

Meon Infant School

Early Years Policy

At Meon Infant School Early Years staff work together to create a happy, nurturing and stimulating learning environment, which enables every child to be able to reach their full potential. We strongly believe that by working closely with parents, carers and families, that Early Years at Meon Infant School should provide every child with a feeling of security, being valued and the confidence to explore new learning. The Reception Year is the first year of compulsory schooling and the last year of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). At Meon Infant School we believe that it is a unique, special and vital year of schooling that can set the tone for later school life. The EYFS applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. In our school all children join us on a phased introduction at the beginning of the school year in which they are five.

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. ('The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.' DfE March 2014).

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

- 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 independent through **positive relationships**;
- children learn and develop well in **enabling environments**, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers;
- **learning and development** of children will happen in different ways and at different rates, and all areas of learning and development are equally important and interconnected.

A Unique Child

At Meon Infant 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 both by their school and home environments. We carefully 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. During their first year at school, children are taught to be observant, curious, determined, imaginative, adventurous, co-operative and to use reasoning. Children begin to understand how to be resilient learners and are encouraged to 'have a go' at new activities and challenges.

Inclusion

All children and their families are valued within our school. We value the diversity of individuals within the school and do not discriminate because of differences. All children at Meon Infant School are treated fairly regardless of race, religion or stage of learning. We teach the children that practice and effort lead to learning and improvement. Teachers plan activities which enable all children to access the learning and to achieve as highly as possible, and adapt activities to meet the varying needs of all pupils. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when planning for their learning.

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.

It is vital that all children in the school are safe. 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.

Positive Relationships

At Meon Infant 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.

Parents/Carers as Partners

We recognise the important role parents/carers play in educating the children. We do this by:

- Talking to parents/carers about their child before their child starts our school.
- Inviting the parents/carers and their children to spend two sessions with their teacher in the classroom before starting at school; at the first session parents and carers stay with their child and at the second they attend a short meeting in school with the Head Teacher.
- Offering home visits from the class teacher and teaching assistant, just before the children start in school. Where parents/carers would prefer this not to happen, they are invited into school for a short meeting with staff.
- Inviting all parents/carers to an induction meeting during the term their child starts school.
- Encouraging parents/carers to attend meetings with the class teacher. In the first term this is to discuss how their child has settled into school and in the second term it is to discuss the child's progress so far.
- Providing parents/carers with a written report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each school year.

- Encouraging parents/carers to contribute 'Wow' moment observations and achievements of anything that their child has done at home that can be celebrated in school.
- Encouraging parents/carers to contribute comments on their child's reading in their reading diary.
- By operating an open door policy where parents can speak to the class teacher briefly in the mornings or make an appointment to see them after school about any concerns.
- Sending home regular Early Years Newsletters together with topic overviews for the learning for the next half term. We include key vocabulary that will be used, the main activities and assessments that will be carried out, texts that will be used and details of any trips or special events.
- Encouraging parents/carers to help out with class trips, cake sales and other school events, where appropriate.

Enabling Environments

At Meon Infant School we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. Both the indoor and outdoor learning areas provide an engaging environment matched to the children's interests which in turn provides opportunities for child initiated learning. We provide stimulating resources which are accessible and open-ended so they can be used, moved and combined in a variety of ways. We adapt resources and planning accordingly as pupils play and interests develop.

Planning

Teachers work together with Moorings Way Infant Early Years staff to plan a detailed Long Term Plan – a yearly overview of topics and learning covered throughout the academic year. A more detailed termly Medium Term plan is then produced with specific information on what will be covered in each area of learning. Teachers then work together to plan detailed and focused weekly plans that link to prior learning and observations of children, and this is shared with all EYFS staff. We aim to plan fun and inspiring activities and learning opportunities that provide challenge appropriate to the development of individual children, and that act as a spring board for the imagination and development of child initiated learning experiences.

Assessment

We conduct an internal Baseline Assessment within the first month of pupils being in school so as to provide an informative basis for teaching and planning. Throughout the year, Early Years staff work and play alongside pupils and undertake daily, informal observations of the children. These may be in the form of photographs, speech bubbles or more detailed observations. Other adults in school, parents/carers and other significant adults in a child's life are also hugely encouraged to contribute observations too. All observations are kept in each child's Individual Learning Journey. Each child's progress is also recorded against each of the Early Learning Goals (ELGs). Teachers use a school electronic data system to record pupils' progress against all 17 ELGs on a termly basis. At the end of the academic year, the class teacher makes an informed judgement as to whether each pupil has met the expected level of development for each of the 17 Early Learning Goals. If the expected level or above has been met in a set 12 of the Early Learning Goals, the child is said to have reached 'A Good Level of Development' at the end of the Early Years. Parents are informed of their child's attainment in each of the 17 ELGs.

Moderation

Class teachers moderate their observations and judgements internally in school on a half termly basis. Other teachers and colleagues in Year 1 and Year 2 frequently contribute to this process. Class teachers also take part in external moderation with other Trust schools and other nearby schools in Portsmouth. We are also externally moderated by Portsmouth City Council as part of their moderation cycle.

