

# The Ivory Federation

Propps Hall Junior, Infant & Nursery School   Springhead Infant & Nursery School   Rushcroft Primary School

## EARLY YEARS POLICY

### RATIONALE

*'All children deserve the care and support they need to have the best start in life. Children learn and develop at a faster rate from birth to five years old than at any other time in their lives, so their experiences in early years 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 provide the foundation children need to fulfil their potential.'* Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers, effective 1 September 2026

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe.

Within the Ivory Federation, we recognise the fundamental importance of the early years in laying secure foundations for children's future learning, development and wellbeing. We aim to provide a secure, safe, happy and stimulating environment in which every child can develop confidence, independence, curiosity and a positive attitude towards learning.

We recognise that children develop rapidly during the early years and that their experiences during this period can have a significant impact on their future life chances. Our provision therefore reflects both the importance of preparing children for future learning and the value of childhood in its own right.

Our Early Years provision is underpinned by the four guiding principles of the EYFS:

- **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**, with teaching and support from adults who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time.
- **Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.**

We recognise that children's learning is interconnected. Experiences within the EYFS provide opportunities for children to develop knowledge, skills and understanding across the areas of learning and development through purposeful play, adult interaction, exploration and direct teaching.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is:

- To ensure that the Federation meets the learning and development and safeguarding and welfare requirements of the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage.
- To provide a secure, safe, nurturing and stimulating environment in which children are able to learn and develop.
- To provide opportunities for children to engage in purposeful play, adult-led learning and activities which children initiate themselves.
- To ensure that practitioners consider the individual needs, interests and development of each child and use this information to provide challenging and enjoyable experiences across all areas of learning and development.
- To recognise the holistic nature of young children's learning and make meaningful links between different areas of the curriculum.
- To support and extend children's learning through high-quality interactions, observation, assessment and responsive teaching.
- To promote children's communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development as fundamental aspects of their learning.
- To work in partnership with parents/carers and, where appropriate, other professionals and settings to support children's learning, development, health and wellbeing.

### PRINCIPLES

#### PLANNING AND CURRICULUM ORGANISATION

The three prime areas 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 how to develop both their gross motor skills and fine motor skills to prepare them for writing.
- **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, 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, so they become confident with numbers to 10 and number patterns.
- 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, their environment and past events.
- 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.

The characteristics of effective teaching and learning underpin practice across the EYFS and describe the different ways in which children engage with other people and their environment. Practitioners reflect on the different rates at which children develop and adjust their practice appropriately.

The three characteristics are:

- **Playing and exploring** – children investigate and experience things and 'have a go'.
- **Active learning** – children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties and enjoy achievements.
- **Creating and thinking critically** – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things.

Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult led and child-initiated activities. The curriculum is planned through a series of themes that reflect and respond to the children's interests, offering experiences in all areas of the curriculum and which carry equal importance to provide a broad and balanced curriculum with opportunities for play and child-initiated activities.

Long-term planning reflects the educational programmes set out within the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage and the Federation's curriculum intent. This is an overarching framework that informs all other stages of planning. It shows the range of experiences and learning opportunities that are available while children are in the early years. Medium term planning takes the form of a theme based upon the children's interests and include school specific knowledge to ensure there is progression in our curriculum from Nursery to Year 6. It is also adapted to respond to other emerging interests that the children may have. Short term plans are then devised from the medium-term plans into daily lessons and include active and real life experiences that reflect the thematic curriculum and children's interests.

As the child grows older and as their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards more adult led activities to help the children prepare for the transition into Year 1.

### **CLASSROOM ORGANISATION AND RESOURCES**

The organisation of the classroom 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. We pride ourselves on offering a stimulating and nurturing environment that promotes independence.

Our Early Years classrooms provide the following areas:

- Small world area
- Role play area
- Small construction
- Book corner with a range of fiction and non-fiction books
- Writing table with a range of writing resources
- Finger gym area with access to a choice of natural and man-made resources to develop fine motor skills.
- Investigation Area
- iPads and computers
- Sand and water
- Interactive whiteboard
- Malleable materials
- Musical instruments
- Painting and creative equipment
- Maths games and equipment
- Outside learning environment – this is a safe play area with a wide range of learning opportunities including, a role-play, sand pit, water tray, water wall, mud-kitchen, small world and role play, den, outdoor chalkboard, reading pod, outdoor painting, large scale construction toys, PE equipment, balance bikes and climbing equipment.

## USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND SCREENS

Technology may be used within the Early Years where it has a clear educational purpose and enhances children's learning and experiences. Its use will be appropriate to children's age and stage of development and will not replace high-quality adult interaction, physical activity, practical experiences, outdoor learning, play or opportunities for communication and language.

The Federation will have regard to current Department for Education guidance on children's screen use in early years settings. The use of devices and online services will also be consistent with the Federation's Online Safety, Acceptable Use and Filtering and Monitoring Policy.

## HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE

The safety and wellbeing of children are fundamental to the Federation's Early Years provision. The Federation will meet the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage and will ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to safeguard children and promote their welfare.

Early Years staff will:

- follow the Federation's safeguarding and child protection procedures and *Keeping Children Safe in Education*;
- maintain appropriate supervision of children;
- ensure that premises, equipment and learning environments are safe and suitable;
- undertake and respond appropriately to risk assessments;
- promote children's physical and emotional health and wellbeing;
- follow appropriate hygiene, food safety, allergy and medical procedures;
- ensure that children are kept safe during meals and snacks;
- follow statutory requirements relating to paediatric first aid;
- ensure that children's individual medical, dietary, allergy and additional needs are known and appropriately supported; and
- share concerns about a child's safety or welfare promptly in accordance with the Federation's safeguarding procedures.

Detailed arrangements are contained within the Federation's relevant safeguarding, health and safety, medical needs, allergy and other associated policies.

## REST AND SAFER SLEEP

The Federation recognises that some children may require opportunities to rest or sleep during the day according to their age, individual needs and circumstances.

Where a child sleeps while in the care of the school, staff will ensure that:

- appropriate and safe sleeping arrangements are provided;
- the child is appropriately supervised and checked during sleep;
- sleeping children remain within sight and/or hearing of an appropriately qualified member of staff;
- sleeping arrangements and equipment are appropriate for the child's age and needs;
- information provided by parents/carers about a child's individual needs is considered; and
- current statutory EYFS safer sleep requirements are followed.

Staff will remain alert to any change in a sleeping child's normal breathing, appearance or behaviour and will respond immediately to any concern.

The Federation's current Early Years provision does not include children aged 12 months or under and, therefore, the specific EYFS requirements relating to sleeping arrangements for babies do not currently apply to our schools. Should the age range of the provision change, the Federation will ensure that all statutory safer sleep requirements are met, including the requirement for babies aged 12 months or under to sleep in an appropriate cot, carrycot, Moses basket or travel cot. Floor beds or sleep pods will not be used for children aged 12 months or under.

## INVOLVING PARENTS AND CARERS

Parents and carers are children's first and most enduring educators. Effective partnership between parents/carers and practitioners has a positive impact on children's learning, development and wellbeing. We aim to establish open, respectful and supportive relationships with families and encourage a two-way flow of information between home and school.

We support this partnership by:

- providing information about the EYFS and our provision during induction, open events and intake meetings;
- sharing information about the curriculum and ways in which parents/carers can support learning at home;
- maintaining regular communication with parents/carers about their child's learning, development, wellbeing and individual needs;

- providing opportunities for parents/carers to discuss their child's progress through consultation meetings and informal discussions;
- sharing appropriate information about children's progress and development through reports and other communication;
- using Tapestry to share aspects of children's experiences and learning and to enable parents/carers to contribute relevant information from home;
- encouraging parents/carers to share information about their child's interests, experiences, health, medical needs, allergies, dietary requirements or any other circumstances that may affect their care, wellbeing or learning;
- discussing any concerns about a child's development or additional needs with parents/carers and, where appropriate, involving the school's SENCO and other relevant professionals; and
- working with parents/carers and other settings or professionals to support effective transitions into, within and from the EYFS.

Parents/carers will be informed promptly of any accident, injury, significant incident or concern relating to their child's health, safety or welfare, in accordance with the Federation's relevant policies and statutory EYFS requirements.

## **ROLE OF THE STAFF**

### **The Early Years Leader will:**

- provide leadership, guidance and support to Early Years staff;
- ensure that practice reflects the statutory EYFS framework and current guidance;
- support the effective implementation and development of the Early Years curriculum;
- monitor the quality of provision, teaching, learning and children's experiences;
- support staff to identify and respond appropriately to children's individual needs;
- promote effective partnership working with parents/carers and other professionals;
- ensure that safeguarding, welfare, health and safety requirements are understood and implemented within the provision; and
- identify relevant professional development and support staff to maintain appropriate knowledge and skills.

