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Thongsley Fields Primary & Nursery School

Early Years Policy

Teaching & Learning

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Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

1. Our Vision

At Thongsley Fields, we aim to provide every child with the skills to become a happy, independent and curious lifelong learner. Our priority is that our provision provides a high level of engagement and active learning through a range of skill based activities.

2. Our Principles

We strive to meet every child's entitlement to develop a love of learning that will enable them to have the best possible life chances both now and in the future.

3. Key Requirements

“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.”

(EYFS 2017)

The overarching aim of the EYFS is to help young children stay safe, be healthy, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and achieve economic well-being by providing:

- quality and consistency, so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind;
- a secure foundation which creates learning and development opportunities that are planned around the interest and needs of the children, informed by regular assessments and reviews;
- partnership working between practitioners, parents and carers
- equality of opportunity ensuring that there is no discrimination and every child is included and supported

The guiding principles which shape our practice are grouped into four distinct but complementary themes:

1. A Unique Child
2. Positive Relationships
3. Enabling Environments
4. Learning and Development

4. Curriculum

At Thongsley Fields, we recognise that every child is unique. We understand that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. We want our children to be independent and self-motivated learners, encouraging the children to adapt their work, think critically and take risks with their learning.

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5. Our EYFS Curriculum

- is at the heart of our life-long approach to our learning journey
- is distinctive, innovative and strategically planned with pupils' individuality and our local needs and context in mind
- is reviewed in the light of national developments, new thinking, research and development
- introduces challenging, engaging and real life problems
- strives to encourage and develop a love of learning
- promotes learning within a child centred approach
- ensures resources and apparatus are available to support learning in every area of the EYFS curriculum and at every stage of development
- ensures all areas of learning are regarded with the same level of importance and interwoven as appropriate
- includes fundamental British values to teach children a sense of self and belonging; enabling them to learn and stay true to the values that make people good human beings
- ensures that children learn to live together peacefully, with each of them playing a valuable role in the multicultural world in which they live.

Our Reception class(es) follows the curriculum as outlined in the [Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\) framework document](#). This document defines what we teach and details the specifics of our setting and school.

The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development, all of which are important, interconnected and included in the curriculum taught. There are three prime areas, which are seen to underpin all of the basics and support the other more specific areas of the curriculum.

The Prime Areas of Learning and Development

➤ **Personal, Social and Emotional Development**

This area focuses on making relationships, self-confidence and self-awareness, and managing feelings and behaviour. This is critical for very young children in all aspects of their lives and gives them the best opportunity for success in all other areas of learning.

➤ **Communication and Language**

This area encourages developing competence in listening and attention, and in understanding and speaking.

➤ **Physical Development**

This area focuses on the child's developing physical control, moving and handling, and health and self-care.

The Specific Areas of Learning and Development

➤ **Literacy**

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This focuses on reading and writing. Children are taught phonics throughout the EYFS.

➤ **Mathematics**

This area focuses on learning through practical activities and on using numbers and understanding shape, space and measure.

➤ **Understanding of the World**

This area focuses on children's developing knowledge and understanding of their own environment, through learning about people and communities, the world and technology. It forms the foundation for later work in Science, Design and Technology, History, RE, Geography and ICT.

➤ **Expressive Arts and Design**

This area focuses on the development of the child's imagination and her or his ability to communicate and express ideas and feeling in creative ways. It incorporates exploring and using media and materials. Creativity is fundamental to successful learning.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

Through regular observations, we will discover children's interests and assess what children know. Fundamental to our practice is assessing how children learn and it is our duty to report to parents their children's individual dispositions and attitudes to learning. This will be assessed using the *Characteristics of Effective Learning*, which are:

- **Playing and exploring – engagement**
Children investigate and experience things and events around them and 'have a go'.
- **Active learning – motivation**
Children concentrate and keep trying if they experience difficulties, as well as enjoying what they achieve.
- **Creating and thinking critically – thinking**
Children have and develop their own ideas, make links between different and experiences and develop strategies for doing things.

