Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

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Date produced: December 2019

Reviewed on: 09.09.2024
17.09.2026

Our Vision

To provide exceptional learning experiences, where staff empower students and their families to be thriving members of their communities.

Our Values and Beliefs

- Our school is a community in which everyone is valued and has a part to play.
- Our students deserve the best throughout their school career.
- We believe that all of our students will make progress and become more independent so that they can take a valued role in society.
- It is our job to deliver the highest quality, most inspirational and enjoyable educational experience possible.

Our Strengths

- We understand our students' needs and always plan to meet those needs.
- We have high expectations and promote independence.
- We deliver highly individual and personalised learning programmes to all our students.
- We use a range of communication techniques according to out students' needs.
- We communicate with parents and carers and include parents in planning.
- We liaise with multi professionals working in our school and ensure that therapy is delivered to meet student needs.
- We also liaise with external multi professionals to support us in ensuring that our students have a holistic approach to their overall development and wellbeing.
- We regularly reflect carefully on our curriculum and approaches to ensure all students needs are met.
- The primary is located on a separate site and accesses specialist resources across both of Oaklands' sites.
- We teach skills in the community.
- Our staff are helpful and dedicated. Teamwork is strong and supportive.
- We welcome and support staff well, and are building a strong team of staff for the future of our school.
- Our staff have specialist training and skills in a wide range of subjects and approaches.
- We provide the resources our students need.
- Our training programmes are designed well so that staff can develop the skills they need.
- We have an efficient and helpful administrative team to support everyone so that education staff can concentrate on their classroom roles.
- We have an increasingly effective site team to support us managing facilities through a help desk.
- We understand our students needs and cultures.

- We employ staff who have special needs and adapt job descriptions to facilitate employment.

Aims of the EYFS curriculum

- To encourage our students to develop independence from the very start of their school journey at Oaklands in our Early Years classrooms.
- To provide our students with a variety of enriching learning experiences that support them to develop personally, socially and academically and motivate them to engage.
- To support our students to develop communication skills that enable them to communicate functionally with others around them.
- To encourage our students to develop strategies that help them regulate their emotions effectively.
- To ensure that learning is individualised to the learner with their developmental stage at the forefront of all planning.
- To ensure that the students' learning suitably challenges them and, through positive experiences, promotes confidence and a sense of achievement.
- To provide an adapted curriculum that is guided by the developmental milestones and Early Learning Goals as outlined in Development Matters.
- To support students to achieve the five outcomes of Every Child Matters (ECM):
    1. **Being healthy:** enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle
    2. **Staying safe:** being protected from harm and neglect
    3. **Enjoying and achieving:** getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood
    4. **Making a positive contribution:** being involved with the community and society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour
    5. **Economic well-being:** not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life
- To work in partnership with parents and multi-agency professionals such as medical staff, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists in providing holistic learning and development for our students to achieve the outcomes outlined in their Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs).
- To ensure that the following EYFS principles underpin curriculum development at New Oaks.:
    - **A unique student:** developing resilient, capable, confident and self-assured individuals.
    - **Positive relationships:** supporting the children in becoming strong and independent.
    - **Enabling environments:** where opportunities and experiences respond to the individual needs of the student by developing a strong partnership between practitioners, parents/carers and the student.
    - **Learning and development:** An acknowledgement that children learn in different ways and at different rates.

The curriculum

At New Oaks, students in reception follow the EYFS curriculum. The curriculum is delivered through a range of topics with guidance being taken from Development Matters and from our students' EHCPs. The focus is placed on ensuring that the curriculum addresses the students' social, emotional, physical, intellectual, moral and cultural development through a safe, secure and stimulating environment. Students are supported to learn and develop skills, attitudes and understanding across these seven areas of learning within the EYFS:

Prime areas	Specific areas
Personal, Social and Emotional Development Communication and Language Physical development	Mathematics Literacy Understanding the World Expressive Art and Design

Learning and Development

Learning in our Early Years classrooms is delivered through a mixture of play based opportunities and structured lessons. Learning is linked to a termly topic and, wherever possible, cross curricular links are forged between the areas of learning to strengthen knowledge development for our students.

The physical structure of the classroom allows the student to learn in the most suitable way e.g. through small group work or working alongside an adult. Promoting independence is an upmost priority and, this is enabled by the classroom environment through independent workstations. In line with Oaklands prompt hierarchy, the level of prompting is gradually reduced so the expectation to work independently is embedded from the very start. Having an outdoor space as well as a group room attached to each class enables the students to further access learning and skills development in different environments.

