Hayesdown First School

Early Years Policy

Rationale

Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe, and happy childhood is important. Effective parenting combined with high-quality early education establishes a robust foundation for children, enabling them to fully develop their abilities and talents as they mature.
('The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.' DfE September 2021).

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year.

Our Aims at Hayesdown First School are to:

- Provide a safe, challenging, stimulating, caring, and sharing environment, which is sensitive to the needs of the child, including children with additional needs.
- Provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for future learning and development in Key Stage 1 and beyond.
- Provide opportunities for children to learn through planned, purposeful play in all areas of learning and development.
- Use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress.
- Enable choice and decision-making, fostering independence and self-confidence.
- Work in partnership with Parents/Carers and value their contributions.
- Ensure that all children, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender, or ability, can experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development.

The EYFS is based upon seven features of effective practice:

- The best for every child.
- High-quality care.
- The curriculum: what we want children to learn.
- Pedagogy: helping children to learn.

- Assessment: checking what children have learnt.
- Self-regulation and executive function.
- Partnership with parents.

The Best for Every Child

At Hayesdown First School we recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident, and self-assured. We know that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by their school and home environments. We observe how each child learns to gain an understanding of the characteristics they develop to become effective learners. We use questioning, praise, and encouragement to develop a positive attitude to learning and high self-esteem. In their first year at school, children are introduced to the REACH values. They are encouraged and supported to embody these principles in all their activities: Responsibility, Enthusiasm, Ambition, Confidence, Happiness, and Health.

In the EYFS we have realistic and challenging expectations and meet the needs of all our children through:

- Planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests and develop their self-esteem and confidence through a creative curriculum and learning environment.

- Using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs.

- Providing a wide range of opportunities and environments to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively.

- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which each child's contribution is valued.

- Monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support, as necessary.

High-Quality Care

At Hayesdown First School we recognise that children learn to be confident and independent through the development of secure relationships. We develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families. Staff develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively and taking time to listen to them. We introduce the school's Golden Rules and celebrate positive behaviours and relationships through awards and assemblies. We ensure all children are safe and provide opportunities for them to develop skills to protect themselves. Children should be allowed to take risks but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards both in the real and virtual world.

The Curriculum: What we want children to learn.

At Hayesdown First School we recognise that children learn and develop in diverse ways and at different rates. We equally prioritise all domains of learning and development, recognising their interdependence. The children have time and freedom to become deeply involved in the activities and their learning.

Areas of Learning

The EYFS consists of seven areas of learning:
Prime Areas

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Communication & Language

Specific Areas

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

These areas are delivered throughout our project-based curriculum and linked closely together. They are equally important and depend on each other.

Pedagogy: helping children to learn

Children are powerful learners. We believe that every child can make progress in their learning, with the right help and support. Children learn through play, by adults modelling, by observing each other and through guided learning and direct teaching. Children's play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. In their play, children can be inquisitive, creative, questioning, and experimental and will learn at their highest level. Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. The adults model play and interact sensitively with the children fitting in with their plans and ideas. The children are encouraged to try new activities, judge risks for themselves and develop problem solving skills. We talk to them about how we get better at things through effort and practice and that we can all learn when things go wrong. Children practice and build up ideas learning how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They can think creatively with others or independently.

We plan for three layers of provision:

- Continuous provision – resources and experiences consistently available for children to revisit, refine, rehearse, and extend their learning.

- Enhanced provision – additional resources and experiences that prompt, extend, and deepen learning.

- Adult-directed provision: Learning structured by the teacher, provided through whole class sessions, small group activities, or individual instruction.

Assessment

In the EYFS, assessment of attainment and progress is based on observation, discussion, questioning and evidence of children's independent learning. Valuable evidence of children's learning is obtained through observation of independent and targeted learning. This is complemented by practitioner knowledge of the child, gained through interactions during child initiated and adult directed activities.

At Hayesdown First School children are assessed on entry to Reception (baseline assessment) in line with Trust and DfE guidance. Information from all observations and assessments provides a starting point for teachers to plan next steps for individuals and the cohort.

Self-Regulation and Executive Function

It is particularly important for children to be able to hold information in their mind, focus their attention, regulate their behaviour, and plan what to do next. At Hayesdown we know how crucial it is for children to be able to self-regulate, this will help them to; focus their thinking, monitor what they are doing and adapt, regulate strong feelings, be patient when waiting for what they want and be able to bounce back when things get difficult. Children in reception are introduced to our school's Learning Behaviours: Resilience, Independence, Linking, Reflection and Creativity to support them to support them in their self-regulation and executive function.

Partnership with Parents

We recognise the significant role parents play in educating the children.
We do this by:

- Talking to parents about their child before their child starts our school.

- Inviting the children to spend time with their teacher in the classroom before starting at school.

- Inviting all parents to an induction meeting during the term before their child starts school.

- Encouraging parents to attend consultation meetings to discuss their child's progress.

- Providing parents with a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each school year.

- Sharing our approach to reading and other curriculum areas through workshops and meetings.

- Provide parents with a communication platform via Class Dojo and post regular updates.

- Ensuring parents are able to speak to teachers/staff face to face and arrange meetings if required.

- Inviting parents to celebration events at the end of projects.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school and Trust policies:

- Assessment, Recording and Reporting policy.
- Behaviour policy
- SEND policy.
- Safeguarding policy
- Equalities policy
- Anti-bullying policy

Date agreed by Full Governing Body: 14th May 2025

Signed (Chair of Governors):

Review due: 14th May 2026