



Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

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1. INTRODUCTION

“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.” (DfE, 2021)

At Cotteridge Primary School we strive to give children a strong foundation to grow, explore and achieve as learners and we want them to feel happy, safe, secure, in an enabling environment where everyone is valued and respected.

2. PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE

At Cotteridge Primary School as part of our practice we adhere to the Statutory Framework of the EYFS and the four guiding principles that shape practice within Early Years settings.

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

- **A unique child:** We recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Children’s attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement as well as celebration and rewards to encourage and develop a positive attitude to learning
- **Positive relationships:** We recognise that children learn to be strong and independent from secure relationships and aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families.
- **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. We recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children’s development. Through observations we assess the children’s interests, stages of development and learning needs before planning challenging and achievable activities and experiences to extend their learning
- **Learning and development:** The learning environment is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet and rest. The classroom is set up in learning areas where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. We acknowledge that children develop and learn at different rates.

At Cotteridge Primary School we greatly value the important role that the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

The EYFS is for children from birth to five years of age. Here at Cotteridge our EYFS consists of a nursery and two reception classes. All children begin school with a variety of experiences and learning. It is the privilege of the practitioners working in the EYFS to take on the opportunity of building upon that prior learning and experience. This is done through a holistic approach to

learning, ensuring that parents and all school staff work effectively together to support children's learning and development.

3. AIMS

It is every child's right to grow up safe, healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and with economic well-being.

At Cotteridge Primary School our main aim is to give children the best possible start to their learning journey and inspire a passion for life-long learning. We aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum which will enable each child to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually to his/her full potential. Each child is valued as an individual and teaching and learning is based on the understanding that children develop at different rates.

To meet our aims we:

- provide a safe, challenging, stimulating, caring and sharing environment which is sensitive to the needs of the child
- provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for future learning and development in Key Stage 1 and beyond
- provide opportunities for children to learn inside and outside through planned, purposeful play in all areas of learning and development. The outdoor environment is fully embraced and we provide Forest School as well as other stimulating and engaging outdoor experiences.
- use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress
- enable choice and decision-making, fostering independence and self-confidence. Children have a voice that is heard.
- work in partnership with Parents/Carers and value their contributions
- ensure that all children, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability, have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development

4. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The early learning goals (the knowledge, skills and understanding which young children should have acquired by the end of the Reception year) and the educational programmes (the matters, skills and processes which are required to be taught to young children) are set out in the "Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage" document (DfE, 2021).

At Cotteridge Primary School we plan an exciting and challenging curriculum based on our observations of the children's needs, interests and stages of development across the seven areas of learning to enable the children to achieve the early learning goals.

We plan using an objective-led approach that develops both children's skills and knowledge and understanding in all areas of learning. We strive to have a balance between structured and child-initiated learning, alongside high quality adult-child interactions in effective scaffolding and first teaching.

The seven areas of learning and development are:

Three Prime Areas:

- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development**
 - Self-Regulation
 - Managing Self
 - Building relationships
- **Physical Development**
 - Gross Motor Skills
 - Fine Motor Skills
- **Communication and Language**
 - Listening, attention and understanding
 - Speaking

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

Four Specific Areas:

- **Literacy**
 - Comprehension
 - Word Reading
 - Writing
- **Mathematics**
 - Number
 - Numerical Patterns
- **Understanding of the World**
 - Past and Present
 - People, Culture and Communities
 - The Natural World
- **Expressive Art and Design**
 - Creating with Materials
 - Being Imaginative and Expressive

At Cotteridge Primary School we believe all seven areas are of equal importance and are interconnected.

Children have whole group and small group times which increase as they progress through the EYFS with times for daily phonics sessions, teaching aspects of Mathematics and Literacy, as well as topic work.

In planning and guiding children's activities we reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in our practice.

Three characteristics of effective learning are:

- **Playing and exploring** - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.
- **Active learning** - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties.

- **Creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

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

Play

At Cotteridge Primary School we recognise that play underpins all learning and development for young children. Most children play spontaneously although some may need adult support. It is through play that children develop intellectually, creatively, physically, socially and emotionally. By providing well planned experiences based on children's spontaneous play, both indoors and outside we support our children to learn with enjoyment and challenge. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside and with other children and adults as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems.

