“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 – 2014)

The Early Years Foundation Stage applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. In both schools classes are accommodated in a purpose-built ‘Early Years Unit’.

There are four guiding principles which shape practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage:

* Every child is a **unique child**
* Children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**
* Children learn and develop well in **enabling environments**
* **Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates**

This policy explains how our practice is underpinned by these four principles.

Additionally, the EYFS has:

* A whole school Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct
* members of staff who have a current paediatric first aid certificate
* staff: child ratios that are above those set out in the Statutory Framework
* a whole school Policy for Administering Medicines
* a first aid box accessible at all times with appropriate content for children. A written record of accidents or injuries and first aid treatment is kept.
* risk assessments of the EYFS carried out to ensure staff and children are not exposed to risks
* a whole school policy for concerns and complaints from parents
* a Changing Policy

**A Unique Child**

We recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways, at varying rates. Children’s attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

**Inclusion**

We value the diversity of individuals within the school. All children at our schools are treated fairly, regardless of race, gender, religion or abilities. All children and their families are valued within our school. We believe that all our children matter. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children’s range of life experiences when planning for their learning. In the Foundation Stage we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

**Welfare**

It is important to us that all children in the school are ‘safe’. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards.

At our schools, we understand that we are legally required to comply with welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage. We:

* promote the welfare of children
* promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill
* manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children’s stage of development and individual needs
* ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so
* Ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose
* Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs
* Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children

Children are encouraged to be healthy and independent at school – they are free to choose fruit or bagels/breadsticks as a snack. Children are asked to bring their own water bottle but otherwise water or milk are provided. Children are encouraged to have a school lunch as we recognise the importance of eating together. Children in the Reception and Nursery classes eat their lunch in their setting separate from the older children.

**Positive Relationships**

We recognise that children learn to be strong, confident and independent. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

**Parents and carers as Partners**

We believe that parents and carers are children’s first and most enduring educators and we value being partners with them in their child’s education. We do this by:

* Visiting children and their parents/carers in their own home before the child starts in school
* Giving parents/carers and children the opportunity to spend time in the Early Years Unit before starting school
* Operating an open door policy for parents/carers with any queries
* Sharing children’s Tapestry/Learning Journals and observations with parents/carers
* Offering parents/carers teacher consultations each term
* Having flexible admission arrangements that enable children and parents/carers to become secure, and by allowing time to discuss each child’s circumstances
* Arranging for children to start school over the first three weeks of term. We stagger the start time of each child over this period, so that staff can welcome each child into our school. We encourage parents/carers to stay and support the settling process, according to the child’s needs.
* Providing parents/ carers with an annual report that offers brief comments on each child’s progress in each area of learning. It highlights the child’s strengths and development needs and gives details of the child’s general progress.

All staff involved with the EYFS aim to develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them.

Links with local pre-schools and children’s centres allows us to meet their staff and discuss individual children and their transition to school.

**Enabling Environments**

We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children’s development. This begins by observing the children and assessing their interests, development and learning, before planning challenging but achievable activities and experiences.

**Observation, Assessment and Planning**

Foundation Stage staff use observations as the basis for planning. Staff are skilled at observing children to identify their achievements, interests and next steps for learning. These observations then lead the direction of the planning.

The planning objectives within the Foundation Stage are from the Development Matters Statements from the Early Years Foundation Stage document. We make regular assessments of children’s learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs.

Assessment in the Foundation Stage takes the form of both formal and informal observations. Once children have been in the setting for 3 weeks they are assessed. This provides us with a base line assessment. At the end of their foundation year in school the children’s progress is recorded on to the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. Each child’s level of development is recorded against the Early Learning Goals.

**The Learning Environment**

The Early Years Unit is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet, or be creative. The Early Years has an outdoor area which is set up to provide a range of activities to encourage physical development and activities in the outdoor area reflect the seven areas of learning. The free flow between the inside and the outside has a positive effect on the children’s development. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. The children can explore, use their senses and be physically active.

We also aim to take the children on visits, which may include museums and parks as well as places in the local area.

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

There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational provision in the early years setting. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. 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:

**Prime Areas:**

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

Staff will also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied:

**Specific Areas:**

* Literacy
* Mathematics
* Understanding the world
* Expressive arts and design

We deliver learning for all of the areas through purposeful play and learning experiences, with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities.

Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, and learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems.

**RE**

As multi-cultural schools we actively promote a caring, respecting and accepting environment. In the Early Years we teach religious education through the appropriate aspects of the Foundation Stage Curriculum using the ‘Discovery RE’ curriculum as the basis for our enquiry–based approach. The themes for the EYFS are: Special People, Christmas, Celebrations, Easter, Story-time & Special Places. Through these themes children learn about Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Sikhism.

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