

# Hallbrook Primary School



## Early Years Policy

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## Hallbrook Primary School

### Early Years Policy

This document outlines the philosophy, aims and principles of early years teaching and learning in the Early Years at Hallbrook Primary School.

#### Introduction

*“Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfill 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. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.”*

“Statutory Framework for the Early Years (Revised)”,  
Department for Education, 2012

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At Hallbrook Primary School we greatly value the important role that the Early Years plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development, however we also believe early childhood is valid in itself, as part of life. It is important to view the Early Years as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

All children begin school with a variety of experiences and learning. It is the privilege of the practitioners working in the Early Years to take on the task of building upon that prior learning and experience. This is done through a holistic approach to learning, ensuring that parents/guardians, support staff, nursery nurses and the Early Years teachers work effectively together to support children's learning and development.

#### Aims

It is every child’s right to grow up safe, healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and with economic well-being. At Hallbrook Primary School the overarching aim of the Early Years is to help young children achieve their full potential by giving them a broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.

This is achieved through a set of guiding principles which shape practise in all Early Years settings:

These are:

- 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; and
- **children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.**

At Hallbrook Primary School we aim to:

- provide a safe, challenging, stimulating, caring and sharing environment which is sensitive to the needs of the child, including children with additional needs
- provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for future learning and development in Key Stage 1 and beyond
- provide opportunities for children to learn through planned, purposeful play in all areas of learning and development
- use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress
- enable choice and decision-making, fostering independence and self-confidence
- work in partnership with parents/guardians and value their contributions
- ensure that all children, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability, have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development
- provide experiences for all children, whatever their needs, which are inclusive rather than parallel

### **Learning and Development**

The Early Learning Goals (the knowledge, skills and understanding which young children should have acquired by the end of the Early Years) and the educational programmes (the matters, skills and processes which are required to be taught to young children) are set out in the “Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (Revised)” document (Department for Education, 2012).

There are seven areas of learning and development that shape educational programmes in early years settings. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. Three areas which have been deemed particularly crucial for igniting children’s curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive are:

- communication and language;
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development

These are called the *prime* areas of learning. These prime areas are supported, strengthened and applied by four *specific* areas, these are:

- literacy;
- mathematics;
- understanding the world; and
- expressive arts and design.

When considering learning and development it is also crucial to reflect on the different ways that children learn. 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; and
- **creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

At Hallbrook Primary School we aim to deliver all the areas of learning through planned, purposeful play, with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities.

### **Planning**

Good planning is the key to making children’s learning effective, exciting, varied and progressive. Effective learning builds on and extends what children know and can do. Our planning shows how the principles of the Early Years will be put into practice and is informed by observations that have been made of the children, in order to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning. All staff who work in the Early Years at Hallbrook Primary School are involved in this process.

There are three stages of planning the curriculum:

#### ***Long Term Planning***

A framework has been created which gives structure and coherence to the curriculum. Overarching topics are planned which are covered throughout the year, although the specific focus of topics is flexible depending on class needs and interests, these topics will be supported further by the Corner Stone Curriculum. The early learning goals and educational programmes are distributed over the terms, to determine broad and balanced coverage. Some early learning goals provide a focus for certain terms, particularly those relating to Knowledge and Understanding of the World.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Topic</b>
Autumn 1	Fabulous Friends
Autumn 2	Amazing Autumn
Spring 3	Starry Night
Spring 4	Once upon a time ...
Summer 5	What a Wonderful World!
Summer 6	Sun, Sand and Sea Creatures

#### ***Medium Term Planning***

Particular aspects of the curriculum are addressed in more detail for each term. Links between areas of learning and development and opportunities for ICT are included. Learning objectives, assessment opportunities, and activities and experiences for each area of learning and development are identified.

#### ***Short Term Planning***

Specific learning objectives, activities, differentiation, deployment of adults and resources are identified to meet the learning needs of the children on a weekly and day-to-day basis. It allows for flexibility in response to individual children’s needs and interests and for revision and modification, informed by on-going observational assessment.

At Hallbrook Primary School we refer to Foundation Stage Framework, Early Learning Goals and additional statements set out in the Early Years Outcomes documents when planning for all Areas of Learning.

### **Staffing and Organisation**

From September 2016 Hallbrook Primary School will become a one form entry school with a maximum intake of thirty children in the year group. This will allow us to have a single Early Years Class where we maintain a maximum adult/pupil ratio of 1:15; there is a teacher and a nursery nurse in the class throughout the school day.

The Early Years area consists of defined work areas including a dedicated creative area where paint, printing and collage materials are available for the children to access independently, as well as a well defined reading and writing area, easier access to construction and small world materials and a more clearly defined table working area. Within each of these areas are displayed on going objectives in order to inform staff, parents and the children of the learning intentions and possible outcomes that may be evident regardless of the topic being covered. Resources have also been organised into more clearly defined topics which are stored in the shed and this has allowed for the easier retrieval of resources when needed. The outdoor environment includes displays of keywords, sounds and numbers that the children can use independently but have also been used in planned adult supported and adult led activities. A number of pieces of play equipment are also continuously available to the children including a covered sand box, a pirate ship and a number of smaller items such as a slide, a caterpillar tunnel, a playhouse and water trays. Role play areas are regularly set up in the playground so that the children can continue their learning from inside to the outside environment. The construction of a canopy in the Early Years playground also means that the children can more freely access the outside environment in all weathers. Each area in the Early Years (the classroom, wetroom and outside) is monitored and supported by a member of staff through out the school day.

