

"At Hilltop Infant School, everyone will work together in a nurturing environment to provide each child with challenging opportunities that encourage a desire for life-long learning"



Hilltop Infant School
Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Ratified by the Governing Body October 2011

Signature_____

Chair of Governors

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Introduction

The Early Years Foundation Stage classes are an integral part of Hilltop Infant School and therefore all school policies relate to the children, practitioners, teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage.

At Hilltop, the EYFS is defined as the provision for our four and five year olds in their first year of school. It is the time when we provide a curriculum base prior to Key Stage One of the National Curriculum.

The Foundation Stage team consists of teachers, learning assistants and midday assistants.

Extra learning support assistants to support specific children may be seen as necessary and when funding is provided.

Before starting at Hilltop, almost all children will have had experience of separating from their parents at pre-school settings. Parents choose to take their children to one of several play-groups or to one of two or three nurseries, and some children go to more than one setting. We therefore acknowledge that children will have had different experiences and will come to school with a range of skills and interests. We recognize that children may need time to adapt to their new school environment and the social, emotional, physical and intellectual demands it makes on them. Some children may need time to watch what is happening before feeling secure enough to “have a go” themselves. A well-resourced and planned classroom with a range of stimulating activities, and with adult support, will facilitate transition to our school.

Induction and Admission

In the Summer Term, parents of children who will come to Hilltop Infant School in the coming year are invited to an evening meeting. Parents are introduced to the Head Teacher, teachers and some support staff and if possible members of the Governing Body and Parents Association (Shipmates). At this meeting parents receive the school prospectus and school forms, booklets from the Local Authority and those produced by Hilltop Infant School to support parents/carers with possible ways to help their children. During the evening parents are informed about class organization, induction and admission arrangements. Parents and Carers have the opportunity to ask questions and share ideas of how to help their child prepare for Hilltop. Parents and Carers are also invited to talk privately to a member of staff to share information about their child. This forms the first record and is a step in establishing a positive working relationship between home and school.

All children starting school are sent a personal letter inviting them to visit.

To help children settle into school life smoothly and happily, so that learning can continue as quickly as possible, children are gradually introduced to school through planned visits with their parents or carers in the summer term before children start school. The children will have the opportunity to get to know their teachers, other adults, other children joining the class, the room and the school. Staff also make home visits before children start school, to families who take up the opportunity.

In September, all children have the opportunity to attend full time. Initially, all children are at school on a part time basis in their first weeks, attending either a morning or an afternoon session. This gives children the opportunity to start their new adventure in a smaller group to begin to know the adults, other children, classroom and routine more easily. Children are invited to attend on a full time basis after about 2 weeks.

Aims

We aim to provide a curriculum that will take children's learning forward, socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually. Our aims, below, underpin everything we do and plan for our children.

- **To develop effective home-school liaison, recognizing that parents/carers are the first educators**
- **To ensure children feel safe, secure and confident**
- **To ensure high expectations of children of all backgrounds, age, ability, religion, race, disability and gender**
- **To ensure each child is an active participant in the learning environment**
- **To ensure play is valued as the child's work**
- **To ensure that adults act as facilitators in a well-planned learning environment**
- **To offer a clearly focussed and developmentally appropriate curriculum both indoors and outdoors**
- **To provide opportunities for exploration, experimentation and creativity**
- **To provide opportunities for children to experience success and pleasure in learning**

Partnership with Parents

To have a positive impact on children's learning in the Foundation Stage we encourage parents and carers to become involved in the life of Hilltop Infant School by:

- taking the opportunity to make pre-selection visits with or without the child
- attending induction meetings and reading admission packs. Parents have the opportunity to share information with a member of staff on an individual basis so that Foundation Stage staff can prepare for children before they begin school
- coming into the classroom when they bring their children to school to,
 - (i) see the activities prepared for their children
 - (ii) view teachers' short term plans displayed on the Parents' notice board so that families who wish to, can follow up or reinforce their children's learning at home or can contribute to displays and resources
 - (iii) talking informally with staff and share any concerns, ideas or information
- attending consultations with class teachers to discuss the progress of their child
- reading an end of year report which identifies the areas of learning for children to be developed both at home and school. Parents are able to see which learning goals their child has or has not achieved
- attending workshops to gain an understanding about the work of the school, the work their children are doing and how the work of school can be developed and extended at home so that a consistent approach is maintained
- sharing books from the class and school libraries and reading books that are taken home
- reading short booklets explaining ways on how they can support their children in their learning
- attending formal and informal events organized by the School or Shipmates
- reading the weekly newsletter from the Headteacher and Shipmates
- being aware of the leaflets for parents published by the Local Authority and Government agencies located by the Notice board near the office and on the classroom notice board
- helping in own child's or other classes or on school visits

Play

“ The heart of learning in early childhood is a most serious playfulness.”

