

NORTH NORFOLK ACADEMY TRUST PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Early Years Policy

North Norfolk Academy Trust have two Early Years settings at Gresham Village School and Nursery and Antingham and Southrepps Primary School and Nursery. Both settings take children from their third birthday and share the same key principles and vision.

Vision

Central to our vision is our desire to prepare our children for their next steps in learning and life through giving them the opportunity to learn through immersion in the world around them. We believe that every child is unique and will flourish in all aspects of their learning, if we provide the environment, challenges and support they need as an individual to develop their full potential.

Key principles

We believe that:

- Every child is a unique child with differing experiences.
- Children are constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, independent, confident and self-assured
- Children learn through investigative play, positive relationships and meaningful interactions.
- Children learn and develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs
- Children develop and learn in unique ways and are most engaged when their learning is led by their own interests.
- A strong partnership between practitioners and parents or carers is essential for children to meet their potential

Statutory requirements

We follow and comply fully with the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage; setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five, DfE 3 March 2017.

Enabling environment

The indoor and outdoor environments are set up to promote children's curiosity, inquisitiveness and engagement through giving them rich opportunities to explore, investigate and take risks. The care that is taken in setting up the environment allows the child to think of innovative and creative ways to use the resources provided, enabling them to be fully engaged and inspired.

Both indoors and outdoors, we set up a core provision of resources to encourage children to use their creativity to create their own activities and learning opportunities. The environment is dynamic and is adjusted to suit the changing needs and skills of the children and what we

intend for them to learn and achieve. Outdoor environments enable children to work on a bigger scale, encouraging their minds to think bigger and expand the depth and breadth of their thinking.

Children develop good attitudes to learning with behaviour consistently high due to the mutually respectful relationships with their adults and the other children, through simple routines and clearly explained boundaries.

Effective interactions and positive relationships

Children are challenged and supported by effective and considered observations and interactions by adults who have developed positive and trusting relationships with the children. Sometimes we stand back and observe, deliberately not interrupting the learning that is taking place. All staff are trained to recognise teaching moments and then to decide the most appropriate way to move the learning on in an effective way. It is through these hundreds of 'teaching moments' every day that our children thrive, make progress and continue to develop admirable attitudes to learning.

As a consequence of this 'planning in the moment', we write very few forward plans for continuous provision, although we make adjustments to the environment and direction of interactions as a result of the observations we make.

Assessment

We are assessing every time we observe or interact with the children and try to record as many of these as is practicable on a daily basis in order to build a picture of every child's development. We record on paper or use our online recording system, Tapestry, this builds a thorough learning journey for each child.

The purpose of observations is to inform us of where each child is at in that moment in a particular area of learning or areas of learning. It guides us to what challenge they need and how to support them with this in the moment. Written observations all contribute to focus child meetings, termly summative assessments and ultimately the Foundation Stage Profile. All staff are trained to make regular, rich and effective observations as part of their daily practice. They are also trained to make accurate assessments using the *Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage* document.

At least twice a year, each child becomes a 'focus child' for a week. The aim of the focus child week is to focus observations and assessments for that individual child. It enables us to accurately assess an individual child's learning and development, drawing on the expertise of all adults working with that child, including parents/ carers. The resulting assessment and conversation with parents is more accurate and in greater depth and enables home and school to have a complete picture and shared understanding of the whole child in all areas of development and characteristics of effective learning.

On entry, children are baselined within the first ten sessions or maximum of two weeks against all seven areas of learning and the three characteristics of learning. Children are subsequently assessed on a termly basis against these criteria and the data used to track individual children's attainment and progress, which is discussed at a termly pupil progress meeting with the Headteacher or Head of School; the data is also used to track the attainment and progress of the cohort in respect of each area of learning and characteristic of effective learning, which informs future improvement planning.

At the end of the reception year, each child is assessed using the statutory *Foundation Stage Profile*. The results of these assessments are reported to parents as part of the end of year reporting process. We moderate our judgements using the national exemplification across our settings, with other local settings and through the Local Authority moderation process.

Working with parents

Parents are involved at all stages of their child's journey through Early Years. Staff are always available to talk to parents on an informal basis before and after sessions; parents are an integral part of the Focus Child meeting; they have access to Tapestry and are encouraged to make their own contributions. Following a Focus Child meeting, parents receive a copy of the assessment and at the end of each year receive a full written report based on the Characteristics of Effective Learning.

Language and Literacy

Communication and language is one of the key foundations for all areas of learning in Early Years and beyond, particularly in relation to developing early reading and writing skills. We are therefore careful to assess children's speech and language development as soon as they enter our settings. How we do this, and the action we take if we feel there is a particular weakness, is set out in our Speech and Language Strategy.

We develop positive attitudes to literacy by ensuring that there are opportunities to read and write as part of our continuous provision both indoors and outdoors. Adults are quick to read stories to children, assist them with 'helicopter writing' and encourage the retelling of stories through drama. All areas of each setting are equipped with a broad range of texts and books that are displayed well and available to the children. Each setting has its own 'library' that is frequently refreshed according to the interests of the children.

Children are taught to read and write as part of a literacy 'lesson' in reception. This lesson includes learning phonics and using them to segment and decode simple words and sentences. Children are also taught to form their letters to write words and sentences. In nursery, literacy is part of continuous provision and adults are always keen to spot opportunities to develop this area of learning. In nursery, we try to teach children basic segmentation of simple words into sounds and give them a limited number of written sounds, so they are able to begin to decode the written word. We are very aware that a good foundation in early reading and writing skills and developing positive attitudes to literacy in Early Years gives our children confidence when

they transfer to key stage 1 and will have an extremely positive impact on their attainment in this phase.

