

# Medlock Primary School



## Early Years Policy

**Ratified: December 2022**

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## Aims

It is every child's right to grow up safe, healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and with economic well-being. At Medlock, the overarching aim of the EYFS is to help young children achieve these five "Every Child Matters" outcomes. We aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum which will enable each child to succeed in becoming school ready by developing personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually to their full potential.

Each child is valued as an individual and learning and teaching is based on the understanding that children develop at different rates. At Medlock, we aim to:

- provide a safe, challenging, stimulating and caring environment which is sensitive to the needs of the child including children with additional needs;
- provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for future learning and development;
- provide opportunities for children to learn through planned, purposeful play in all areas of learning and development in the indoor and outdoor environment;
- use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress;
- enable choice and decision making, fostering independence and self-confidence;
- work in partnership with parents/guardians and value their contributions;
- understand and develop children's resilience, resourcefulness and reflectiveness in order for them to become life-long learners.

## EYFS Principles

The EYFS principles, which guide the effective work of all practitioners, are grouped into four distinct but complementary themes:

- A unique child – developing resilient, capable, confident and self-assured individuals.
- Positive relationships – supporting the children in becoming strong and independent.
- Enabling environments – where opportunities and experiences respond to the individual needs of the child by developing a strong partnership between practitioners, parents/carers and the child.
- Learning and developing – An acknowledgement that children learn in different ways and at different rate.

## A Unique Child:

At Medlock we recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways, at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, as

well as celebration and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

### Inclusion

All children and their families are valued within our school. We believe that children should be treated as individuals but they all should have equal access to the EYFS curriculum. We give our children every opportunity to achieve their best. We help them to do this by planning to meet the needs of both boys, girls, children with special educational needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children from different ethnic groups, and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

We strongly believe that early identification of special needs is crucial in enabling practitioners to support the development of each child and fully meet their needs. Concerns are always discussed with parents/carers at an early stage in an open, honest and sensitive manner and we will always seek their support and involvement.

The school's SENCO is responsible for providing additional information and advice to practitioners and parents, and for arranging external intervention and support where necessary. For further information, see our SEND policy.

### Positive Relationships

At Medlock, we recognise that children learn to be strong, confident and independent from being in secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families.

### The Role of Parents:

We recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make. When parents/guardians and practitioners work together in early years settings, the results have a positive impact on the child's development. We feel successful partnership needs to be a two-way flow of information, knowledge and expertise and so aim to provide a variety of opportunities to support this. We do this by;

- Visiting the child and parent/guardian in their home setting in the term before the child enters our Nursery classes setting to discuss needs, interests and development.
- Encouraging parents to follow their child's learning through the SEESAW app, where photographs, videos, notes and messages can be sent to parents to keep them updated on learning.
- Offering "Stay and Play" sessions in both Nursery Year and Reception for the child to come and visit with their parent/guardian before they start and delivering induction meetings for parents/guardians of children starting both Nursery and Reception.

- Operating an 'open door policy' before and after school for parents/guardians with any queries
- Providing parents with a Welcome booklet detailing staffing, daily routines and information on the setting.
- Informing parents/guardians of their child's progress at parents' evenings which are held twice/three times a year.
- Annual reports to parents sharing the child's development and achievements through the year.
- Delivering workshops which encourage and support parents/guardians understanding of the EYFS and how they can contribute to their child's learning and school life.

### Key Worker

Young children need to develop relationships to support their emotional well-being and learning. A key worker approach provides the child with a special adult to enable him/her to develop secure attachment, the opportunity for the practitioner to develop a supportive relationship with the parents/guardians and share the child's process and development. Every child in both Nursery classes has a Key worker. In Reception, children are in classes of 30 with one teacher and one teaching assistant per class.

### Enabling Environments

#### Learning Environment

At Medlock, we recognise that both the indoor and outdoor environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's developments. We aim to create an attractive, welcoming and stimulating environment which will encourage children to explore, investigate and learn through first-hand experience. We also aim to make it into a place where children feel secure and confident, and are challenged to develop their independence. Adult focus activities in Reception are planned for both the indoor and outdoor environment and children have the freedom to move between the indoor and outdoor throughout the school day. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales than when indoors. It offers the children the ability to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant.

#### Forest Schools

Children in Reception are given the opportunity to visit the Forest School that is set in the school grounds. This is a valuable experience for the children as they undertake a range of practical activities and carry out small achievable tasks. At Forest School, children can develop their team working skills and also learn to become more independent. Those that are unfamiliar with woodlands and green spaces can become confident in using them and this can form the basis of a life-long relationship with natural spaces.

The 'wild' yet controlled, safe environment of Forest School ensures that children taking part naturally learn how to assess risk and are encouraged to make sensible and informed decisions about how to deal with unfamiliar and unpredictable situations (such as exploring and climbing trees, using tools to build shelters and dens). Much of the learning for a child comes as a result of the opportunities they have for testing their own abilities in a real life context. It is an excellent resource that covers and develops all characteristics of learning – Playing and Exploring, Active learning and Creative and Thinking Critically.

