

LOUDWATER COMBINED SCHOOL

Foundation Stage Policy

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1. Introduction

Early Years education is the foundation upon which young children build the rest of their schooling. It is a holistic education that encompasses all learning and development. This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at Loudwater Combined School.

The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of the Key Stage 1 and Foundation Stage Leader, practitioners working in the foundation class setting, including both the teacher and teaching assistant.

In the policy the term 'setting' refers to the Foundation Stage educational provision at Loudwater Combined School.

This provision is available to children who enter school from September of the academic year in which they will turn five years old. These children are in the final year of the EYFS. In the National Curriculum this is referred to as the Reception Year, or YR.

2. Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage

In the EYFS setting at Loudwater Combined School we believe that all children are entitled to the best possible start in their school life, both intellectually and emotionally, in order to enable them to develop their full potential.

We aim to support each child's welfare, learning and developmental needs by:

- Recognising that all children are unique and special.
- Understanding that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates - physically, cognitively, linguistically, socially and emotionally.
- Providing a safe, secure and caring environment where children feel happy and know that they are valued by the staff looking after them.
- Fostering and nurturing children's self-confidence and self-esteem through their developing awareness of their own identity and role within the school community.
- Teaching them to express and communicate their needs and feelings in appropriate ways.
- Encouraging children's independence and decision-making, supporting them to learn through their mistakes.
- Developing children's understanding of social skills and the values and codes of behaviour required for people to work together harmoniously.
- Supporting children to develop care, respect and appreciation for others, including those with beliefs, cultures and opinions different to their own.

- Understanding the importance of play in children's learning and development.
- Providing learning experiences in play which reflect children's personal interests and areas of curiosity in order to encourage and develop their natural desire, interest, excitement and motivation to learn.
- Providing experiences which build on children's existing knowledge and understanding in order to challenge, stimulate and extend their learning and development.
- Providing effective learning opportunities in a range of environments, inside and outside.

3. The Early Years Foundation Stage framework

Teaching in the EYFS class at Loudwater Combined School is delivered in accordance with the government's statutory document 'The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage' (March 2012). This document is a principled approach to Early Years education, bringing together children's welfare, learning and developmental requirements through four themes:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Children Learn in Different Ways and at Different Rates.

The curriculum is centred on 3 prime areas of learning:

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

The teacher and teaching assistant must also support activities through four specific areas which strengthen the prime areas. These are:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding of the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

Educational programmes which the teacher and teaching assistant deliver in the class must involve activities and experiences from one of the following seven areas. These are:

- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding of the World
- Expressive Arts and Design
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These Areas of Learning and Development address children's physical, cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional development. No one aspect of development stands in isolation from the others as all Areas of Learning and Development are all closely interlinked. This ensures the delivery of a holistic, child-centred curriculum which allows children to make lots of links between what they are learning. All Areas of Learning and Development are given equal weighting and value.

At Loudwater Combined School, we believe that learning and education in the Foundation Stage is important in its own right and should not be viewed simply as preparation for the next stage of children's education. This is also true of all year groups, however there is a

need to ensure that all children are prepared for the next stage of their education to enable smooth transitions between year groups and this applies equally to children in Foundation Stage.

4. Active Learning through Play

At Loudwater Combined School we recognise that young children learn best when they are active. We understand that active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods.

Therefore, we believe that Foundation Stage learning should be as practical as possible and our class has an ethos of learning through play. We recognise the importance of children's play. It is an essential and rich part of their learning process, supporting them in all areas of development. Play is a powerful motivator encouraging children to be creative and to develop their ideas, understanding and language. Play is also flexible and able to suit the preferred learning style of the child. It can provide multiple ways for children to learn a variety of different skills and concepts.

In the Foundation Stage class at Loudwater Combined School the teacher provides both structured and unstructured play opportunities inside and outside. These activities are designed to engage children in practical, first-hand experiences which will support them to discover, explore, investigate and develop their personal interests and areas of curiosity, and help to make sense of the world around them as they begin to understand specific concepts.

Play opportunities are also set up to provide children with opportunities to apply newly acquired knowledge, demonstrating their skills and level of understanding. In providing these active learning opportunities through play we understand the central position of play within the Foundation Stage classroom. This is essentially a play based curriculum and pedagogy as the provision of play opportunities underpins its delivery within the setting.

5. Assessment and Record Keeping

Ongoing assessment is an essential aspect of the effective running of the Foundation Stage Class at Loudwater Combined School. Regular, planned and focused assessments are made of children's learning and individual needs.

A record of each child's progress in all areas of their learning is kept by retaining and filing their assessment data. The main assessment method is through the teacher's and teaching assistant's observations of children in different teaching and learning contexts, including both adult focused activities and child initiated play. Observations take place on a daily basis (both formally and informally). Time is made to carry out planned observations of individuals and groups of children regularly. They also make spontaneous observations in order to capture significant moments of children's learning. Observations are recorded in different formats (e.g. narrative style, post-it notes, whole class grids, photographs).

