



## **Woburn Lower school**

### **Early Years Policy**

‘No job is more important than working with children in the early years.’

Development Matters, 2020

#### **INTENT**

At Woburn Lower School, we intend to:

- Make every child’s first experience of school happy, safe, positive and fun with the welfare of the child central to our provision of care, learning and play.
- Value the individuality of the children and ensure that regardless of their needs, all learning opportunities allow access and opportunities to stretch and challenge.
- Enhance the natural curiosity every child starts their school journey with by providing a curriculum based on active learning in a stimulating environment that develops interest, excitement and motivation to learn.
- Foster and nurture children’s self-confidence so they are brave and recognise and fulfil their individual potential and special talents.
- Provide opportunities for children to take ownership of their learning and behaviour by making choices which will foster confident, independent and innovative learners and thinkers.
- Support children to develop care, respect and appreciation for the environment in which they live and for others, including those with beliefs, cultures and opinions different to their own.
- Promote collaborative learning by encouraging children to develop positive relationships with their peers and other members of the school community.
- Encourage parents and carers to become active partners with the school.
- Ensure there is a smooth and effective transition between Early Years and Key Stage 1.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

At Woburn Lower School, our intent is implemented in accordance with the government’s document, ‘Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage’ (EYFS, March 2021). This document sets standards for the learning, development and care of children from birth to five years old. Reception is the final year of the EYFS.

It is based on four key 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 with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- Learning and development is important because children develop and learn at different rates.

### **First Experiences**

Making every child's first experiences of school a happy one begins before they step foot into the classroom, wearing their uniform on their first day. We strive to make sure that when children enter the Woburn Lower School, they are full of positive emotions – excitement, confidence and happiness so they settle quickly into school, learning and developing from day one.

Our implementation:

- Children are encouraged to visit the school with their parents on open days and tours before applying for a school place.
- Open communication is encouraged between school and parents once school places have been offered, to form positive links with families.
- Parents of children with specific needs will liaise with the SENCO, Head Teacher and class teacher to ensure an efficient transition.
- Visits to school during the summer term, prior to starting school. The children spend time playing in their class and the outside area whilst getting to know their peers and the EYFS staff. Staff start to form bonds with the children and get to know their interests and needs. Parents are welcome to stay for the duration of the visit which helps the children to settle and initiates the parent-teacher relationship.
- Reception staff communicate with pre-school settings to discuss the children's interests and how they like to learn.
- Reception staff may visit children in their pre-school settings during the summer term to observe them in their familiar learning environment.
- Reception staff visit the children in their own home during the summer term. This helps the child to get to know and build relationships with their key adults in their own environment and provides further opportunity for further discussion between parents and staff.
- Children start school full-time when the autumn term begins but this can be adapted to suit a child's needs should they find the whole day to be too tiring.

## **Individuality**

At Woburn Lower School, it is our privilege to ensure that in a safe environment, we encourage every aspect of a child to develop, regardless of starting point. We inspire children to continue being curious and provide opportunities for their lively, enquiring minds to grow.

We implement:

- Support for each child to develop an assured and confident sense of their own identity. This is through all adults modelling positive attitudes towards diversity, challenging stereotypical ideas and showing equal respect to all our children and families.
- On-going observations of each child as they play and carry out every day and planned activities. This includes gaining valuable information from parents about what the child does at home.
- On-going reflection of the observations including how the child interacts and communicates, how they tackle and solve problems and their play preferences.
- On-going assessment, when the observations and reflection helps to identify where the child may be on their own developmental pathway including any possible barriers to making next steps.
- On-going planning where the aforementioned information is considered and next steps are planned for and adjusted so each child is engaged and supported to be stretched and challenged. This is known as the Observation, Assessment and Planning cycle.
- The swift identification of any need for additional support, working with the SENCO and external agencies, where necessary, to sensitively support the child, family and school. For further information, please see the SEND policy.

## **Curriculum and Environment**

We aim to deliver an engaging, broad and balanced curriculum that provides individual and appropriate challenge as it progresses. This is through playful activities and rich learning opportunities which are relevant to all the children's cultures and communities. Children will be supported to take risks in an environment which offers stimulating resources and encourages exploration.

Our Implementation:

- The curriculum is brought to life through topics for each half term with relevant learning opportunities planned across the prime and specific areas of learning and development (see below\*).
- High quality books with rich language are shared throughout each topic to instil a love of reading and books whilst developing vocabulary.
- Learning is presented in a range of ways in Reception as we understand children learn and develop differently. There are some tasks the children must complete during the school day, such as short adult-led phonics and maths sessions in addition to small group work. The children have access to the indoor and outdoor learning environment, regardless of weather, for 'Busy Time.' This is when the children interact with the carefully planned activities and resources which leads to vital child-initiated learning.

- The learning environment is organised to support child-initiated learning, allowing the children to learn and explore safely be active, quiet, creative, investigative, independent and collaborative. There are defined learning areas, where children are able to find challenges, resources and equipment independently. The learning areas include: Role Play, Writing, Creative, Maths, Reading, Storytelling, Investigation, Construction, Sand, Water, Mud Kitchen and Physical Development including Finger Gym and sport's equipment.
- During 'Busy Time,' the adults in Reception observe the children playing, as a means of informing the Observation, Assessment and Planning cycle. Additionally, they become 'play partners,' playing alongside the children to extend knowledge, vocabulary and deepen understanding.
- When planning children's next steps, the teachers consider ways to support each child to strengthen and deepen their current learning and development. Planning is child centred and based on the needs and interests of the children, whilst taking into consideration the areas of learning and development which shape activities and experiences for children in all early years' settings.
- Learning at school is complimented by home learning. There is the expectation that children read and are read to daily and fun open- ended homework is suggested to extend learning and embed understanding.

The seven areas of learning and development are all important and inter-connected. For each area there are Early Learning Goals that describe the level of development children should be expected to have attained by the end of the EYFS.

### **The Prime Areas of Development**

The Prime Areas of Development build the foundations for children's success by igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, helping them to form positive relationships and therefore, thrive.

The prime areas are:

#### ***Communication and Language***

This curriculum area includes the sub-headings of 'Listening, Attention and Understanding, and Speaking'. It is extremely valuable because spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development and children's early interactions form the foundations for language and cognitive development. All children are encouraged to interact with adults and their peers in a language rich environment. Conversation, storytelling and role play enable children to use a developing range of vocabulary and rehearse language structures.

#### ***Personal, Social and Emotional Development***

This curriculum area includes the sub-headings of 'Self-Regulation, Managing Self and Building Relationships'. Children's development in this area is crucial so they can lead happy and healthy lives. Every day in school, with the development of positive relationships with adults and their peers, children are supported to develop self-assurance to persist and show resilience when undertaking challenge. They learn to understand and manage their emotions, how to make good friendships, co-operate and resolve conflicts peaceably, in addition to learning how to lead healthy lives and manage their personal needs independently.

### ***Physical Development***

This curriculum area includes the sub-headings of 'Motor Skills and Fine Motor Skills'. Children develop the gross motor skills of core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination and agility through games and activities both inside and outside which is vital for developing healthy bodies and social and emotional well-being. Fine motor skills are developed to enhance the progression of writing including tracing, colouring, painting, cutting, threading, dough, clay and many other aspects of manipulative play.

### **The Specific Areas of Development**

The Specific Areas of Development provide the range of experiences and opportunities for children to strengthen and apply the prime areas.

The specific areas are:

#### ***Literacy***

This curriculum area includes the sub-headings of 'Comprehension, Word Reading and Writing'. With reading for pleasure a key indicator of children's future success, developing a life-long love of reading is crucial. Books and talking about books is a daily feature of life in the Reception environment with weekly learning always based on a story. Through 'book talk', enjoying rhymes, poems and songs, the children develop language comprehension and listening skills that are important for reading and writing.

As soon as they are ready, the children will begin learning letter sounds and tricky words through the structured daily phonics TWINKL scheme alongside the 'Letters and Sounds' programme. We also use Jolly Phonics activities and resources to support our phonics learning. Each week, the children take home a 'phonics' reading book that matches the sounds they know. They also take home a 'home' reader book and are encouraged to read daily to develop word recognition, blending skills, fluency, expression and subsequently comprehension skills. The children have a 'library' reading book that can be changed weekly. This book is to share as a family and develop a love of reading and books.

Writing, in the form of mark-making, is encouraged from the time the children start at Woburn Lower School as a way of expressing themselves and recording meaning. The development of prewriting skills and co-ordination are supported through fun, independent and regular adult led activities whilst children can practise their developing skills during meaningful play opportunities within in the learning environment. Children are taught how to form letters in the print style during phonics lessons as they learn the letter sounds.

#### ***Mathematics***

This curriculum area includes the sub-headings of 'Number and Numerical Patterns'. The development of a strong foundation in number is the aim of this area of learning so children can excel, develop positive attitudes and be confident, resilient mathematicians as they grow. Throughout the Reception year, the children will develop a deep understanding of numbers to 10, the relationships between them and the patterns within those numbers. They will learn through stories, songs, games and practical activities where they talk about maths, collaborate, explore and

investigate number to look for patterns, connections and relationships. Children will develop their reasoning skills across all areas of mathematics including shape, space and measures.

### ***Understanding the World***

This curriculum area includes the sub-headings of 'Past & Present, People, Culture and Communities and The Natural World'. This area includes history, geography, religion and science with the aim of guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community. Opportunities such as investigations and meeting important members of society are provided to enhance the children's personal experiences. Children will listen to a broad range of stories, non-fiction, poems and songs that will help to develop their understanding of our diverse world in addition to enriching and widening their growing vocabulary.

### ***Expressive Arts and Design***

This curriculum area includes the sub-headings of 'Creating with Materials and Being Imaginative and Expressive'. This area of learning and experience develops children's imagination and creativity. The children engage in and communicate through art, design technology, drama and dance activities where they explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. Through this, they develop their understanding, self-expression and vocabulary.

### **Learning Characteristics**

We consider it is of vital importance that children learn and develop positive characteristics as individuals alongside academic knowledge and skills. These are qualities that will ensure they continue to learn and thrive throughout their school life and beyond.

We foster characteristics of being resilient, innovative, collaborative and taking ownership:

*Resilience* - Children are supported to recognise, demonstrate and enhance their individual talents as a process of developing self-confidence. Challenges faced are celebrated and discussed daily during learning reflection time in the supportive and positive environment we strive to create. This will encourage the children to develop the resilience to attempt challenge, solve problems and to keep trying with a task despite experiencing difficulties.

*Innovative* - Children are given the chance to express individualism in their learning so they become creative, independent thinkers. As their confidence grows, children are guided to find more than one way to complete a task or solve a problem; to be creative through different media and resources and to evaluate what they have done and modify accordingly.

*Collaborative* - Children have opportunities to work and play alongside others as partners, in small groups and as a class. As members of the wider school community, children can work together in the School and Eco Councils and on other projects. They will begin to learn the value and skills of working together towards a common goal. This characteristic is developed through the modelling of warm, respectful relationships and positive attitudes towards diversity. Stereotypical ideas are challenged and all families are welcomed, valued and respected equally which fosters a sense of belonging. Children are subsequently supported to develop a positive sense of their own identity and culture in addition to respect for others, including those with beliefs, cultures and opinions different to their own.

*Ownership* - Children are encouraged to steer their own learning across all areas through the choices they make. This is supported through guidance that regularly prompts simple self-reflection and evaluation. The children can choose what, how and where they play and learn; the resources that will help them; the amount of challenge they are ready for and risks they want to take. They will take increasing responsibility for initiating their own lines of enquiry and investigation. Children are also encouraged to take ownership of their behavioural choices. To help them stay safe, they are educated about rules and boundaries; why we have them and why we should follow them. Within the safe environment of Woburn Lower School, we encourage the children to make choices, take responsibility for their choices, whilst teaching them to recognise and avoid hazards.

We will encourage the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning, as outlined in the 'Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage' (EYFS, March 2021) and the 'Development Matters Document' (2020):

- Playing and exploring - (their engagement) children investigate, experience things and 'have a go' through a balance of adult led and child initiated planned, purposeful learning experiences.
- Active learning - (their motivation) children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties and enjoy achievements. Opportunities are provided where the children have some independence and control over their learning and activities, making decisions and taking ownership.
- Creating and thinking critically (their thinking) children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things with the support of adults offering encouragement through clarification and open-ended questions.

### **Parents as Partners**

We recognise and value the important role parents play in education as they know their child best. Consequently, we encourage parents to engage in an active partnership with the school. This results in a positive impact on the child's development and parents that feel secure to share important information, seek advice, help and support should they need it. This creates a shared level of expectation, improves the child's outcomes and ensures every child has their individual needs met. The success of this strong partnership is based on a two-way flow of information, knowledge and expertise.

Our implementation:

- A strong induction and transition programme into school and into Year 1
- Parents are encouraged to talk to their child's class teacher without delay if they have any concerns or queries. This is through an open-door policy where parents can talk with the class teacher briefly at the beginning and end of the school day. Parents are welcome to make arrangements at drop off, pick up, by phoning or emailing the school office to arrange a longer discussion or meeting.
- The use of 'WOW' cards to share home learning and experiences.
- The Reading Record book which parents and carers are encouraged to use to comment on their child's reading at home. Parents are advised and encouraged to listen to their child read and read to their child each night.

