



NICHOLAS HAWKSMOOR  
PRIMARY SCHOOL

## Foundation Stage Policy

### 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 Nicholas Hawksmoor Primary School and Nursery. The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of practitioners working in the EYFS setting, including both teaching and non-teaching adults.

In the policy the term 'setting' refers to the Early Years educational provision at Nicholas Hawksmoor Primary School and Nursery. This is available to children who enter Nursery from September of the academic year in which they will turn four years old. Along with those who enter Reception from the September of the academic year in which they will turn five years old. In the policy the term 'practitioner' refers to the members of staff working with children within the setting.

### Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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.
- 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 good 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 that 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.

### The Early Years Foundation Stage framework

Teaching in the EYFS is delivered in accordance with the government's statutory document 'The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage'. 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.'



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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

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. 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.

### **Active Learning through Play**

At Nicholas Hawksmoor Primary School we recognise that young children learn best when they are active. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods.

We recognise the importance of children's play as 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. It can provide multiple ways for children to learn a variety of different skills and concepts.

We 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.

### **Assessment and Record Keeping**

On-going assessment is an essential aspect of the effective practice in the EYFS setting. Regular, planned and focused assessments are made of children's learning and individual needs.

The main EYFS assessment method is through practitioners' 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). Practitioners 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 through the use of 'Tapestry', an online learning journal system.



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All practitioners are involved in observing children and use observation information 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.

'Tapestry' is used to continuously monitor and record children's progress over the academic year in all Areas of Learning and Development within the EYFS framework. Samples of children's work are gathered, along with photographic evidence, observations and videos. This also includes home observations and assessments.

Baseline assessment is carried out using the EYFS Profile during the children's first six weeks upon entering the setting. Judgments made on children's development are based on practitioners' evidence of children's behaviour observed independently and consistently in their self-initiated activities across all Areas of Learning and Development as well as detailed information provided by parents shared during the early autumn meetings with staff.

### **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 details events and significant learning themes, and is generally based on seasonal changes and celebrations. It may also give indication to any key areas that need targeting as noted through observation and analysis of assessment.

Planning is holistic and always has the child at the centre. Practitioners plan as teams and are led in discussion and conversation by the Head of Foundation Stage. During this planning time detailed conversations about the learning and success of the previous week are held along with identification of interests and needs of individuals. This information is then used in conjunction with 'learning wishes' (taken from parent and child conversations) and parental observations to plan for the week ahead. Planning has an underlying theme and activities are closely linked to this in order to ensure high levels of engagement and motivation.

The weekly plan for the children in both Nursery and Reception will always cover all areas of learning and development and encompass the whole environment, both indoors and out. It will identify opportunities for literacy and mathematics in more detail as well as key focus groups and interventions. Adult guided activities are also planned in and have a key learning focus with all children in the EYFS also experience daily phonics and maths sessions. Role play and imaginative play is always considered and areas are creatively transformed on a weekly basis to match the theme. Continuous provision (resources and experiences that are constantly available) is reviewed and adapted where necessary, depending on the varying needs of the children.

Additionally, children will have planned experiences in dance, drama and music, along with a weekly trip to Forest School.

### **Parents as Partners**

At Nicholas Hawksmoor Primary School and Nursery we recognise the vital importance of establishing positive relationships with parents, as highlighted by the EYFS framework, and that an effective partnership between school and home will have a positive impact on children's learning and development.



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We value the role of parents as children's primary educators and believe that parents should be partners in the learning and development of their child. We therefore, provide parents with access to their child's online learning journey through the creation of a 'Tapestry' account. By logging on they can view all journal entries for their child along with seeing the curriculum reference and age band, therefore parents are always kept informed of their child's developmental stage.

Parents can then respond to journal entries from practitioners, giving a two way learning conversation, or upload their own observations, photographs and videos of their child's home learning. This provides us with a wider perspective on each child's development shared between home and school.

Through entry booklets and informal chats at the beginning and end of the day, practitioners 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).

Parents are also invited to make 'learning wishes' with their child where they can share their child's interests and questions which we can then feed into our planning at school. This supports practitioners in establishing interesting and stimulating learning experiences, responding to children's needs and interests.

Parents are kept informed of what is happening in the setting through regular letters, the Foundation Stage Blog and school website, parent board, welcome board, reading records and our informal chatting at the beginning and end of the day. This not only provides information on current learning and themes but also gives suggestions of how parents can support their children's learning at home; consolidating and building on what has been covered in the setting.