Phonics

At Cotteridge Primary School we use the 'Essential Letters and Sounds' (ELS) phonics programme. The programme enables us to plan a systematic approach to phonics and adheres to a small number of core principles.

The core principles involve:

- Children having knowledge of the alphabetic code;
- Children having the skills to blend to read fluently;
- Children having the skills to segment to spell accurately;
- Children understanding these as a reversible process.

These principles are underpinned by the modelling and teaching of good listening skills, combined with frequent opportunities to improve children's visual and auditory memory and their ability to sequence. These skills are developed in our nursery through the teaching of activities to promote phonological and phonemic awareness in young children before they embark upon a systematic phonics programme.

There is a clear overview of the programme that progresses from phase 1 (nursery/pre-school/beginning of reception) to beyond phase 5 (the end of year 1).

At Cotteridge Primary we are also aware that the knowledge children acquire to support their development of early reading is equally as relevant for their development as a writer, with the need for high quality phonics and early spelling teaching.

Children's progress towards national expectations is monitored using ELS online assessments.

Parents are invited in for phonics and early reading meetings in reception and are supported with reading and writing at home.

Reading underpins everything we do at Cotteridge It is vital that whilst children are learning to read, they read books matched to their phonic knowledge. The Oxford University Press decodable readers support ELS and have been carefully matched to the programme. These decodable books are read repeatedly throughout each week, aligning with the phonics teaching, and then sent home to be celebrated with parents and carers. Alongside this, the children take home a colour banded 'Richer Reading' book and a library book of their choice, to promote reading for pleasure.

Pupil Premium and Early Years Pupil Premium

We track closely the progress of our PP and EYPP pupils. Please see the school's Pupil Premium strategy for more details.

5. OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT

Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise children's progress, understand their needs and to plan activities and support. Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. (DFE, 2021)

As part of our daily practice we observe and assess children's development and learning to shape teaching and learning experiences, inform practitioners' knowledge of children's levels of achievements and interests. We record our observations in a variety of different ways e.g. long observations, short observations, photographs and video. Each child has an online learning diary using 'EvidenceMe' (a secure online learning journal) where observations are collected and shared with parents/carers. Parents are encouraged to contribute their own observations onto EvidenceMe. In interactions with children, practitioners respond to their own day-to-day observations about children's progress and observations that Parents/Carers share.

We use the Development Matters, non-statutory curriculum guidance for the EYFS to support our delivery of the EYFS learning and development requirements as well as our own tailor designed progressive learning and development plans.

From Sept 2022 all children starting reception will be participating in the government statutory reception baseline assessment (RBA) within the first 6 weeks of starting reception.

The purpose of the assessment is to provide the starting point for a new measure that will help parents understand how well schools support their pupils to progress between reception and year 6 / the end of key stage 2.

The RBA is a short, interactive and practical assessment of your child's early literacy, communication, language and mathematics skills when they begin school, using materials that most children of your child's age will be familiar with.

The RBA is not about judging or labelling your child or putting them under any pressure. Your child cannot 'pass' or 'fail' the assessment. Its main purpose is to create a starting point to measure the progress schools make with their pupils.

More information for parents regarding RBA can be found on the government website link below:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1004560/2021_Information_for_parents_reception_baseline_assessment.pdf

Teacher based entry assessments of children in EYFS will take place within the first three weeks

of starting. These assessments are used to gather a baseline and help teachers plan for children's individual and cohort needs. Observations of children's learning both at school and at home as well as teacher led assessments will be used as part of this process.

Additional assessments take place at Christmas, Easter and Summer 1 and 2 and a gap-strength analysis is undertaken to monitor children's individual progress and to identify the cohort's areas of strengths and weaknesses. We also use this information to track the progress of particular groups e.g. gender, SEN, EAL, LAC and Pupil Premium. This information is used to plan effectively for children's next steps in learning and ensure gaps in learning and development are closed.