We are always aiming to improve our teaching skills, knowledge and understanding and so staff are encouraged to participate in local authority courses and family of schools training and support. When necessary staff also conduct in-house training to disseminate new initiatives, ideas and teaching methods to colleagues.

### **Assessment, recording and monitoring**

At Hallbrook Primary School assessment for learning is undertaken in all areas of learning. We analyse and review what we know about each child's development and learning, and then make informed decisions about the child's progress. This enables us to plan the next steps to meet their development and learning needs. All staff who interact with the child contribute to the assessment process.

#### ***Formative assessment***

This type of assessment informs everyday planning and is based on on-going observational assessment of each child's achievements, interests and characteristics of learning. Formative assessment may take the form of anecdotal observations, focused observations recorded during group work, baseline assessment, other focused assessments e.g. sound/number, annotated examples of work, photographs, video and information from parents. Each child has an individual Early Years Profile undertaken

on Target Tracker which must be completed by the end of the summer term as well as an individual learning journey folder in which evidence is stored from school, home and work selected by the children themselves. Observational assessment is planned for in the medium and short term planning.

### ***Summative assessment***

The Early Years Profile summarises all of the formative assessment undertaken and makes statements about the child's achievements in all areas of learning. Each child's level of development must be assessed against the 17 early learning goals and staff must indicate whether children are meeting expected levels of development, or if they are exceeding expected levels, or not yet reaching expected levels. Staff contribute to the Early Years Profile throughout the year as necessary but essentially on entry and at the end of each term. The information gathered from the Early Years Profile on Target Tracker contributes to an end of year report for each child. Parents are provided with this report as well as a summary of their child's attainment against the 17 Early Learning Goals and a narrative on how their child demonstrates the three characteristics of effective learning.

Staff undertake in-house moderation as well as Moderation meetings within the Family of Schools and Local Authority moderation of profile judgments in the form of moderation visits throughout the year or moderation discussion meetings. For further information see the Assessment Policy.

Teaching and learning in Communication and Language, Literacy and Mathematics is monitored by the literacy and mathematics coordinators, through lesson observations and pupil interviews when necessary. Other areas of learning and development in the Early Years are monitored in this way by the respective co-coordinators. The Early Years leader monitors teaching and learning across the Early Years each year and analyses Early Years assessment and Profile data in conjunction with the assessment coordinator and school management team.

### **Learning through play**

*"Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others."*

("Revised Early Years Foundation Stage",  
Department for Education, 2012)

At Hallbrook Primary School we do not make a distinction between work and play. We support children's learning through planned play activities, and decide when child-initiated or adult-led play activities would provide the most effective learning opportunities. We believe that it is important for adults to support children's learning through play, by getting involved in the play themselves.

### **The Learning Environment**

*"A rich and varied environment supports children's learning and development. It gives them the confidence to explore and learn in secure and safe, yet challenging, indoor and outdoor spaces."*

("Early Years Foundation Stage",

We aim to create an attractive, welcoming and stimulating learning environment which will encourage children to explore, investigate and learn through first hand experience. We also aim to make it a place where children feel secure and confident, and are challenged to develop their independence.

Activities are planned for both the inside and outside; children are able to move between the indoor and outdoor classroom throughout the school day (see Outdoor Learning Policy for more details). The learning environment is divided into a variety of different areas: role play, book corner, writing table, a maths working wall, topic display tables, a computer area, art and craft area, play dough, builder's tray, sand, water, outside, construction, small world and puzzles. These areas are arranged to encourage quiet areas and more active areas within the learning environment (see staffing and organization section for more detail).

Children are encouraged to become independent learners and to take some responsibility for initiating their own lines of enquiry and investigation and selection of resources.

#### **Liaison with pre-school settings and induction**

A new parents meeting is held in July to introduce the school's expectations and routines, and to outline the induction process and the Early Years curriculum. Parents/guardians have the opportunity to meet the class teacher and to visit the Early Years classroom. Parents/guardians are given an Early Years information pack which outlines the Early Years curriculum and school routines, along with an information booklet to share with their child and a document pack to be completed and returned to school. Uniform and reading folder orders can also be taken at this meeting. Parents/guardians are also invited to attend a parent interview at the beginning of the autumn term to discuss their child or any issues in more detail with the class teacher.

During the summer term, the Early Years teacher/leader visits the local feeder playschools including Thomas Estley Pre-school, The Pre-school Playstation, Teapots Nursery School, Sutton in the Elms Playschool and Leire Playschool to meet prospective children and to talk to the pre-school leaders about the children who will be starting school. All prospective children have the opportunity to visit their classroom for an afternoon in the summer term, as well as attend a teddy bears picnic and the summer fair. Transfer records from pre-school settings inform the Early Years practitioners about the new intake.

