

Headington Quarry Foundation Stage School

Learning and teaching Policy

**Reviewed: Spring 2020**

**Date of next review: Spring 2022**

**Headington Quarry Foundation Stage School**

**Learning and Teaching Policy**

Our learning and teaching policy is guided by the Headington Quarry Foundation Stage School (HQFSS) vision statement.

***Headington Quarry Foundation Stage School Vision Statement***

*We are a welcoming and inclusive school. Governors, staff and families are committed to working together to provide high quality education and care for young children. We believe every child matters and strive to provide rich experiences that support each child’s unique development based on early child principles.*

*Our school is a place where everyone is known, valued and respected.*

* *We plan experiences which stimulate children to wonder about the world and to think creatively, led by strengths and their own interests*
* *We share our outstanding practice beyond our school, by supporting professional development*
* *We strive to be a centre of excellence with experienced and knowledgeable staff who are lifelong learners*
* *We offer varied, enticing environments that encourage independent, exploratory learning through play*
* *We have high aspirations for learning and development for children and families*
* *Our strong, nurturing key person approach ensures that children are supported to fulfil their potential*
* *Staff work alongside children and families in order to develop and extend their learning*

**The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum**

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum is the statutory guidance and curriculum for all children up to the end of the school year in which they have their fifth birthday. The EYFS describes the characteristics of effective learning (see Appendix 1) and, at HQFSS, we consider each of these characteristics when planning a wide range opportunities for children.

EYFS Practice Guidance divides the curriculum into seven areas. There are three prime areas: communication and language; physical development; and personal, social and emotional development. There are four specific areas: literacy; mathematics; understanding the world; expressive arts and design. The curriculum areas are organised into broad developmental phases and identify the developing knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes that children will need if they are to achieve the early learning goals by the end of the EYFS. All curriculum areas have equal importance; all are planned carefully with a balance of adult-focused, adult-initiated and child-initiated experiences.

**Our approach to children’s learning**

We find the following quotation helpful when thinking about children’s learning through play

*“Children can demonstrate embedded learning and secure development without the need for overt adult support. Where learning is secure it is likely that children often initiate the use of that learning. Practitioners will make judgements by observing behaviour that a child demonstrates consistently and independently in a range of situations. Attainment in this context will assure practitioners of the child’s confidence and ownership of the specific knowledge, skill or concept being assessed. Skilful interactions with adults and learning which is supported by them are necessary on the journey to embedding skills and knowledge”*

*Early Years Foundation Profile Handbook, 2018*

Learning opportunities are planned by staff, building upon children’s interests and needs using the EYFS curriculum guidance. We use the following guiding principles in our provision of effective learning and teaching opportunities:

* Children learn to be resilient and strong from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents as well as their key person
* In their play children learn at their highest level. Through their play children discover connections and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things
* Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates; all areas of learning are equally important and interconnected
* We know that children are learning and making progress when they display certain dispositions and behaviours such as curiosity, motivation, confidence, enjoyment, independence and involvement.
* We work towards developing the Characteristics of Learning in all children
* The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children’s development and learning. A rich and varied environment supports children’s learning
* Children learn in a variety of ways: from and with each other, with adults, through their interactions with the environment.
* Children learn both inside and outside, in the nursery garden. Both environments are equally important, in different ways, in supporting children’s learning

**The role of the adult Practitioner**

Adult Practitioners support children’s learning through:

* warm, trusting relationships
* sensitive observation and evaluation
* appropriate responses that encourage and extend curiosity and learning
* helping children to learn so that they make connections in their learning, are actively led forward and can reflect on their learning
* a flexible, child-led approach that enables practitioners to respond easily to individual children’s learning and development needs
* knowledge of child development and the EYFS curriculum
* supporting and extending children’s thinking through conversation where the practitioner might (at different times) inform, explain, wonder, reflect or help the child to make connections
* sensitivity to the individual development of each child to ensure that the activities they undertake are suitable for the stage they have reached
* planning learning opportunities and resourcing appropriately, in all areas of the nursery, inside and out at the school and on regular visits to Forest school
* making different types of environments available to children so that, if children want, they can rest, watch, be physically active, make noise and so on
* supporting children to initiate their own learning
* showing genuine interest, clarifying ideas, asking questions to find out more about what the child is thinking
* knowing each child really well; this means that we are better able to judge the right time to support and teach new skills and understanding. We judge when to ‘step in’ and offer support and when to wait and let the child try...and sometimes fail.
* modelling e.g. creative thinking, practical skills, how to have conversations
* moderation of assessments with staff team
* valuing the processes that children go through in their learning, rather than simply the end product
* encouraging independence and autonomy