Neil Bolton

The value of play is acknowledged and we view play as central to children's learning. Young children are naturally curious and enthusiastic and play facilitates the development of a range of skills and concepts, including oral language, early reading and mathematical skills. We believe that for children, learning is an integrated process, not compartmentalized into subject areas. First hand experience and play provide meaningful contexts for learning because they motivate children in allowing them to explore what interests them. It helps children develop socially and to express their feelings. Some children may need to be taught how to play, to develop the confidence to use materials, to socialize, to communicate, etc.

We acknowledge that, through play, children can practise and consolidate their learning. It is therefore important that adults are clear about the aims and learning intentions of children in play situations. The role of all adults within play includes:

- taking part eg. suggesting scenarios, modelling play
- sensitively intervening
- carefully planning and organizing to provide for, and extend learning
- introducing new or changing resources to ensure play doesn't become repetitive, low-level and superficial. We will ensure our structured play poses fresh challenges, adds stimulus and offers new experiences
- providing enough time for children to develop their play
- observing children to facilitate assessment and planning their next steps
- giving children the freedom to be inventive (not all resources need to be authentic or lifelike)
- providing opportunities for children to play alone and in groups

Teaching and Learning

Children will have the experience of working with an adult and choosing from the activities set out, in each session. To ensure that our teaching is effective we will:

- work in partnership with parents
- plan challenging experiences and activities
- identify specific learning objectives and skills to ensure that the needs of each individual are met
- model a range of positive behaviour
- use conversation and open-ended questions to develop vocabulary and challenge thinking
- use a range of teaching strategies, based on children's learning needs
- extend and enhance children's play
- directly teach skills and knowledge
- lead children into finding out for themselves
- interact and support children in a way that promotes positive attitudes of learning. Children who feel safe and happy will learn more readily.
- value the contribution of all children
- challenge racial, religious, disability and gender stereotypes
- use materials that positively reflect diversity, free from any discrimination
- plan the outdoor and indoor experiences carefully to provide a positive context for learning and teaching
- provide opportunities for children to engage in activities of their choice that they are motivated to explore
- assess children's development and progress for planning next steps
- provide opportunities for children to work in small groups, in pairs, individually or as part of a whole group

Children's learning takes account of them:

- initiating their own ideas
- being active and using all their senses
- having time to explore ideas and interests, to concentrate and reflect
- feeling secure and becoming confident learners
- learning in different ways and at different rates

- making links and developing concepts
- learning from each other

The curriculum

Children are provided with a broad and balanced curriculum for both inside and outside, that is defined in the six areas of learning identified in the Early Learning Goals and which offers continuity with the National Curriculum. There is a balance of child-led and adult-led activities. The curriculum is arranged so that children may achieve the Early Learning Goals which set expectations for the end of the Foundation Stage and are described in the "Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage September 2008 (Department for Education and Skill- setting the Standards for Learning Development and Care for children from birth to five)" The curriculum is not compartmentalized into separate areas but all areas are covered nevertheless. Experiences are topic based which presents the curriculum as a coherent and integrated whole. Our practice is built on the four identified themes that support the development, learning and care of young children. The four themes are **A Unique child** which centres on child development, inclusive practice, keeping safe and health and well-being, **Positive Relationships** which centres on respecting each other, parent partnership, supporting learning and the importance of the key person working with children , **Enabling Environments** which centres on observation, assessment and planning, supporting every child, the learning environment and the wider context of the community, **Learning and Development** which centres on play and exploration, active learning, creativity and critical thinking and areas of learning and development. Our planning focus on the "Developmental Stages" that show the knowledge, skills and understanding and attitudes that children are required to learn. When children's learning extend beyond the Learning Goals, they are provided with a curriculum that will further extend their knowledge, understanding and skills. Children participate in language/literacy activities and mathematical activities but in a less structured way than prescribed in the National Literacy Strategy and the Numeracy Strategy. A variety of good quality books, including schemes, are used for the introduction of reading. It is our intention that children find the fun and "release" that books offer. ERP (Essex Reading Programme) is one tool that we use to support children in using their knowledge of letter sounds and building their sight vocabulary. Please refer to the attached guidance of our curriculum.

