



# Early Years Policy Statement

Balfour Primary School

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## **BALFOUR PRIMARY SCHOOL EARLY YEARS POLICY STATEMENT**

“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 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 EYFS 2021)

### **Safeguarding and Welfare Procedures**

We promote good physical and mental health in the Early Years by: weekly PE sessions, outdoor learning, circle times, ‘funky fingers’ (fine and gross motor development), discussions of oral health, healthy eating sessions, cooking. We also cover e-safety as part of our curriculum. Policies and procedures are followed for any students and adults working in the Early Years. Please see the Safeguarding policy for additional information.

### **Learning and development**

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. The EYFS is based upon four over-arching principles; A Unique Child, Positive Relationships, Enabling Environments with teaching and support from adults and Learning and Development. It is our responsibility to ensure that children at Balfour are healthy and safe, and that they learn and develop into children who are ready for school.

We base our learning around the ‘Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage’. We acknowledge that when children begin school, they have had a vast range of nursery, home and pre-school experiences. Through getting to know the children as individuals, exciting planning and meaningful assessment, we ensure that prior learning experiences are built on effectively.

We assess the children on entry using our own baseline assessments and build on the progress made from the children’s experiences prior to entering school. We also complete the RBA (Reception Baseline Assessment) to assess children’s early literacy, communication, language and mathematics, by the end of the first autumn term.

The curriculum is broken down into seven educational programmes, split into Prime and Specific areas.

Prime areas:

- Personal, social and emotional development
- Communication and language
- Physical development

Specific areas:

- Mathematics
- Literacy
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

### **Characteristics of effective learning**

The characteristics of effective learning focus on how children learn; process over outcome. They are essential for underpinning achievement in the prime and specific areas of the EYFS. These characteristics play a vital role in the children developing as learners and in turn, how they will respond to teaching and

learning. Developing these characteristics enables our children to become creative, inquisitive and adventurous learners.

### **Playing and exploring – engagement**

Finding out and exploring  
Playing with what they know  
Being willing to 'have a go'

### **Active learning – motivation**

Being involved and concentrating  
Keeping trying  
Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

### **Creating and thinking critically – thinking**

Having their own ideas  
Making links  
Choosing ways to do things

### **At Balfour Primary, our Early Years ethos is:**

- To encourage our children to be curious and inquisitive, through open ended activities and use of questioning,
- To instil a love of learning, through a range of environment activities, exciting topics, fancy dress days, appealing to their interests, high quality texts and role play areas to immerse themselves,
- For our children to be happy and settled through getting to know them as individuals, planning activities based on their interests and a range of exciting opportunities e.g. cooking, visitors,
- To develop the children's confidence and independence, through accessing the snack station, independently access free flow areas, not 'capping' our environmental opportunities,
- To develop friendships and relationships, through our free flow model, circle times, positive adult role models,
- To develop children's vocabulary with a view of embedding this, through the use of range of high quality, diverse, engaging texts, 'word of the week', role play areas, modelling of language and interventions,
- To instil a love of reading through daily story and rhyme or poem time, use of high quality texts throughout the curriculum, use of Read Write Inc, 'Choosy Tuesday',
- Instilling a 'have a go' attitude, through explaining it is okay to make mistakes (this is how we learn!), teaching through misconceptions, making mistakes ourselves, links to the characteristics of effective learning (trial and error, improving),
- To encourage a safe and healthy environment which promotes healthy eating, exercise and oral health,
- To provide stimulating, exciting activities, through planning as a year group team, researching opportunities to instil a love of learning, appealing to the children's interests and open-ended activities.

### **We 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,
- Offering an exciting range of experiences for the children to develop and enhance the prime areas, which then impact positively on the specific areas,
- Using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's learning needs,
- Providing a wide range of creative opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively,
- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued,

- Using resources and displays which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping,
- Planning challenge through questioning and opportunity for children of all abilities, in all subject areas,
- Monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary,
- Offering a balance of child initiated and adult led activities to enable the children to have autonomy over their own learning and exploration,
- Offering a 'free-flow' system throughout the day where children can choose if they would like to enjoy their free learning in the classroom, outside area or shared area,
- Passionate and dedicated staff whose best interest lies with building those learning foundations with your child.

