

Bewdley Primary School

EYFS Policy

Intent

Bewdley Primary School Early Years celebrates our youngest children as wonderful, loving, unique, exciting, unpredictable learners and lovers of life. We support them to follow their interests, make friends, compromise, communicate and begin their lifelong learning journey. We celebrate a love of learning, and value positive effort and attitude.

Our children should always feel safe, cared for and important. The self-confidence and self-esteem of our children is absolutely central to the way we work and, at all times, we model respectful relationships between all adults, adults and children so that these respectful relationships develop between the children themselves.

We believe that children should spend as much time outside as inside in environments which support their independence in learning, have the chance to practise their new skills in a way which appeals to them, explore, experiment, use all their senses to learn, and receive the highest possible quality of care and teaching. Physical activity and development is supported through regular PE sessions for both Nurseries and Reception, as well as opportunities for gross motor skills development in our outside areas.

Using Loose Parts and open-ended resources from a young age helps children to develop their imagination and ability to use representations in play, and encourages them to use talk to give meaning to objects and play. This is a relatively new way of working for us, but one from which we are seeing benefits for all children.

Underpinning all of this is our belief in the power of communication. All children are supported to become confident communicators, firstly with behaviour, then speech, then through reading and writing. The children are encouraged to share their ideas, explain their thoughts and needs to the adults and each other.

We want parents to feel fully informed and involved in their child's learning so that they feel that they feel confident supporting this at home and know that their input will be valued and supported. Parents are encouraged to come and spend time in Nursery and Reception to give them a full picture of how the children learn, and how school supports their child.

Implementation

Our curriculum is guided by the EYFS development matters statements, leading up to the Early Learning Goals by the end of Reception. For the past year and a half, we have been part of the Achievement For All: Achieving Early programme which is designed to support the progress of all children, and the most disadvantaged, in particular, through examining all aspects of provision, leadership and management.

Hungry Caterpillar's Nursery

Children are able to start in our Hungry Caterpillar Nursery from the term after they are 2, with priority being given to those children eligible for 2 year old funding. We recognise that these children often start nursery with lower levels of achievement, and speaking and listening skills in particular and therefore, benefit from high quality nursery interactions and support to narrow the gap between them and less dis-advantaged peers. Using the lower adult:child ratio, supplemented with additional students whenever possible, individual plans for each 2-3 year old are developed to support their progress using their interests. At some points in the year, we have slightly older

children in the Hungry Caterpillar nursery. This may be because it is developmentally more appropriate for them to stay for a little longer, or because of lack of space in Elmer's Nursery.

Under the AfA programme, the youngest children's interests are planned for on an individual basis, with plans being updated approximately every 4-5 weeks. These plans are shared with individual parents in regular "Taking Time for Talk sessions" where a child's key person works closely with the family to develop a deeper understanding of the family dynamics, child's interests and areas of strength and development. During observations of the children, and discussion with parents and carers, if we see a theme emerging which several children are interested in, we will develop this idea throughout the whole nursery with a theme, giving children opportunities both inside and outside to explore connected ideas, discuss their ideas with both children and adults and extend their thinking. For the slightly older children, we develop group plans, with individual areas of development for each child, which are shared with parents.

Learning through play is supported by an incredibly nurturing environment where children are valued and supported to develop emotional resilience through trial and error, taking risks, and building a relationship with a key person who knows them well. We pride ourselves on our "mother duck" approach where each key person really does know their key children, will cuddle and hold them, if appropriate, and support their development from a place of emotional security.