### **Teachers and support staff will:**

- place children's safety, welfare and wellbeing at the centre of their practice;
- understand and follow the Federation's safeguarding and child protection procedures and report concerns promptly;
- value all areas of learning and development and recognise that they are interconnected;
- plan and provide a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum through a combination of purposeful play, adult-led and child-initiated experiences;
- provide high-quality interactions which develop children's communication, thinking, knowledge and understanding;
- respond to children's individual needs, interests and stages of development, including those of children with SEND or other additional needs;
- ensure that indoor and outdoor provision is appropriately organised, resourced and supervised;
- maintain an environment which is safe, inclusive and appropriate to the needs of young children;
- undertake and follow appropriate risk assessments and established health, safety, medical, allergy, food safety and hygiene procedures;
- follow the Federation's arrangements for rest and safer sleep where applicable;
- work in partnership with parents/carers and share relevant information about children's learning, development, health and wellbeing;
- use ongoing assessment appropriately to understand children's progress and inform teaching and provision; and
- follow the Federation's relevant policies and procedures.

### **The Executive Headteacher will:**

The Executive Headteacher has overall responsibility for ensuring that the Federation's Early Years provision meets statutory requirements and provides children with high-quality education, care and support. The Executive Headteacher will support and challenge Early Years leaders and staff, monitor the effectiveness of provision and ensure that appropriate safeguarding, welfare, staffing and curriculum arrangements are in place.

## **ASSESSMENT**

Ongoing assessment is an integral part of learning and development within the Early Years. Practitioners use their professional knowledge of each child, gained through observation, interaction, discussion and children's everyday learning and experiences, to understand their development and to inform future teaching and provision.

Assessment should be proportionate and should not require excessive collection or recording of evidence. Practitioners are not required to keep written records, photographs or other evidence to support every assessment judgement. Assessment will not detract from the quality of interactions between practitioners and children.

Information shared by parents/carers and, where relevant, previous settings and other professionals contributes to practitioners' understanding of each child. Tapestry may be used to share significant aspects of children's learning and experiences with parents/carers and to support communication between home and school; it is not used as a requirement to evidence every aspect of children's learning.

### **On-entry assessment**

When children enter our Early Years provision, practitioners will use information from parents/carers, previous settings where applicable, professional discussions and their own observations to establish an understanding of each child's starting points, strengths and needs. This information will inform appropriate teaching, provision and support.

Children entering Reception will complete the statutory **Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA)** within the required statutory timescale. The assessment will be administered in accordance with current statutory guidance.

### **Ongoing assessment**

Practitioners will continually consider what children know, understand and can do and use this knowledge to identify where additional support or further challenge may be required.

Development Matters and other appropriate non-statutory guidance may be used to support curriculum planning and professional understanding of children's development. Such guidance will not be used as a checklist against which children are routinely assessed.

Where there are concerns about a child's progress or development, practitioners will work with parents/carers, the SENCO and other relevant professionals, where appropriate, to identify and provide suitable support.

### **EYFS Profile**

At the end of Reception, the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) will be completed for each child in accordance with current statutory requirements.

Each child's level of development will be assessed against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELGs). For each ELG, practitioners will determine whether the child is:

- meeting the level of development expected at the end of the EYFS (expected); or
- not yet reaching this level (emerging).

EYFS Profile judgements will be based on practitioners' professional knowledge of the child, informed by their observations and interactions and, where appropriate, information from parents/carers and other adults.

The results of the EYFS Profile will be shared with parents/carers and relevant Year 1 staff to support each child's continuing learning and transition into Key Stage 1.

### **CONCLUSION**

Through the implementation of this policy, the Federation will ensure that children within the Early Years are provided with a safe, nurturing and stimulating environment in which they are valued as individuals and supported to thrive.

Our Early Years provision will provide secure foundations for children's learning, development and wellbeing through high-quality teaching, purposeful play, positive relationships and strong partnerships with parents and carers. We aim for every child to develop the confidence, knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to make the best possible progress and to be well prepared for the next stage of their education.

### **LINKED POLICIES**

This policy should be read alongside all relevant Federation policies and procedures, but more specifically:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Online Safety, Acceptable Use and Filtering and Monitoring Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Allergy Safety and Anaphylaxis Policy
- SEND Policy and SEND Information Report
- Behaviour Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Educational Visits Policy, where applicable

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