Parents are invited to attend parents' evenings during the course of the academic year. The first of these takes place during the autumn term to allow practitioners and parents to discuss how children have settled into the setting as well as giving time for a detailed conversation about the characteristics of a child's stage of development in which parents information supports a more accurate baseline assessment early in the Autumn Term. Another parents' evening takes place during the spring term where practitioners will feedback further on children's learning and development progress.

Parents are also invited to get involved with school life. There are opportunities for them to help with activities on a weekly basis such as reading with children, along with educational visits, parent talks and offering their particular skills (e.g. cooking, art, music) to support children's learning. Parents may be invited into the setting on other occasions such as stay and play days, special events and learning days where children show them their work and parents and children work together in the setting.

Information and welcome evenings and parent workshops are also run by practitioners to give parents more information on both the Foundation Stage Curriculum and ways in which they can help at home.

The setting has a friendly, open-doors ethos and practitioners are available to talk to parents at the beginning and end of the day. Parents are also provided with a communication book where they can write a message to a practitioner. Parents are always welcomed into school and encouraged to discuss and concerns they might have.



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### **Induction**

Before starting at Nicholas Hawksmoor Nursery School all parents are invited to a welcome evening in which they can speak to practitioners, hear more about the year ahead and view the setting. After which every child will receive a home visit. In these visits practitioner will spend time building relationships with both the child and parents, along with gathering information regarding the two year check, and the child's previous experiences. 'All About Me' induction packs are handed out and parents are asked to fill these in with their child to give us further information on the child's learning and development.

The children and their parents are then invited to a stay and play session, which is followed by a visit session where the child is encouraged to stay alone at Nursery. The purpose of these initial visits is for the children to meet their new practitioners and start to become familiar with the setting environment whilst still having their parents on hand.

Settling in is a flexible process and we observe the children and families closely during this period, ready to adapt to the needs of individuals where necessary. Parents are asked for their feedback with a 'how has your child settled' letter and receive some information from the setting regarding this in response. The transition from Nursery to Reception is seamless and practitioners work closely together to ensure that the children experience a smooth change between areas.

Reception practitioners will read stories and spend time in the Nursery to ensure that they know each child before starting in September. Children who do not attend Nicholas Hawksmoor Nursery are offered a home visit and also practitioners, with parental permission, will also go to visit the children in their current pre-school settings.

In the summer term parents are invited into school to meet the setting practitioners and attend a welcome meeting, as with entry to Nursery. At this meeting information regarding the induction process and what goes on in the setting 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. 'All About Me' induction packs will also be given out to parents as another way to support practitioners' knowledge and understanding of each individual child.

From September children first attend a visit session, in which they come to the setting in a small group, this allows practitioners to spend time with each child and individually and ensure that they settle quickly into the routine. After this the children attend school for morning sessions only to allow them time to settle into the environment without the pressures of a full day. The children are then invited to stay for lunch and are supported by practitioners during this time before attending school full time. Every effort is made to make children feel safe, secure and happy. There is a relaxed and open ethos in the setting. Established routines, a calm atmosphere and encouraging talk are some of the strategies practitioners use to maintain children's positive feelings about school.

### **Equal Opportunities**

All practitioners at Nicholas Hawksmoor Primary School and Nursery 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 our EYFS setting.



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**Inclusion in the Foundation Stage**

*See Inclusion Policy.*

In the Nursery there is also a specialist Speech and Language Unit, children are referred to this from other agencies. Targeted speech support with a speech and language therapist is provided, this regular intense therapy gives the children accelerated progress towards speech and language goals.

**Safeguarding**

*See Safeguarding Policy.*

In the EYFS there is a Designated Person with Safeguarding responsibility who will liaise with the Deputy Head and Head teacher in line with the schools Safeguarding policy and Code of Conduct. Each child in the Foundation Stage will be assigned a key person (in Reception this will be the class teacher) this role will help to ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs. All practitioners in the EYFS ensure safety and suitability of premises and equipment by regular checks of provision.

Children have photographs and videos taken to provide evidence of their achievements for developmental records all staff, visitors, volunteers and students are not permitted to use their own mobile phones to take or record any images of children. We obtain parental consent to take photographs and use video recorders and iPads/Pods and upload evidence to each individual child's secure 'Tapestry' account. All practitioners are equipped with an iPad or iPod and these are always password protected. When not in use these are kept locked in the cupboard and are not taken from the premises unless it has been agreed. Often photographs may contain other children in the background, parents are made aware of this and given the opportunity to opt out if they wish. Cameras and mobile phones are prohibited in the toilet or changing areas.

Signed: .....

Date: .....