

Early Years EYFS Policy

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Introduction

'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. 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 Foundation Stage DFES 2012).

At Pictor Academy we provide children and their families with a supportive high quality learning environment. Starting school can be a particularly emotional time for many of our families who are just beginning to come to terms with their child's needs. As a team, we are committed to supporting families through this journey. We ensure that the children feel safe, happy and valued through the environment we provide and the positive relationships we develop.

Our Aims and Principles

We aim to promote the four principles of the EYFS:

A unique child

We believe that every child is a competent learner from birth and a valuable member of society. We encourage the development of independence and choice. We are committed to equal opportunities and are fully inclusive of all children and their families. We encourage children to respect others and value diversity through gaining awareness of themselves and others.

Positive relationships

We believe that children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person. Staff support pupils in developing secure relationships in a safe environment where they can learn to express themselves. We value parents as the co educator of their child and know that we can best support children's learning through developing a positive relationship with families. We liaise with other settings and professionals to ensure a consistent, informed approach and work as part of a multidisciplinary team.

Enabling environment

The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning and this is especially true of pupils who have SEN. We provide a learning environment that best supports the learning styles of our children at Pictor Academy. This may differ between classes based on our knowledge of pupils and the approaches and environment they need to fully access the curriculum. We provide opportunities for children to learn through both indoor and outdoor play and through visits in the local community where appropriate.

Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.

We are committed to recognising that our children have different starting points, learning styles, needs and interests and we use this information to ensure they fulfil their true potential. Where possible, skills are taught in practical, real life situations with opportunities for repetition and to generalise learning. The development of social and communication skills are a key priority with many pupils experiencing major difficulties in these areas. The development of physical and sensory skills are also a key area for pupils who have physical and sensory impairments.

Starting School and Transition

We have a clear policy concerning starting school (see Transition Policy). Parents are fully involved in the process. Information is gathered from parents using the 'starting school' proforma and transition visits are set up that best meet the children's and families' needs. Parents are given a Handbook with relevant information and consent forms. Staff liaise with other settings and professionals. Reception children are offered a 2 week staggered start to gradually introduce them to a full school day and lunch times. All children and families in the EYFS have flexibility in their transition depending on age and needs. Some children require a slower and longer transition period than others.

The children have planned transition visits on changing class/Key Stage. The staff share information with the receiving teacher ensuring that any approaches are carried across to the new environment. This could be to the next class, key stage or into a different provision. This reduces anxiety for the child and family.

Developing a home-school partnership

We believe in developing a close working partnership with parents/carers which starts with their initial visits to school. We maintain communication through home-school books, telephone conversations, emails or meetings. We have regular meetings and coffee mornings for parents/carers.

We understand that pupils may show different skills at home and school so information sharing is essential. We hold more formal parents' evenings in the autumn and summer terms. Parents/carers are encouraged to share and record progress they see with their child. At the beginning of each half term parents/carers are sent a 'Topic Letter' which briefly outlines what their child will be experiencing and learning about during that half term. At the end of each half term they are sent a brief 'Review' of what their child has enjoyed during the topic. This may be a written comment, photograph or piece of work. Both the 'Topic Letter' and the brief 'Review' are offered to parents in an email, in a written paper form or in a 'Learning Journey' book. Parents/carers are encouraged to respond to the information shared from school, again in a format which best suits them. This supports our assessments of pupils and the planning of learning opportunities.

Organisation of classes

We usually have four classes in the Early Years. We provide an early years environment and curriculum for children from age 2 years up to Year 1. Due to the nature of the needs of the pupils there are some Year 1 pupils who benefit from being in this environment. The age groupings of the pupils vary depending upon the needs of the children in school. Some of our classes cater for the needs of pupils with Social and Communication needs including ASC who require a more structured and visually clear environment. One of our classes caters for the complex physical, sensory and learning needs of those pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties. The classes for children with Social and Communication needs including ASC usually have a ratio of 6 children with 3 staff. The other classes have up to 8 children with 3 staff. There is further enhanced staffing in the class to meet the needs of the pupils who have complex needs. The

Nursery children (the term after they are 3 years old) attend for 5 half day sessions or 2 ½ days (15 hours). We also provide statutory assessment for children as young as two years old. These pupils are offered a maximum of 3 sessions and staff work closely with other settings and parents/carers to meet the needs of these very young children.

EYFS Staff are highly experienced and trained in a range of approaches to meet the needs of children with SEN e.g. TEACCH, PECS, Signalong, Intensive Interaction, Behaviour Management. We work as part of a multidisciplinary team e.g. with a Speech & Language Therapist, physiotherapist and Teacher from the Sensory Impairment team. We liaise and plan closely and advice is followed through in the school day and at home. Therapy is delivered through advice, individual work, small group or whole class depending on needs and type of therapy. Each class has a shared small room where staff can work individually with children to focus attention.

