



Thornford Church of England Primary School

Early Years Policy Adapted by Rachel Saunders - September 2023

Philosophy/Rationale

At Thornford CE School we believe it essential for children to have a positive, rich start in school to develop their love of learning, natural curiosity and self-confidence. It is also a priority to ensure children are kept safe and healthy.

Aims and Objectives

As a school we aim to ensure effective learning takes place where :

- Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.
- Children learn to be strong and independently through positive relationships.
- Children learn and develop well in 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.
- Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- We recognise the importance of all areas of learning and development. Children develop and learn at different rates. Our practice is informed by the EYFS framework and covers the education and care of all children in EYFS, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Effective Practice in relation to each of the four overarching principles of EYFS, the seven key features of effective practice and the characteristics of effective teaching and learning is detailed in the Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage (link below)

[Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/672222/Early_Years_Foundation_Stage_EYFS_Statutory_Framework.pdf)

Our carefully planned curriculum, quality interactions and use of assessment ensures that we address the seven key features of effective practice:

- Providing the best for every child.
- Offering consistent, high-quality care for all of our children.
- Planning a curriculum with a focus on what we want children to learn.
- Using a range of different approaches to ensure our pedagogy is effective in helping children to learn.
- Implementing a range of assessment strategies to check what children have learnt in order to inform future planning.
- Supporting children to develop their self-regulation and executive function.
- Developing a strong partnership with parents through positive and regular communications.

The 3 prime areas are:

- **Communication and language**
 - Listening, attention and understanding
 - Speaking
- **Physical development**
 - Gross motor skills
 - Fine motor skills
- **Personal, social and emotional development**
 - Self-regulation

- Managing self
- Building relationships

The prime areas are strengthened and applied through 4 specific areas:

- **Literacy**
 - Comprehension
 - Word reading
 - Writing
- **Mathematics**
 - Numbers
 - Numerical patterns
- **Understanding the world**
 - Past and present
 - People, culture and communities
 - The natural world
- **Expressive arts and design**
 - Creating with materials
 - Being imaginative and expressive

We recognise that teaching can take place at all times of the day through directed teaching sessions, through times of play and inside and outside the classroom. We encourage all of these. We strive to make our environments irresistible to children and encourage our staff and volunteers to seize every opportunity for teaching. Weekly and daily planning formalise this and aim to ensure a balance of formal and informal learning. Staff are encouraged to think carefully about their questions and interventions in children's learning in order to optimise this. Learning should be personalised by building on the child's interests and involving them fully in reflecting on what they have learned and how they may build on their skills. Children will be intrinsically motivated to be life-long learners.

At appropriate opportunities the adults will:

- The EYFS teacher will adapt Cornerstones Foundation stage planning to provide a broad and balanced curriculum, which links with the curriculum used by the rest of the school to ensure continuity of lessons and progression of skills.
- Question, respond to questions and engage the child in extended conversations that support sustained shared thinking
 - Extend vocabulary, knowledge and skills
 - Encourage independence
 - Add resources that stimulate, motivate and engage the learner
 - Demonstrate, model and work alongside the children
 - Help children to see links in their learning
 - Support and encourage the children
 - Encourage children to be problem solvers, problem setters and investigators
 - Re-direct the play if necessary
 - Help children to learn how to negotiate and resolve conflict
 - Promote children's well-being
 - Observe and assess learning
 - Record judgments and plan for next steps in learning
 - Provide feedback to child/other adult/parents
 - Ensure the environment is safe and secure and that the Welfare Requirements are in place

Characteristics of Effective Learning

We uphold the view that learning is underpinned by the characteristics of effective learning. In planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners must reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in their practice.

The 3 characteristics of effective teaching and 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, and enjoy achievements; and
- **creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

All of these areas interlink throughout the curriculum and adults make the most of opportunities to interact with children to develop their playing, thinking and learning. Adults also recognize that there are times when they need to take a step back to enable children to think critically and solve a problem by trial and error or perseverance.

It is our aim that children leave the EYFS with:

- a positive 'can do' attitude to learning
- a willingness to take risks and make mistakes
- high levels of engagement in a task where they can practise and build up concepts, ideas and skills
- perseverance
- a love of learning
- ideas of their own, that they can plan and follow through
- an ability to express fears to relieve anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations

Early Language, Reading and Mathematics

At Thornford Primary School, we provide a language-rich environment in which high quality talk is valued. All staff model good communication skills in their interactions with pupils and each other. For early phonics teaching, the school follows the Essential Letters and Sounds phonics scheme to ensure that we are effective in teaching children to be successful early readers. Home reading materials ensure that the children are given reading books that reflect their phonic knowledge, so phonics is the only strategy used for decoding. The children take home two decodable books every day, which are changed each week. The school also places an importance on the development of early comprehension skills; in line with the Revised Framework to ensure that children are able, to comprehend what they read and listen to. This sits alongside the development of children's speaking, listening and language skills which are crucial for developing children's comprehension and vocabulary, with a specific focus on closing the vocabulary gap for children starting school with less experience of a language rich environment. Adults also strive to promote a love of reading through daily story time and carefully chosen books within the learning environment. Teachers closely monitor children's progress in reading weekly and in the summer guided reading groups begin. Regular phonics assessments are carried out, in order that interventions are implemented to address gaps in learning promptly.