Planning, Assessment, Recording and Reporting

To ensure continuity, progression and challenge, teachers plan their teaching within three time bands. Topics may vary in length from one week to half a term, and include festivals at appropriate times.

Long Term Plans

Our scheme of work for the six areas of learning outline our programme for the whole year.

Medium Term Plans

Learning objectives that plan for progression, have been identified for each term. They provide a minimum framework, as it is acknowledged that some children's needs may fall outside of these guidelines. Activities will be matched to the individual child's stage of development in all areas of learning. Our curriculum is topic based and themes are chosen for each term.

Short Term Plans

Using our medium term plans, our more detailed short-term plans are made at weekly team meetings. They provide a good balance across the different areas of learning. Staffs' observations, evaluations and children's records inform these plans. The planned learning, objectives and learning outcomes are identified and a completed copy is displayed on our Parent's notice board for their perusal.

Teachers identify a week's programme in a way that is appropriate to their group of children. Teacher's daily plans identify which tasks are directed and undirected, the curriculum areas in which children will be working, observation/assessment opportunities, and the work of other adults in the room. We need to be aware of the unplanned learning opportunities initiated by the children themselves, or spontaneously by staff, and allow time and flexibility to capitalize on these.

Assessment is used to:

- identify, recognize and value previous knowledge and achievement
- inform future planning
- identify and respond to children with special needs
- enable teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum

Judgement of children's development and learning is based on skills, knowledge, understanding and behaviour that they demonstrate consistently and independently in a range of situations

Observations may be planned formally with specific learning objectives in mind or can occur informally in on-going situations. Children's progress is assessed by:

- observing
- listening
- discussing
- involving the child in his/her assessment
- keeping dated samples of work
- keeping anecdotal notes
- photographic evidence
- specifically planned assessment activities, eg. Boehm test of basic concepts
- involving parents
- using the information that parents give about their child

Records include:

- Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. Staff find out what children are able to understand and do as they join our school. This begins a continuous ongoing assessment in all six areas of learning. This represents the standard national form used to assess children at the end of Foundation Stage. It provides a rounded picture of a child's progress and development in relation to the learning goals at the end of EYFS. The EYFS profile for each child at the end of the academic year in which they reach five is completed and shared with their parents, their next

teacher and the Local Authority.

- Regular meetings with parents/carers of children with Special Educational Needs. Parents receive and sign copies of all IEP's and reviews.
- Reading records, including comments written in home-school diaries, the identified learning objectives for reading for each child and how well they are achieved, half-termly records of sight-words, termly records of children's knowledge of letter sounds, ongoing records of children's mathematical understanding
- End of Year written report that highlights a child's strengths and identifies the areas to be developed at school and home. Parents are also shown which of the Learning Goals have been achieved and those yet to be achieved.
- Parent Consultations. Formal consultations are held each term. Meetings with staff can be arranged at mutually convenient times.

Equal Opportunities

"Providers have a responsibility to ensure positive attitudes to diversity and difference - not only so that every child is included and not disadvantaged, but also so that they learn from the earliest age to value diversity in others and grow up making a positive contribution to society." Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2008

The Early Years Co-ordinator is the named person with responsibility to ensure each child has an equal opportunity to learn at their own pace in the Foundation Stage.

Please refer to whole school policy

Special Educational Needs

Staff in the Foundation Stage have a crucial role as the first point of contact in the school system in supporting children with special needs and their families. We will ensure that children with SEN have equal opportunities to access the curriculum through the choice of resources and our planning.

Staff may well be the first to identify the special educational needs of a child, and we will approach the matter in a sensitive and supportive way. We work and plan very closely with the SENCO and parents.

Please refer to whole school policy

Other agencies

We welcome the support of other agencies and work hard in partnership with them, for the maximum benefit of our children and their families.

