to be relevant and purposeful. We believe children develop rapidly during the early years; physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially and that play, both indoors and outdoors, is an ideal vehicle for young children's learning and development. Play based activities help children to explore, investigate, communicate and make sense of the world around them. Children are naturally inquisitive and curious; therefore we aim to provide a stimulating and focussed environment. All children in the Foundation stage should feel included, secure and valued and no child should be disadvantaged.

At Meir Heath Academy we aim to provide the highest quality care and education for all our children thereby giving them a strong foundation for their future learning.

Aim s

- To create a safe and happy environment with motivating and enjoyable learning experiences that enable children to become confident and independent.
- To value the individual child.
- To value and respect the role of parents and carers and to work alongside parents and others to meet their needs and help every child to reach their full potential, building on what they already know, developing a positive attitude towards learning and an enjoyment of learning.
- To provide a range of opportunities to learn through direct experience, enquiry and active exploration, in the classroom and outdoors, using a wide variety of resources.
- To encourage independence and confidence.

As outlined in the EYFS 'Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances.'

We adhere to the Statutory Framework of the EYFS and the four guiding principles that shape practice within Early Years settings.

- Every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- Children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**.
- Children learn and develop well in **enabling environments**, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- **Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.**

Principles into practice

As part of our practice we:

- Provide a balanced curriculum, based on the EYFS, across the seven areas of learning, using play as the vehicle for learning.
- Promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice. We provide early intervention for those children who require additional support.
- Work in partnership with parents and within the wider context.
- Plan challenging learning experiences, based on the individual child, informed by observation and assessment.
- Provide opportunities for children to engage in activities that are adult-initiated and child-initiated, supported by the adult.
- Provide a secure and safe learning environment both indoors and outdoors.

Foundation Stage Curriculum

We plan an exciting and challenging curriculum based on our observation of children's needs, interests, and stages of development across the seven areas of learning to enable the children to achieve and exceed the early learning goals.

All the seven areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected.

Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

These three areas are the **prime** areas:

Communication and Language

Physical Development

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Children are also supported through the four **specific** areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

The **specific** areas are:

Literacy

Mathematics

Understanding the World

Expressive Arts and Design

Children are provided with a range of rich, meaningful first-hand experiences in which children explore, think creatively and are active. We aim to develop and foster positive attitudes towards learning, confidence, communication and physical development.

Children have whole group and small group times, these include a daily phonics session using 'Letters and Sounds', teaching aspects of Mathematics and Literacy, including shared reading and writing.

The curriculum is delivered using a play-based approach as outlined by the EYFS.

'Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities'.

We plan a balance between children having time and space to engage in their own child-initiated activities and those that are planned by the adults. During children's play, early years practitioners interact to stretch and challenge children further. In planning and guiding children's activities, we reflect as practitioners on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in our practice.

We create a stimulating environment to encourage children to free-flow between inside and out.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

- Playing and Exploring
- Active Learning
- Creating and Thinking Critically

The characteristics of effective learning describes factors which play a central role in a child's learning and in becoming an effective learner. The characteristics of effective learning run through and underpin all seven areas of learning and development, representing processes rather than outcomes.

Children are born ready, able and eager to learn. They actively reach out to interact with other people, and the world around them. Development is not an automatic process however, it depends on each unique child having opportunities to interact in positive relationships and enabling environments.

Observation and Assessment

- Children entering Reception are observed during the first three weeks. These observations form the basis of our baseline assessments upon entry (alongside nursery records, where they are provided by pre-school settings).
- As part of our daily practice we observe and assess children's development and learning to inform our future plans.
- Monitoring of each child takes place through daily informal observations, discussion, photographs, and record keeping and planned formative assessments.
- Continual informal and formal assessments undertaken by staff provide opportunities to identify any special educational needs a child may have. Children identified with special educational needs are monitored and initial concerns are discussed with parents and the SENCO. Additional advice may be sought from other agencies e.g. speech and language therapy service.
- Significant observations of children's achievements are collated in their own personal learning journey. All staff are expected to contribute to each child's learning journey and discussions take place between staff. Parents are welcome to contribute to their child's learning journey, by providing evidence of what their child has independently achieved outside of school.
- During each school term, parents are invited to attend a parents evening and reports are written once a year.
- Within the final term of Reception, we provide the parent's with a report based on their child's development against each of the Early Learning Goals and the characteristics of their learning. The parents are then given the opportunity to discuss these judgements with the Reception teacher in preparation for Year 1.

Admissions

- See admissions policy

Safety

Children's safety and welfare is paramount. We create a safe and secure environment and provide a curriculum which teaches children how to be safe, make choices and assess risks. We have stringent policies, procedures and documents in place to ensure children's safety.

We promote the good health of the children in our care in numerous ways including the provision of nutritious food; All children have free fruit and milk (until the month after their 5th birthday for milk) and access to water throughout the day. During the afternoon all children sit together in classes to have a drink and a piece of fruit. We follow set procedures when children become ill or have an accident.

Inclusion

We value all our children as individuals at Meir Heath Academy, irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability or gender. We plan a curriculum that meet the needs of the individual child and support them at their own pace so that most of our children achieve and even exceed the Early Learning Goals. We strongly believe that early identification of children with additional needs is crucial in enabling us to give the child the support that they need and in doing so, work closely with parents and outside agencies.

Partnership with parents

We wholeheartedly value and respect the contribution and knowledge of all parents and carers as we recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators. We promote democracy and therefore operate in a way that includes parents as much as possible. All parents encouraged to attend termly parents' evenings, open days and special school based events. The EYFS offers an open door policy for parents with any queries.

Working with other services and organisations is integral to our practice in order to meet the needs of our children. At times we may need to share information with other professionals to provide the best support possible.

We use our community link to enrich children's experiences by taking them on outings and by inviting members of the community into our setting.

Moderation and Review

The SLT carry out moderation and evaluation termly through learning walks, book scrutiny and discussion with staff and pupils. This is part of the whole school moderation process.

Safeguarding

See safeguarding policy

Discipline

At Meir Heath Academy positive behaviour is expected and encouraged. We operate a reward system and praise good behaviour and attitudes. Age appropriate strategies are used to develop a safe and secure environment for learning.