## Learning and Development

The planning within the EYFS is based on the Development Matters statements from The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum and the Early Years Outcomes (DfE- September 2013). The Early Years Foundation Stage encompasses seven areas of learning and development. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. These three areas, the prime areas, are:

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

We also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are:

- Literacy;
- Mathematics;
- Understanding the World;
- Expressive arts and Design;

### In the Moment Planning

In the Moment Planning captures the interest of a child or group of children in the present moment. Young children have a natural desire to learn, explore and question. Throughout EYFS we offer an environment that enables child-initiated play in order to capture the moment of engagement. Careful observation by practitioners is key to utilising the approach. Opportunities to seize the moment when a child shows interest in an activity which can be built upon needs to be recognised, these are normally called '**teachable moments**'. Written 'planning' is then carried out in the form of observations, records of the interactions and notes on the outcomes.

This approach compliments the Statutory Framework for EYFS that states;

"1.6. Practitioners must consider the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care. They must use this information to plan a

challenging and enjoyable experience for each child, across all areas of learning and development.”

Teachable moments are about recognising that children learn in an unconscious way during informal interactions. To do this effectively teaching staff;

- Provide opportunities and environments that stimulate curiosity (each child will have different things that stimulate them – while one might enjoy painting, another might like dressing up).
- Have a very good understanding of how children learn, the development matters and where each child is within their learning and what their next steps might be.
- Observe and listen closely so we can follow the child's lead
- Identify the item/place/person/idea that has sparked the child's interest
- Use open-ended questions that require a description, rather than a yes or no answer – these usually start with I wonder how? I wonder if?
- Praise and reinforce positive learning experiences.

In reception there is a balance of 'In the moment planning' as well as planned guided adult activities. Good planning is the key to making children's learning effective, exciting, varied and progressive. Effective learning builds on and extends what children know and can already do.

Our planning, Long term, medium term, guided and In the Moment, shows how the principles of the EYFS are put into practice and is always informed by observations we have made of the children, in order to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning needs. All staff who work in the Foundation Stage are involved in this process. The planning within the EYFS is based on Whole school termly themes, seasonal observations and the children's interests.

### Teaching and Learning Style

We recognise that features of effective teaching and learning in the EYFS are:

- the partnership between teachers and parents, so that our children feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement;
- the understanding that teachers have of how children develop and learn, and how this affects their teaching;
- the range of approaches used that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions and extend and develop play and talk or other means of communication;
- the carefully planned curriculum that helps children work towards the Early Learning Goals throughout EYFS;
- the provision for children to take part in activities that build on and extend their interests and develop their intellectual, physical, social and emotional abilities;

- the encouragement for children to communicate and talk about their learning, and to develop independence;
- the support for learning with appropriate and accessible indoor and outdoor space, facilities and equipment;
- the identification of the progress and future learning needs of children through observations;

## Phonics

At medlock, we follow the Letters and sounds Programme of Study to teach Phonics. High quality phonics lessons are taught daily in Nursery through Phase 1 activities, rhymes and songs. We complement this with small group interventions to build on vocabulary and Language development through the Welcomm programme. In Reception, high quality, active and interactive phonics is planned from Letters and Sounds combined with elements of the Jolly Phonics Scheme. Phonics is taught daily in differentiated groups across the year group. Where appropriate, children take part in additional phonic and early reading activities to help accelerate progress in this area. Phonics is built upon through weekly guided reading and writing activities where children practise and apply their newly acquired skills.

## Characteristics of effective learning

The characteristics of effective learning describe factors which play a central role in a child's learning and in becoming an effective learner. They are vital elements of support for the transition process from EYFS to year 1. The characteristics of effective learning run through and underpin all 7 areas of learning and development and represent learning processes rather than learning outcomes.

## Playing and Exploring - Engagement

'Finding out and exploring' is concerned with the child's open-ended hands-on experiences which result from innate curiosity. These experiences provide raw sensory material from which the child builds concepts, tests ideas and finds out.

'Using what they know in their play' describes how children use play to bring together their current understandings, combining, refining and exploring their ideas in imaginative ways. Representing experiences through imaginative play supports the development of narrative thought, the ability to see from other perspectives, and symbolic thinking.

'Being willing to have a go' refers to the child:

- finding an interest
- initiating activities
- seeking challenge
- having a 'can do' attitude
- being willing to take a risk in new experiences

- developing the view that failures are opportunities to learn

### Active Learning – Motivation

'Being involved and concentrating' describes the intensity of attention that arises from children engaged in following a line of interest in their activities.

'Keeping on trying' refers to:

- the importance of persistence even in the face of challenge or difficulties
- an element of purposeful control which supports resilience

'Enjoying achieving what they set out to do' builds on the intrinsic motivation which supports long-term success. It refers to the reward of meeting one's own goals, rather than relying on the approval of others.

### Creativity and Critical Thinking

'Having their own ideas' covers the critical area of creativity - generating new ideas and approaches in all areas of endeavour. Being inventive allows children to find new problems as they seek challenges, and to explore ways of solving these.

