

Netherfield Infant School

Foundation Stage Policy

In this policy we intend to outline the aims and objectives of our Nursery and Reception class in order to inform all those who have an interest in the Foundation Stage Provision in our school of the philosophy which guides our planning and practice.

The Nottinghamshire Entitlement Statement was adopted by the Governing Body and is adhered to in our school.

We are constantly seeking to develop and improve and will review this policy as necessary.

Aims

- * To provide a bright, welcoming, stimulating environment in which the children feel happy and secure;
- * To fully and actively involve parents in their children's learning;
- * To provide a safe, caring environment where children can develop physically, socially, emotionally and intellectually;
- * To structure a curriculum with reference to the Early Learning Goals and the schemes of work for Literacy and Numeracy while showing an awareness of the particular developmental needs and characteristics of the early years child;
- * To work as an effective staff team;
- * To promote the Nursery to parents and staff as an integral part of the school;
- * To show students and parent helpers that they are valued and appreciated;
- * To make transfer from the Nursery to the reception class an exciting prospect and a happy experience;
- * To have a staff who are well informed on current Foundation Stage issues and concerns.

These aims reflect our whole school aims, a copy of which can be seen on the next page. The school policies all relate to the Foundation Stage to some degree and the appropriate parts of these will be adopted. In particular we draw attention to the school behaviour policy and re-affirm our belief that positive recognition and rewarding of good behaviour is the most effective way of achieving high standards.

At Netherfield we believe that :-

- * Every child has abilities which can and should be identified and promoted;
- * Every child has the right of access to the curriculum as appropriate to his/her developing abilities, irrespective of gender, ethnic or social background, or special educational needs;
- * Early childhood education has value in its own right, not solely as a means through which children learn and develop skills, attitudes and understanding which will prepare them for formal education:
- * Play is a valuable vehicle by which young children learn;
- * The relationships which children make with children and adults outside their immediate family are of central importance to their development.

Areas of Learning

These will be as recommended in the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority document "Curriculum guidance for the Foundation stage" . These outline goals for learning by the time children enter compulsory education. They emphasise early literacy, numeracy and the development of personal and social skills, contribute to children's knowledge, understanding and skills in other areas, and provide a foundation for later achievement.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Communication, Language and Literacy
Mathematical development
Knowledge and Understanding of the world
Physical Development
Creative Development

The significant differences between the Nursery and the Reception class will centre around a more structured time of gradually increasing length devoted to teaching Literacy and Numeracy, and the fact that children will attend for a whole day so school playtimes, lunchtimes, assemblies etc will apply.

Approaches to Learning in the Foundation Stage

We take as our starting point where the child is now in his learning ie we concentrate on the things s/he can do rather than what s/he cannot do.

Although we use a variety of approaches and strategies which we monitor regularly for effectiveness, we recognise that the main ways in which a young child learns about his world are through play and conversation; the emphasis at first is on a play-based approach in which the opportunity for first hand experience is valued.

During a typical Nursery session a child will experience being a member of the whole group, perhaps to be introduced to a new activity, skill, or resource; will be in a smaller group with his/her "special" member of staff; and will have time alone, on a one to one basis with an adult or friend, or in a small group which will change as frequently as the child changes his activity. Specific skills eg scissor control or loading a computer disk, are taught in small groups or individually as appropriate to the skill and the situation. Much of this applies to the Reception class too, although the children are expected to be more independent and to work at tasks for increasingly longer periods.

We value the contribution outdoor play makes to a child's all-round development and in the Nursery this is usually available at any time. Outdoor play is also an important part of the Reception curriculum and is available as frequently as possible.

Some of the experiences and activities offered will be directly related to the topic for that term, which in turn will have been chosen for appeal and appropriateness.

Role of Adults

The 26 place Nursery is staffed by a teacher and a Nursery Nurse who work as a team. Children attend either 5 mornings or 5 afternoons a week. Tasks and duties are shared, with the ultimate responsibility lying with the Nursery teacher. We regularly have students on placement with us and parents and grandparents are welcomed; the children gain from working with a variety of people.