### **Admission and Induction Procedures**

We invite and encourage prospective parents to visit the school in the autumn and spring terms for a presentation on our values and ethos, and also provide a tour of the school. Parents must then apply through Brighton and Hove admissions for a place at their preference of schools by mid-January.

For those parents who accept a place at Balfour Primary, they are invited in during the summer term for a presentation with the Headteacher to find out information on the settling in period, information on the Foundation Stage and information on what a day in the life of a reception child consists of. Later in the summer term, children visit their new classrooms and meet their teachers and teaching assistants during an after school session.

At the start of the new school year in September, parents and carers are invited in to school for a 15 minute appointment with their new teacher. This is an opportunity to meet on an individual basis and discuss their child. To support the children in a smooth transition into school life, the children experience school on a part-time basis over a one week period in September. This is to allow the teachers to get to know each child as an individual and to allow the children to adjust to their new environment, routines and adults.

We have built positive links and relationships with our feeder nurseries. Members of the EYFS team make visits to these nurseries to meet your children and get to know them in their familiar setting. We bring a booklet to share with the children with lots of photos of their new school, which is then left in their book corner for them to share with their friends. Where visits aren't possible, phone calls are made so that we can hear from the nursery staff about your children.

Parents have the choice as to when their child starts at school based on their child's age, as well as the option to admit their child part-time, until the term that they turn five. Information on this can be found on the Brighton and Hove schools admissions site.

### **Planning for the EYFS**

The staff in the EYFS team plan thoroughly for all of the areas of the EYFS. They ensure that there is a broad range of topics, with exciting and engaging learning activities to support all children in their development.

Planning is reviewed yearly, termly and weekly. It consists of:

- Long term- an annual curriculum overview is created,
- Medium term-these plans outline the learning for each half term. A topic web is also made which is published on the school website and sent to parents via school Ping,
- Short term- these are weekly and identify learning objectives, key questions, resources and differentiation as well as environmental assessment opportunities.

The Early Learning Goals (ELG) are the knowledge, skills and understanding which are used to establish progress by the end of the EYFS. The Development Matters documentation provided by the DFE, and the Birth to Five Matters document, are used as guidance to inform planning at all levels and are broken down into age bands and phases (respectively) to monitor development. As a school, we always aim to support and challenge all children and create plans that are differentiated appropriately to target all learners. We recognise the importance of the children learning through play and offer enabling environments for them to explore and develop their imaginations, friendships and knowledge.

### **Assessment and record keeping**

*(See Assessment Policy)*

Assessment plays a key role in monitoring the progress of all pupils and is largely done in the EYFS through environmental observations and focus activities. The assessments and observations carried out go on to inform future planning to meet the needs of all children. The new EYFS framework (2021) has highlighted the importance of spending time with the children and alleviating unnecessary paperwork. As a result of this, teachers get to know the children as individuals and may not have an abundance of written observations.

Within the first half term, all the children in the EYFS are assessed using a baseline. This enables to teachers to plan for opportunities of development at the right pace and stage of the curriculum. Throughout the year, all teachers and teaching assistants will continue to carry observations to assess individual progress and inform weekly planning. Teachers and support staff work on a daily basis with children in focus groups and they record their observations of development. Tapestry is used to record 'wow' moments which the children have throughout the year and these are shared with the parents each term by Ping.

All observations and assessments are combined to build a Foundation Stage Profile for each child. Assessments may be post-it-note recordings, photographs, annotated work, tick-lists or Tapestry observations. The Foundation Stage Profile provides a record of achievement in all areas of the curriculum, as well as observations of the children's characteristics of effective learning. This information is then communicated with parents and with their Year One teacher.

Phonics assessments are carried out regularly, as per Read Write Inc guidance. Children's progress in reading is documented through notes and monitoring of their book colour. We also have reading records where we can monitor and celebrate the children's reading at home. Through high quality texts and other opportunities throughout the year, we aim to instil a love of reading within our children.

### **Teaching and Learning**

*(See school policy)*

### **Behaviour management**

*(See EYFS section of school policy)*

### **Equal Opportunities and Inclusion**

In the EYFS, we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of our children. We achieve this by planning to meet the needs of all children including those with SEND, more able, children with English as an additional language, children from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds and different

ethnic groups. Staff in the EYFS focus particularly on children from disadvantaged backgrounds ensuring their needs are met.

We aim to provide a safe and supportive learning environment where the contribution of all children is valued and where racial, religious, disability and gender stereotypes are challenged. We use a wide range of teaching strategies, we differentiate the curriculum to meet children's individual needs and we carefully monitor children's progress. Children with English as a second language are assessed by EMAS and can be supported by a BA (bilingual assistant) if appropriate or an EMAS TA (see also school policy). Classroom practice including Makaton, Widgeo images and props or resources are used to ensure we include all learners, regardless of their language acquisition.

## **Parental Partnership**

Reception teachers work hard to build up open and productive relationships with parents. Through a range of home-school learning opportunities, we aim to provide events and activities to share and celebrate the learning of each child.

There are opportunities for parents to chat informally with teachers at the end of each day; we have a very 'open door' policy. Parents can also make an appointment for a private, more formal, discussion with the class teacher. Parents receive weekly learning slides and a half-termly topic web providing an overview of what the children will be learning.

Parent workshops about phonics, reading, writing and maths are held during the autumn and spring terms. The objective of these workshops is to inform parents of the expectations of Reception, how we teach these subjects, resources used and practical ways to help at home. We also ask parents in to school during the autumn term to celebrate the beginning of our guided reading sessions, as well as the summer term for the children to share their learning from the year.

Parents receive half termly Tapestry reports via school Ping, which allows them to share their children's learning at home. At the end of the school year, the children take home their maths, English and learning journal books, as well as their 'keep safe' folder which holds their independent learning.

Where topics allow, we also invite parents in to support the children's learning, for example, if they are a 'real life superhero' for our 'Super you, Super me!' topic. We also invite parents and carers into school to celebrate our 'Around the World' topic, to share what knowledge they may have about a different country.

At the start of the school year, we invite the new Reception parents and children in for a one to one with their teacher and teaching assistant. There are also Parent Consultations held in the autumn and spring terms. All parents are invited to the Christmas Performance in December and the celebration assembly during the summer term. The Parents Association (FAB) also arrange social events throughout the year.

## **Community Links**

- Children attending our feeder nurseries are invited to watch the Christmas Performance,
- The Year Group Leader visits all main feeder nurseries during the summer term,
- We invite the feeder nurseries to come and visit the school in the summer term to help ensure a smooth transition from nursery to school,
- We run an annual art exhibition as part of the Artists' Open Houses for the Brighton Festival. Members of the community are invited to come and enjoy art work from every child in our school,
- Through our important learning about social responsibility, we have an annual fundraising day for Reception's chosen charity, Pelican Parcels,
- We make links with our nurseries by running competitions for the children to take part in.

## **Governors**

There is a designated Early Years Governor whose responsibility is to liaise, support and monitor Early Years provision.

## **Our learning environments**

Children have an opportunity to access the curriculum through our Butterflies room (shared area), the classroom and our outdoor area. Through our free flow model, children have autonomy to choose where they would like to do their learning through play at certain times of the day. During other times, the children are class based.

The school is well resourced. There are central supplies of construction, small world and role-play equipment which are shared between the classes, shared area and outside. There is an outside play area, which incorporates a large sandpit, stage, train, bikes and opportunities for independent play.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Early Years Leader monitors planning, classroom organisation and practice to ensure there is consistency across the year group and that policy is being implemented. Weekly planning is reviewed to incorporate new ideas and thinking and improve the quality of learning. The year team moderates regularly both internally and with schools in the local area.

## **Staff Development**

Where possible, all reception teachers attend courses to further their professional development. We utilise opportunities for peer observation in order to share good practice. Staff are supportive of each other and share ideas and resources.