Classroom Organisation and Resources

The organisation of the classrooms reflects the importance that is placed on children learning through play and first-hand experience, developing independence and having opportunities to initiate their own activities.

The Early Years environment at Meon Infant school provides the following areas among others (these areas may be inside or outside):

- Small world areas and equipment for retelling stories
- Role play areas
- Dressing up equipment and a stage
- Large and small construction equipment
- Sand and water
- Messy areas with a variety of equipment such as mud, pasta, flour, shaving foam and water
- Book corners and quiet reading areas with a range of fiction and non-fiction books
- Writing areas and tool boxes with a range of writing resources
- Making area with access to a choice of natural and man-made resources
- Table top and small world toys
- Computers
- Interactive whiteboards
- Malleable materials, such as playdough
- Musical instruments
- Painting and creative equipment
- Maths games and equipment

Use of Whole School Resources

The Reception classes use:

- The hall for dance, drama, physical education and assemblies.
- The playground, adventure trail and environmental garden.
- The music room, including the wide range of musical instruments, for drama, dance music and quiet activities.
- The school Library and quiet reading area.

Transition into Meon Infant School Early Years

In the Summer Term, information packs are sent out to all families who have been offered a place at Meon Infant School for the following academic year in Reception.

Teachers attend a Portsmouth City Council Transition meeting and meet colleagues at nurseries and Early Years settings where prospective pupils currently attend.

Pupils and their parents attend two informal transition afternoons at Meon Infant School. Half of each class attend any one session so that teachers and staff can better get to know both pupils and their parents/carers. At the first session, parents/carers stay with their child in the classroom. Pupils get the opportunity to play with classroom resources and teachers chat to parents and hand out further information packs. At the second session, if pupils and parents/carers are happy, parents/carers attend a short meeting with the Head teacher in the school hall while staff play alongside and get to know pupils in the classroom.

Teachers visit most nurseries and Early Years settings to meet prospective pupils in a familiar setting and spend time playing with them and getting to know them, as well as discussing any specific concerns or information with nursery staff. Where a pupil is coming from a nursery out of area then a telephone call will be made to the nursery manager by the class teacher.

In some cases, nurseries and early years settings, parents/carers or healthcare professionals may advise a more gradual or extended transition programme for individual pupils. At Meon Infant School, we want all our pupils to have a happy and a positive experience of starting school and we will always therefore work closely with nurseries, parents/carers and health care professionals to provide a transition that caters for the individual needs of every pupil starting at Meon Infant School. This may include additional visits from Meon Infant staff to the current nursery setting, additional visits by the pupil and/or parents/carers to Meon Infant School either after school or at a quiet time within the classrooms, and additional meetings with health care professionals put in place additional physical resources or training for staff.

Teachers and teaching assistants conduct home visits prior to pupils starting at Meon Infant School. This allows pupils and parents/carers to see staff in a non-threatening environment and for parents/carers to raise any concerns that they may have about their child starting school. If parents/carers would prefer not to have a home visit, a meeting in school will be arranged instead.

Pupils start at Meon Infant School on a part-time basis initially. Older pupils begin to be full-time more quickly than younger pupils. By starting pupils on a part-time basis in small groups, staff are able to spend a greater amount of time getting to know each individual pupil and making them familiar and secure with the school environment and routines.

The Head teacher invites parents/carers to an informal information meeting a few weeks after pupils have started at Meon Infant School.

Teachers conduct individual meetings with parents/carers to discuss how their child has found starting at Meon Infant School.

Learning and Development

At Meon Infant School we recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are interconnected. The children have time and freedom to become deeply involved in the activities and their learning.

The Curriculum

The curriculum for the Early Years forms the first stage of our Whole School Curriculum. It covers children in the Reception Class.

There are seven areas of learning and development that must provide a framework for planning, teaching and assessing in early years settings. All areas of learning and development are inter-connected.

The three **prime areas of learning** are:

- **Communication and Language** – children will be given lots of opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; to speak and listen in a range of situations.
- **Physical Development** – children will be provided with opportunities to be active and interactive; to develop their co-ordination, control and movement. Children will be taught the importance of physical activity and to make healthy choices in relation to food.
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** – help children develop a positive sense of themselves and others; forming positive relationships and develop respect for others; develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and have confidence in their own abilities.

There are also four **specific areas of learning**, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied:

- **Literacy** – children will be taught to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children will be given access to a wide range of reading materials to ignite their interest.
- **Mathematics** – children will be provided with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces and measures.
- **Understanding the World** – Children will make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.
- **Expressive Arts and Design** – Children will explore and play with a range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

These areas are delivered throughout each topic and are linked closely together. They are equally important and depend on each other. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult led and child initiated activities.

The EYFS classes have their own outdoor area used all year round in all weathers. Being outdoors encourages learning in different ways. It offers the children more opportunities to be creative and explore on a larger scale as well as to be physically active linking the indoors and outdoors together.

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