Learning is supported with the use of visuals in the form of objects of reference, photographs and symbols. Once again, being independent and taking responsibility is encouraged from the offset. Students are expected to follow 'Now and next' boards, mini schedules and daily schedules to transition between activities with reduced adult support.

For our students, it is imperative that they are able to communicate effectively. Throughout their day, they are encouraged to make choices and communicate them appropriately to others around them. A total communication approach consisting of physical objects of reference, communication core boards, AAC like TDSnap, Makaton signing, using Picture Exchange Communication System alongside speech benefits the students in establishing links between lesson content and resources. This is adopted by all staff to ensure that the students have ample opportunities to communicate and are empowered to make choices.

The Importance of Play

'Play underpins the EYFS. It also underpins learning and all aspects of children's development. Through play, children develop language skills, their emotions and creativity, social and intellectual skills. For most children their play is natural and spontaneous although some children may need extra help from adults. Play takes place indoors and outdoors and it is in these different environments that children explore and discover their immediate world. It is here they practise new ideas and skills, they take risks, show imagination and solve problems on their own or with others. The role that adults have is crucial. Adults provide time and space and appropriate resources. These might include clothes, boxes, buckets, old blankets that will inspire play and fire children's imaginations. They observe play and join in when invited, watching and listening before intervening. They value play and provide safe but challenging environments that support and extend learning and development.'

At New Oaks, play is integral to the Early Years practice. Within our Early Years specialist nursery, as well as across the school, students are supported to engage in a variety of play experiences daily through excellent staff modelling and access to enticing resources that enable them to explore and experiment. Play is also an essential tool in supporting our students to develop understanding of more abstract concepts e.g. through role play, they can explore the role of different professionals. Free play sessions are offered into the week in which the onus is placed on students to lead their play, with staff modelling and making suggestions about ways to extend it further.

Multi-sensory play sessions are hugely beneficial to the development of all our students. By introducing a range of textures, smells and tastes presented to them in play, they explore their likes and dislikes at their own pace. The impacts of this are evident when students become less tactile defensive and tolerate a wider range of foods and textures.

For the ASD/SLD cohort of students, physical play is an essential part of their day. Within the playground, there is a variety of equipment available to support with developing gross motor skills, hand eye coordination and overall body awareness. When accessing the equipment, students are supported to share with one another, await their turn and work collaboratively to make equipment operate.

For our PMLD cohort of students, play is made available through staff offering them choices to ascertain a response. The students are offered a wide variety of switch toys that are visually and auditory stimulating and staff model how to operate them and encourage them to engage with the toys. By having positive interactions with the students through the day, staff are able to promote the playful culture associated with Early Years practice. The use of intensive interaction further allows the students to play with familiar adults and supports them to develop positive relationships.

Assessment of Learning

At the start of the year, each pupil has a learning profile set up for them on 'Evidence for Learning' app in which their EYFS journey is recorded. This consists of work examples, photos and informal observations. Also enclosed on Evidence for Learning are the students' individual targets which are derived from their EHCPs. These are matched against the different areas of learning within EYFS. Using the Evidence for Learning app, students' progress is tracked to assess how they are progressing towards meeting the ELGs.Throughout the day, classroom staff will observe students as they engage in a variety of activities and will complete observation slips to add to the learning journals. These slips capture what areas of learning the activity covered, the level of prompting required by the student to complete the task and also identifies what the next steps would be for the student.

All students have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) that have long term targets for the students in the following areas:

1. Communication
2. Cognition
3. Sensory/Physical
4. Independence

Each term, using the long term targets from the EHCP, the teacher will develop short term targets which are achievable in a term. A link is also forged between the targets and the areas of learning within the EYFS curriculum. For areas of learning that are not linked with the EHCP, class teachers identify subject specific targets and these will be added to the Individual Learning Plans (ILPs). The ILPs are displayed in the classroom so that staff can record progress as they observe it taking place.

Guidance is also taken from the 'Development Matters' document about the different skills that students are taught.

Moderation

In the summer term, we conduct moderation as a whole school, encompassing EYFS, primary, secondary, and sixth form. Prior to the internal moderation meeting, a focus is identified, such as Making Relationships in PSED. Teachers are requested to bring a range of evidence highlighting different abilities.

The sessions are very insightful in comparing learning and hearing the views of other professionals.

Parental involvement

Positive relationships with the parents and carers of our students are pivotal to the progression of our students. This is especially important as many of our students travel to and from school via school transport so there are reduced opportunities to engage with parents. To ensure effective communication, each student has a home/school communication book for staff to record details about the students' day and we encourage our parents to use them to provide information too.

