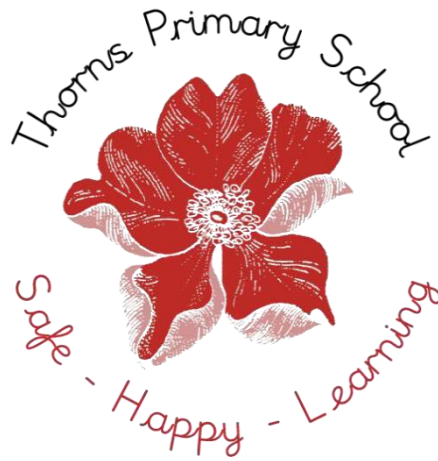




Thorns Primary School

Early Year Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy

Policy approved by governors: 2nd December 2024

Review: The policy will be reviewed regularly and amended if necessary.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives.

Learning for children is a rewarding and enjoyable experience in which they explore, investigate, discover, create, practice, rehearse, repeat, revise and consolidate their developing knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes. During the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), many of these aspects of learning are brought together effectively through play and talk.

As outlined in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage (November 2024):

‘All children deserve the care and support they need to have the best start in life. Children learn and develop at a faster rate from birth to five years old than at any other time in their lives, so their experiences in early years have a major impact on their future life chances.’

The framework recognises that the EYFS is about what the children learn, as well as how they learn, and states:

‘Effective practice is a mix of different approaches. Children learn through play, by adults modelling, by observing each other and through adult-guided learning.’

The EYFS seeks to provide:

- **Quality and consistency** in all early years settings, so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind.
- **A secure foundation** through planning for the learning and development of each individual child and assessing and reviewing what they have learned regularly.
- **Partnership working** between practitioners and with parents and/or carers.
- **Equality of opportunity** and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.

The four guiding principles that should shape practice in early years:

- Every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- Children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**.
- Children learn and develop well in **enabling environments with teaching and support from adults**, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- The importance of **learning and development**. Children develop and learn at different rates.

Our EYFS Provision Map provides an overview of early years education in our school.

As part of our practice we:

- provide a balanced curriculum, based on the EYFS, across the seven areas of learning and development, using play as the vehicle for learning
- value the role of play in children's learning and development and embrace the power of play (VIP time – Very Important Play)
- promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice
- provide early intervention for those children who require additional support
- work in partnership with parents and carers
- plan challenging learning experiences, based on the individual child, informed by observation and assessment and by the children's own ideas and interests
- provide opportunities for children to engage in activities that are:
 - *adult-guided*: done with an adult to model, scaffold and support
 - *adult-initiated*: an activity carried out by a child following initial instruction from an adult (to practise a specific skill or work on a specific LI)
 - *child-initiated*: independently chosen by the child (VIP time)
- ensure the environment is purposefully planned to maximise learning for all:
 - *continuous provision*: provision and resources that are always available
 - *enhanced provision*: specific provision and resources that relate to children's interests or a current theme or text, etc.
 - *linked provision*: specific resources/activities that directly link to a learning intention (e.g., a sorting activity using that day's focus sound)
- provide a secure and safe learning environment indoors and outdoors
- keep the 3Ms at the forefront of our interactions: Making conversation; Mark making; Mathematics

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE CURRICULUM

We plan an exciting and challenging curriculum based on the educational programmes set out in the EYFS and our observations of children's needs and next steps, interests and stages of development across the seven areas of learning. This enables children to develop the knowledge and skills to be prepared for KS1.

All seven areas of learning and development are important and interconnected.

The prime areas are fundamental to a broad and balanced base of learning for children and are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive, both in the EYFS and into Key Stage 1.

The **prime** areas are:

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

Children are also supported through the four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

The **specific** areas are:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

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

Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

1. **Playing and exploring** - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.
2. **Active learning** - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties.
3. **Creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things.

Across the whole of school, we actively teach, describe, model and expect our children to demonstrate 'Learning Powers'. These directly support the children's development of the characteristics of effective learning in a child-friendly way.

