



Early Years 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 West Chiltington. The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of teachers working in the EYFS setting, including both teaching and non-teaching adults. In the policy the term 'school' refers to the Early Years educational provision at West Chiltington. This 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. In the policy the term 'teacher' refers to the members of staff working with children within the school.

2. Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage

In the EYFS setting at West Chiltington 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 teachers 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 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 differ 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 school at West Chiltington 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 development requirements through four themes: 'A Unique Child', 'Positive Relationships', 'Enabling Environments' and 'Children Learn in Different Ways and at Different Rates.'

The curriculum is centred on 3 prime areas of learning:

1. Communication and Language.
2. Physical Development
3. Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Providers must also support activities through four specific areas which strengthen the prime areas.

These are:

1. Literacy
2. Mathematics
3. Understanding of the World
4. Expressive Arts and Design

Educational programmes which teachers deliver in the school must involve activities and experiences from one of the following seven areas. These are:

1. Communication and Language
2. Physical Development
3. Personal, Social and Emotional Development
4. Literacy
5. Mathematics
6. Understanding of the World
7. Expressive Arts and Design

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 West Chiltington, we believe that Early Years education is important in its own right and should not be viewed simply as preparation for the next stage of children's education. We believe that the EYFS framework allows a natural progression into the National Curriculum at the beginning of Year 1.

4. Active Learning through Play

At West Chiltington we recognise that young children learn best through 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 Early Years education should be as practical as possible and our EYFS school 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 EYFS school at West Chiltington teachers provide both structured and unstructured play opportunities inside and outside. These activities are designed to engage children in practical, first-hand experiences which will support children to discover, explore, investigate, 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 EYFS framework. This is essentially a play based curriculum and pedagogy as the provision of play opportunities underpins its delivery within schools.

5. Assessment and Record Keeping

Ongoing assessment is an essential aspect of the effective running of the EYFS setting at West Chilton. 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 EYFS assessment method is through teachers' 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). Teachers make time 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). All teachers are involved in observing children.

Teachers use observations to support their developing knowledge of individual children. It informs them of children's abilities, needs, interests, play schemas 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 at least once each term 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 school. Judgments made on children's development in the Profile are based on teachers' 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 is created with all early years teachers' involvement and 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 school. The learning opportunities provided include a range of adult focused and child initiated activities indoors. The school also makes use of the outdoor environment whenever possible.

Educational visits within the local community and further afield are also planned to support children's learning within the classroom.

7. Parents as Partners

At West Chiltoningon 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. So, teachers endeavour to encourage the regular sharing of information about the children with parents.

We value the role of parents as children's primary educators. Through regular dialogue, teachers encourage parents 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 teachers in establishing interesting and stimulating learning experiences, responding to children's needs and interests.

Parents are kept informed of what is happening in the school through regular communication both formal and informal. This helps establish ways in which parents can support their children's learning at home; consolidating and building on what has been covered in the school. Parents are invited to make an appointment once a term to discuss in detail their child's progress but we aim to keep this conversation going through email, sharing of children's work and regular informal conversations at the beginning and end of the school day.

Other opportunities for teachers to share children's learning, development and well-being with parents include termly opportunities to come and get involved with children and their learning as well as end of year reports.

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.

We have a friendly, open-doors ethos and teachers are available to talk to parents at the beginning and end of the day. Parents are always welcomed into school and encouraged to discuss and concerns they might have.

8. Admissions and Induction

West Chiltoningon 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 school, all children are offered a series of visits during the summer term. The purpose of these initial visits is for the children to meet their new teachers and start to become familiar with the school environment. We also like to visit each family in their own home prior to starting school. With parental permission, we will also go to visit the children in their current pre-school schools. The aim of these visits is to support teachers develop their knowledge and understanding of each child in order to make the transition period to West Chiltoningon as smooth as possible.

In the summer term parents are invited into school to meet the school teachers. At this meeting information regarding the induction process and what goes on in the school is shared. There is also time for informal chat and parents' questions. School information packs will be distributed to parents at this meeting, detailing school routines and expectations.

From September children attend the school full-time, though parents can opt for their child to attend part-time should they see fit. Every effort is made to make children feel safe, secure and happy. There is a relaxed and open ethos in the school. Established routines, a calm atmosphere and encouraging talk are some of the strategies teachers use to maintain children's positive feelings about school.

9. Equal Opportunities

All teachers at West Chiltonington have a responsibility to maintain positive attitudes to diversity and difference, ensuring that inclusive practice is delivered in the EYFS setting.

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 EYFS setting at West Chiltonington.

10. Special Educational Needs

See Special Educational Needs Policy.