The teacher and teaching assistant use observations to support their developing knowledge of individual children. It informs them of children's abilities, needs, interests, play and learning styles. Observations are evaluated, children's learning priorities are identified and relevant learning opportunities are planned to support children to make the next steps and progress.

Other methods of assessing children in the EYFS setting include engaging alongside children in their play, annotation of children's written work, talking with children about their task or play and in Learning Journeys.

Learning Journeys record children's progress over the academic year in all Areas of Learning and Development of the EYFS framework. Samples of children's work are gathered, along with photographic evidence and observations.

There is continuous monitoring and assessment of each child's development using the new Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (2012). This is updated half termly to track individual progress. At the end of the year it provides a summary of every child's development and learning achievements. Baseline assessment is carried out using the EYFS Profile during the children's first six weeks upon entering the setting. Judgments made on children's development in the Profile are based on evidence of children's behaviour observed independently and consistently in their self-initiated activities across all Areas of Learning and Development.

6. Planning

The EYFS framework provides a long term plan to follow by ensuring that all Early Learning Goals are covered throughout the academic year.

Medium term planning takes into account the individual children's learning and developmental needs. All Areas of Learning and Development are planned for and available to access within the classroom. The learning opportunities provided include a range of adult focused and child initiated activities indoors. Use of the outdoor environment is made whenever possible. Educational visits within the local community and further afield are also planned to support children's learning.

7. Parents as Partners

At Loudwater Combined School we recognise the importance of establishing positive relationships with parents, as highlighted by the EYFS framework. We understand that an effective partnership between school and home will have a positive impact on children's learning and development.

We value the role of parents as children's primary educators. Through home visits and informal chats at the beginning and end of the day, parents are encouraged to share their unique knowledge of their child, providing further insight into the child as an individual (e.g. characteristics, interests, experiences, likes, dislikes). This supports the teacher in establishing interesting and stimulating learning experiences, responding to children's needs and interests.

Parents are kept informed of what is happening in the class through weekly newsletters, information about the topic each half term, reading records and informal chatting at the beginning and end of the day. There is a notice in the classroom window each week describing the key activities the children will be engaged in.

There is also information on the school website which gives suggestions of how parents can support their children's learning at home; consolidating and building on what has been covered in class. Parents are invited to attend parents' evenings during the course of the academic year. The first of these takes place during the autumn term to allow the teacher and parents to discuss how children have settled into the setting. Another parent's evening takes place during the spring term where the teacher will feedback on children's learning and developmental progress.

Other opportunities for the teacher to share children's learning, development and well-being with parents include Learning Journeys, end of year reports and celebration assemblies where children's achievements are recognised.

Parents are also invited to get involved with school life. There are opportunities for them to help with activities such as educational visits and reading, as well as offering their particular skills (e.g. cooking, art, music) to support children's learning. Parents may be invited into the

class on other occasions such as open days where children show them their work and other special events.

The setting has a friendly, open-doors ethos and the teacher and teaching assistant are available to talk to parents at the beginning and end of the day. Parents are always welcomed into school and encouraged to discuss any concerns they might have.

8. Admissions and Induction

Loudwater Combined School provides full-time Early Years education for children in the Reception Year. This is for children who enter school from September of the academic year in which they will turn five years old.

Before they start in the class, all children and parents are invited to an induction morning in early July. The purpose of this initial visit is for the children to meet their new teacher and teaching assistant and start to become familiar with the classroom. At the same time the head-teacher speaks to parents about the school in general and Foundation Stage in more detail. School information and the prospectus are available at this meeting.

The teacher will visit the children in their pre-school settings. The aim of these visits is to develop the teacher's knowledge and understanding of each child in order to make the transition period to Loudwater Combined School as smooth as possible.

Prior to the start of the autumn term the teacher and teaching assistant will arrange to make a home visit. The purpose of this visit is to get to know you and your child better, to exchange any important information and to answer any questions.

At the start of the summer term children in foundation stage attend either the morning or afternoon session for the first week. This gives the teacher and teaching assistant an opportunity to get to know the children well. In the second week of term they stay for lunch or come to have lunch before their session. This provides an opportunity for the children to get to know each other in an informal situation and to experience the lunchtime routines. During the third week of term most children start to attend full time. If a child is not ready to do this the class teacher will talk to parents about how transition arrangements can be adapted to suit their needs.

See Admissions Policy for more information.

9. Equal Opportunities

All staff at Loudwater Combined School have a responsibility to maintain positive attitudes to diversity and difference, ensuring that inclusive practice is delivered throughout the school. All children, irrespective of gender, ability, ethnicity, culture or religion, and social circumstances, have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development within the Foundation Stage class at Loudwater Combined School.

See Equal Opportunities Policy for more information.

10. Special Educational Needs

See Special Educational Needs Policy.

January 2014

This policy will be reviewed in line with the governors' policy review schedule.