

# Mayflower Primary School

## Early Years Policy



**SET SAIL FOR SUCCESS**

Adopted: February 2015

To be reviewed: February 2017

'Children have a right, to provision which enables them to develop their personalities, talents and abilities, irrespective of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities or gender.' (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child)

Children who join our Nursery or Reception are joining the Early Years Stage (EYS). We follow documents pertaining to the Early Years Foundation Stage eg Early Years Foundation Stage Handbook, Early Years Outcomes/Development Matters.

### Admissions

The Nursery has about 35 places. These are mostly part time places with a limited number of full time places. Places for both part time and full time are allocated according to the guidance from Tower Hamlets. The admissions timetable is organised by Tower Hamlets and synchronised with other schools.

The Reception class has one annual intake in September and offers 45 places. Admissions are conducted by Tower Hamlets. Having a place in our Nursery class has no impact on the chance of gaining a place in Reception.

### The Ethos and Values of the Early Years Stage

The EYS is based upon four principles:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

### A Unique Child

At Mayflower Primary School we recognise that every child is an individual who can develop in different ways, and we value that diversity. We put a strong emphasis on 'Building Learning Powers' so that children's natural resilience is strengthened and developed. Every child is seen as a competent learner and we encourage a 'growth mind-set' whereby children are encouraged to have a 'can-do' positive approach, rather than seeing children as having fixed capabilities. We use positive feedback such as timely, appropriate praise and sensitive commenting and questioning to help children develop their skills. We run a 'Pupil of the Day' system where every child can have a turn to be given compliments and be valued.

### *Inclusion*

All children at Mayflower Primary School are treated fairly regardless of race, religion or abilities. All children and their families are valued within our school and we welcome diversity.

In the EYS we plan to meet the needs of boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds. We set high expectations for all children.

The progress and attainment of all children is carefully monitored and analysed to ensure that all children are succeeding, including groups of children. We provide stimulating and exciting learning opportunities based on careful observation of children's prior knowledge and interests, excellent teaching, our inclusive storytelling curriculum, and appropriate EAL and SEN help. We have an early years specialist Speech and Language therapist one day a week and weekly guidance from an Occupational Therapist. We also have a School Social Worker who can provide help and guidance to parents if they would like it.

### *Safety*

We deeply value the children's safety and we aim to provide a safe and secure environment at all times. We also aim to educate children about risks as well as the need for boundaries and rules. We talk to the children about any risks connected to the activities they are doing. In the outside area, there is a written Risk Assessment which is shared with all staff and the children. It balances the need for safety with the need to provide some challenges. We believe in educating children about the need for themselves to evaluate the risk involved in what they are doing, as this is a life long skill.

### *Welfare*

At Mayflower Primary School we understand that we are legally required to comply with certain welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2014. We understand that we are required to:

- promote the welfare of children.
- promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill.
- manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs.
- ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.
- Ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose
- Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs.
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

We endeavour to meet all these requirements.

## **Health and well-being**

### *Refreshments:*

Fruit, wholemeal snacks (brown rice cakes, oatcakes) water and milk are available for children throughout the day. Children are encouraged to be responsible for helping themselves to refreshments and washing their cups. There is also a Breakfast Club available for all children and their parents before school (free of

charge). We ask parents for details of any allergies the children have and make known to them what is being provided.

#### *Sickness and injury:*

If children are too unwell or badly injured to stay at school their parents, carers or emergency contact are phoned and asked to take them home. If children sustain injuries during the day parents or carers must be informed of this at home time or earlier if appropriate. Accidents are recorded on Accident Slips and given to the parents. We encourage good attendance.

#### *Changing children's clothes:*

We will change your child clothes in school if they have an accident. It can be a good idea to bring in spare clothes in a bag to stay at school, as some children feel more comfortable changing into their own clothes. Parents are asked to start toilet training their child in preparation for starting Nursery. The Early Years Team will be happy to advise and support you on this.

### **Positive Relationships**

Positive relationships are absolutely crucial and the foundation on which learning builds. At Mayflower Primary School, we aim to develop warm, supportive and positive relationships with children, parents and between the staff.

#### *Parents as Partners*

Parents are the children's first educators and continue to educate and influence their child all their lives. We understand how important it is to work alongside parents. How we do this:

- EYS team visit all children in their home setting prior to their starting school.
- We give all children and their parents an 'All About Me' booklet to fill in which gives parents an opportunity to tell us all about their child.
- All parents are invited to have a one-to-one interview with the Head Teacher with the chance to ask questions in depth.
- the children have the opportunity to spend time with their teacher before starting school in the summer term during Stay and Play sessions (these sessions run for most of the year for prospective Nursery children)
- inviting all parents to an induction meeting during the term before their child starts school and also a welcome meeting after their child starts
- offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress in our Nursery and Reception class, especially between 8.45 and 9am, and having free access to the children's Special Books;
- As well as 'open door', informal opportunities to speak to the staff with any concerns, ask questions or share achievements, there are regular formal opportunities such as termly formal parents' meetings and a yearly report detailing their achievements
- Offering a variety of parent workshops to support learning at home, based on the needs of the children and families
- Parents and carers can contribute to Special Books, sharing information, for example, on the child's favourite books or what they can do on the computer. Also, parents are encouraged to contribute photographs of special times with descriptions of what they have enjoyed as a family.

