

# *Stepney Primary School*



*A Small School With Great Expectations*

## **FOUNDATION STAGE POLICY**

At Stepney raising the achievement and basic skills of pupils and ensuring that they reach their full potential is the responsibility of all staff

## **Aims and Principles**

The Early Years Foundation Stage has 4 main themes.

- A Unique Child,
- Positive Relationships,
- Enabling Environments,
- Learning and Development.

Each of the themes has an overarching principle. The principles underpin all that practitioners are required to do and applies to all children from birth. Each principle is supported by 4 commitments that describe how the principle can be put in to practice. (The principles are stated later in the policy.)

In addition to the themes from the EYFS, the Foundation Stage team believe the following aims are also relevant to their practice.

1. To provide a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum in a happy, secure environment which promotes the intellectual, emotional, physical, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children.
2. To ensure that all children have access to the curriculum and make progress according to their developing abilities irrespective of their gender, ethnic or social background or special educational needs.
3. To enable the children to acquire the essential skills, concepts, attitudes and knowledge which will prepare them for continuing education and enable them to become independent, thinking and caring members of society.
4. To complement the role of the parents, building on what the children have learnt at home and helping them to make an effective transition from home to school.

Stepney primary School firmly supports the Every Child Matters documentation.

We believe all of our children have the right to:

- Be Healthy;
- Stay safe;
- Enjoy and achieve;
- Make a positive contribution;
- Achieve economic well-being.

## **The Foundation Stage.**

The Foundation Stage has 5 members of staff.

Mrs Sally Heidstra - Teacher  
Mrs Hannah Bielby – Teacher  
Mrs Rachel Hudson – Teacher  
Mrs Jane Carmichael - Teacher  
Mrs Susan Jackson - Nursery Nurse  
Miss Kerry Webb – Teaching Assistant

The children in the Foundation Stage will be identified as being part of the Nursery Class or the Reception Class. These classes are age related and children will join the Nursery class aged 3 years and will join the Reception class in the September of the school year they will be 5.

The Nursery class has 52 places available on a part time basis 26 morning places, and 26 afternoon places. The Nursery children do not stay in school during the lunch time period. The Reception class has 30 full time places.

Morning Session     8.55 -11.45  
Afternoon Session   1.00 - 3.15

The Reception children have the option to stay at school during the lunch time period.

New Nursery children joining the Foundation Stage are invited to visit the Unit with parents/carers before admission. Parents and Carers are given the Foundation Stage Handbook which explains routines and organisation in the Unit. Entry in to the Nursery class is staggered to allow staff to support new children and ease the transition between home and Nursery. If parents feel the need to spend some time with their child in the Foundation Stage as part of the settling in process, they are encouraged to do so. The two-way co-operation between practitioners and parents provides an excellent means of ensuring the needs of children are met both at home and at school. We value the fact that 'parents are children's first and most enduring educators' (QCA, 2000, p.9) and understand that 'when parents and practitioners work together in early years setting, the results have a positive impact on the child's development and learning' (QCA, 2000, p.9).

At Stepney Primary School we value the involvement of parents and carers in their child's education. We encourage parents and carers to support their child during the first 15 minutes of each day during the 'Finger Fun' activities. The Foundation Stage Unit also has weekly 'Stay and Play' sessions in which parents/carers are invited to stay and play with their child once a week on specific days between 9am and 10am.

In addition, half-termly curriculum summaries are sent to parents/carers to inform them of their child's current topics and themes and the work they will be involved in.

## **The Learning Environment**

We believe the creation and organisation of the early year's environment is a crucial factor in helping us to deliver a high quality learning experience. It reflects our understanding of how children learn. Planning and organising a quality learning environment is a continuous, evolving and interactive process which involves all Foundation Stage members, staff and children.

The Foundation Stage Unit is divided into well-defined areas e.g. home corner, book corner, construction area, creative area, writing area etc. Resources are clearly labelled with both pictures and writing. Displays are used to provide a stimulating environment and reflect and promote children's learning. We want to provide a rich and stimulating programme of play which will lead to the growth in all aspects of the child's development and establish the foundations of future learning. Boys and girls are given equal access to, and encouraged to take part in, all activities. Children are given opportunities to explore and enjoy stories, music, art and play materials from a range of cultures.

## **Play**

'Well-planned play, both indoors and outdoors, is a key way in which young children learn with enjoyment and challenge. In playing, they behave in different ways: sometimes their play will be boisterous, sometimes they will describe and discuss what they are doing, sometimes they will be quiet and reflective as they play.' (QCA, 2000, p. 25)

'Play is the child's main business in life; through play he learns the skills to survive and finds some pattern in the confusing world into which he was born' (Lee, 1977, p.340)

The importance of play cannot be over emphasised. It is the principal means by which young children learn. For the young child, play is a means of coming to terms with the environment. First discoveries of the world are made possible through play; Language and thought are developed in play situations. Social and emotional development are supported and developed through play. Physical and mental well-being is assisted through play.