The Thorns Way: <i>Our Learning Powers</i>				
				
Kelly the koala	Emily the elephant	Albert the armadillo	Sadie the squirrel	The monkeys
				
To be curious	To concentrate	To be resilient	To co-operate	To self-improve/ continuously improve
• asks questions • notices things • looks for patterns and connections • thinks of possible reasons • researches • ponders – what if...? • is creative	• manages distractions • gets lost in their learning • breaks things down into smaller steps • focuses on one thing at a time • looks for patterns and connections • plans and thinks things through • jots things down to help them think	• uses a growth mindset • does not worry if it goes wrong • learns from their mistakes • is excited to try new things	• listens to others • explains things to help others • is kind when you disagree • is tolerant • works together	• keeps reviewing their learning • improves one thing first • tries to be better than last time • takes small steps • does not compare themselves to anybody else • strives for accuracy

Children are provided with a range of rich, meaningful first-hand experiences in which they can explore, think creatively and be active. We aim to develop and foster positive attitudes towards learning, confidence, communication and physical development.

PLANNING IN THE EYFS

We have produced a comprehensive '*Long-Term Curriculum Overview*' that shows the progression of knowledge and skills in all seven areas of learning and development throughout the year. Each half-term clearly learning objectives across the curriculum ensure that learning is not left to chance. Bespoke *medium-term plans* are produced by the class teacher to map out how the half-term's learning will be spread over the weeks available, taking account of special events that may be happening and other factors that may need to be planned in alongside. Each week the medium-term plan is used to produce more detailed plans for the week's literacy, maths and other or 'themed' learning, where intended learning is developed through adult-guided, adult-initiated and child-initiated opportunities for all. Enhancements to continuous provision and linked provision to support the text or theme are carefully planned. The environment also provides plenty of opportunities, inside and outdoors, for children to practise what they have been taught previously, revisiting prior learning and applying their learned skills. Running as a thread through all provision all the time is an awareness of how children's *executive function* develops and the crucial part this plays in learning.

Executive function has three core areas:

- Inhibition (self-control of behaviour and attention)
- Working memory (holding information in mind and working with it)
- Cognitive flexibility (changing approaches to a problem, and switching between tasks)

The EYFS principle that '*children learn well in enabling environments with teaching and support from adults*' is particularly relevant here.

Each 'theme' is supported by quality texts, and much of the weekly learning is based around one of these. However, tenuous links to a theme is not the approach we take, and whilst often there is a link, there will be occasions when a book or story is chosen for no other reason than because it 'sparks joy'. We adopt Greg Bottrill's Drawing Club approach to literacy development, and alongside our phonics lessons, daily DC activities are linked to a week-long focus on a story book, storytelling (traditional tales) or an animation from the past. Drawing Club is not a scheme; it is a 'world that runs alongside the world of play' and develops the magic of story, mathematics, physical development, language, creativity, collaboration and joy. Drawing Club takes place daily, with the same stimulus being used for one week. Within the Drawing Club approach run three over-arching 'Ms': Making

conversation; Mark making; Mathematics. The 3Ms should be at the forefront of our thinking all day, every day, not just within a literacy context but in all that we do.

Structured lessons take place in phonics, where we use Little Wandle, and in mathematics, where we follow Mastering Number. These short lessons take place daily. There are also short carpet sessions every afternoon with a different curriculum focus each day. In this way, we ensure that children are being taught the skills and knowledge of the wider curriculum. Subject leaders have planned the content so that it is age-appropriate and provides the foundational knowledge and skills to enable the children to successfully access the national Curriculum when they transition into Year 1.

We always remain flexible to allow for unplanned circumstances and children's responses. Our planning is continually evaluated by all staff to ensure that children's individual 'Next Steps in Learning' and personalised learning needs are met. All adults continually assess children, both in more formal activities and during their play, to identify these next steps.

The curriculum is delivered using a play-based approach as outlined by the EYFS framework: 'Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals and solve problems... leading their own play and by taking part in play and learning that is guided by adults.'

We plan a balance between children having time and space to engage in their own child-initiated activities and those which are planned by adults. During children's play, the adults in class interact when appropriate to stretch and challenge them further. They use their professional judgement to know when to intervene, model etc. and when to stand back, observe and assess.

In planning and guiding children's activities, we reflect as practitioners on the different ways that children learn and build these into our practice. We create a stimulating learning environment that allows and encourages children to free flow between inside and outdoors as far as possible.

OBSERVATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

As part of our daily practice, we observe and assess children's development and learning to inform our future plans. We record our observations in a variety of ways and all adults contribute. Our recorded observations focus on capturing significant moments of learning that children achieve so that quality interactions with children can remain our focus. Our priority is to be with the children.

Observations of children's achievements are collated in the class floor books (learning journeys) as well as in specific maths and English folders/books. Parents/carers are invited in to school each term to look at their children's books. Parents/carers also receive a termly progress report which is followed by a parents' evening appointment. Children's

'Next Steps in Learning' are shared during these appointments so that parents/carers know how to help their children with their learning at home.

