

# **ALDERMAN RICHARD HALLAM PRIMARY SCHOOL**

## **Early Years Foundation Stage Policy**



# Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

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## Our Aims

At Alderman Richard Hallam Primary School, we aim to provide the highest quality care and education for all our children thereby giving them a strong foundation for their future learning. We create a safe and happy environment with motivating and enjoyable learning experiences that enable children to become confident and independent. We value the individual child and work alongside parents and carers to meet their needs and help every child to reach their full potential. This policy is part of the mission of the school:

Pupils will leave A.R.H. as happy, healthy and inspired young people who can confidently participate in the world as resilient, articulate citizens who have a life-long love of learning, creativity and discovery.

Our curriculum is the vehicle to empower pupils with knowledge and skills. We strive to immerse young people in their topics which are designed to engage, provide real life links and progress all pupils' understanding.

### **'A.R.H. - Educating a community of life-long learners'**

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.

### 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.
- Ensure quality and consistency so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind.
- 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 carers, 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.
- Have a key-person approach to develop close relationships with individual children.
- Provide a secure and safe learning environment indoors and out.

### **The Overarching Principles**

- 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 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.
- Learning and development are vitally important; children develop and learn at different rates.

*'A child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances.'*

- EYFS FRAMEWORK 2021

## The Right to Play and Child Agency

We believe that all children have the right to play. Play is central to young children's learning and wellbeing, helping them explore, imagine, connect and make sense of their world. Our settings are places where play is celebrated, and where children lead their own learning in ways that are meaningful and motivating.

We respect children's agency by providing time, space and support for them to explore their interests, make choices, take risks and express themselves. Staff tune into children's ideas and responses, using them to shape the environment and curriculum. We ensure children feel heard, valued and empowered in their own learning journey. Staff will always ensure play is safe but will encourage children to take calculated and measured risk to allow the development of core skills such as gross motor.

## 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 children to achieve and exceed the early learning goals.

All the seven areas of learning and development are important and interconnected. 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.

Our curriculum is always developing based on children's experiences and ideas. Children are a very important part of the planning process and it is their ideas that form our topics.

Staff working with the youngest children in Nursery will focus strongly on the three prime areas, which are the basis for successful learning in the other four specific areas. The three prime areas reflect the key skills and capacities all children need to develop and learn effectively, and become ready for school. The balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning as the children move through the Early Years at Alderman Richard Hallam and grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas.

Children have whole group and small group sessions which increase as they progress through the EYFS with daily phonics sessions using the 'Partnership Phonics' program in Reception and the 'Supersounds' program in Nursery. The teaching of different aspects of Mathematics and Literacy, including shared reading and writing is also increased across the year and phases as the children become more advanced in their skills.

The curriculum is delivered using a play-based approach as outlined in Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum guidance:

*'Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals and solve problems. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults.'*

All staff 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, staff use the skill of play partnering which enables them to stretch and challenge children's learning further as well as developing their knowledge, skills and language.

Staff will stimulate children's interests, responding to each child's emerging needs and guiding their development through warm, positive interactions coupled with secure routines for play and learning.

In planning and guiding children's activities, staff will reflect on the different rates at which children are developing and adjust their practice appropriately. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

- 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

The Characteristics of Effective Learning are linked to the school's Ingredients for Success (I.F.S.). Superhero certificates and stickers are used to encourage children to participate in their own learning, helping them in setting their own goals, being proud of achievements and encouraging independence. These are shared with parents and carers on a weekly basis.

## Learning Environments

Our environments are intentionally designed to be calm, nurturing and inspiring. They reflect children's cultures, promote independence and support challenge across the curriculum. Continuous provision allows children to revisit and deepen learning, while open-ended materials encourage creativity and critical thinking.

We ensure our outdoor environment is an essential part of the curriculum, offering children the freedom to explore on a larger scale and connect with the natural world. Practitioners review the environment regularly to adapt and improve provision in response to children's evolving needs and interests.

A risk assessment is conducted regularly to ensure all learning spaces meet health and safety expectations and are safe for the pupils to explore independently.

## Observation and Assessment

As part of our daily practice, we observe and assess children's development and learning to inform our future plans. Staff carry out initial and baseline assessments at the start of the year to help them identify the children's starting points. The skills that children need to develop are then planned carefully throughout the term, week-by-week, with activities linked to help children achieve these skills. Continuous observations are made throughout and are carried out in a variety of ways. Everyone is encouraged to contribute and discussions take place. Children's achievements and day-to-day interactions are shared with parents and carers via Seesaw. Parents and carers are encouraged to contribute to their child's Learning Journey through informal chats, written annotations and 'wow' moment notes. These on-going observations are used to inform the EYFS Profile/developmental matter bands and future next steps. Next steps are encouraged with questioning, carefully timed interactions and quality discussions with children. Children's work which showcases a progressive step are gathered in their learning journeys alongside any written informal observations.

The Reception Baseline Assessment is a short assessment taken in the first six weeks in which a child starts Reception.