End-year assessments take place during June. Another gap-strength analysis takes place to record children's progress since entry to the end of year. Individual, particular groups and cohort areas of strengths and weaknesses are reported. These are shared with practitioners/teachers in the next age group, to support effective transition and planning for children's next steps in learning and development.

Teachers use these assessments to monitor and track progress. Children's progress is reviewed with senior leadership three times a year and is regularly discussed with Parents and carers during two parent meetings and a final end of year report.

Within the final term of reception when a child turns five, the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) is completed for each child. Teachers use observations, assessments, professional judgements and contributions from Parents/Carers as well as any other adults whom can offer a useful contribution. We provide the parents with a report based on the child's progress in the profile. In addition to this we also comment on the child's characteristics of learning.

The profile provides Parents/Carers, practitioners and teachers with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their expected attainment against expected levels and their readiness for year 1 (DFE, 2021)

6. INCLUSION

We value all our children as individuals at Cotteridge Primary School, irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability or gender. We plan a curriculum that meets the needs of the individual child. We believe that early identification of children with additional needs is crucial in enabling us to give the child the support that they need and in doing so work closely with parents/carers and outside agencies. However, we also recognise that these additional needs do not necessarily mean that a child has special educational needs. It may be that an individual's starting points are lower than age-related expectations perhaps due to different or limited pre-school/nursery experiences or adverse childhood experiences and that the gap can be swiftly closed.

7. PARENTS AS PARTNERS AND THE WIDER CONTEXT

We strive to create and maintain partnership with parents and carers as we recognise that together, we can have a significant impact on a child's learning. We welcome and actively encourage parents/carers to participate confidently in their child's education and care in numerous ways;

- Parent Meetings prior to children joining nursery and reception.
- Open evenings prior to children joining nursery and reception.
- Stay and Play sessions for children prior to starting nursery and reception

- Parent meetings during nursery and reception re. Phonics and Early Reading.
- 'Learning Shares' where parents can come in and join in with their children's learning
- Shared events such as Fathers and Mothers Day activities, sports day, reading workshops etc.
- Weekly newsletters informing parents about learning and upcoming events
- Weekly updates on our website and social media platforms
- 'Wow work', home challenges and celebration postcards sent home or phone calls to parents to share good learning/behaviour
- EvidenceMe online learning diaries
- An open door policy across the whole EYFS

8. TRANSITIONS

Transitions are carefully planned for and time given to ensure continuity of learning. At any transition, we acknowledge the child's needs and establish effective partnerships with those involved with the child and other settings.

Before children start nursery and reception, families are invited to visit and to attend a special open evening. In addition to this the child's teacher will meet with the parents and child on an individual basis. The purpose of these meetings is to get to know children in a safe and comfortable environment and gain knowledge of each child's needs and development from parents and carers.

Although many of our reception cohort have attended our nursery we do receive children from other early years settings. Before starting reception we ensure that we contact their early years setting and key person to discuss the child's progress and attainment as well as ensuring we are aware of and able to address any safeguarding/child protection concerns. Early years settings complete and send a transfer document to us documenting the information mentioned above.

If a child has identified special educational needs and will be in receipt of additional funding they become part of the 'Link Programme'. This enables the child's early years setting, parent/carer, professionals involved and school staff (including SENCO, LSA, class teacher) to meet to discuss a more detailed and individualised transition into reception.

The children are invited to stay and play sessions to become familiar with the classroom and practitioners.

A reception parents meeting is also held to share information about the forthcoming year and welcome parents/carers to Cotteridge Primary School. This also happens in nursery for new starters.

In EYFS all children begin through a phased induction programme and we ensure children and their families have a comfortable and relaxed start to nursery or preschool.

This is all made clear during meetings and the open evenings so families feel their child's individual needs can be met.

The nursery and reception teams work very closely together and with year one teachers. Events, celebrations, visits and topics are shared between each age phase. Also, half termly team meetings are held to discuss planning, assessment and areas of development towards our EYFS section of the continuous school improvement plan.

Assessment runs as a thread between nursery, reception and beyond and this means that all staff

are well informed about the learning needs of each child and how to address these. The reception team work closely with the year one teachers to ensure a successful transition through handover meetings and pre-visits to new classrooms.