In childhood, play is the equivalent of work. It is most important to the development of the individual personality. Young children are active and curious. They need to be able to discover, to imitate, and pretend. They have an inner drive, an irresistible urge to investigate their surroundings. They need to plan and construct and be active. In play, children become absorbed in what they are doing. This fixes habits of concentration which

can be transferred to other learning. In modern psychology it is agreed that play is the starting point for cognitive development. Cognitive learning includes the forming of concepts - mathematical and scientific, the use of language, the development of perception, investigation, exploration, imagination, experimentation, problem-solving and reasoning.

Play provides for all aspects of a child's development. These aspects of development are inter-woven with each other and with cognitive development. Social development is dependent upon the capacity to relate to oneself, to one's peers and to adults. Emotional development also depends upon a capacity to relate, particularly upon the process of forming a self-image. Thus the ability to form a social relationship depends upon emotional stability. Physical development is equally linked with these other aspects of development. Physical skills need to be learnt and emotional disturbance can make physical control difficult. Intellectual growth depends upon all these aspects of development. Children cannot learn effectively unless they maintain their emotional and social equilibrium. If children cannot make relationships they will be disadvantaged in their learning.

Children need a highly stimulating and challenging environment where opportunities for learning and discovery are maximised. Play must be structured to enable the children to gain the maximum learning and development latent in play combined with the maximum enjoyment. Audrey Curtis sees the role of the teacher as one of 'facilitator and enabler' (1986). A skilled teacher can point the children's enquiry, provide new materials, stimulate discussion or bring out new possibilities in an existing situation.

### **The Foundation Stage Curriculum**

The Principles which guide the work of all early years practitioners are as follows:

*A Unique Child-* every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self assured.

*Positive Relationships-* children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person.

*Enabling Environments-* the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning.

*Learning and Development-* children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of Learning and Development are equally important and inter-connected.

(Practice Guidance for the EYFS 2007, p5.)

In planning a Foundation Stage Curriculum the starting point must be the children and must ensure equality of opportunity as well as taking into account developmental needs, current interests and previous experience in order to produce self-motivated, enthusiastic, independent learners.

We believe that an appropriate early years' curriculum should include opportunities for;

- Exploring, investigating and problem-solving using a wide variety of equipment and materials.
- Representing and communicating ideas and feelings.
- Developing a positive self-image and a sense of identity.
- Creating imaginary worlds and stories.
- Interacting and exchanging ideas with others.
- Opportunities to learn from lively interaction with adults who understand the developmental needs of young children.
- Opportunities to develop a positive attitude to healthy living.
- Talking, discussing, puzzling, wondering and reflecting.
- A broad range of stimulating experiences that support development in personal, social, emotional, spiritual and cultural understanding, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical abilities.
- Watching, listening, repeating and practising.

Activities in the Foundation Stage are a balance of teacher directed and child choice activities, as advocated in by the EPPE Project (Sylva et. al. 2004) which are matched to the abilities of the children and structured in such a way that the children can develop further skills and understanding. Activities are developed from objectives in the EYFS guidance and the Foundation Stage profile points. The Long Term Plan identifies the skills developed in each classroom area. Planned regular observations are made by practitioners, which lead to assessments of the children's needs and achievements. Each child in the Foundation Stage has their own portfolio with evidence of their learning and developments. The portfolios are available for parents and carers to look at as they wish. Parents/carers receive a report summarising their child's achievements and future targets at the end of both the Nursery and Reception Year.

### **Communication, Language and Literacy**

The children are provided with opportunities to promote language development and communication skills. Children enter the Foundation Stage with a wide range of language skills, from using single words or 'word strings' to using language flexibly and for a variety of purposes.

Some children have English as an additional language and on entering the Foundation Stage, some have very little understanding of English. A few children also have speech impediments. It is essential to extend and enrich the variety of skills the children have. Vocabulary, clarity and complexity of speech, confidence and listening skills are developed as an integral part of their activities.

As oral competence develops, children are brought to see the relationship between speaking, listening and the written word. The children are provided with opportunities to listen to and enjoy stories through 'whole class' story-time, shared reading and with story tapes.

Rhymes, songs and poems are also used to foster reading, listening and memorising skills. Children are given opportunities to paint, draw, trace and write with increasing control. They are encouraged to write as part of play activities in the 'writing corner', using their own invented symbols, and this is then developed in more structured play activities through handwriting patterns and forming letters and print in the conventional way. Children are encouraged to trace, write their names using individual name cards for a variety of purposes e.g. on a painting or drawing. They are also encouraged to talk and draw about their own experiences and use emergent writing to record their ideas.