Physical activity is encouraged and each class has access to an outdoor play area and a weekly hall and soft play session. The children also have opportunities to access the field and school garden.

The curriculum

Our learning environments meet the needs of pupils so may be different to those in a mainstream school. Each of the classes provides continuous play based provision which varies based on the developmental and sensory needs and interests of the children. Adults support learning by focusing pupils, extending play and communication. Some classes may be able to use areas such as mark making, construction and small world while others classes need more early exploratory, sensory and physical play such as water, shaving foam and small object exploration as found in Treasure Baskets.

Children with autism do not tend to learn through play but need to be taught how to play. The classes for children with autism benefit from the use of visual timetables and work stations to organise their time and restricted choice to develop their play and communication skills. This would not be reflected in a mainstream nursery but this is how children with autism learn and function best. Many of our pupils benefit from low distraction areas to focus on an activity.

Focused learning challenges and enhanced activities are developed through medium term planning. The short term planning identifies the activities for the week and organisational issues. It is flexible enough to allow staff to plan using the children's range of needs and interests.

We follow the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and provide our pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum covering the seven areas of learning.

Prime Areas:

Communication and language development involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations.

• ***Physical development*** involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children must also be

helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food.

- **Personal, social and emotional development** involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities.

Other Curriculum areas:

- **Literacy** development involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children must be given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems, and other written materials) to ignite their interest.

- **Mathematics** involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces, and measures.

- **Understanding the world** involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.

- **Expressive arts and design** involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

We consider the EYFS curriculum to be a Semi-Formal Curriculum where pupils can begin to move into learning within the Specific Areas as their skills develop and their learning progresses. For younger pupils we focus upon the prime areas of communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development, as guided by the EYFS curriculum. Where appropriate, activities are differentiated to meet the pupils' needs. All areas of learning are interconnected, with communication and language impacting on development in all areas. Communication and language and PSED are a major focus in EYFS as the majority of pupils experience these types of difficulties.

Our pupils who have significant and complex needs and who are operating at very early development levels follow a Pre-Formal Curriculum in an early Years environment. Their priority or prime areas are communication which includes personal, social and emotional development, physical development which includes self-care and independence skills and cognition.

Our pupils learn best where they have access to real life experiences, objects and pictures and have opportunities to generalise these skills. We provide the children with a range of environments to extend their play opportunities (e.g. soft play area, sensory room and cookery room). As part of our curriculum, we take the children on visits to the local community (e.g. shops, café, church, park.) We also extend their first hand experience through topic related visits (e.g. farm.)

Assessment and Record Keeping

For whole school aspects of assessment, recording and reporting, please refer to the school policy on assessment. We use The Early Years Foundation Stage and Foundation stage Profile in Reception. Our assessment procedures are:

- For children on a statutory assessment place we use the school based Classroom Monitor assessment and PEP-R(a developmental play based assessment for pupils with ASC)
- For children that can access the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA), this assessment will take place within the first 6 weeks of pupils starting reception. The RBA is a short, task-based assessment. It is not used to label or track individual pupils. The RBA has been designed to get a snapshot of your child's early literacy mathematics, language and communication skills
- All staff keep observations on the priority areas of learning. These are shared through class meetings to plan appropriate next steps.
- Throughout the year photographic records are kept to show attainment in all areas of learning which are important and appropriate to pupils. These are shared and celebrated with parents at the end of the Summer Term through power point presentations which form our Records of Achievement or end of year reports.
- We record progress on the whole school Classroom Monitor assessment. Pupils are baseline from the term in which they start school.
- The statutory EYFS Profile is completed at the end of Reception but the pupils tend to have very low scores on this which is due to their additional special educational needs. Classroom Monitor better reflects their attainment in small steps.
- All pupils have Education Action Plans from the completion of their assessment. These clearly show individual pupil progress.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to contribute to their child's learning and progress through the use of our Learning Journeys. Parents/carers are offered the choice of sharing information through a book or email system. At the beginning of each half term a Topic Letter is shared with parents/carers which outlines the activities and learning which is planned and at the end of each half term a few photos and comments are shared to show what their child has been doing. Parents are encouraged to respond to this sharing of learning with photos and comments from home either in the Learning Journey book or through emails.

Monitoring & Evaluation

We have a Phase Leader for The Early Years. This role includes:

- Leading the staff team to ensure the schools policies and practices are delivered to a high standard
- Coordinating assessment, planning, recording and reporting
- Monitoring to ensure provision of an appropriately organised learning environment that supports learning and well being
- Taking an over view of the learning environment and resources to ensure they meet our high standards
- Maintaining good liaison with parents, other providers, multidisciplinary team and community
- Appraisal of other members of the Foundation Stage Team
- Reporting back to the Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body