The information we gather on each child, through observations, 1:1 and group activities etc. is used to inform practitioners in making summative assessment judgements about each child in each area of learning and development. Termly 'checkpoints' have been identified to help practitioners determine whether children are on-track to achieve the Early Learning Goals (ELGs). These statements must not be used as a checklist. They are indicators of the skills and behaviours that might be seen at that point in time. There is no expectation that children can 'do' everything as identified at a particular checkpoint. The checkpoints do, however, provide useful insight into children's gaps and resultant next steps.

RECEPTION BASELINE ASSESSMENT (RBA)

The Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) is a short, statutory assessment, taken within the first six weeks of a child starting reception. It assesses children in early mathematics, literacy, communication and language. The purpose of the RBA is to form the starting point for cohort-level school progress measures. This data will be compared to key stage 2 outcomes 7 years later to form the overall progress measure for a school. The data collected and produced from the assessment is stored in the National Pupil Database (NPD), including numerical scores. It is not shared with external bodies, including schools, teachers, pupils or parents/carers.

EYFS PROFILE

In the final term of the reception year (no later than 30th June), the EYFS profile is completed for each child. This is a statutory requirement. The EYFSP provides parents and carers, practitioners and teachers with a well-rounded summary of every child's development and learning achievements and readiness for Year 1. It also includes whether they have reached a 'Good Level of Development' (GLD). Children are assessed against the Early Learning Goals (ELG) by the class teacher - who uses practitioners' knowledge and professional judgement of the children to make a 'best fit' judgement.

The children are assessed as achieving a 1 or 2 against each area of the EYFS curriculum:

- 1 Emerging ELG – not yet meeting the expected level
- 2 Expected ELG – meeting the expected level of development

Year 1 teachers must be given a copy of the Profile report, enabling a dialogue between the reception and Y1 teachers which will assist in the planning of learning in the next academic year. This profile data is the statutory data that is sent to the Local Authority and collected nationally. GLD is a headline attainment measure for primary schools. It is

intended as a summary of what the children have achieved during their time in EYFS and an indicator of the effectiveness of the provision. It is not intended to predict pupils' future attainment outcomes.

INCLUSION

We value all our children as individuals, irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability or gender. As a school we follow a No Outsiders approach to personal development and we say, 'All different, all welcome'. We plan a curriculum that meets the needs of the individual child and supports them at their own pace, intended that as many children as possible achieve the Early Learning Goals. For those children where there are clear barriers to this, we endeavour to try and overcome these and will do our very best for them. We strongly believe that early identification of children with additional needs is crucial in enabling us to give the child the support that they need. In doing so, we work closely with parents and outside agencies.

SAFETY INCLUDING SAFEGUARDING AND WELFARE REQUIREMENTS

The safety and welfare of our children is paramount at Thorns Primary School. We have robust policies and procedures in place to ensure their safety. In Reception we provide a safe and secure environment and provide a curriculum which teaches children how to take risks, follow rules and stay safe. We comply with the welfare requirements set out in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage and understand that we must:

- Promote the welfare of all children;
- Promote good health;
- Manage behaviour effectively and appropriately;
- Ensure all adults working with children are suitable to do so;
- Ensure that the environment is safe and all equipment and furniture is fit for purpose;
- Ensure all children have a challenging and enjoyable learning experience.

We promote the good health of the children in our care in numerous ways, including the provision of nutritious fruit snacks, access to water throughout the day, allocating significant time for physical development and following set procedures when children become ill or have an accident.

Staff and visitors are prohibited from using their mobile phones in our classroom or outdoor areas, including Forest School. Only the class iPads are used to photograph children (for observation and assessment purposes) and children must be appropriately dressed in photographs. Robust systems are in place to ensure that all practitioners who have regular contact with children are suitable for their role.

Members of our school staff hold the paediatric first aid qualification, which is a statutory requirement of the EYFS, and someone with a PFA certificate is always on the premises and available when children are present as well as on off-site visits.

The Child Protection Policy is in place to ensure the safety of all stakeholders. The policy is known and understood by all, and staff receive annual CP training as well as other safeguarding training throughout the year. The safeguarding team consists of: Sam Hinkley, Designated Safeguarding Lead; Rebecca Jordan and Karen Cartwright, Deputy Safeguarding Leads. All staff have access to the CPOMS system to log any concerns regarding any aspects of safeguarding and behaviour. All staff are vigilant in reporting concerns. The Excelsior MAT Code of Conduct and Whistleblowing Policies further support all adults in school in always maintaining the highest standards of professionalism and appropriateness and what to do in the event of any concerns about this.