- developmental playgroups
- educational psychologist
- speech therapist
- health agencies – school nurses and community Paediatricians
- occupational therapists
- specialist teachers

Links with other Early Years providers in the local area

- Visits are made to the local playgroups to liaise with staff and meet the children. This gives an opportunity to share valuable information that will help children transfer into our school more easily.
- Colleagues at other foundation stage settings in the Wickford area meet in our cluster group and are supported through Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. Our Headteacher is the co-ordinator for the Cluster.
- All staff in Early Years Foundation Stage at Hilltop Infant School have opportunities to attend INSET courses

Monitoring, Evaluating and Reviewing

To maintain and develop the quality of teaching and learning there is careful monitoring of our provision. We aim to monitor:

- our planning
- our standards
- our practice

Monitoring planning

Team members discuss and reflect on activities, children and their needs both informally and at regular meetings. We therefore, evaluate both the curriculum and a child's response to it. At our planning meetings, teachers use these evaluations to highlight the areas that have been covered on our termly programmes. Teachers can easily see, therefore, the areas still to be planned for in all areas of learning. All teachers review our provision each term by matching long, medium and short term plans against a checklist (see Appendix) to assess strengths and weaknesses. Teachers will plan to address any weaknesses.

Monitoring standards

At our evaluation meetings, which are held every month, teachers discuss a chosen area of the curriculum eg. children's writing. Samples of children's work or teacher's observations from each class group are looked at, so that we can assess the overall quality and share the same expectations.

Each half term teachers record the number of sight words that children confidently recognize. A copy of this is given to the Head teacher, Assessment leader and the English co-ordinator.

Children of differing abilities in each group are tracked throughout the year. Samples of work or other evidence are kept to monitor their progress.

Governors are involved in monitoring the implementation of agreed policies.

Monitoring Practice

This is done by:

- classroom observations by Early Years Foundation Stage Co-ordinator, the Head teacher, Subject Co-ordinators, L.A staff or OFSTED
- self-evaluation using "Principles into Practice" cards (included with the new framework) as a tool/guide
- the school development plan
- Foundation Stage leader's yearly action plan includes our focus for monitoring our

- provision
- visits from the link governor

Governor links

We have an Early Years Foundation Stage Link Governor. She visits all class groups in the EYFS and takes the opportunity to talk to the children to gain an understanding of their activities and progress. The Early Years Co-ordinator writes a yearly action plan to update the governing body on issues relating to the Foundation Stage.

Resources

It is our intention that resources reflect our central belief that children learn best through play and first hand experiences. Resources include both the indoor and outdoor provision. These two areas are linked together and reflect the total curriculum offered. They include:

- a stimulating and comfortable environment with a range of books to read
- labelled storage, encouraging children to return equipment independently
- sand – dry/wet with a range of equipment
- water tray with equipment
- mathematical and scientific equipment
- a writing area with a variety of paper and tools to “mark” make or write
- puzzles, games and other resources to promote children’s learning in language and literacy
- a role-play area with props and dressing-up clothes
- a variety of resources to promote children’s creative development including paint, clay, wood, musical instruments and music
- small and large construction equipment
- computer, keyboard, mouse and printer with appropriate software
- baking materials and equipment
- growing and living things
- collections of interesting objects to handle
- outdoor play equipment, including wheeled toys

Health and safety issues/Maintenance

- Staff receive training in Paediatric First Aid
- All items of furniture and equipment are inspected before put into use
- Non-slip flooring is used in wet areas
- A repair book is kept in the staffroom and all staff are requested to use it to record anything which needs attention
- All staff are responsible for withdrawing any resource that is potentially unsafe to use
- During the first term a special cupboard is used for storing all foods and utensils
- We encourage children to handle equipment with care
- Risk assessments are carried out as required

Discussions at planning meetings ensure effective and efficient deployment of existing resources. Through discussion and the monitoring of the Co-ordinator for

Foundation Stage, new resources are identified.

Staff training and development

The Early Years Co-ordinator, Assessment Leader and the Head teacher work closely together and any training needs, that are informed by classroom observations, self evaluations or discussions at Foundation Stage team meetings, are discussed and planned for. All staff are involved in both training and other aspects of Professional Development, such as at annual reviews of performance.

Staff training may include:

- inset courses
- in house training
- in cluster groups supported through Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership
- visits to playgroups or other schools