'Using what they already know to learn new things' refers to the way children use narrative and scientific modes of thought to:

- develop and link concepts
- find meaning in sequence, cause and effect
- find meaning in the intentions of others

'Choosing ways to do things and finding new ways' involves children:

- approaching goal-directed activity in organised ways
- making choices and decisions about how to approach tasks
- planning and monitoring what to do and being able to change strategies
- planning and monitoring what to do and being able to change strategies

### Assessment

#### Assessments and Record Keeping

We analyse and review what we know about each child's development and learning, and then make informed decisions about supporting the child's progress. This enables us to plan the next steps for individuals and groups of children by providing challenging but achievable activities and experiences to extend the children's learning. All practitioners who interact with the children contribute to the assessment process. Practitioners review the tracking data half termly with the SLT and termly during pupil progress meetings, monitoring rates of progress and identifying strategies that address learning and teaching priorities and next steps.



## Formative Assessments

This assessment informs everyday planning and is based on on-going observational assessment of each child's achievements, interests and learning styles. Formative assessment may take the form of anecdotal and focused narrative observations, other targeted assessments, annotated examples of work, photographs, and information from parents/guardians. This information is kept in individual learning journeys which track and record each child's progress and interests. Practitioners record In The Moment planning activities through the week, Nursery classes also have weekly focus children who they observe and track more closely.

## Summative Assessments

Baseline assessments are conducted whenever a child enters the EYFS, in Nursery within the first 6 weeks of entering and in Reception within the first 4 weeks. Practitioners observe and assess children against the Development Matters and their one Age Related Expectations. From this initial assessment, planning and the learning environment can be tailored to meet the individual needs of the children. The baseline is also a means of tracking progress against each child's starting points.

Throughout Nursery 2, Development Matters is used to summarise and record evidence from formative assessments and provides the basis of the report at the end of the year.

At the end of the Reception year, the child's progress is measured against the Early Learning Goals set out in the EYFS Learning Outcomes. For each goal, the child is recorded as Emerging, Expected or Exceeding. Children are defined as having reached a good level of development at the end of the EYFS if they have achieved at least the expected level in:

- the early learning goals in the prime areas of learning (personal, social and emotional development; physical development; and communication and language) and;
- the early learning goals in the specific areas of mathematics and literacy.

The GLD measure is supported by a measure of the average of the cohort's total point score across all the early learning goals in order to also help to promote the attainment of all children across all the early learning goals.

To ensure consistency and accuracy of assessments and judgements, moderation occurs regularly throughout the year during phase meetings, cluster meetings and in an external moderation meeting or visit at the end of the academic year.

## Transition

During the Summer term, prior to a child's entry into Nursery 2/Reception the following procedures have been put in place to ensure a successful transition:

- Home visits take place by the key worker and another member of the EYFS team. Information is given, as well as an 'All About Me' booklet for parents to complete with their child and bring back to school. This booklet is then used to inform planning and support transition.
- When appropriate, the key worker and a member of the team will visit a feeder nursery to speak to the child's key worker and to meet with the child.
- Activity mornings planned where parents/guardians and children can play and meet up with their Key Worker and other new parents and peers.
- Planned sessions in the Summer and beginning of the Autumn term where Parents can meet with Kitchen staff to discuss dietary requirements, Dental nurse to discuss the Brush Bus project and the Attendance Officer.
- Staggered admissions during the first three weeks of September, with a parent/guardian accompanying the child for the first session.
- Welcome meeting in the Autumn term informing parents on EYFS Curriculum, daily routines, homework, reading books etc.
- Daily opportunities for parents to talk with the key worker about the settling in process.

#### Transition from Nursery 2 to Reception

- Transition meetings between Nursery 2 key worker and Reception class teacher and key worker.
- During Summer term previous to starting Reception, 'Story Swaps' with Reception practitioners reading stories with different key worker groups in Nursery
- Stay and play sessions for children to meet with their key worker and discover the Reception environment
- Welcome meeting to introduce what to expect in Reception , meet all members of staff and discuss Early Learning Goals, assessments and learning journeys.
- Workshops delivered to parents to introduce new teaching in Reception; phonics, home reading, writing, speaking and listening, maths and homework.
- Regular meetings and courses offered to parents.

Transition is flexible to meet the needs of individual children and individual transition plans are put in place where needed.

#### Transition from EYFS to Key Stage 1

During the year:

- Reception cohort attends Family and Celebration assemblies throughout the year in the main hall.

- Use of the main hall for physical activities, music and movement and lunchtimes.

During Summer term:

- Transition meetings between Reception teacher and key worker with Year 1 teacher.
- EYFS profile and ELG data discussed and passed along to the new teacher to inform Year 1 planning.
- Visits to KS1 play area during Outdoor play time within Summer Term
- Year 1 teacher observes children and phonics, Literacy and Mathematics teaching in Reception
- Transition mornings planned for children to meet new class teacher and visit classrooms
- Assistant head for EYFS and KS1 works between both teams on planning days to ensure continuity and that learning is appropriate and each individual cohort's needs are being addressed.

Linked Policies and Documents

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019
- SEND Policy 2019
- N1 Admissions