6. Planning

Through planning, teachers ensure that there is a balance of *adult led* and *child initiated* activities across the day. During *child initiated* activities the adults' role is to show an interest in the children's ideas, build conversation, facilitate and share ideas and model a range of different skills.

Such interaction with the children is essential in helping to build the children's understanding, guide and develop new learning. These interests are then incorporated in future planning in order to ensure that the topics and themes being covered reflect the children's interests.

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By being flexible in this way, allows for spontaneity within the Foundation Stage and unexpected occurrences such as a butterfly flying into the classroom, birthdays, new siblings and even the window cleaner cleaning our windows to become an integral part of our learning!

7. Direct Teaching

At specific times of the school day, children will take part in activities that are *teacher led*. This will include sessions such as daily phonics, daily reading and daily maths and counting experiences. Staff teach new skills to support children's learning within both the classroom environment and in our extended outdoor classroom.

In Reception, guided and group reading sessions where the love of reading is shared and promoted every day. In the early stages of the year, phonics teaching is focused on the very important task of learning and consolidating the letter sounds required to start the process of learning to read.

All direct taught sessions are carefully planned and tailored for each group using previous assessments of the children's knowledge, skills and ability. Planning is changed and tailored regularly and, in response to the result of taught sessions, ensuring all teaching and learning is relevant and challenging for each child.

8. Learning Through Play

Children's play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. We believe children learn best from activities and experiences that they have initiated and play with peers is important for children's development. We carefully plan our environment and provide opportunities to reflect these interests to inspire them further, whilst also making sure that children also have the opportunity to extend and practise the skills they have learned through direct teaching.

Constant opportunities are provided for children to be able to make their own decisions and choices in order that they can become independent, confident and happy learners as soon as is possible for each individual child. Some children will need gentle encouragement in this step as they become more comfortable in their new setting.

Through play, children explore and develop learning experiences, helping them make sense of the world around them. They practise and develop ideas, and learn how to control themselves, understanding the need for rules and boundaries. Children at Thongsley Fields soon grasp the rules we have in our school. They see the high expectations we have in every aspect of our day and delight in trying to meet these. 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. They express fears and explore challenging experiences in controlled and safe situations, learning to manage risks appropriately. Our Forest School experiences are prime examples of this.

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Giving children the opportunity to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, allows them to discover connections and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. With appropriate adult support, this process enhances children's ability to think critically and ask questions. Adults support children in making connections by showing genuine interest, offering encouragement, probing and helping to clarify ideas and asking open questions. Children can access resources freely and are allowed to move them around the classroom to extend their learning. Children have the choice to be outside throughout the day, unless in exceptional poor weather conditions. We make provisions for the typical British winter: puddle suits are available for all although parents and carers are expected to provide a pair of wellies!

9. Assessment, Recording and Reporting of Progress

Assessment is an essential and important part of the Early Years for children's learning and development. Assessment takes a variety of forms in order to gain an understanding of each child's level of understanding. These can be through observations, photographic evidence, examples of work and parental conversations. Assessment occurs throughout any taught session as well as during free flow times when children are embedding and extending any previous learning. These assessments are used to shape and adapt any future learning.

Observations are recorded using Tapestry, an online learning journal, which allows staff to take photos, videos and make notes while observing what the children are doing or saying. From these observations, staff ascertain and plan for children's next steps. We are then able to share these experiences with children's parents on an almost daily basis. Assessment is a two-way process with parents able to input observations of their own and 'like' and add comments. The online system is highly accessible and can be accessed from a wide range of devices.

On entry to Reception, a baseline assessment is carried out for each child and at the end of each term, assessments are collated to track how well the children are progressing. Opportunities for parents to discuss children's progress and their 'learning journey' are provided in the Autumn and Spring terms. A written report including details about the children's strengths, achievements, interests and next steps is provided in the Summer term.

We ensure our end of EYFS assessments are reliable through:

- our knowledge of the child gained through observation and interaction
- our environment enables the child to flourish to their full capacity
- our assessments ensure a range of contributors e.g. parents, the school nurse, Speech and Language Therapy,
- outreach teachers and other relevant adults
- in-house moderation across the EYFS team
- moderation within the Local Authority (LA) and other schools in The Cam Academy Trust.