**Our approach to planning**

We respond to the development and learning of each child by planning a range of experiences which include the Prime and Specific areas of learning and the engage the three Characteristics of Effective Learning (see Appendix 1). We are committed to narrowing the gap, ensuring that no child underachieves. Regular monitoring and evaluation of children’s progress enables us to continually adjust our provision in response to any areas of underachievement that may be identified

Planning for the environment is informed by observations of children’s interests and learning needs.

Resources are easily accessible and well maintained. Children have opportunities to explore learning in variety of different ways. The organisation of the day allows space and time for children to explore their learning individually, in pairs and in small groups.

Daily adult led ‘group times’ ensure that every child accesses a broad and balanced curriculum across the Prime and Specific areas of learning.

A consistent routine ensures time for children to have uninterrupted time to explore, repeat, revisit and reflect on their experiences

The outdoor area is a central feature of the physical learning environment. Outdoor experiences both in school and during Forest school are carefully planned so that children have access to engaging and stimulating experiences

**Our approach to assessment**

Assessment plays an important role in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise children’s progress, understand their needs, and to plan activities and support.

Observations are used to assess children’s progress and their learning is tracked. Observations and assessments are used to support the planning for individuals and groups.

Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. We observe children in order to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations. These assessments are recorded as data and then evidenced in each child’s ‘learning journey’ document

Regular meetings with parents and carers both formally and informally secure a working partnership in which information about their child’s progress is shared and celebrated. Parents are given the opportunity to add their comments to children’s ‘learning journeys’ at regular parents meetings that are used to discuss progress and in a final report that is prepared before children start reception.

**Appendix 1: Characteristics of Effective Learning**

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| **Playing and Exploring** | **Active Learning** | **Creating and thinking critically** |
| Finding out and exploring   * What areas / activities are they drawn to? * Do they prefer to work in a group / alone? * Do they initiate activities themselves or join in an existing one with a group? * Do they think aloud describing what they do? | Being involved and concentrating   * Do the children keep focused on a self-initiated activity for a long period of time? * Are they concentrating and involved in the activity without being distracted? * Do they show care with what they’re doing? * Do they demonstrate concentration through silence or thinking aloud? | Having their own ideas   * Do they try something different rather than follow what someone else has done? * Do they address a problem with a strategy? * Retaining independence – not asking for support even if it takes longer to achieve the outcome |
| Using what they know in their play   * In play do they draw on experiences from home / outside school? * Do they act out situations in the role play area? * Are they confident in finding tools, materials and resources they need for a particular project or idea? | Keeping on trying   * Do children show persistence – not giving up even if it means starting again? * Do they ask for help / support if they need it? * Do they discuss solutions for challenges with peers / adults or work things through themselves? | Using what they already know to learn new things   * Do they understand patterns and predictability of events? * Talks about / explains how their process links to a previous experience * Do they draw upon knowledge or experiences not immediately related to their activity? |
| Being willing to have a go   * Levels of persistence – do they give up at first hurdle or keep trying? * Are they eager to try new ideas or do they stay with what they are familiar with? * Are they able to talk about / review what they’ve done if things haven’t worked? * Do they work best with continual support or prefer to get on with activities themselves? | Enjoying achieving what they set out to do   * Is there a sense of satisfaction and pride when they have completed an activity; do they want to show / tell people? * Do they relish challenges and continually try to make things better? * Do they evaluate themselves and try different things as a result? * Are they ‘intrinsically motivated’- achieving things for themselves as opposed to adult praise? | Choosing ways to do things and finding new ways   * Are they confident in using a ‘trial; and error’ approach and talking about why some things do / don’t work * Choosing different ways of approaching activities and adapting if it doesn’t work |