



**CUCKOO HALL
ACADEMIES TRUST**

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy

Primary Academies

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Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Aims

For each of our Primary Academies our aims are:-

- To give each child a happy, positive and fun start to their school life in which they can establish solid foundations on which to expand and foster a deep love of learning;
- To offer each child a wide range of new and exciting experiences and give them the opportunity to consolidate, explore and test them out along with their own, individual experiences;
- To enable each child, through encouragement and high expectations, to develop, to the full, socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally.
- To offer a structure for learning that has a range of starting points and unlimited opportunity for development;
- To encourage children to develop independence within a loving, secure and friendly atmosphere;
- To support children in building relationships through the development of social skills such as cooperation and sharing;
- To help each child to recognise their own strengths and achievements through experiencing success and developing the confidence to work towards personal goals.

The Curriculum

Our Nurseries and Reception classes follow the curriculum outlined in the '*Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage*' document which defines what we teach. At the time of publication, this document is available from the gov.uk website <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

Our approach

The EYFS framework includes seven areas of learning and development, all of which are seen as important and interconnected. Three of these areas are seen as particularly important for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, for building their capacity to learn and to help them form relationships and thrive. These are known as the 'prime areas' as they support children's learning in all other areas. The prime areas are:-

Communication and Language

Listening & Attention and Understanding & Speaking

Physical Development

Moving & Handling and Self care

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Making relationships, Managing feelings and behaviour and Self-confidence & Self-awareness

The specific areas of learning develop essential skills and knowledge for children to participate successfully in society and these are:-

Literacy

Reading and Writing

Mathematics

Numbers and Shapes, Spaces & Measures

Understanding the World

People & Communities and the World & Technology

Expressive Arts and Design

Exploring and using media and materials and to be imaginative

Characteristics of Effective Learning

The Early Years and Foundation (EYFS) also includes the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. Nursery and Reception teachers plan activities within the respective classrooms with these in mind. They highlight the importance of a child's attitude to learning and their ability to play, explore and think critically about the world around them. 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.

Teaching strategies

We ensure there is a balance of adult led and child initiated activities across the day. Although much of the time is spent with children self-selecting tasks, the interaction between the adult and child is essential as the adult's response to children builds understanding and therefore guides new learning. The adult's role is to continually model, demonstrate and question what the child is doing. Most days the adult will ask a child to come and complete a task or game with them; at other times they will participate in a child's game, extending it where possible.

We are focussed on ensuring all of our children have excellent Literacy and Numeracy skills.as early on as possible. Therefore once the children are settled, we will deliver high quality phonics and mathematics sessions to the children in small, matched-level learning groups. This also supports transition to Year 1 as the children are used to more formal teaching strategies.

Play

Learning through play is an important part of our Early Years classrooms. We believe children learn best from activities and from experiences that interest and inspire them. Using children's interests as a starting point, we provide them with stimulating, active play experiences in which they can explore and develop their learning to help them make sense of the world. They have opportunities through their play to think creatively and critically alongside other children as well as on their own. They are able to practise skills, build upon and revisit prior learning and experience at their own level and pace.

Play gives our children the opportunity to pursue their own interests and inspire those around them. The children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions. We believe it is important that adults take an active role in child initiated play through observing, modelling, facilitating and extending their play. Getting the balance right between child initiated play (which is controlled) and adult led activities is very important to us.

Teaching

We include direct, carefully planned, adult led experiences for children in the form of structured adult led teaching and adult led group activities. These are particularly important in helping children to learn specific skills and knowledge and it is often through children's play that we see how much of this learning children have understood and taken on.

Each day we follow a timetable with set routines in place. This may vary between our academies and further details can be found in the 'Parent and carer Information Pack' found on each respective academy's website www.chat-edu.org.uk

We set aside times each day when the children come together to be taught in the more traditional sense, gathered together on the carpet as a class. In these slots we focus on our topic work; maths, literacy, phonics, and stories. These sessions help to develop vital habits of learning, such as learning as a group, listening to the teacher, taking turns to answer, and sitting still etc.

Reading and story play an important part of the day. We want to make sure our children have a love of books and will leave the EYFS with a bank of stories they know well, both traditional and modern classics. We make sure there is always time for whole class story at the end of the day but also that there are many opportunities to enjoy books at other times. Every child requires their own book bag and has a designated day when they will have a group reading session. In addition to this we encourage parents and carers, where possible, to play an active role in the 'library' session supporting the children to pick an appropriate book to borrow and share at home.