We will regularly liaise with parents via phone calls to provide them support with any arising concerns or issue, discuss behavioural strategies and to inform them of any significant developments throughout the day. Due to personal commitments and circumstances, it is not possible for parents to come into school regularly so it is important to ensure that they are well informed.

Parent events are organised throughout the year to provide support and share information. For most parents, it is their first experience of a special school environment. Through workshops, we support our parents to increase their knowledge and learn strategies to support their child at home.

Parent evenings occur twice through the year and an Annual Review is also held with the parents and other professionals to get an overall view of how their child is progressing at school.

Assessing and reporting arrangements

On completion of Year Reception, due to the severity of their needs, almost no students will have yet achieved the expected level of progress in the areas of learning. We follow the guidelines set out by Assessing and Reporting guidance to report our end of year EYFS profile data to the Local Authority by scoring progress against the 17 Early Learning Goals as:

1. Emerging
2. Expected
3. Exceeding

From September 2021, it is statutory for all schools to complete the **Reception Baseline Assessment** within the first six weeks of students starting in Reception. This is an activity based assessment of students' starting points in:

- Language, communication and Literacy
- Mathematics

Students are expected to use practical resources to complete a variety of tasks and the data is to be used at the end of Year 6 to form the school level progress measure. At the start of each academic year, a decision will need to be made about whether the students are able to complete this assessment or whether they will need to be withdrawn.

Safer Sleep

From September 2026, there is new wording around sleeping arrangements. Whilst this is specifically relevant to children aged 2 and under, the following requirements would apply to students in Bumblebees and Ladybirds class:

- Children must be placed down on their back in their own separate sleep space on a firm flat surface such as a cot, bed or mattress on the floor.
- Sleep spaces must only contain a firm, flat, waterproof mattress and lightweight bedding which is firmly tucked in around the child below their shoulders to prevent head covering. Alternatively, a well fitted baby sleep bag may be used. Check the manufacturer recommendations before using a baby sleep bag.
- Where blankets are used, the child must be placed feet-to-foot at the bottom of the cot, with blankets tucked in.
- Cots must not contain extra items such as toys, pillows, extra blankets, bumpers, wedges or straps.
- Children should not get too hot or cold. The recommended room temperature for babies is 16 – 20˚C.
- Children's heads must not be covered.
- Babies under six months of age must always have an adult with them in the same room for every sleep. All children must be frequently checked when sleeping.
- Children must always be within sight and hearing of staff when sleeping.

At New Oaks Primary, sleeping mats and cellular blankets are provided for children. These are kept within the classroom and utilised when needed. Where children fall asleep in class but not in the recommended position, staff will make all efforts to transfer them on to their back on a flat mat. If this is not possible, staff will monitor them whilst they asleep to ensure that their airways are not impacted.
For students with PMLD, medical advice will be sought from parents and health care professionals including the school nursing team, physiotherapists and occupational therapists to confirm the safest sleep position for the child. Where appropriate, this advice will be included into the medical care plans and circulated to relevant staff

Screen Use

The UK government and early years bodies now provide clear evidence-informed guidance for children aged 0 – 5. Settings are advised to take a precautionary approach to screen usage by limiting screen use for children and carefully using it intentionally for specific learning and development aims. It should be carefully planned and clearly linked to intended learning aims.

It is a recommended that screen time should be limited to one hour a day for 2 -5 year olds. The advice recognises that this will differ for children with SEND and requires a tailored approach as some may need to access screen based assistive technology to communicate, take part in everyday activities and create an inclusive learning environment.

Staff are encouraged to reflect on the following points when considering screen time for students in school:

- Is the screen use necessary? Are there other methods or resources that can be used instead?
- What is the clear educational rationale for using a screen?
- How does it extend and enhance learning, rather than replace the educator's role?
- How can you ensure children are interacting in screen use and not passively using or watching it? How will you discuss the content with children?
- Is the content designed for educational purposes and appropriate for early years children?
- How can you introduce movement and physical activity?
- Are there any safeguarding risks around the device or content you're thinking of using? Has it been effectively checked?

Furthermore, staff must ensure that the digital content is:

- checked to ensure it is suitable for early years children, prior to showing it to the children
- slow-paced, repetitive and predictable
- advert-free, as young children cannot discern between advertisements and other content
- free of scrolling and autoplay features, to ensure children are not inadvertently exposed to inappropriate content or able to access content for longer than planned use - this includes algorithm-driven content, such as video platforms

Signed by Chair of Governors:

Print Name: Date: