**Foundation Stage Policy**

**Aims**

At Marwood we aim to provide the highest quality care and education for all our children thereby giving them a strong foundation for their future learning. We create a safe and happy environment with motivating and enjoyable learning experiences that enable children to become confident and independent. We value the individual child and work alongside parents and others to meet their needs and help every child to reach their full potential.

As outlined in the EYFS ‘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.’

**Guiding principles**

We adhere to the Statutory Framework of the EYFS and the four guiding principles that shape practice within Early Years settings.

* 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.
* **Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.**

**Principles into practice**

As part of our practice we:

* Provide a balanced curriculum, based on the EYFS, across the seven areas of learning, using play as the vehicle for learning.
* Promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice. We provide early intervention for those children who require additional support.
* Work in partnership with parents and within the wider context.
* Plan challenging learning experiences, based on the individual child, informed by observation and assessment.
* Provide opportunities for children to engage in activities that are adult–initiated and child-initiated, supported by an adult.
* Provide a secure and safe learning environment, both indoors and out.

**Foundation Stage Curriculum**

We plan an exciting and challenging curriculum based on our observation of children’s needs, interests, and stages of development across the seven areas of learning to enable the children to achieve and exceed the early learning goals.

All the **seven 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 are **prime** areas:

**Communication and Language**

**Physical Development**

**Personal, Social and Emotional Development**

Children are also supported through the 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**

Children are provided with a range of rich, meaningful first-hand experiences in which children explore, think creatively and are active. We aim to develop and foster positive attitudes towards learning, confidence, communication and physical development.

**Observation, Assessment and Planning**

Foundation Stage staff use observations as the basis of planning. Staff will observe children to identify their achievements, interests and next steps for learning within the class environment and parents contribute observations from home by using the ‘WOW’ voucher system. These observations, alongside informal chats with parents on ‘Focus Fridays’, then lead the direction of the planning. The staff will then use the children’s interests to plan for themes through medium term plans. In addition to this the children shape the short-term activity planning on a weekly basis. This fostering of the children’s interests develops a high level of motivation for the children’s learning.

The planning objectives within the Foundation Stage are from the Development Matters Statements from the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) document. We make regular assessments of children’s learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs.

Children have whole group and small group times which increase as they progress through the EYFS, with times for a phonics session twice a day and for teaching aspects of Literacy and Mathematics, including shared reading, writing and maths. The curriculum is delivered using a play-based approach, as outlined in the EYFS,

‘Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities.’

We plan a balance between children having time and space to engage in their own child-initiated activities and those that are planned by the adults. During children’s play, early years practitioners interact to stretch and challenge children further in their learning.

In planning and guiding children’s activities, we reflect as practitioners on the different ways that children learn and include these in our practice.

We create a stimulating environment to encourage children to free flow between inside and out.

All staff involved with the EYFS aim to develop good relationships with all the children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them. 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.

Assessment in the Foundation Stage takes the form of both formal and informal observations, contributed by both parents and staff at the school. At the end of their foundation year in school, the children’s progress, as well as information about their characteristics of learning, is recorded on to the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. Each child’s level of development is recorded against the 17 Early Learning Goals and parents are informed of their progress in an end of year report.

**Inclusion**

We value all our children as individuals at Marwood, irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, background, ability or gender. We plan a curriculum that meets the needs of the individual child and support them at their own pace so that most of our children achieve and even exceed the Early Learning Goals. We strongly believe that early identification of children with additional needs is crucial in enabling us to give the child the support that they need and in doing so, work closely with parents and outside agencies.

**Parents as Partners**

We recognise that parents are children’s first and most enduring educators and we value being partners with them in their child’s education through:

* Talking to parents about their child before their child starts school, in an informal way, at the child’s visits to school.
* Operating an open-door policy for parents with any queries.
* Valuing the ongoing contributions to the children’s assessments from parents.
* Inviting parents into school every 6 weeks on ‘Focus Friday’, to discuss with them and their child what their child has achieved and what the next steps are to progress forward with their learning.
* Offering one formal parent/teacher consultation evening per year.
* Sending a report on their child’s attainment and progress at the end of their time in the Foundation Stage.
* Developing a range of activities and workshops throughout the year that support parents with their involvement in their child’s education.

**Transition**

We have very strong links with Springfield Nursery, as well as other feeder nurseries. The Foundation Stage staff will share information with these providers about each individual child and their transition process into school, before they start school. Children are invited to visit the Foundation Stage setting for 4 mornings during the second half of the Summer term, prior to the September in which they begin school. At the beginning of the Foundation year, we offer half days to the children for the first two to three weeks, depending on the school term dates. However, if parents request, we will take their children full time from the first day of term. At the end of the Foundation year, staff will share information about each child moving to year 1, with their new teacher, if they are moving class.

This policy was reviewed by Gill May (October 2019).