Safeguarding, safety and welfare

Our schools' safeguarding policies set out clearly the responsibilities and procedures around safeguarding and apply to Early Years as well as the rest of the school. Our schools' attendance policy also applies to Early Years and sets out what to do in the case of a pupil absence.

An Early Years risk assessment is carried out once a year and the outcomes shared with staff; every term, the Early Years teacher and Headteacher carry out a setting inspection and any remedial action is taken. The schools' Health and Safety policies set out the roles and responsibilities of staff with regard to health and safety.

Both settings comply fully with the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage*.

Staff working with children in Early Years will inevitably have to help children with their Intimate care. Our Intimate Care Policy sets out the safe working practices and procedures around this.

Special educational, disability and medical needs

We are committed to providing the best possible provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and different medical conditions.

Monitoring and evaluation

Maintaining a self-reflective practice is of high importance within our teams. We therefore regularly organise and attend network meetings with other local settings and are involved in national forums that enable us to compare our practice with others. The Headteacher/ Head of School and school governors update the Early Years section of the Self-evaluation Framework once a term and modify action plans accordingly. At least once a year, we commission an external expert to monitor our provision.

Admissions

We have an Admissions Policy for the schools that includes Early Years and a Terms and Conditions document for parents. Both are available on our school websites.

Associated Policies

Safeguarding
Health and Safety
Intimate Care
Attendance
Admissions

Appendix 1: Statement of Intent

We give children the best possible start in Early education, recognising their prior learning and experiences in order to support them in becoming independent, confident, successful learners with positive self- image and high aspirations.

Each child is encouraged to approach the world around them with awe and wonder. They have an intrinsic desire to explore and investigate their surroundings and want to prosper for their own, inner reward. During their play, children show their understanding of British Values and the aims and values of Gresham Village School, they take part, aim high, challenge themselves, are resilient and are respectful of themselves, others and the environment.

The Early Years Team model and inspire children to take a nurturing approach to themselves and others, whilst children are assertive, confident and are developing the skills to resolve conflicts they also know that they can seek reassurance, comfort and guidance from adults when they need it. This support equips children with the confidence and security to try new things and embrace mistakes on their journey of learning and development. The setting promotes an evolving awareness and appreciation of the community around them and the greater world with a focus on celebrating individuality and diversity.

With well- developed indoor and outdoor learning environments, rich with opportunities to explore, discover and take risks, children have plentiful opportunities to problem solve, be reflective, think critically and review and adapt their approaches to child-led tasks. With children taking the lead in their learning they are not only more engaged but create much more memorable experiences.

Children leave Gresham Village School Early Years with a positive, embedded attitude to learning and the foundations to become an effective citizen of the World.

Intent statements for curriculum areas:

Personal, social and emotional development

To develop children's understanding of making relationships, managing feelings and behaviours and promoting self -confidence and self- awareness. We will provide them with a foundation of life skills that they will apply throughout their childhood and adult life.

Communication and language

To develop children's vocabulary so that they may express themselves clearly with an understanding of their listener's needs. We will model speech and language and provide opportunities for children to listen and respond in a variety of situations.

Physical development

To develop children's co-ordination and move confidently with a sound negotiation of space. To develop every child's understanding of health and hygiene. We will provide an environment in which children have appropriate space to explore movement and take part in games. There is opportunity, support and modelling to encourage children to use equipment and tools safely and independently.

Literacy

To develop children's excitement, passion and appreciation of a wide range of texts, both fact and fiction and ensure time is devoted to the reading and sharing of books. We realise that children have differing literary experiences and will ensure that the best possible individualised support is given to every child to reach their full potential in reading and writing.

Mathematics

To develop children's skills in calculation, reasoning, problem solving, prediction, reflection and critical thinking that they can apply beyond school and within real context. We will provide the teaching, modelling, explanations and reasoning to enable children to confidently approach mathematical challenges.

Understanding the world

To develop children's understanding of culture within their community and the wider world, an awareness and appreciation of similarities and differences, embracing diversity and the technological world. We will ensure that children thrive in the modern, technological world with access to appropriate software and with an intense appreciation of the natural world around them.

Expressive arts and design

To develop children's exploration of music, dance, experimentation with colour, design, texture and form. We will provide inspirational pieces of art and music, with the resources for children to recreate and invent their own expressive arts in the form of art, music, dance, role play and stories.

Appendix 2: Early Years Reading Strategy

We believe early language skills are the foundation of all learning and social skills. We develop pupils' reading through progressive phonics teaching, shared reading, individual reading and access to an extensive range of literature so that children will learn to read widely, fluently, frequently, with comprehension and with enjoyment.

We aim for reading to have a high priority in school, promoting a good model of reading with expression, enjoyment and understanding, through daily shared reading, access to books in many areas around the setting and animated discussions around books.

Parents are kept up to date with their child's progress using Tapestry on-line learning journeys and regular focus meetings. Parents are encouraged to read with their child and are provided with texts that reflect the level of learning that their child is at. Both challenge and support packs are available for children to take home at the request of parents or by suggestion of the teacher.

Nursery

In Nursery we begin to develop the fundamental elements of early speech, language and communication –processing sounds, understanding and expanding vocabulary, beginning to recognise tone and context and developing the ability to listen and concentrate. These elements provide the building blocks for learning to read and continue to be important right through school.

Reception

As children progress into Reception effective phonics teaching will support children's understanding that letters represent sounds in spoken words which supports their developing reading skills. 'Read Write Inc' will be used as a basis for a daily phonics session and these sessions are adapted to suit the changing interests and abilities of the children.

With relevant and varied books in most areas of the setting, not only are books frequently shared by adults but children independently select literature frequently and adults use well thought out interactions to explore the texts with children.