The main difference the children will notice on entering the Reception class will be that there may be fewer adults available to see to their needs, which can often have the positive effect of encouraging the children's independence and self esteem. However, parental (and grandparental) help is still encouraged and valued here and this further underpins our aim to make the transition from Nursery to Reception as smooth as possible.

Planning

The Foundation Stage team plan the curriculum, ie what is taught, together. Curriculum planning is carried out by the whole team, small teams and individuals at different levels of detail.

Long - term planning is concerned with producing a broad curriculum framework for the whole school. It involves the whole staff and Governors and reflects the aims set down in the school's curriculum policies and schemes of work, the Literacy and Numeracy Framework, National Curriculum, and Early Learning Goals. It addresses a number of planning issues:-

- * coverage of all Areas of Learning and aspects of the curriculum;
- * progression in all Areas of Learning and aspects of the curriculum;
- * balance and take up of the curriculum;
- * coherence between Areas of Learning;
- * continuity with home and Key Stage 1

Medium-term planning is done on a termly or half termly basis and is concerned with the programme of work (usually topic related) to be taught in order to fulfil the aims of the long term planning.

Short-term planning is done by the staff in weekly blocks during lunch-time and after-school meetings, referring to the medium -term planning and setting it into a manageable programme which shows what we want the children to learn, the activities through which we want them to learn it, how the resources will be organised, the resources (including human) which will be needed, and any opportunities for assessment which the activity will provide. Reference to the medium term planning plus teacher assessment at the end of the week will inform future planning. All planning is kept readily available and a copy of the topic web is displayed. Sometimes activities which have been planned are not covered and these may be carried forward to the next day/week if still considered appropriate.

In the Nursery an “organisational map” is made on a daily basis and includes what is to be provided where. This ensures a balanced daily provision of experiences and details of how staff and parent helpers are to be deployed. The choice of when to play outside is left to individual children, and the weather, as well as the children’s preferences, is taken into account when setting up outside; for instance, making streamers and kites might be more appropriate on a windy day than setting up an obstacle course.

The Learning Environment

The Nursery consists of one main room with a large carpeted area and two small part-enclosed areas, three toilets and a handwashing area and an outside area which is fenced and tarmaced. Outside play is available to the children for a large proportion of the session and parents are asked to provide waterproof clothing and footwear and/or a change of clothes so that their child's choice of activities is not limited in any way. This "unrestricted access" has been in operation since September 1996 and we have monitored its success; we have observed that the Nursery is more settled and productive, and this system appears to encourage independence and co-operative play.

Other areas of choice are usually the construction area, sand, water, and "workshop", the only stipulation being that the children respect each others' choices, and all who have used any equipment help to sort and put away at the end of the session.

Adult directed activities are often craft based or those chosen to help to teach or reinforce a particular skill or learning objective. One qualified member of staff will be inside and one outside during each session, with students and parents used as available.

The children are divided into two smaller groups at Grouptime 2, which usually includes milk-time - sometimes these are mixed age groups, and sometimes divided into older and younger children depending on what suits the children best at the time.

The Reception class consists of one main room with a carpeted area, two toilet and handwashing areas and an outside area which is fenced and tarmaced. The classroom will be organised to positively promote and encourage children's development as described in the Early Learning Goals ie Language area, Maths area, Creative area, role play or imaginative play area, carpeted area for construction and puzzles, group work etc, library area, IT area, sand and water and outdoor play.

Assessment , Recording and Reporting

Teacher assessment is ongoing , by observation of and conversation with the children and by planning specific assessment activities.