An outline daily plan for Hungry Caterpillar's Nursery

8.30	Children can arrive for an "early morning session" for an additional charge
9.00	Full session starts – children are welcomed by their key person. Parents are encouraged to stay and settle their child into the session.
9.20	Welcome song. Children are invited to join the lead adult for a short welcome song and story. Children who are not yet developmentally ready to join this session will be supported with other activities by one of the other adults, or their key person if they are available.
9.30	Snack is available. This is a chance to begin simple discussions and turn taking with an adult.
9.40	Children are able to explore either the activities which have been put out (following a plan developed from their interests), or choose from other resources which are freely available to them. The outside area is used in the same way as inside. The adults may support individual children or a small group with a specific targeted activity, if appropriate to the child/ren's needs.
10.30	Morning snack café - one of the adults supports the children to express their preferences, and share their news and ideas as they eat a range of fruit and healthy snacks.
12.00	Morning only children go home, and afternoon only children arrive. The parents of children arriving are encouraged to stay and settle them in.
12.15	Lunchtime! Children sit in small groups with a familiar adult and their friends to eat a packed lunch which they have brought with them. The children are encouraged to talk to their friends as they eat, to make lunch a sociable time.
1.00	Afternoon welcome time. Like the morning, the children are invited to spend about 10 minutes singing songs, listening to a story, counting etc.
1.10	Children explore their interests both inside and outside. Adults may support individuals or small groups with targeted activities, if appropriate.
2.00	Afternoon snack café – children are once again offered fruit or healthy snacks. There's no chance of children going hungry in our Hungry Caterpillar nursery!
2.40	Children help to tidy up the nursery, put all the activities away and begin to develop a sense of group responsibility.
2.50	Songs, stories and getting ready to go home.
3.00	Afternoon session finishes.

Children move into Elmer's nursery sometime following the term after their third birthday, depending on space availability, and emotional readiness.

Elmer's nursery

In Elmer's nursery, the children work and play in larger groups and further emphasis is placed on collaboration, compromise and communication. Daily key group times allow key people to plan for the specific needs of the children in their group. Explicit teaching of mathematical and science concepts are then followed up in the continuous and enhanced provision

We continue with our Loose Parts approach in Elmer's Nursery, where we use a wide variety of open-ended natural and man-made materials which the children use to represent, build or create. This encourages the use of language and imagination to explain what they are doing. Much of the provision in Elmer's Nursery is based around Understanding the World, with children being encouraged to test ideas, compare differences and similarities, talk about their families and friends, use technology, and talk about the world around them.

There is also a strong focus on speaking and listening, early phonics and number skills. Children are encouraged and supported to talk for many reasons – at our snack café, in the role play area, when sharing books with other children or an adult, in the creative area when mixing paint colours, designing and refining models, in the toilet when washing hands etc! Early phonics takes the form of listening games, sound discrimination and playing with sounds in words. This is introduced in small groups, according to a child's developmental stage. Early phonics is taught systematically to ensure that children are able to orally segment and blend sounds by the time they enter the Reception Class. Alongside this, children use "emergent writing" to communicate their ideas, such as making signs to welcome others into their den, ask others not to touch their model, or in a card to celebrate a friend's birthday.

Children's number knowledge and understanding is developed through specific adult-led sessions, and then through continuous provision opportunities. For example, a child making a train out of cardboard boxes might be asked how many toys will fit in each carriage. For our more able mathematicians, they might then be asked how many toys will fit in the whole train, which encourages them to think about early addition skills.

Parents are again encouraged to stay with their children to settle them into each session, and to share information using our online Learning Journey system, Tapestry. Taking Time to Talk sessions take place three times a year, with each family meeting with their child's key person. Weekly information about nursery life is shared on Tapestry, along with individual observations of a child's learning and development.

The vast majority of children then join the Reception classes at Bewdley Primary School the September after their fourth birthday.

A daily plan for Elmer's Nursery

8.30	Children can arrive for an "early morning session" for an additional charge
9.00	Full session starts – children are welcomed by their key person. Parents are encouraged to stay and settle their child into the session.
9.10	Welcome song. Children are invited to join the lead adult for a short welcome song and story. Children who are not yet developmentally ready to join this session will be supported with other activities by one of the other adults, or their key person if they are available.
9.20	All children take part in a key group session with their key person. Each session involves some speaking and listening, along with a focus on an area identified through close and careful observation of the children in that group.
9.20	Return to the carpet for a brief introduction to today's concepts, opportunities and activities.