### **Problem Solving, Reasoning and Number development.**

The children are provided with opportunities to develop mathematical skills, concepts and language. Activities in the Foundation Stage present a wide range of experience where mathematical activity is purposeful, relevant and meaningful. Everyday activities are used as a base for learning and structured practical activities which are often theme-related are designed to help the children understand aspects of number, shape, pattern, measurement etc. Talking with the children at every stage extends their understanding and skills.

The children learn to sort, match, order and count during domestic play, as well as when they use mathematical equipment such as sets objects that are different, for example, in size, shape and colour. They have opportunities to solve mathematical problems and to develop spatial awareness when they use constructional equipment, such as bricks, blocks and other building materials. Through using a variety of threading equipment such as beads, teddy bear shapes etc. and multilink, they can copy, devise and extend their pattern-making skills. Through structured sand and water activities children begin to understand capacity, conservation and comparative measurement. Enjoyable activities such as playing games and singing and reciting number songs and rhymes help the children to begin to see sequences and patterns in number and encourage their interest in mathematics.

## **Knowledge and Understanding of the World**

The children are provided with opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world. Young children are instinctively curious. They are fascinated by living things and natural phenomena, so it is essential to be aware of the potential in daily learning experiences and in the general environment and capitalise on the children's interests and curiosity.

Scientific activities in the Foundation Stage are theme-related and designed to promote observation, investigation and inquiry. The children are encouraged to look closely at similarities and difference both in natural and man-made objects. They are encouraged to ask questions, suggest explanations and experiment to test out their ideas. Scientific enquiry often focuses on themselves, animals, plants and a variety of materials. Children are encouraged to make observations and to record some of them in an appropriate manner such as painting, drawing or modelling. The practitioners may record the children's spoken observations in writing where appropriate.

The children have access to a computer and interactive whiteboards. Using this helps them to develop physical co-ordination and control while aiding their understanding of information technology and its applications.

## **Creative Development**

The children are provided with opportunities to explore and experiment with a wide range of two and three dimensional materials, to be creative and imaginative and to develop their ability to handle tools. They are encouraged to observe in detail and also use their imagination in painting and other mark-making activities and to use and extend their knowledge and skills in a wide range of materials e.g. powder, block and finger paints, chalk and oil pastels, felt-tip pens, pencils, crayons etc. They are also introduced to a range of 3-D materials e.g. play dough, plasticine, junk-modelling, woodwork etc and encouraged to explore and develop an understanding of the different properties of these materials.

Children enjoy singing a variety of songs and rhymes and are encouraged to incorporate actions and 'role-play' into them. They are introduced to a wide range of musical instruments and listen to and make a variety of sounds with them. All these activities help to cultivate children's imaginative and creative thinking as well as developing co-ordination and manipulative skills.

## **Physical Development**

The children are provided with opportunities to improve fine and gross motor skills through handling a wide range of equipment, materials and tools correctly and safely. The programme of activities in the Foundation Stage is planned and resourced, so encouraging the children to become familiar and more competent in handling these materials.

The children develop strength and body and spatial awareness through movement, both indoors and outdoors. Activities in the Foundation Stage include running, jumping, skipping, climbing and balancing using a range of large and smaller climbing equipment, and playing with bicycles and smaller outdoor play equipment, bats, balls, 'stompers', skittles etc.

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

The daily Foundation Stage routine allows for children to participate in a range of activities as part of a small group, whole class group or on an individual basis. Equipment is clearly labelled and organised so that it is accessible to children and so promotes independence. Children are encouraged to select activities and resources as appropriate and tidy up after themselves.

The children are helped to develop important attitudes e.g. a sense of fairness, justice, honesty, truthfulness, care and respect for each other and living things. Well-chosen stories, group discussion and role-play help the children to understand 'right' and 'wrong' behaviour and to come to terms with emotions. Talking with the children about their experiences at home can help them adjust to events which they have not understood or have found upsetting.

The quality and consistency of relationships in school are important in shaping children's regard for themselves and others. The programme of play provides the children with opportunities to socialise with members of their peer group, to co-operate and work with others and to identify socially acceptable and unacceptable behaviours in an environment which encourages generosity, tolerance and care for others. Through using the variety of cultural backgrounds of the children, supported by both stories and visits for example, from the Traveller Education support service, or visiting the local church, we aim to encourage the children to become more culturally aware and to show respect for others irrespective of race or religion.

At Stepney we believe in equal opportunities for all pupils, whatever their age, gender, ethnicity, attainment and background. Within the Foundation Stage each practitioner will ensure that all pupils are included in all activities.

Practitioners will pay attention to the achievement and attainment of:

- boys/girls;
- minority and ethnic faith groups, travellers, refugees and asylum seekers;
- pupils who have EAL;
- pupils with SEN;
- gifted and talented pupils;
- children 'looked after' by the local authority;
- other children, such as sick children and those from families under stress;
- pupils at risk of disaffection and exclusion; to ensure that these pupils are effectively included in the nursery.

**Updated by Mrs S Heidstra & Mrs H Bielby  
Spring 2009.**

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### **References**

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