Maths is taught through a range of experiences including counting as part of the daily routine; discreet teaching with follow up group activities and play based opportunities and experiences through the learning environment. We recognise that Maths can take place in any environment and we promote the use of learning maths skills through play-based opportunities. As with phonics, children experiencing any difficulties are identified early and support measures are put into place. Teachers target specific questions at individuals in whole class teaching, extending the children's understanding, allowing key mathematical concepts to be revisited and developed across the year. We adopt the Maths No Problem foundation stage planning to our teaching, which ensures progression and coverage throughout the year.

Play

We believe that it is vitally important for adults to support children's learning through play. We believe that play, both indoors and outdoors, is the fundamental way in which young children learn. When playing, children behave in different ways. Sometimes, their play will be lively and interactive, sometimes they will describe and discuss what they are doing, and sometimes they will be quiet and reflective as they play. Through play, children will be developing skills across all the Prime and Specific areas of learning, working towards achieving the Early Learning Goals, the desired outcomes for the end of the EYFS.

Planning

The Reception teacher uses the EYFS statutory Framework. From this and from analysis of data and on-going assessments, areas of learning are planned through a series of topics, initiated by the pupils' interests, each of which offers experiences in all seven areas of learning. These plans then inform short-term weekly planning, alongside observations, which remains flexible for unplanned circumstances or children's responses. Adult focused and independent activities are planned on a weekly basis. Children have the opportunity to work in each of the learning areas within the classroom and outdoors. Whole class, group and individual activities are used to develop skills in all areas of the curriculum, as appropriate. We plan a balance between children having time and space to engage in their own child-initiated activities and those that are planned by the adults. During children's play, our early years practitioners interact and question to challenge children. In planning and

guiding children's activities, we reflect as practitioners on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in our practice.

Assessment

At Thornford Primary School, ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development processes. Staff observe pupils to identify their level of achievement, interests and learning styles. These observations are used to shape future planning. Staff also take into account observations shared by parents and carers. The Reception Baseline Assessment is carried out within the first six weeks of a child starting in Reception. We also use a range of assessments, both formative and summative, with individual pupils at various points including phonics checks. At the end of Reception, teachers complete the EYFS profile for each child. Pupils are assessed against the 17 Early Learning Goals, indicating whether they are:

- meeting expected levels of development
- not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging')

The profile reflects ongoing observations and discussions among teachers working with the children. The results of the profile are shared with parents and carers. EYFS profile data is submitted to the Local Authority (LA) in the summer term when these are requested. The LA is under a duty to return this data to the relevant government department. We formally report to parents three times a year, in October, March and July. The report in July is a detailed, written summary and contains information about how each child learns and an assessment against each of the seven areas of learning.

Safety

At Thornford Primary School, we believe children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure. Children's safety and welfare is paramount to us. We create a safe, secure and welcoming environment where children can enjoy learning and grow in confidence. We provide a curriculum that teaches children how to be safe, make choices and assess risks. We have stringent policies in place to safeguard children and daily procedures are in place to encourage children to operate in safe ways and to keep them safe. We promote the good health of the children in our care in numerous ways, including the provision of nutritious food, following set procedures when children become ill or have an accident.

Inclusion

We value all of our children as unique individuals at Thornford 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 and support them at their own pace so that most of our children meet the expected levels of development against the Early Learning Goals. We strongly 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 and outside agencies. At times, it is necessary to work with children in a small group or on an individual basis outside of the learning environment to allow for specialist input e.g. Speech and Language support. However, whenever possible, support is provided within the classroom context.

Relationships with Parents/Carers and the Wider Community

We know what an important role parents/carers play in their children's learning journey and we aim to involve them as much as possible in school life. We recognise the huge contribution that parents make to their child's learning and we work hard to develop and sustain links with parents. We seek to start building relationships with parents from the term before their child starts school, through clear communication and the initial visits and information sessions. We do this in a range of different ways, which range from communication with home to inviting parents into the school setting. These include:

- Introductory stay and play sessions
- Reading books shared between home and school
- Monthly newsletters
- Parent workshops
- Home Link Books
- Parents consultations

Working with other services and organisations is integral to our practice in order to meet the needs of our children. At times we may need to share information with other professionals to provide the best support possible. We draw on our links with the community to enrich children's experiences by taking them on outings and exploring the village. Thornford School uses Tapestry to regularly update the parents about the children's progress and achievements.

Transition

At Thornford Primary School we work closely with the local pre-schools to ensure that we have detailed information about the children prior to them starting school. The Early Years Leader meets with the pre-schools in the summer term prior to the children starting school. The teachers observe all of the children in their pre-school settings and we invite the children to join us for three sessions in the summer term. The Early Years teacher works closely with the Year 1 teacher to discuss the end of year data within a Pupil Progress Meeting in order to ensure a smooth transition into Year 1. This discussion helps the Year 1 teacher to plan an effective, responsive and appropriate curriculum that will meet the needs of all children. The children will also spend time with their new teacher in the Year 1 classroom.

Date to be updated: - September 2024