9.30	Snack is available in a snack café style. This is a chance to begin simple discussions and turn taking with an adult.
Throughout the morning	The nursery teacher or another adult leads small, focussed teaching sessions throughout the morning, focussing on phonics, maths or science.
9.30	Children are able to explore either the activities which have been put out (following a plan developed from their interests), or choose from other resources which are freely available to them. The outside area is used in the same way as inside. The adults may support individual children or a small group with a specific targeted activity, if appropriate to the child/ren's needs.
11.30	Children are taken onto the big playground to play playground games, adventure playground equipment, parachute games etc.
12.00	Morning only children go home, and afternoon only children arrive. The parents of children arriving are encouraged to stay and settle them in.
12.05	Lunchtime! Children sit in small groups with a familiar adult and their friends to eat either a packed lunch which they have brought with them, or a hot school dinner. The children are encouraged to talk to their friends as they eat, to make lunch a sociable time.
12.30	Afternoon welcome time. Like the morning, the children spend about 10 minutes singing songs, listening to a story, counting, discussing a new concept etc.
12.40	The nursery teacher or another adult continue with small focussed group activities.
1.10	Children explore their interests both inside and outside. Adults may support individuals or small groups with targeted activities, if appropriate.
2.40	Children help to tidy up the nursery, put all the activities away and begin to develop a sense of group responsibility.
2.50	Songs, stories and getting ready to go home.
3.00	Afternoon session finishes.

Reception

It's very important to us that our Reception year continues our strong Early Years ethos of supporting children to follow their interests and learn through play and collaboration. A continued focus on speech and language supports children to compromise with other children engaged in the same activities, begin to orally compose and rehearse stories with more defined structure, share their knowledge in a larger group and explain and ask questions about mathematical and scientific knowledge and opinions.

The children continue to have the option to spend much of their day outside, if that is where they prefer to learn.

At the beginning of each half term, or sometimes more often, the children are introduced to a broad idea, such as "Powerful people", or "Transformation". They are then asked to contribute ideas or ask questions about the initial theme. Their ideas are then used to design the curriculum for that half term, or period of time so that we are confident it reflects their interests.

Each week starts with a new book as its focus, which will usually include a scientific, creative or mathematical theme. Our continuous and enhanced provision in the classroom will then build on these ideas, giving the children the opportunity to explore concepts in different ways and deepen their understanding with support from an adult.

Following carefully assessment and discussion with the Nursery team, and on-going assessment once in Reception, the children are divided into smaller groups for both phonics and mathematics. These groups then work systematically and rigorously for a short session each day on phonics, reading, writing and mathematics. The groups are very fluid and children are regularly move between groups if a different group is felt to be more appropriate for them.

From the start of the school year, the children are expected to use emergent writing on a daily basis as part of their play. Starting with labels and signs, and moving on to phrases and sentences to explain their learning. Children can choose what they would like to write, but to provide some children with more structure, we also give an option of piece of set writing, which we call “peg writing”. It’s called this because once the children have done their piece of writing, they hang it up on a named clothes peg so we can see easily who has completed it.

To support mathematical development, there are maths areas across the Reception unit which give children the opportunity to independently practise the skills they have been taught in their focussed session.

Over the course of the year, the length of time children spend in directly taught session increases, as the children’s ability to concentrate improves. However, this is balanced with continuous and enhanced provision so that the children still have lots of time to learn in the way that suits them best.

We are passionate about reading, and so every child reads in a group every morning with an adult. This might be a Teacher, TA or parent/grandparent helper. We have received lovely feedback from parents and grandparents who come in to read, and know how much the children also enjoy it. Reading is also taught in phonics, and in our lovely story times at the end of every day. These story times give us the opportunity to share wonderful ideas and vocabulary and build up children’s love of reading and books.

Opportunities for the children to explore their understanding of the world, art, design and social skills are encouraged through our continuous provision as well as adult-led learning opportunities. The Loose Parts approach supports these opportunities.

As with both Nurseries, we use the Tapestry Online Learning Journey system to share information with parents and carers. We regularly issue challenges, such as “Can you take a photo of your child using technology at home”, to encourage parents and carers to work together with us. The children absolutely love seeing themselves on our Interactive Whiteboards when we share photographs and comments from home.

Impact

For the last 2 years, our Reception results have been broadly in line with the National levels. This year, so far, we have seen approximately a 15% improvement in our Good Level of Development results since the beginning of the year.

To reach the “Good Level of Development” which is the expected level by the end of Reception, children need to reach the required level in Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Listening and Attention, Physical Development, Literacy and Mathematics. If they do not meet the expected level in any one of these areas, then they are deemed not to have reached the expected level overall.

We have been particularly pleased with our improved levels in Writing, which had previously been an area for focus.

In a recent Nursery questionnaire, parents were overwhelmingly supportive of our approach to Early Years and their child’s development and learning.