

**EARLY YEARS POLICY**

**Anstey First School**

**Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed in full by the Governing Body annually.

The policy was last reviewed and agreed by the Governing Body on 1 July 2021

It is due for review in July 2023

The review was completed by: Hannah Fell

Signature ..... Head Teacher

Date.....

Signature ..... Chair of Governors

Date .....

## **Anstey First School Early Years Policy 2020/21**

### **Our intent:**

- To give each child a happy, positive and fun start to their school life in which they can establish solid foundations on which to expand and foster a deep love of learning;
- To offer each child a wide range of new and exciting experiences and give them the opportunity to consolidate, explore and test them along with their own, individual experiences;
- To give children the opportunity to become more independent, learning and applying practical life skills, including looking after themselves, their belongings and the environment;
- To enable each child, through high quality interactions and high expectations, to develop to the full, socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally;
- To offer an inclusive structure for learning that has a range of starting points and unlimited opportunity for development; To identify children that require support to reach expected levels so that adults can provide rapid, effective interventions and amendments to the curriculum where necessary.
- To encourage children to develop independence within a loving, secure and friendly atmosphere;
- To support children in building relationships through the development of social skills such as cooperation and sharing, respecting others and their environment;
- To help each child to recognise their own strengths and achievements through experiencing success and developing the confidence to work towards personal goals.
- To place a strong focus on adults reading to children to strengthen communication and language and build rich vocabulary.
- To promote prosocial behaviour, understand what behaviour might be communicating and manage anti-social, difficult or dangerous behaviour; To focus on de-escalation and preventative strategies rather than focusing on reactive strategies.

### **The Curriculum**

We use Montessori resources and curriculum where possible to enhance the Early Years Framework. We believe this sensory and independent style of learning helps our children to sustain a high level of concentration and high levels of self-control for most children. We see greater independence in our children from the choosing, using and putting away of learning activities to the independence of washing plates and glasses from their self-prepared snack time to cleaning their own spills and the importance of keeping their learning environment organised.

### **Our approach**

Our EYFS staff know the children well and plan for their individual needs building on previous learning experiences, all of which are seen as important and interconnected. There are seven areas of learning and three of these areas are seen as particularly important for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, for building their capacity to learn and to help them form relationships and thrive. These are known as the 'prime areas' as they support children's learning in all other areas and are the focus of the Pre-school curriculum. The prime areas are:-

## **Communication and Language**

Listening and Understanding and Speaking

## **Physical Development**

Gross Motor and Fine Motor skills

## **Personal, Social and Emotional Development**

Self-Regulation, Managing Self and Building Relationships

The specific areas of learning develop essential skills and knowledge for children to participate successfully in society and these are:-

### **Literacy**

Comprehension, Word Reading and Writing

### **Mathematics**

Numbers and Numerical Patterns

### **Understanding the World**

Past and Present, People Culture and Communities, The Natural World

### **Expressive Arts and Design**

Creating with Materials and Being Imaginative and Expressive

### **Characteristics of Effective Learning**

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) also includes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. Nursery and Reception teachers plan activities within the classroom with these in mind. They highlight the importance of a child's attitude to learning and their ability to play, explore and think critically about the world around them. The three characteristics 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, and enjoy achievements.

#### **Creating and Thinking Critically**

Children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

### **Teaching strategies**

Routines of the classroom, building relationships and PSE are a major focus in the early weeks of school in order to support successful learning. We ensure there is a balance of adult led and child initiated activities across the day. Although much of the time is spent with children self-selecting tasks, the interaction between the adult and child is essential as the adult's response and modelling to children builds understanding and therefore guides new learning. The adult's role is to continually model, demonstrate and question what the child is doing. In the Nursery and Reception classroom, most days the adult will ask a child to come and

complete a task or use a Montessori material with them; at other times they will participate in a child's game, extending it where possible.

We are focussed on ensuring all our children have excellent Literacy and Numeracy skills as early as possible. Therefore, once the Reception children are settled, we will deliver high quality daily phonics lessons which include active phonics sessions (Supersonic Phonics) and mathematics sessions to the children in small, matched-level learning groups. This also supports transition to Year 1 as the children are used to more formal teaching strategies.

Pupils needing intervention are quickly identified and an individual learning plan is put in place to guide the support given. ILPs are reviewed as needed (at least half termly) to assure focussed interventions are as effective as possible to promote progress in the very early stages of a pupil's learning journey. Children with special needs are well provided for by highly trained staff and as a result make good progress from their starting points.

### **Play**

Learning through play is an important part of our Early Years classrooms. We believe children learn best from activities and from experiences that interest and inspire them. Using children's interests as a starting point, we provide them with stimulating, active play experiences and Montessori materials where they can explore and develop their learning to help them make sense of the world. They have opportunities through their play to think creatively and critically alongside other children as well as on their own. They are able to practise skills, build upon and revisit prior learning and experience at their own level and pace.

Play gives our children the opportunity to pursue their own interests and inspire those around them. The children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions. We believe it is important that adults take an active role in child initiated play and build strong, warm and supportive relationships with children through observing, modelling, facilitating and extending their play. Getting the balance right between child initiated play (which is controlled) and adult led activities is very important to us.