In the Nursery recording takes several forms:

- * an entry profile booklet is completed by parent and child before starting Nursery
- * staff and parents complete a comprehensive assessment sheet on the child's entry to Nursery and staff complete it twice more before the child moves into the reception class
- * staff use a note book to record observations during a Nursery session; every half term these are copied onto the child's assessment sheet.
- * the county base line assessment sheet is completed during the child's first half term in Nursery and during the child's first term in the Reception class. The information gained from these will be used to inform us about each child's progress and eventually will be used to compare the progress of children at our school with other schools in the County.
- * each child has a 'Progress Book' in which a piece of work is entered every half-term; this could be a tracing, cutting, colour-mixing, attempt at name-writing etc.

At present the Nursery does not have a formal open evening when parents can discuss their child's progress; however we are always happy to talk to parents at any mutually convenient time.

A written report of each child's progress to date is produced when s/he leaves Nursery. Parents are asked to add their comments to one and return it to school, keeping the other. They are given the option of discussing the report with Nursery staff.

In the Reception class a Parents' evening takes place to discuss each child's base-line assessment and then again during the summer term. Written reports are produced for parents and teachers to discuss. These

sessions provide an opportunity for parents to talk to the child's teacher to celebrate achievements and to voice any concerns.

Commitment to Equal Opportunities and Provision for Pupils with Special Needs

We affirm our commitment to both these issues in the school's policies. For brevity and ease of reading, the term "parent" has been used in this document as a general term to refer to any person who has long-term care of the child.

While the National Curriculum proper does not govern Foundation Stage planning, many of the Early Learning Goals dovetail with the attainment targets. Working on the principle that we start from where the child is and that s/he is allowed to progress at his own rate, we provide for all the children, whatever their ability. For instance, in the Nursery we do not plan time for "hearing the children read", but we give them the tools to help them learn to read ie an introduction to phonics, many opportunities to enjoy books and stories, word recognition games etc. and encourage the progress they make at their own pace.

The half-term before the children leave Nursery they are given a reading diary, and parents and children are encouraged to choose books to share at home from a special selection. Progress is recorded in the diary, which is brought to school every day; in this way, school and home are working together to promote learning to read as an interesting and desirable thing to do.

In the Reception class the children will usually begin reading the early books of the Oxford Reading Tree scheme as well as a range of other material.

If a child is causing us concern for any reason we discuss this with the parents and decide what action we need to take. This initially may be careful monitoring over a period of time. We will also register our concerns with the school Special Needs Co-ordinator and involve her in the decisions. If after the agreed time further action is indicated we follow the stages as given in the Special Needs Policy.

Partnership with Parents

Parents are the first educators of their children and we value the learning which has gone on before the child starts Nursery. We aim for an open and honest relationship with parents where all those who share responsibility for the child's development respect each others' contribution.

As detailed later in the policy, we arrange two meetings with the parents/child before the child actually begins Nursery so that good relationships are established early on. We are on hand to greet parents and children at the beginning of each session and can usually make ourselves available then, or at a mutually convenient time, if there is anything they wish to discuss. Parents are welcomed as regular or occasional helpers and we have compiled a help sheet to further their understanding of what we do and why we do it.

Transfer into School

A smooth transition from Nursery to Reception class is a priority - if our children eagerly look forward to starting full-time school and settle quickly we have successfully managed the transition.

At the beginning of the half-term before children transfer to Reception, there are two short meetings for parents. One is with the Nursery teacher to talk about "Getting ready for reading", when the principles of reading readiness are discussed. The other is with the headteacher, when parents and children are taken to visit the child's new class; the children then stay in their new classes for a session and their parents continue their meeting with the headteacher. They are given information about what will happen when their child starts school, and will be able to raise any queries they may have.

Following that initial visit one or two visits per week are arranged for the children until the transfer proper. In addition to this the children will have become gradually more involved in activities which help them identify

themselves as a part of the whole school: since first coming into Nursery they will have been used to sharing a whole school playtime; they will have paid regular visits to the library to watch television and share books; they will have taken messages to the school office and to other teachers; they will have accompanied staff on visits to other classes, and will have welcomed older children back to the Nursery to read stories they have written for us, to share a “looking at books” time and so on. Older nursery children also attend some school assemblies.