10. Special educational needs and disability (SEND) and Inclusion

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At Thongsley Fields, we value the diversity of all children 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.

Assessments and teacher observations are used to identify children who may have specific needs within the first half term and ongoing through each child's primary education. Results of assessments are used to ensure that a differentiated curriculum is offered to such children to meet their needs.

[See our website for more information.](#)

11. Safeguarding and Children's Welfare

Children learn best when they are happy, safe and feel secure. We aim to ensure that all children feel happy, safe and secure through the continuous development of positive relationships between children and staff as well as relationships with their peers. We follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements detailed in the Early Years Foundation Stage Guidance. Our school has rigorous safeguarding procedures that are used to identify anyone at risk or harm and set out clear procedures for reporting concerns. See our [Safeguarding Policy](#) available on the school's website.

It is important to us that all children in the school are 'safe'. We aim to teach children that, in society, as in a classroom, there is a need for boundaries, rules and limits to which we all need to adhere. We aim to teach children to be consciously aware of their feelings and the feelings of others; to learn to manage their own behaviour with staff using issues that arise as teaching opportunities. See our [Behaviour Policy](#) available on the school's website.

We also aim to teach our children to take risks whilst learning how to recognise and avoid hazards. A [Data Collection](#) form is completed prior to children starting at our school. Emergency contact information as well as medical, personal and social details are recorded for all children. Other than minor cuts and bruises, all accidents on school premises are recorded in our Accident Book and parents are informed accordingly.

12. Induction and Transition

Parents of children who are offered a place in Reception are invited to an induction meeting in June. Children and their parents are invited to a 'stay and play' session shortly afterwards. Early in September, staff visit the children and their families at home prior to starting school. This is an ideal opportunity to share any relevant information about children and their families.

Additional transition sessions are made available where parents and staff feel it may be beneficial. We endeavour to be flexible wherever possible in order that all children feel comfortable and happy. All children in Reception start in September on a slightly staggered basis. Children begin by staying for a short session and building up to full sessions. Each child will be given a [Starting](#)

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[School Pack](#), which provides lots of useful information and guidance as to how best to prepare your child for school.

To ensure the best possible transition we:

- value the parent as the first educator of their child
- make contact with our feeder pre-school within our new intake to discuss essential information on every child
- share important information about our school during new-parents meeting
- use written information sent by pre-schools to inform early planning
- hold a series of 'welcome/taster' sessions for parents and children in June and July
- share information in a transition meeting(s) with key adults for children with additional needs
- meet with every parent and child before beginning school to share important information from home and school (wherever this is possible)

13. Partnership with Parents and Carers

The school recognises the huge importance of establishing effective relationships with parents/carers in ensuring the children achieve their full potential. Parental involvement is actively encouraged. Parents are very welcome to chat to staff prior to the start of the school day or at the end of the school day giving them opportunities to discuss any concerns with staff. Staff ensure that parents are well informed about the curriculum their child is experiencing through Tapestry, home school diary, notes, letters, newsletters, notice boards and the school blog. Staff take the opportunity at the end of the day to talk to parents about significant achievements or any concerns.

Throughout the year, parents are invited to attend workshops that help support their child's development at home. Parents are very welcome in the Reception classroom talk about interesting pets, hobbies or jobs.

14. Equal Opportunities

Staff ensure that all children have equal access to the curriculum. They will be encouraged to respect similarities and differences within cultures other than their own. The school seeks to develop tolerance and concern for others.

15. Monitoring

The relevant Phase Leader is responsible for the monitoring of this policy in conjunction with the Headteacher and Leadership Team. Areas identified for improvement will be incorporated into the main School Development Plan as appropriate.

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Our Early Years team consists of experienced staff whose responsibility it is to follow the principles stated in this policy. Our team are experienced and skilled in early years teaching and understand the needs of the young child and how best to create an environment to foster a love of learning.

We believe in working together to ensure every child achieves their highest potential by learning through play and enjoyment.