

# Heart of the Forest Community Special School

## Early Years Policy



|                                      |                    |                          |            |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|------------|
| <b>Approved by:</b>                  | HoF Governing Body | <b>Date:</b>             | 10/5/23    |
| <b>Signed by Chair of Governors:</b> |                    | <b>Date:</b>             |            |
| <b>Last reviewed on:</b>             | March 2023         | <b>Next review date:</b> | March 2024 |
| <b>Website:</b>                      | Yes                | <b>Type:</b>             | Statutory  |

## **1. Introduction**

1.1. This policy aims to ensure:

1.1.1. That children access a broad and balanced curriculum that gives them the broad range of knowledge and skills needed for good progress through school and life

1.1.2. Quality and consistency in teaching and learning so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind

1.1.3. Close partnership working between practitioners and with parents and/or carers

1.1.4. Every child is included and supported through equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice

1.2 This policy follows the requirements set out in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) 2021.

## **2. Structure of the EYFS**

The Early Years Department now encompasses pupils on transition from age three to pupils at the end of KS1 at age seven. Our aim for high quality education in the Early Years begins by building on what the children already know and can do, providing carefully structured play based activities that are relevant and match the needs of the individual child. We aim to provide our pupils with rich experiences designed to stimulate and educate, encourage exploration, investigation, independence and a desire to learn. Our Curriculum provides opportunities for the child to take part in activities planned and supported by an adult, but also to initiate play and learning by themselves or with their peers. We aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum addressing the seven areas of learning in the Revised Early Years Foundation Stage Practice Guidance, and during transition to National Curriculum areas, showing awareness of cross-curricular opportunities for learning in all areas of our daily routines. We place a strong emphasis on learning through play and interaction, with pupils feeling secure, confident, valued and cared for.

## **3. Curriculum**

3.1. Our early years setting follows the curriculum as outlined in the EYFS statutory framework that applies from September 2021.

3.2. The EYFS framework includes 7 areas of learning and development that are equally important and inter-connected.

3.3. 3 of these areas are known as the prime areas – these are seen as particularly important for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, for building children's capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

3.4. The prime areas are:

3.4.1. Communication and language

3.4.2. Physical development

3.4.3. Personal, social and emotional development

3.5. The prime areas are strengthened and applied through 4 specific areas:

3.5.1. Literacy

3.5.2. Mathematics

3.5.3. Understanding the world

3.5.4. Expressive arts and design

3.6 Classrooms are fitted with hoist tracking and specially adapted personal care areas in order to provide appropriate care for our non-ambulant pupils. We have access to specialist areas in the school to provide alternative learning opportunities for our pupils e.g. Hydrotherapy Pool, Sensory Room and Sports Hall which has a full-size trampoline, in order to provide Rebound Therapy. Pupils have access to a wide range of therapies and services provided by in-house or outside agencies e.g. Speech Therapy, Music Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Visual and Hearing Impairment agencies and the Educational Psychology service.

#### **4. Planning**

4.1. Staff plan activities and experiences that enable children to develop and learn effectively. In order to do this, practitioners working with the youngest children are expected to focus strongly on the 3 prime areas.

4.2. Staff also take into account the individual needs, interests and stage of development of each child in their care, and use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience.

4.3. As children have Special Educational Needs, staff will consider whether specialist support is required, linking with relevant services from other agencies, where appropriate.

4.4. In planning and guiding the children's activities, practitioners reflect on the different ways that children learn and include these in their practice.

4.5. In Early Years Classes, all pupils have specific outcomes identified each term that will be worked towards in both child and adult led learning, identified on their personalised curriculum plan.

#### **5. Teaching**

5.1. Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play, and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities.

5.2. Staff respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction.

5.3. As children grow older and as their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards more adult-led activities to help children prepare for more formal learning as appropriate to their individual needs.

## **6. Assessment**

6.1. Ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development processes. Pupils are observed continually throughout all aspects of their daily routines and written or photographic records are kept of a child's attention, interactions, and engagements with things they encounter. These records are kept in Learning Journey books and can be seen by a parent/carer at any time on request.

6.2. Staff observe pupils to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. These observations are used to shape future planning.

6.3. Staff will also take into account observations shared by parents and/or carers.

6.4. Within the first 6 weeks that a child starts reception, staff will administer the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) if appropriate.

6.5 In Reception, pupils are assessed on SOLAR against the prime areas – Communication and Language, Literacy, Mathematics, Personal Social and Emotional Development and Physical Development.

6.6 When pupils start in Year 1 they are assessed using the SOLAR Wilson Stuart P Levels in line with the rest of the school, even if they remain in an EYFS class.

## **7. Working with parents**

7.1. We recognise that children learn and develop well when there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.

7.2. Parents and/or carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development.

7.3. The assessment data, EHCP reviews, personalised curriculum plans and curriculum reports help to provide parents and/or carers with a well-rounded picture of their child's knowledge, understanding and abilities.

## **8. Transition into School**

8.1. Home visits are conducted in term 6 of the school year in which the child will commence their placement at The Heart of the Forest Community Special School to discuss their child's needs and transition to nursery/school. Holding these meetings at the start of the school year ensures that all families have the opportunity to meet with the Class Teacher and/or Family Support Worker, including families for whom placements are agreed during the summer break. This promotes equality for all children and families (see point 1.1.4)

8.2. Children new to Early Years in September have the opportunity for a transition period. This ensures teaching staff can get to know new children, their needs and interests, and

support them to settle into their new environment. The plan for a transition period commences after home visits have been completed.

8.3. The transition period will consist of whole days to ensure children who access home-school transport can attend.

8.4. Where possible, families will be informed of the dates of the child's 3 transition days, and the date and time of their home visit, prior to the summer break. Where children are offered places at the school during the summer break, their families will be contacted by the Class Teacher within the first two days of school commencing in September to arrange the home visit, and provide the dates of their transition days.