Information about the children is passed to the receiving teacher in the form of comprehensive record sheets completed by Nursery staff, a copy of the report sent to parents and a discussion between Foundation Stage staff.

All infant staff, but especially the Reception teacher, are welcomed into the Nursery at any time, both on an informal basis and to cover the Nursery teacher when she has commitments in school.

Details about when children transfer from Nursery to school are given in the school prospectus.

Links with Other Agencies

We maintain links with the local health visitors, the school nurse, the speech therapist, the local playgroup, social services and representatives of any body with whom we share a mutual interest or concern about a Nursery child and that child’s family. We aim to have an occasional session with the local health visitors to meet them on a social level and also to have general discussions about any concerns. We feel that any attempts to build stronger working relationships can only benefit our children and demonstrate our desire to work with and support our parents.

Assuring Quality

Research has proved that high quality early years education can have a significant and long term effect on children's learning; can lead to higher achievement throughout schooling and can lead to better and more responsible social behaviour. As a school we are constantly reviewing, monitoring and evaluating the quality of our provision.

The Nursery staff meet regularly to plan the week's activities according to the learning objectives identified in the short-term planning, and some reviewing and evaluation will take place then. Most is done on an informal basis during discussion at the end of the session, and notes will be made of any future action indicated. Observation plays a key part, as does the regular recording of children's all-round progress.

We belong to the Meden family of schools and meet every half term with the staff of other Nurseries in the family. The meetings are usually after school because of the varying times of the Nurseries. We may discuss a particular item of interest to us all, anyone who has attended a course or meeting of general interest will give feedback, or the get-together may be purely social. We find the meetings invaluable as an opportunity to share ideas and get our own situation into perspective.

Early Years staff are encouraged to take advantage of appropriate training or courses as they become available. We subscribe to the "Under 5's Forum" - a newsletter produced by the Advisory and Inspection Service Early Years team - and we attend as many of their twilight courses in the area as we can. This gives us an opportunity to visit other schools, meet Early Years colleagues and share ideas. The school also subscribes to the British Association of Early Childhood Education and staff attend their meetings.

Admission and Induction Procedures

Admission to the Nursery follows the procedure agreed by staff and Governors, and common to all the Nurseries in the Meden Family of schools in most respects :-

- * Parents put child's name on waiting list, usually by personal visit, stating preference for a.m. or p.m. place;
- * Parents are notified by Nursery teacher when a place becomes available; they are given the option of waiting for a place in the other session if they wish;
- * Once a place has been accepted the child is sent a written invitation to an hour long "play session" between 4pm and 5pm just before s/he is due to start;
- * At the play session the child meets others who will be starting Nursery, parents meet Nursery staff and other parents and are shown round the school if they wish. Staff give parents a Nursery Brochure, a "How Play Works" booklet, check the child's birth certificate, give and explain the Entry Profile booklet which parent and child complete at home together, and arrange a home visit. A photo album of Nursery activities is available for child/parents to look at.
- * Nursery staff visit child at home on the pre-arranged day, which can be during a non-contact day for the September term, and during a lunch-time or after school at other times, taking a picture for the child, and an admission form and Initial Entry Profile to complete with the parents. Also taken are the permission slip for taking a child on a walk, information about Yorkshire Bank Savings Scheme, and a list of school dates. This is also an opportunity for parent and child to show and discuss the completed Entry Profile booklet which staff then keep to form the first part

of the child's school records. The date the child will be starting Nursery is confirmed.

* On the day of admission child and parent are welcomed by a member of staff. The parent is encouraged to stay and settle the child but the procedure is very flexible as our aim is to have a happy child. If the child is happy for the parent to leave after a short while the parent can sit in the Parent's Room or go home or shopping, coming back at the pre-arranged time, probably after an hour on the first day, increasing gradually until the child is happy to be left for the whole session.