Planning

We believe many children need to be given a starting point to learn new things and find topics are a great way to fire the imagination.

We have an annual topic cycle where the Nursery and Reception focus on a theme. Topics can range from a topic on Dinosaurs to Keeping Healthy or Traditional Tales and are usually based on the following areas of learning, '*Understanding the World*', '*Literacy*' and '*Communication and Language*'. The topics are flexible to ensure we also follow the children's interests, academy themes and local or national events (e.g. the Olympics).

Every half term (and occasionally termly) staff plan the next topic and book visits and visitors that will enhance the learning. Staff plan in more detail on a weekly basis using daily notes, observations and interactions with children to inform where the learning journey should move to and these weekly plans are regularly scrutinised by senior leaders. Although class teachers are responsible for writing plans, the EYFS plan as a team, with senior leaders, teachers and teaching assistants all attending planning meetings and giving an input whenever possible.

Visits and visitors

The part that visits and visitors play in the curriculum at Cuckoo Hall Academies Trust is given great emphasis, particularly in the Early Years. We aim to build up to an increased number of visits in the Summer Term; these can range from a visit to the local Farm to travelling to the local Wildlife Park. We actively seek parental support on trips (subject to DBS checks where applicable and successful volunteer application), aiming for a ratio of 1:3 (one adult for three children) in Nursery and a minimum ratio of 1:5 in Reception. For safety reasons we are unable to allow younger siblings (who are not admitted to our academy or in the cohort attending the trip), to come along on school trips.

Visitors also really enhance a topic and we like to have 'experts' coming in to talk to the children (for example a doctor). We often ask parents if they are willing and able to share knowledge or a skill (for example cooking, how to bath a baby, painting mehndi patterns on hands or playing guitar).

As an established family of schools we are fortunate to have a bank of excellent visitors who can enhance the curriculum. We utilise the skills of other public sector workers in the local community to ensure a sense of 'belonging' and 'togetherness' in topic work. Working in partnership with the police, fire service, ambulance and even local library affords us the opportunity to provide additional experiences the children may not otherwise come across.

Classroom organisation

Our Early Years classrooms have defined areas with clearly labelled resources to ensure children can access them easily. Each classroom is set up in a way to provide children with experiences and activities in all of the seven areas of learning. Classrooms have a writing area, maths area, creative area, book corner, role play area, construction / small world area, outdoor area and carpeted teaching area. However, all of these spaces are flexible and we encourage staff to move the zones around to keep the children motivated and interested. A variety of activities are planned for and set up in the different areas each day. The adults move to whichever area their focus for the session / day is.

The outdoor area is an important part of the classroom with many children choosing to learn outside for much of the day. We believe that outdoor learning is the opportunity for 'big' learning and so generally the activities are large scale. We try to ensure that the range of activities outside reflects the different curriculum areas, for example setting up quiet spaces for a maths game, reading and for construction. In Nursery, physical activity often dominates, with climbing, running, cycling and other active games being key. The Reception class also have a dedicated outdoor area with high quality play equipment demonstrating our belief in the importance of physical development.

We ensure that whatever the weather our children have access to our excellent outdoor provision. We ask that children have waterproof jackets and wellies in school, as puddles and snow can be great learning opportunities.

Each child has their own labelled peg in the classroom / corridor. We encourage children to take responsibility for keeping their clothes, book bag and work safely in one place.

Assessment, observations and portfolios

Assessment is an essential part of the learning and development of children in the EYFS. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations.

To ensure we have evidence of a child's progress in the EYFS we use a range of strategies all of which come together in their individual memory book / learning journey. We are very proud of our portfolios as these are collections of children's work, photos and observations which create a detailed picture of the child. Gap analysis and next steps are discussed by the EYFS team in informal meetings after school each day and in the weekly planning meetings. These next steps inform planning for the next day and week ahead. Staff have an academy owned tablet which is used to capture and note observations.

Parents have access to the portfolios which are stored in the classroom and are encouraged to contribute through the use of our WOW moments sheets. These are utilised where significant events that happen at home, or outside of the school environment can be recorded. They are available from the class teacher and can be taken home to complete or can be completed with the support of a member of staff. In addition to this the children will bring their memory book / learning journey home every six weeks for more extensive contributions from the family. This also provides parents with the opportunity to annotate and discuss the child's in-school achievements in more depth at home.