### **Teaching**

We include direct, carefully planned, adult led experiences for children in the form of structured adult led teaching and adult led group activities. These are particularly important in helping children to learn specific skills and knowledge and it is often through children's play that we see how much of this learning children have understood and taken on.

Each day we follow a timetable with set routines in place. We set aside times each day when the children come together to be taught in the more traditional sense, gathered together on the line/carpet as a class. In these slots we focus on presentations of Montessori materials, our topic work; maths, literacy, phonics, singing, dancing and stories. These sessions help to develop vital habits of learning, such as learning as a group, listening to the teacher, taking turns to answer and sitting still etc.

Reading and stories play an important part of the day. We want to make sure our children have a love of books and will leave the EYFS with a bank of stories they know well, both traditional and modern classics. We make sure there is always time for whole class story at the end of the day but also that there are many opportunities to enjoy books at other times. "Readit2" strategies are used to promote children's enjoyment of early reading and writing to ensure firm foundations. Age appropriate discussions around comprehension, vocabulary and content of stories allow children to gain a solid understanding of language. Every child in Reception is required to have their own book bag and will read with an adult at least once a week. There is also a designated day when children's books are changed. In addition to this we encourage parents and carers, where possible, to play an active role in reading at home with their children on a daily basis.

## **Planning**

We believe many children need to be given a starting point to learn new things and find topics are a great way to fire the imagination.

We have an annual topic cycle where we focus on a theme. Topics can range from a topic on Dinosaurs to Keeping Healthy or Traditional Tales and are usually based on the following areas of learning, '*Understanding the World*', '*Expressive Art and Design*', '*Literacy*' and '*Communication and Language*'. The topics are flexible to ensure we also follow the children's interests, our Montessori ethos and local or national events (e.g. the Olympics). Every term staff plan the next topic and book visits and visitors that will enhance the learning.

Staff plan in more detail on a weekly basis using daily notes, observations and interactions with children to inform where the learning journey should move to and these weekly plans are regularly scrutinised by senior leaders. Although class teachers are responsible for writing plans, the EYFS plan as a team, with senior leaders, the Montessori teacher and teaching assistants all giving an input whenever possible.

## **Visits and visitors**

The part that visits and visitors play in the curriculum at Anstey First School is given great emphasis, particularly in the Early Years. We aim to build up to an increased number of visits in the Summer Term; these can range from a visit to the local Farm to travelling to the local Wildlife Park. We actively seek parental support on trips (subject to DBS checks where applicable) aiming for a ratio of 1:3 (one adult for three children) in Pre-school and Nursery and a minimum ratio of 1:5 in Reception. For safety reasons we are unable to allow younger siblings to come along on school trips.

Visitors also really enhance a topic and we like to have 'experts' coming in to talk to the children (for example a doctor). We often ask parents if they are willing and able to share knowledge or a skill (for example cooking, how to bath a baby, painting mehndi patterns on hands or playing musical instruments).

We are fortunate to have a bank of excellent visitors who can enhance the curriculum. We utilise the skills of other public sector workers in the local community to ensure a sense of 'belonging' and 'togetherness' in topic work. Working in partnership with the police, fire service, ambulance and even local library affords us the opportunity to provide additional experiences the children may not otherwise come across.

## **Classroom organisation**

Our Montessori / Early Years classrooms have defined areas with clearly labelled resources to ensure children can access them easily. Each classroom is set up in such a way as to provide children with experiences and activities in all of the seven areas of learning. Classrooms have a writing area, maths area, creative area, book corner, role play area, construction / small world area, outdoor area and teaching area. However, all of these spaces are flexible and we encourage staff to move the zones around to keep the children motivated and interested. Children are encouraged to choose, use and put away resources independently and with our Montessori ethos underpinning our classroom practice, respect for the environment and care for others is paramount.

The outdoor area is an important part of the classrooms with many children choosing to learn outside for much of the day. We believe that outdoor learning is the opportunity for 'big' learning and so generally the activities are large scale. We try to ensure that the range of activities outside reflects the different curriculum areas, for example setting up quiet spaces for a maths game, reading and for construction. In Nursery, physical activity often dominates, with climbing, running, cycling and other active games being key. The Reception class also

have access to a dedicated outdoor area with high quality play equipment demonstrating our belief in the importance of physical development.

We ensure that whatever the weather our children have access to our excellent outdoor provision. We ask that children have waterproof jackets and wellies in school, as puddles and snow can be great learning opportunities.

Each child has their own labelled peg in each classroom and a shelf for their book bag. We encourage children to take responsibility for keeping their clothes, book bag and work safely in one place.

### **Assessment, observations and portfolios**

Assessment is an essential part of the learning and development of children in the EYFS. It involves taking a holistic view of what the child can do with practitioners observing children during their daily activities. This enables adults to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations.