When children arrive at the school, they will be assigned a key person. That person will take extra care to develop a positive relationship with the child and their family. Children will have regular small group time with their key person to discuss personal, social and developmental issues.

We have good relationships with the local Children's Centres and liaise with them so that we can provide a smooth transition for children attending the Children's Centres who are going into the Nursery. The Children Centre staff also help run the Baby Group and Toddler Group at the school, aiding transition. Before children come to our Nursery and Reception, we visit them all at their previous settings so that we can get to know them and we make sure we receive information such as their Special Books and details of their progress from their previous setting. Meeting the children also helps the children feel more comfortable with us.

### Enabling Environments

#### *Observation, Assessment and Planning*

As a team, the staff carefully observe the children in their play and also at adult directed tasks. These observations inform the planning of the following week's activities. However, the main structure of what is taught comes from a series of plans:

#### Long Term: Cycles A & B

Mayflower is a Storytelling School. Each half term, every class in the school learns a new story or book, and this lasts half a term (six stories a year). There is a two year cycle with different stories for the two years. The effectiveness of the story is evaluated periodically to ensure that it is providing appropriate stimulation for children. The storytelling curriculum has been shown to really enthuse children and provide a rich scaffold for their storytelling writing and imagination.

#### Medium Term Planning

Each half term, the staff plan what the children need to know by the end of the half term for each of the seven areas of learning (See: The Seven Areas of Learning). However, this is not static and is informed by ongoing formative assessment and observation of children, as well as from appreciating what children are enjoying and being stimulated by most. Teachers then plan weekly what they will be teaching and plan the provision accordingly.

Observations of children ('long' observations and 'short' observations) may be written on paper or recorded on ipods using the '2 Simple System'. The observations are stored in children's personal files. Parents are also encouraged to complete observations on their child. Significant pieces of work are also placed in Special Books. Children's formal, more adult directed writing is recorded in their English Books. From this, the children's progress is checked and analysed. At the end of the year, staff moderate with Year One to make decisions about the child's achievements in the 'Seven Areas'. Parents are informed about their child's progress in the Seven Areas in a formal report at the end of the year. The report also provides information on how the child is in relation to 'The Characteristics of Effective Learning'. (Please see separate section for more information about the 'Seven Areas' and the 'Characteristics of Effective Learning'.)

#### *The Learning Environment*

The Reception classes are open plan so that both classes can socialise and learn together. However, each class has their own carpet area where they have their adult led carpet time as well as a table for adult directed activities. The setting has flexible doors that can be open or shut depending on the activities being run. Both classes have doors leading to the outside. A good proportion of the children's time is spent in free flow play, where children can choose to play inside or outside. The Nursery class is next door to the Reception classes and has access to the same outdoor space as the Reception classes. Additionally, children from Nursery and Reception are free to go into each others' classrooms and use the resources. The children share the

outside area and mixing with different aged children can be beneficial for children's development. Children are free to access most of the resources and combine them as they see fit.

The classrooms are organized in zones which generally relate to the Seven Areas of Learning. Clear zoning and signs helps children know where to go when they wish to get resources, and also helps them to return them afterwards.

Outside, the Seven Areas of Learning are planned and provided for, with permanent and temporary activities available for each area of learning. As well as this, the outside classroom provides a 'natural' environment, with an emphasis on helping the children to experience the natural world, with trees, bark pits, logs, stone boulders and a water pump and a pebbly river. There is a mud kitchen. Protective and waterproof clothing is available. The outside environment provides an element of planned for, controlled risk.

## Learning and Development

### *Teaching and Learning Style*

At Mayflower Primary School we constantly strive to improve our practice and we enjoy providing consistently excellent teaching. Part of outstanding teaching is outstanding planning. Planning is informed by careful observations and assessments of children which are then discussed in weekly meetings with the other members of the staff team.

### *Long term plan:*

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We broadly work on an annual cycle of termly topics or themes. These change depending on the children's interests, school initiatives and themed weeks throughout the year. The long term plan outlines how we put the principles and commitments of the EYFS into practice in our setting and is used alongside policies and procedures that underpin statutory welfare requirements.

#### Weekly Literacy (English) Learning Opportunities

In Nursery and Reception children learn phonics daily. In Nursery this is a simple, short session based on Phase One of the Government's 'Letters and Sounds' document such as enjoying nursery rhymes and exploring musical instruments. In Reception, phonics follows the Tower Hamlets Phonics Scheme which adheres to government guidance. It involves swiftly learning the letter sounds and graphemes. These letters are sent home so that parents and children can practise the letters together if they wish. There are also several phonics meetings so that parents can

keep up to date with how their child is being taught. There are also regular phonics assessments to see which children are having a problem with a particular aspect of phonics. The children will also be taught high frequency (sight) words which go home in a keyring (in Nursery in the summer term) and also in a book in Reception which is checked every week.

