

Balcombe C E (C) School



Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy

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Contents

- 1. Introduction to The Early Years Foundation Stage – the best possible start**
- 2. Our EYFS Vision and Aims**
- 3. EYFS Principles - implementing the EYFS curriculum and its principles**
 - **A Unique Child**
 - Observations, assessment and planning for children's needs (including Starting School, baseline observations, observations from families, The EYFS Profile)
 - Equal opportunities
 - Inclusion
 - Welfare
 - **Positive Relationships**
 - Parents as partners, home school links
 - Key workers
 - Preschool relationships
 - Transition into Key Stage 1
 - **Enabling Environments**
 - The emotional and physical learning environment
 - **Learning and Development**
 - The 7 areas of learning
 - Characteristics of Effective Learning
- 4. Monitoring and review**

1. Introduction to The Early Years Foundation Stage - the best possible start

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum is for children from birth to five years of age and children when they start school follow this curriculum until they begin year 1. At Balcombe CE Primary School our early years practice reflects the guidance set out in the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2014)* as well as the 'Development Matters in the EYFS' document (2012). We believe that

*"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 experience between birth and age five has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high-quality early learning **together** provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up."*

(Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2014).

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all those involved with a child's learning in the EYFS all work effectively together to build the '**best possible start**' to school life for all our learners.

2. Our EYFS Vision and Aims

Our vision or aim, is to provide for our EYFS learners the best possible start to a life of learning, with the best possible outcomes for ALL. At the heart of what we do is value:

- **The unique child** – where the curriculum is tailored to the needs of individual children – both their interests and needs.
- **Positive relationships** – where we work together with all those involved with our learners - our families, staff, preschools and children – to form positive relationships.
- **The enabling environment** – where both the physical and emotional environment are above all safe, nurturing and stimulating and support the children as they **learn and develop**.

As children **learn and develop**, all learners have opportunities EVERY DAY to;

- **be engaged – to play and explore**
to find out and explore, to play with what they know, to be willing to 'have a go',
- **be motivated – to be active learners**
to be involved and concentrate, to keep trying and not give up, to enjoy achieving what they set out to do,
- **think – to create and think critically**
to have their own ideas, to make links, to choose their own way to do things and be independent!

We want our learners to be happy, willing and confident, who, as they grow and develop become the **best that they can be**.

3. EYFS Principles – implementing the EYFS

The EYFS principles, as outlined in the EYFS Development Matters document mentioned above and which guide the work of all practitioners, are grouped into four distinct, but complimentary themes. These themes are:

- **A Unique Child**
- **Positive Relationships**
- **Enabling Environments**
- **Learning and Development**

The following section of this policy states how each of these principles are established in practice at Balcombe CE Primary School.

Principle: A Unique Child

In our school we believe that **all** our children matter. We recognise that every child is **a unique child** who is constantly learning, who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We also recognise that **children develop in individual ways**, at varying rates.

In order to know and understand the individual needs of our learners, we continuously carry out **observations and assessments** on them to ensure that we can plan the most appropriate tasks that meet their individual needs.

Observations, assessment and planning for children's unique needs

Starting school

Our observations of children begin before they start school.

We know that parents and carers are a child's first educator and we work with them to seek their views and observations on their child's development. Families are invited to;

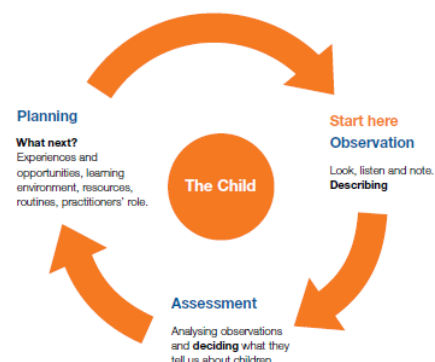
- meet with the EYFS teacher to share their views on their child's development, and views are recorded to be used as a source for planning for children's needs
- join in 'Come and Play!' sessions at school with their child so that we can observe and play with children together
- create 'All About Me' books with their child full of pictures and images that children share with their new friends when starting school

EYFS staff also visit preschools in order to discuss their views on children's needs and stage of development.

Observations

As children settle into school life we continue to;

- **Observe** each child's development and learning.
- **Assess** progress they make.
- **Plan** for their next steps.



Ongoing formative observation and assessment is at the heart of our EYFS class. Every day we dedicate time to observing children as they play and explore in our environment in self-initiated tasks, with each other and within planned adult led tasks. We record our observations by

- taking photographs or videos of children's learning
- scribing down a child's thoughts and ideas
- using samples of children's drawing and mark making.

Not all of our observations will be recorded in physical form. However, all observations are talked about and shared between staff and families.

Recorded observations are kept in a child's 'Learning Journal.'