*'The purpose of the reception baseline assessment is to provide an on-entry assessment of pupil attainment to be used as a starting point from which a cohort-level progress measure to the end of key stage 2 (KS2) can be created.'*

*- DfE February 2020*

Nursery and Reception will also carry out their own baseline assessments in the first six weeks once a child starts their setting. These assessments will be general observations while the child is accessing different areas of the provision and will give staff an indication of their strengths and starting points at that moment in time. They will also allow staff to see a

child's interests and passions. 'All about me' forms given out prior to starting school will also be shared with parents and carers and used to inform baseline assessments.

*'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.'*

- EYFS 2021

Quality observations are the best way to capture children's learning and progress. Staff will make observations from interactions and play partnering with the children and use these to help them to understand their level of achievement as well as their interests, passions and learning styles. These observations will then inform the onward learning journey of that child.

If you require any further information about observations or assessments, please contact your child's class teacher.

### **Embedding the learning**

Staff will work hard to ensure that learning is embedded by giving children a secure understanding before moving on to new activities and ideas. Children will be given repeated opportunities to tackle the same activities and skills.

### **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 good choices and assess risks. We have stringent policies, procedures and documents in place to ensure the safety of children in our care. Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them. We ensure that the safeguarding and welfare requirements, specified in the EYFS, are adhered to in order to help us to create a high quality learning environment and provision which is welcoming, safe and stimulating, and where children are able to enjoy learning and grow in confidence.

Each child in the EYFS is assigned a key person whose role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs. The key person helps the child become familiar with routines, provides a settled relationship for the child and builds a working relationship with their parents or carers.

Personal mobile telephones or cameras are not allowed in the Foundation setting to take photographs for a child's Learning Journey. Only school equipment will be used for this purpose. Once photographs have been taken, they are saved and stored on school's ICT equipment which is securely password protected. Once a child leaves the school, photographs will be deleted from school ICT equipment unless it is necessary to retain these

images as evidence of a child's achievement or proof that certain activities have been completed. Parents and carers are requested to complete a permission form which allows the school to use photographs for displays around school, on the school website or for stories about the school in the press. For more information regarding the use of ICT within the EYFS, please refer to the school's ICT and Technology Policies (<https://www.arhprimary.co.uk/ict-and-technology/>) or contact Miss Ellis or Mr Holder via the school website.

If you require any further information about safeguarding, please refer to our school website (<https://www.arhprimary.co.uk/topic/safeguarding>).

### **Inclusion**

We value all children as individuals at Alderman Richard Hallam, irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability or gender. We plan a curriculum that meets the needs of the individual child and supports them at their own pace so that most of our children achieve 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.

If you require any further information about inclusion, please contact Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator, Mrs Nanda. Contact information can be found on the website at <https://www.arhprimary.co.uk/contact-details/>

### **Parents and Carers as Partners and the Wider Context**

We strive to create and maintain partnerships with parents and carers as we recognise that together, we can have a significant impact on a child's learning. We welcome and actively encourage parents and carers to participate confidently in their child's education and care in numerous ways, through working together with your child's key person, attending play sessions and workshops, and supporting the Foundation Stage team with a range of curricular activities.

Working with other services and organisations is also 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. Please refer to the school's Data Protection Policy for more information on how data is shared and stored within the school. This can be found on the school website.

We draw on our links with the community to enrich children's experiences by taking them on outings or inviting members of the community into our setting to talk to children about what they do.

## **Transitions**

Transitions are carefully planned for and time is given to ensure continuity of learning. At any transition, we acknowledge the child's needs and establish effective partnerships with those involved with the child and other settings, including nurseries and child-minders. In both Nursery and Reception, parents and carers are invited to a curriculum meeting where more information on starting school will be discussed and the transition programme is outlined. This starts with visit or phone calls to the previous nursery setting and/or home at the end of the academic year prior to the children starting. Class visits will take place before the start of the new term, followed by the opportunity for children to attend induction sessions in Nursery. In Reception, class visits help children to develop familiarity with the setting and to build positive relationships with staff. They receive a welcome pack and complete an 'All About Me' sheet.

Parents and carers also have access to an online hub on our website with all the information they might need about starting school, including classroom tours, 'meet the teachers' and key information. Children beginning Reception attend a number of induction sessions.

Children new to the school starting in Reception may receive a home visit and children transitioning from the current Nursery will have regular time spent in their new classes. In the Summer term, the Reception teachers and Year 1 teachers discuss each child, their needs and analyse assessment data to ensure an effective transition into their new class. Transition and settling sessions are adapted to suit the needs of each child and we work closely with parents and carers to ensure that each individual child's needs are met so that they come into school feeling happy, settled and ready to learn.

## **Parents, Carers and the Wider Community**

We know that strong partnerships with families have a significant impact on children's learning. We keep parents informed through regular conversations, Seesaw updates, and shared Learning Journeys. We offer workshops, play sessions and open invitations into school.

We also work with local services and members of our community to enrich children's experiences and ensure holistic support for their development.

## **More Information**

If you would like more information, please refer to our Nursery Admissions Policy, our Nursery and Reception Prospectus or, for a visit, please contact the school office on 0116 262 4003

## **Policy Links**

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Nursery Admissions Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- All other relevant school policies