RATIOS

The school will ensure that staff levels within our EYFS setting comply with statutory guidance and can meet the needs of the children, providing suitable levels of supervision and always keeping them safe. Children will be kept within sight and hearing at all times. The reception teacher assumes day-to-day management and oversight of the provision, with support from the EYFS lead as needed.

- Class sizes will be limited to 30 pupils.
- Classes will be led by a qualified teacher, supported by suitably qualified support staff, currently:
 - 1 x qualified teacher
 - 1 x L3 EYFS practitioner
 - 1 x L1 EYFS support assistant
- If required due to a child's needs (which may or may not be supported by an EHCP), additional adults may also be working in the setting.

At Thorns Primary school, we believe that the EYFS is of such fundamental importance that we will always endeavour to provide more than minimal staffing when we can. Quality reception provision, of which skilled and capable adults are a key component, is our priority.

THE ROLE OF FAMILIES

We recognise the central importance of parents/carers as children's first educators. We believe they have a significant role to play in the lifelong education of their child. We strive to create and maintain partnerships with parents/carers as we recognise that together, we can have a significant impact on a child's learning. We welcome and actively encourage parents to participate confidently in their child's education and care in numerous ways.

- Holding an information evening before the children start school (July)
- Talking to them about their child's interests and needs during our introductory sessions in school and at our home visits
- Being visible, welcoming and approachable for parents to voice concerns/ask questions
- Sending end-of-term reports and inviting them to parents' evenings to discuss how their children have settled and share progress and next steps for learning
- Valuing parents' contributions to learning journeys (weekly 'wow bubbles')
- Encouraging parents to read with their child at home and make comments in their reading record books
- Sending home a termly newsletter outlining planned learning and suggesting ways this can be supported at home
- Inviting parents into school for phonics workshop sessions to demonstrate how we teach phonics and help them support their child
- Inviting parents in for Mastering Number workshops to demonstrate how we teach early mathematics skills
- Inviting parents in for other sessions
- Weekly home learning activities accessed via our website

TRANSITIONS

Transitions are carefully planned for, and significant time is given to ensure continuity of learning and care. At times of transition, we acknowledge the child's needs and establish effective partnerships with those involved with the child and other settings. In the summer term prior to children starting school, we speak at length with nurseries to develop an understanding of the needs of each child. Towards the end of the summer term, children attend introductory sessions to develop familiarity with the settings and staff. Our reception staff also visit the local nurseries and preschools to familiarise themselves with the children. Parents/carers are encouraged to take up the offer of a home visit (by the reception class teacher and TA) or have the option to instead meet with Reception staff in school. This is a valuable time to talk 1:1 with them and answer any concerns/queries they may have. A parents' meeting and information pack also aims to address the main things parents/carers need to know.

The Assistant Head Teacher for the lower school is involved in the assessment of children in reception so already have a good understanding of needs and next steps prior to them starting KS1. In the summer term, our reception and year 1 teachers meet to discuss the individual children and their specific needs. The children's assessment information is shared so that their new teacher can plan for their 'next steps in learning' from the moment they enter their new class. Towards the end of the summer term, children spend a session in their new classroom with their new teacher. Because we are a small school, most adults

are familiar to the children already, but a more formal session, along with a 'meet the new teacher' session for parents, ensures that they are familiar and comfortable with their new teacher and are ready for the next phase of their education.

MONITORING THE EYFS

We are committed to providing the best possible experiences for our children. The Head Teacher is responsible for monitoring provision, teaching and learning and children's progress. Regular monitoring visits are also carried out by the other members of the Senior Leadership Team. Feedback is then shared with the relevant adults and any necessary actions are taken.

All adults in the reception team have a key role in children's learning and development. Therefore, they are required to be knowledgeable and skilled in the EYFS curriculum. Any training needs for existing or new members of staff are identified and addressed as part of our Professional Growth process.

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

As part of Excelsior Multi Academy Trust, the EYFS teacher and practitioners have opportunities to develop their own practice through CPD and training as well as visiting other settings. Working with the MAT also provides opportunities for moderation and quality assurance, as well as the sharing of skills and expertise across the Trust.

MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The EYFS Lead is responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of this policy. All Staff are responsible for implementing procedures outlined in this policy.

Written by: Mrs. Rebecca Jordan

Date: November 2024

Review: As required