Observations from families

We also learn from families about what children can do at home and encourage parents and carers to share information, views and observations through a variety of different ways. The key ways of communication include;

- ensuring that staff are available every day before and after school to talk to families. We open the classroom early, allowing a staggered start to children arriving, and meaning that staff are available to talk to parents and carers
- inviting families to send in WOW notes (observations from home) that describes their children's achievements from a parents' point of view
- inviting families to termly open afternoons to view their child's learning with them
- inviting parents and carers to parents' evenings, twice a year.

(Please also refer to our 'Starting School' family activities listed above.

Assessment

Having analysed our observations and assessments of children's skills, knowledge and understanding across the whole EYFS curriculum, we then use the 'Development Matters' Framework, to measure **which stage of development each individual child is at across all areas of the curriculum** (e.g. 3-50 months, 40-60+ months...). We measure future progress from this point.

Baseline Assessments

The initial observations and assessments that we carry out in the first month of a child's schooling are referred to as our 'baseline' observations. We use these 'baseline' observations, or 'starting points,' to plan the children's next steps for learning, and to measure children's progress from.

Planning

Our observations and assessments are essential in informing us as to what to plan next for our children. We use them not only to work out what skills, knowledge and understanding to plan next for children, but also how to teach it.

Individual plans for children are then created based on assessments and these are reviewed throughout the term by all members of staff and by families at parents' evenings.

Tracking pupil progress

Following our 'baseline' assessments, we continue to observe and teach every day and record progress against these 'baseline observations.'

We review this progress every half term to ensure that children are making progress towards the end of EYFS expectations – referred to as Early Learning Goals.

The Senior Leadership Team monitor the progress of the learners with the EYFS staff to ensure that children are making progress.

If children are not making progress, then Individual Learning Plans are adapted and provision changed to ensure progress does occur. The SENCO will, at this point, also monitor progress as well.

The end of the EYFS Reception year - The EYFS Profile

At the end of the reception year at school, the EYFS practitioners complete an 'EYFS Profile' for each individual child. The EYFS Profile summarises all of the assessments undertaken and makes statements about the child's achievements towards the Early Learning Goals (ELG's).

In each child's individual EYFS Profile, we state whether children;

- have met **expected levels** of development
or
- **are exceeding** expected levels
or
- are not yet reaching expected levels (and therefore the children's skills, knowledge and understanding are '**emerging**').

The class teacher participates in school, locality and county-led moderation activities in order to ensure that judgements are accurate.

Within the final term of the EYFS, we provide a written summary to parents, reporting their progress against the ELG's. We give a reasonable opportunity for the parents to discuss these judgements with the EYFS teacher. The profile and written report is passed to Year One teachers.

All practitioners who work in the EYFS are involved in this process.

Equal opportunities

At Balcombe School we aim to provide all pupils, regardless of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability, equal access to all aspects of school life and work to ensure that every child is valued fully as an individual.

Practitioners, as role models, are aware of the influence of adults in promoting positive attitudes and use that influence to challenge stereotypical ideas.

In getting to know the uniqueness of every child we aim to support children to develop a positive sense of their own identity and culture and;

- Identify any need for support
- Value and respect all children and families equally.

Inclusion

We meet the needs of all learners through;

- working closely with our families in a variety of different ways: being available to talk with them every day, arranging meetings with them, inviting their views on their child's learning (as described earlier in this policy). This helps us to establish what their children's individual needs are
- liaising with relevant outside agencies to get the best advice to support all learners (school nurse, OT, SALT etc.) where appropriate
- ensuring children have daily opportunities to engage in self-initiated learning so that children have opportunities to explore their own interests and skills, knowledge and understanding and that all adults have opportunities to observe these
- creating 'Individual Development Plans' for all learners in the EYFS that are shared and discussed with their families
- planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence
- being flexible – adapting what we do in response to the children's needs using a wide range of teaching strategies
- providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued
- using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping.
- monitoring children's progress and acting to provide support as necessary.

In addition to the 'Individual Development Plans.' mentioned above, SEND Individual Education Plans are completed for those pupils for whom progress or attainment is a concern and who have been identified as having Special Educational Needs. Please refer to our school SEND policy/Local Offer document.

Welfare

"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." (EYFS Statutory Guidance 2014).

When parents choose Balcombe CE Primary School we want them to be confident that we will keep their children safe and help them to thrive.

It is important to us that all children in the school are safe. We carry out risk assessments on a daily basis to ensure that the environment is safe for them to explore independently and take risks in. We educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards. (See EYFS Risk Assessment File).

In addition, we carry out risk assessments for children who have health and medical needs in order that they can access the curriculum with their peers and do so safely (see EYFS Risk Assessment File).

We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children. As key workers, we use the 'Leuven Scale of Well-being and Involvement' to assist us as we observe children and these help support us in tracking and ensuring children are well, happy and safe. Our termly pupil conferencing seeks to ensure the same and always asks children if they feel happy and safe and if they have someone they can ask for help if they need it.