To ensure we have evidence of a child's progress in the EYFS we use a range of strategies all of which come together in their individual learning journey. We are very proud of our Tapestry portfolios as these are collections of children's work, photos and observations which create a detailed picture of the child. Staff have high expectations of the children and use their professional judgement to make accurate assessments, demonstrating a range of learning and development from across the curriculum and plan next steps accordingly. Gap analysis and next steps are discussed by the EYFS team in informal meetings after school each day and in planning meetings. These next steps inform planning for the next day and week ahead. Staff have a school owned tablet which is used to capture and note observations. Parents have access to their child's online Tapestry portfolio where they are encouraged to detail significant events that happen at home, or outside of the school environment. The use of Tapestry online learning journals and our target setting system supports the children's development in all areas of learning and ensures learning is personal to each child. Children will often know their specific target in an area of learning.

In Pre-school staff carry out settling in observations and 2 year checks with all children. On entry to Nursery and Reception we carry out baseline assessments for each child. Throughout the Early Years the Class Teacher submits end of half term / termly assessment data to the Head Teacher, subject leads and governors showing each child's development across the seven areas of learning. This assessment is carried out as part of an ongoing process and ensures that the school is motivating and challenging every individual child. It also maximises progress for all learners.

At the end of Reception the class teacher assesses each child against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELG) and comments on whether their development within each ELG is either '*working towards*' or '*expected*'. This information is also communicated to parents and carers in the Reception child's end of year report and can be discussed in the final Parent Consultation in Reception

### **Role of staff and key worker**

Each child in our setting has a key worker who is overseen by the Pre-school leader and class teacher (in the Nursery and Reception class). Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs, to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents. All adults within the Early Years setting actively seek to form positive respectful relationships with the children in their care. The formation of healthy relationships between adults and children is essential in enabling children's well-being both now and in their future successes.

There are rare occasions when significant adults cannot be in the class and we aim to be consistent in who covers these absences utilising support staff where appropriate.

Staff within the early years setting carry out internal moderations each term and external moderations at the end of the academic year.

### **Partnership with parents and carers**

We believe that parents and carers are a child's first educator and therefore work very closely to ensure they are involved in what we do with their child at school. We want parents to feel they can speak to us about their child at any time and feel comfortable in our setting. Staff communicate well with parents on a daily basis and through the online Tapestry journal. As well as parent workshops we also offer regular parent forums where we are able to gain valuable feedback.

We are aware that most parents will be part of the school for the next six or seven years and want them to get to know their child's peers and their families, so we encourage all of our new parents to attend our regular parent forums and workshops. The EYFS team, the Head and other school staff attend regularly so we can meet the parents in a more informal setting. Parents are invited to attend a Parents' Meeting three times a year and teachers are available most mornings and evenings to talk and to discuss more urgent matters.

We have a transition programme that begins in Spring for those children in the Pre-School and those from pre-schools in the surrounding areas coming up to our Nursery and Reception class. Children from surrounding area pre-schools are encouraged to visit and invited to transition from the beginning of the summer term. Staff from Anstey visit the child's previous provision and complete a handover profile with either the staff or parent. Anstey is very flexible on transitions into our provision and can accommodate the needs and timings of pupils who may be less confident. Children who attend our pre-school have their daily lunch and play sessions in the Nursery / Reception classroom area. This allows the pre-school children to become confident in the classroom they will eventually transition to and become familiar with the staff.

Pre-School and Nursery and Reception staff hold end of month meetings to discuss topics for the upcoming half term, celebrations and/or the specific needs of individual children.

### **Health & Safety and Safeguarding**

Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them. We follow whole school procedures for child protection and our *Safeguarding and Child Protection policies* are available on our website.

Our EYFS safeguarding procedures are regularly reviewed and are part of the weekly team meeting. Safeguarding checks (classroom / play area) take place daily, issues arising are reported to the SBM and are dealt with promptly and are monitored by the Head, and EYF leaders.

It is important to note that members of staff do not use their mobile phones or personal handset devices in the classroom and are prohibited from taking photographs with their personal handsets in line with our e-safety policy. Members of staff do however, use school tablets to take photographs as evidence to support the regular observation assessment cycle in the EYFS. These photographs are used in children's portfolios and in class displays. We may use images on our school website but we will never do so without consent from parents.

Our school is '*healthy*' and our children receive free fruit and milk from a Government scheme. Reception children are also entitled to a free school meal, daily, as part of the Government's Universal Free School Meals initiative.

In some circumstances we cook in our EYFS classrooms. When using a portable cooker, safety measures are strictly enforced and extra health and safety measures are taken in line with the risk assessments conducted.

We take all accidents seriously. If a child bangs their head or has an accident leaving a serious mark we will always log it and phone home immediately. We have cold compresses stored in close proximity to the EYFS to minimise this risk.

We acknowledge that young children often have 'accidents' and have stocks of spare clothes and change anyone who needs it. We ask parents to help keep our stocks of clothes high by returning anything their child has borrowed. Children are changed in an open space within the toilet facilities.

All large climbing equipment is checked by our staff regularly with an annual independent inspection. Fire alarms are tested weekly and fire drills are held termly in line with whole school policy. Further information on site checks can be found in the school's health and safety policy.

We have separate policies for the administration of medicine in school and off-site visits.