On entry to Nursery we carry out baseline assessments for each child. Throughout the Early Years the Class Teacher submits end of half term / termly assessment data

to the Head Teacher showing each child's development across the seven areas of learning. This assessment is carried out as part of an ongoing process and ensures that the school is motivating and challenging every individual child. It also maximises progress for all learners.

We are actively engaging with the Government's new BASE initiative, using one of the DfE approved assessing systems. From this we are able to gauge progress over time and key stages and make national comparisons.

At the end of Reception the class teacher assesses each child against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELG) and comments on whether their development within each ELG is either '*emerging*', '*expected*' or '*exceeding*'. This information is also communicated to parents and carers in the Reception child's end of year report and can be discussed in the final Parents' Evening in Reception.

Role of staff and key worker

The class teacher is the named key worker for each child in the setting. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs, to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents. All adults within the Early Years setting actively seek to form positive respectful relationships with the children in their care. The formation of healthy relationships between adults and children is essential in enabling children's well-being both now and in their future successes.

There are rare occasions when significant adults cannot be in the class and we aim to be consistent in who covers these absences utilising support staff where appropriate.

Partnership with parents and carers

We believe that parents and carers are a child's first educator and therefore work very closely to ensure they are involved in what we do with their child at school. We want parents to feel they can speak to us about their child at any time and feel comfortable in our setting. As well as the Nursery and Reception open days we offer a stay and play session at the beginning of the school year and offer parenting workshops and other sessions for parents, such as our successful SHARE programme.

When a child gains a place in one of our Primary Academies we will not be able to start the child until we have completed a home visit. This provides us with the opportunity to spend time with the child and their family in their most comfortable setting. We then ask them to attend a stay and play session at the school alongside all other children who will be starting and with their parents. This is an excellent introduction to the environment for both the children and our families.

We have a fast-paced staggered entry into Nursery and a slightly quicker staggered entry into Reception. In our experience a quick stagger helps the children to settle into a routine much quicker than if this period is prolonged. If a child is struggling to adapt we will adapt this stagger timetable on a one-to-one basis in conjunction with senior leaders and the family.

We encourage all parents to say goodbye to their child and leave at the classroom door. The children enjoy the independence of putting their belongings away independently and it is often easier to settle children without lots of families present. Early in the first term parents are also invited to a parents' meeting so the child's progress towards settling in can be reviewed.

We are aware that most parents will be part of the school for the next seven or eight years and want them to get to know their child's peers and their families, so we encourage all of our new parents to attend our regular coffee mornings / afternoon teas. The EYFS team, the Head, Deputy and other school staff attend regularly so we can meet the parents in a more informal setting. Parents are invited to attend a Parents' Meeting twice a year and teachers are available most mornings and evenings to talk and to discuss more urgent matters.

Health & safety and safeguarding

Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them. We follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements outlined in the '[Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage](#)' document.

We follow whole school procedures for child protection and our *Safeguarding and Child Protection policy* is available on our website.

It is important to note that members of staff do not use their mobile phones or personal handset devices in the classroom and are prohibited from taking photographs with their personal handsets in line with our e-safety policy. Members of staff do however, use academy tablets to take photographs as evidence to support the regular observation assessment cycle in the EYFS. These photographs are used in children's portfolios and in class displays. We may use images on our academy website but we will never do so without consent from parents and this will be sought through paperwork provided in the initial starter pack.

Our academies are '*healthy*' and our children receive free fruit and milk from a Government scheme. Reception are also entitled to a free school meal, daily, as part of the Government's Universal Free School Meals initiative. Our staff model good eating habits by supporting the lunch service, regularly accompanying the children for a 'duty' lunch meal.

In some circumstances we have kitchens / cooking facilities in our EYFS classrooms. These are secure spaces with prohibited access for the children. When using a

portable cooker, safety measures are strictly enforced and extra health and safety measures are taken in line with the risk assessments conducted.

We take all accidents seriously. If a child bangs their head or has an accident leaving a serious mark we will always log it and phone home immediately. We have cold compresses stored in close proximity to the EYFS to minimise this risk.

We require all children to start school without nappies and will support any families struggling with this by providing proactive advice and guidance. We acknowledge that young children often have 'accidents' and have stocks of spare clothes and change anyone who needs it. We ask parents to help keep our stocks of clothes high by returning anything their child has borrowed. Children are changed in an open space within the toilet facilities.

All large climbing equipment is checked by our site officer and fire alarms are held regularly in line with whole school policy. There is an annual external check of equipment and further information on site checks can be found in the school's health and safety policy.

We have separate policies for the administration of medicine in school and off-site visits.