See whole school Safeguarding policies.

At Balcombe CE Primary School, we understand that we are legally required to comply with welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2014. We understand that we are required to;

- promote the welfare of children (which we do through implementing whole school policies inc. the Health and Safety and Safeguarding policies)
- promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill (which we do through whole school policies. In addition, our 'Starting School' booklet outlines procedures that promote good health and actions when children are ill)
- manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs (as demonstrated through our Behaviour Policy)
- ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so, with relevant safety checks carried out,
- ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose (as demonstrated through our Risk Assessments)
- ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning experiences tailored to meet their needs
- maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe, efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children, with respect being paid to confidentiality/data protection.

Principle: Positive Relationships

At Balcombe CE Primary School, we recognise that children learn to be strong independent learners from secure relationships with all those around them. **Relationships are fundamental to all learning.** We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

Relationships with children

Key workers

All staff involved with the EYFS will develop good relationships with **all** children; interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them, bond with them and develop secure attachments with them. As well as teaching and observing them we play and bond with them – everyday.

At our school the EYFS teacher acts a 'Key Person' to all children in EYFS – this means that they are responsible for bonding with all of them, as well as for assessing and planning for the whole class. The teaching assistants support the teacher in observing and planning for the children's next steps.

Parents as Partners/home school links

We recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make. We recognise the role that parents have played and their future role in educating their children. We work closely with our families through offering a range of different opportunities to join in with school life, and adapting these to suit the needs of different families. For example, we invite all parents and carers to;

- meet with EYFS staff and the Head Teacher during the term before their child starts school in order to begin to establish and develop home-school relationships, as well as outline our starting school programme
- meet with the EYFS teacher on an individual basis to share their views on their child's development. These views are recorded and used as we plan for children's learning
- join in 'Come and Play!' sessions at school with their child so that we can observe and play with children together
- create 'All About Me' books with their child full of pictures and images that children share with their new friends when starting school.

We also support our families in understanding school life by providing clear written communications in our 'Starting School' booklet that outlines our curriculum and our approach to learning, activities and procedures and we guide parents through this verbally during our meetings with them.

Once children have started school, we;

- ensure that staff are available every day before and after school to talk to families. We open the classroom early, allowing a staggered start to children arriving, and meaning that staff are available to talk to parents and carers
- invite families to send in WOW notes (observations from home) that describes their children's achievements from a parents' point of view
- invite families to termly open afternoons to view their child's learning with them
- invite parents and carers to parents' evenings, twice a year
- send curriculum letters home each term as well as their child's 'Individual Development Plan' to keep parents informed of their child's curriculum and learning needs
- hold a parents' evenings in the Autumn and Spring term. Parents receive a report on their child's attainment and progress in the Summer term
- provide a range of activities throughout the year that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents, e.g. fitness days, outings, learning questionnaires, nativity plays, class assemblies, celebration assemblies, Sports Day etc
- hold workshops for parents and carers on areas of the curriculum
- ensure that there is space in the children's 'Learning Journals' for parents to add comments relating to the children's achievements.

Preschool Relationships

During the Summer term regular visits are undertaken by the EYFS teacher to local preschools to meet with staff to discuss and observe the new intake of children. Staff and children from preschool are regularly invited to school events (Sports Day, Christmas productions etc.). Where children continue to attend preschool provision, while only attending school part time, we aim to ensure continuity and coherence by sharing information about the children's achievements.

Transition into KS1 – Developing Relationships after the EYFS

The Reception and Key Stage 1 teacher work together to make the transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1 as smooth as possible. In order to maintain this vital link, we ensure that the following takes place;

- Reception children meet the Key Stage 1 teacher regularly throughout the year during a variety of different learning opportunities including class assemblies, playtimes, story and song times as well as other whole school activities
- in the summer term prior to starting year 1, Reception children visit their teacher for some play sessions as well as story and physical development sessions
- EYFS moderation takes place with the KS1 teacher to enable KS1 to develop an understanding of teaching and learning style in the EYFS
- EYFS and KS1 teachers meet to discuss individual needs throughout the year and in the Summer term
- records and assessments are passed on to the KS1 teacher
- Reception practitioners plan for more structured activities to be undertaken during the summer terms encouraging less dependence on adult support.

Principle: Enabling Environments

At Balcombe CE Primary School, we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development.

We know that children learn and develop in enabling environments, where

- they feel emotionally safe and secure
- there is a strong, positive relationships between everyone
- there are resources relevant to their interests, needs and stage of development.

Our environment

- values all people – their needs and interests
- values all areas of learning.

We aim to offer

- stimulating resources relevant to the children's needs, interests, culture and community
- learning opportunities through a balance of play and playful teaching
- support for children to take risks and explore and gain confidence and independence as learners.