Prior to school selections being made we also offer a parent and child drop in session in the autumn term which allows prospective parents an opportunity to visit the school during a teaching session. Parents and children can join in during the session, look around the Early Years base as well as have an opportunity to talk to staff.

During the induction period in September, children attend school initially on a half day basis for the first few days including to staying for some lunch, building up to them being in school full time by the end of their first week. Year six children are appointed as lunch time support to help the new children with their lunches and to become

familiar with the playground and to become confident at joining in with playground games at playtimes.

This staggered entry into school allows:

- children to feel secure in their new environment and gradually build up to fulltime attendance
- the practitioners to get to know the children individually and establish good relationships
- the Early Years teacher to begin to carry out a baseline assessment

Admission on a full-time basis is introduced by the second week at school unless it is mutually agreed between parents and teachers that the child will benefit from a continuation of the part-time arrangement. A child reaches statutory school age at the beginning of the term following his/her fifth birthday.

### **Early Years to Year 1 Transition**

Early Years and year 1 teachers have worked together to make the transition from the Early Years to Key Stage 1 as smooth as possible.

At Hallbrook Primary School:

- children are encouraged to develop independence when dressing and undressing and when organising their personal belongings throughout the Early Years
- the Early Years practitioners plan for more structured activities to be undertaken during the summer terms, encouraging less dependence on adult support
- reading sessions linked to Reading with RIC are introduced throughout the year in the Early Years in preparation for a similar strategy in year 1
- the Early Years children meet year 1 teachers during whole school activities
- individual Early Years Profile summaries are passed on to year 1 teachers
- a brief individual description of how each child demonstrates the three characteristic of effective learning is passed on to year 1 teachers
- an Early Years Profile end of year class summary (produced by Target Tracker) is passed on to year 1 teachers
- the Early Years and year 1 teachers meet to discuss individual needs of children in July
- the Early Years children visit their new year 1 class and teacher for a half day session in July as well as story time sessions towards the end of the summer term.
- where possible year 1 classes have access to learning areas similar to the Early Years classroom: role play, writing table, sand and water
- learning is planned for the outdoor environment in year 1 when possible

Parents/guardians also have the opportunity to discuss the transition from the Early Years to year 1 and the expectations and routines that are within Key Stage One through an information meeting held in the summer term prior to the transition. An information leaflet to support the transition is also sent home to all parents.

### **Home/School Links**

We recognise that parents/guardians are the child's first and most enduring educators. When parents/guardians and practitioners work together in early years settings, the results have a positive impact on the child's development. A successful partnership needs to be a two-way flow of information, knowledge and expertise. We aim to develop this by:

- outlining the Early Years curriculum to parents/guardians during the new parents meeting in July, to enable them to understand the value of supporting their child's learning at home
- encouraging parents/guardians to complete the home/school admissions booklet
- sending home a planning topic letters, informing parents/guardians of the learning that will be taking place at school, with suggestions of the types of activities that could be carried out at home to support that learning (At School This Week letter)
- having a home/school link book for parents and staff to write in about a child's achievements or events that are taking place, these can then be used for discussion point with children
- holding parent/guardian information meetings throughout the year to outline learning in school including reading, maths and transition to year 1, and to provide an opportunity for asking questions
- operating an "open door" policy, whereby parents/guardians can come and discuss concerns and developments in an informal manner
- inviting parents/guardians to help in class and to accompany children on school visits
- having a number of activity days throughout the year such as at Christmas and Easter when parents can drop in and work with their child as well as look around the school.
- having a number of parent drop in sessions were parents can come into school and see a normal working morning (a different curriculum focus is chosen each session)
- encouraging parents/guardians to listen to their child read each night and to comment on reading progress in a home/school reading diary
- encouraging relevant learning activities to be continued at home e.g. Rhyme of the Week, and ensuring that experiences at home are used to develop learning in school
- discussing individual targets with parents/guardians at parents' evening in October, March and July (informed by the Early Years Profile)
- providing an annual written report to parents/guardians in July summarizing the child's progress against the early learning goals and Early Years assessment scales

### **Equal Opportunities**

At Hallbrook Primary School we aim to provide all pupils, regardless of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability, equal access to all aspects of school life and work to ensure that every child is valued fully as an individual. Practitioners, as role models, are aware of the influence of adults in promoting positive attitudes and use that influence to challenge stereotypical ideas.

For further information see Equal Opportunities Policy.

**Inclusion**

Children with special educational needs and disabilities will be given support as appropriate to enable them to benefit from the curriculum. This includes children that are more able, and those with specific learning difficulties and disabilities. Additional adult support may be provided for children with specific special needs e.g. a medical condition, thus increasing the adult/pupil ratio.

A one page profile as well as an SEN Outcomes Plan identify targets in specific areas of learning for those children who require additional support, in line with the school's Special Educational Needs Policy. The Early Years teacher discusses these targets with the child and his/her parents/guardians. Progress is monitored and reviewed every two terms. The school's SEND co-coordinator is responsible for providing additional information and advice to practitioners and parents, and for arranging external intervention and support where necessary.

For further information see Special Educational Needs Policy.

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