- Regular newsletters, informing parents of upcoming dates for the diary, events at school and in the community, and Class Dojo pages that summarise and celebrate recent learning. Email and Class Dojo messaging are also used as reminders for events and to update information.
- Open ended weekly home learning challenges with suggestions on how to support and enrich the children's learning as well as phonics information sheets to support our phonics learning in school
- A curriculum overview on Owls' class page for each topic that outlines the learning experiences planned to take place in school over a half term.
- A range of activities, throughout the year, that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents, for example assemblies and curriculum mornings. This also extends to accompanying children on school visits.
- Parents are invited to workshops to develop their understanding of ways to support their child's development at home.
- Parents' evening during the autumn, spring and summer terms to discuss children's individual progress and targets with class teachers. A written report is also provided at the end of the academic year.
- Parents are invited to take part in regular parent forums and surveys regarding developments within school.

### **Transition to Year 1**

Transition between year groups is an important step for children and we acknowledge that the step from Reception to Year 1 is a significant one due to the expectations of moving from the Early Years to the National Curriculum. There are many elements to ensuring children at Woburn Lower School experience a smooth and effective transition, as listed below, however we believe every child is unique, so the transition experience will be tailored to meet the child's individual needs.

Our implementation:

- Reception children meet Year 1 staff at lunch time, during weekly assemblies, reading buddy sessions and through other whole school activities during their Reception year.
- Reception and Year 1 teachers work together throughout the year to make the transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1 as smooth as possible for each cohort.
- Reception and Year 1 teachers meet during the summer term and discuss at length the individual needs of the children.
- EYFS Profiles and annual reports are passed on to the Year 1 teachers and discussed.
- SENCO, parents, Reception and Year 1 teacher meet during the summer term to discuss any additional needs and support.
- Reception children complete transition activities throughout the summer term
- Reception children visit their new Year 1 class and teacher for a 'move up' day (additional visits are arranged as necessary).
- Year 1 teacher visits the children in their Reception class during the summer term.



- Activities are arranged for Reception children to spend time with Year 1 in their new classroom.
- Year 1 maintains many similar routines to Reception and the classroom includes learning areas and resources that are recognisable too.
- The learning for the first half of the autumn term of Year 1 follows a similar structure to Reception.
- Children who have not met the early learning goals will continue to follow the EYFS curriculum to develop their skills but through the Year 1 topics.

## **IMPACT**

At Woburn Lower School, we adhere to the principles of assessment for learning. We analyse and review what we know about each child's development and learning, and then make informed decisions about the child's progress, this is based on ongoing observations of what the children know and can do. This enables us to plan the next steps to meet their development and learning needs. All adults who interact with the child contribute to the assessment process, with great importance placed on parent voice. Children are also encouraged to assess their own learning, primarily through discussion.

### **Formative assessment**

This type of assessment (mentioned previously as part of the 'observation, assessment and planning cycle') informs everyday planning and is based on ongoing observational assessment of each child's achievements, interests and learning styles. Formative assessment may take the form of anecdotal observations, focused observations, other focused assessments e.g. sound/number and high frequency words, annotated examples of independent work, photographs, and information from parents. We plan for observations when undertaking short term planning. Each child has a 'Learning Journey' profile where observations and assessments reflecting progress are recorded.

### **Summative assessment**

Individual assessments are recorded using the OTRACK assessment tracking tool for the EYFS. On-entry baseline assessments are entered into the system based on transition documents from pre-school settings and initial observations. At points during the year, the tracking tool is used to summarise children's progress through the curriculum. This allows the school to see where the children are on their own developmental pathway and if they have made progress from their individual starting point.

### **Statutory assessment**

Within the first six weeks in which a child starts Reception, they undertake the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA). This is a short and simple check of a child's early literacy, communication, language and maths skills. There is no pass mark or score and the assessment is undertaken through play activities so the children do not realise they are completing an assessment. At the end of the Reception year, the EYFS Profile is completed for each child. Its aim is to provide parents, carers and teachers with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their attainment against expected levels, and their readiness for year 1. Each child's level of development is assessed as emerging or meeting the expected levels of development, against the early learning goals.

## **Monitoring Impact**

Whole-school monitoring and progress meetings with the SENCO are held half-termly to review the attainment and progress of children and key groups of children. These meetings also review the actions put in place to support children who are not working at expected levels of development or are not making expected progress through the curriculum. Further termly analysis of the assessment data enables us to reflect on the EYFS profile to ensure the curriculum offered is accessible for all and meets the needs of the children. Teachers participate in regular in-school, LC2 schools and local authority group moderation meetings. This provides an external quality assurance and validation of our teacher assessments. The EYFS Profile data is analysed by the Head Teacher, the EYFS teacher and the Local Advisory Committee.

Impact is also evident through our successful transitions into Year 1. Reception staff have a good understanding of how ELG's link to the National Curriculum, and through our robust planning and delivery across the spectrum of subjects – both core and foundation - children leave the EYFS stage with the skills, knowledge and confidence to continue their journey as scientists, historians, artists and geographers.

Written by: Mrs P. Black

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