We will achieve this through:

- carrying out daily risk assessments prior to the morning session starting, to make sure that the environment is safe for all learners to explore and play in independently
- termly risk assessments on the learning environment – reviewing resources carefully
- making the emotional environment safe; where every day children experience opportunities to play and learn and build positive relationships with adults and peers

- at least every term formally, then informally throughout the term, finding out about the children's learning needs and interests through individual pupil conferencing and asking families about their child via questionnaires. This is to ensure that the planning and resources in the environment reflect the needs and interests of the children
- ensuring that everyday activities are planned for both the inside and outside. At certain times children have the freedom to move between the indoor and outdoor environment throughout the school day
- ensuring that the learning environment is divided into a variety of different workshop areas (for example, quiet book areas, construction areas, making workshops, role play areas, investigation zones etc.). Each area is carefully labelled to ensure that children are encouraged to become independent learners and to take some responsibility for initiating their own lines of enquiry and investigation.
- planning for the environment every week – adding and developing resources to ensure each area stimulates the learners and meets their ever-changing needs.

Principle: Learning and Development

There are **seven areas of learning** and development that make up the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum.

Three of these areas are called **prime areas of learning and development** and these are:

1. **Communication and Language** (Listening and attention, Understanding, Speaking).
2. **Physical Development** (Moving and Handling, Health and self-care).
3. **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** (Self-confidence and self-awareness, managing feelings and behaviour, making relationships).

The above “three areas of learning are particularly crucial for igniting children’s enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, relationships to form and thrive.” (Statutory Guidance, 2014).

The four other areas of learning and development are:

4. **Literacy** (reading and writing).
5. **Mathematics** (Numbers and shapes, space and measures).
6. **Understanding the world** (People and Communities, The world, Technology).
7. **Expressive arts and design** (Exploring and Using Media and Materials, Being Imaginative).

We value **all** areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are interconnected.

None of these areas can be delivered in isolation from the others. **They are equally important and depend on each other.**

Teaching and Learning Style

Children are unique and learn in different ways and at different rates. Therefore, teaching styles vary according to the needs and stage of development of each child.

We aim to deliver all the areas through planned and purposeful play, with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities, outdoor and indoor learning.

We value play and believe that;

“Play is essential for children’s development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play and by taking part in their own play and by taking part in play that is guided by adults.” (Statutory Guidance, 2014).

The Characteristics of Effective Learning.

There are key characteristics of effective learning, all of which are interconnected across all areas of learning.

They are as follows

- Playing and exploring
- Active Learning
- Creating and thinking critically

‘The ways in which the child engages with other people and their environment – playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically – underpin learning and development across all areas and support the child.’ (Development Matters, 2012).

In the following section of this policy, we explain more about each characteristic and how we ensure that each is promoted in our setting.

Playing and exploring - engagement

‘Children investigate and experience things and ‘have a go.’ (EYFS Statutory Guidance, 2014).

Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, and learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. They express fears or re-live anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.

We promote play and exploration by:

- providing a balanced day, every day, where children have space and time to play both outdoors and indoors and in doing so engage in a balance of both self-initiated learning and adult led tasks
- planning and resourcing a challenging environment to stimulate children’s play and ideas
- practitioners extending and developing children’s language and communication in their play through observation and intervention – playing with children
- celebrating and displaying achievements of children from their play and exploration in the classroom.

Active learning – motivation

‘Children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements.’ (EYFS Statutory Guidance 2012).

At Balcombe CE Primary School we believe active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need to have some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence they learn to make decisions. We promote active learning by:

- continuously developing our environment to ensure that it is interesting, attractive and accessible to every child so that they can learn independently
- providing daily opportunities for self-initiated play – balanced with adult led opportunities – giving time for children to follow interests and lines of enquiry
- encouraging children to set their own targets and state what they would like to learn next
- planning activities and an environment that reflects their interests and patterns in their play.

Creating and thinking critically – thinking

‘Children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things.’ (Statutory Guidance 2012).

We believe that children should be given opportunities to be creative through all areas of learning, not just through the arts. We promote creativity and critical thinking by:

- planning open ended activities
- modelling being creative – encouraging children to help solve problems and communicate ideas in different ways (through movement, dance, building etc.)

We track and monitor these characteristics of effective learning as children learn and discuss these with parents and carers informally throughout the year and in our end of year report.

We endeavour to meet all these requirements.

Please also refer to the following documents

- **‘Starting School’ booklet which outlines procedures for the EYFS**
- **whole school ‘Health and Safety policy’**
- **Safeguarding Children Policy**
- **EYFS Risk Assessment.**

4. Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of the EYFS teachers and all staff to follow the principles stated in this policy. The Head Teacher monitors the EYFS formally every term and constantly informally.