#### Reading

Children in Nursery and Reception enjoy Shared Reading several times a week. Reception then take part in Guided Reading, where an adult hears them read in groups. Both Nursery and Reception teachers hear the children read individually. Parents and children read together when they first come into the classroom and can take a story book home.

#### Writing

Children also do Shared Writing several times a week. They write in their daily phonics lessons. They also write as part of their English storytelling sessions.

#### Storytelling

Children learn a story by heart by hearing it, stepping it out, drawing a story 'map', learning about the characters, writing the story, changing parts of the story, and finally, writing their own story. They also learn about different forms of non-fiction writing such as writing letters, invitations, lists and instructions. This forms the basis of many of the English lessons.

#### Maths

Children do short mental maths sessions every day. They also do Maths afternoons three times a week, following the objectives in Early Years Outcomes (Development Matters). There is always provision for mathematics in the continuous provision.

#### *Adult-led activities:*

The role of the adult is to introduce new learning by modelling, demonstrating and supporting children, scaffolding children's learning so that their thinking is extended by the adult being there. During this time it is important to use talk to extend children's learning – all staff have had training on 'Sustained Shared Thinking'. Adults must make notes on their observations of children during the activity (assessment).

#### *Observer/Modeller*

This adult acts as a floater and trouble shooter, enabling children to access the resources and activities and aiding children to resolve conflict. They then make observations of children (long and short observations). They also do interventions with children, to help them with their learning according to personal targets.

#### *Organisation and setting up:*

A staff rota means that adults take turns to work in the different areas either floating or working on adult-led activities for a week at a time.

Activities are prepared and set-up before the start of the school day and after the children have left at the end of day.

#### How Children Learn and What they Will Learn

#### *The Characteristics of Effective Learning:*

##### 1) Play and Exploring – Engagement

Play is essential for children's development. It is their 'work' and how they learn. Children need prolonged periods of time in which to play. It is where they learn to

'have a go' and take risks and try new things. They can play around with what they know.

### 2) Active Learning – Motivation

This is where children are really involved in what they are doing and are at a deep level of concentrating. They may be persevering – really 'keeping on trying'. When they achieve what they set out to do, they feel a real sense of achievement.

### 3) Creating and thinking critically

This is where there is evidence that children have their own ideas. They make links between different areas of their learning and they choose different ways to do things.

## **The Seven Areas of Learning**

### *Areas of Learning*

The EYS is made up of seven areas of learning:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

. The first three areas are called the 'Prime Areas' and the second four areas the 'Specific Areas' None of these areas can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are equally important and depend on each other. However, the 'prime' areas can be seen as the secure basis for the development of the specific areas and the Nursery, in particular, gives a big emphasis to children's development in these areas. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult led and child initiated activities. In each area there are Early Learning Goals (ELGs) that define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYS.

## **Assessment, Recording and Reporting**

### *Assessment for Learning*

A range of assessment tools are used such as thinking thumbs, using lolly sticks to ask children to respond, peer discussion and Learning Partners. We encourage children to work with their Learning Partners on the carpet and when in small groups so that children can collaborate. These partners are changed every week or so.

### *Special Books*

Children can choose items of work, as well as photographs to go into their 'Special Books'. The adults should write alongside the photograph or piece of work some details about the significance of the work as well as the date. It is very important that adults record what the child has to say at the time that they create the work so that the child can talk in detail about the process of creating the work in an extended way.

### *Assessment during adult-led/self-initiated activities:*

During adult directed activities, adults will record whether children have met the learning intention and record significant details. All adults will also look out for children who have achieved something significant or who are engaging in significant conversations and these will be recorded.

### *Focused Observation:*

Specific children in the setting are chosen each week to be observed. During these observations the adult watches and writes down what that child is doing for 10 minutes. The next steps for these children are noted. It is also noted how the child is progressing in terms of the Characteristics of Effective Learning. The observations are analysed, with significant comments and next steps added. The focus observations are then discussed during the weekly planning meeting and used to inform the planning. All adults are responsible for observations.

*Annual reports to parents:*

Each child in the Early Years receives an end of year report in the Summer term.

*Transition to Year 1:*

A variety of strategies are used to support the transition to Year 1 from Reception. These include:

- Team teaching with the new teacher
- Working with their new teacher in the Reception and later in the Y1 classroom
- Going to assemblies
- Cross moderation with Year One, looking at the children's work and the ELGs
- Playing in the big playground with all of the Reception staff to support them
- Setting up an appropriate Year 1 classroom environment for the Autumn term
- Using the EYS alongside KS1 curriculum for the first term, where appropriate.