

Brighter Futures Academy Trust

Early Years Policy



Name of Policy Writer/Amendments	Date Written/Amended	Next Review Date
H Thickett/V Dear	October 2015	October 2018

Introduction

Early Years education is the foundation upon which young pupils build the rest of their education. It is a holistic education that encompasses all learning and development.

This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the Early Years (EYRS) at Brighter Futures Academy Trust. (BFMAT)

The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of practitioners working in the EYFS setting, including both teaching and non-teaching adults.

In the policy the term 'setting' refers to the Early Years educational provision at BFAT. This is available to pupils who enter school the term after their 3rd birthday for Nursery pupils, and the September of the academic year in which they turn 5 for Reception pupils up to the end of the Reception year.

Our Ethos

Our focus throughout the early years is on developing happy, confident, resilient learners who enjoy coming to school. We promote an enquiry based approach to teaching and learning, where pupils are encouraged to 'discover for themselves'. We use a range of provocations and learning experiences which stimulate pupil's imagination and thinking skills. The learning environment supports our ethos of pupil-led learning, whilst providing an environment which enables pupils to make progress socially as well as academically.

Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage

In the Early Years settings at BFMAT we believe that all pupils are entitled to the best possible start in their school life, both intellectually and emotionally, in order to enable them to develop their full potential.

We aim to support each pupil's welfare, learning and developmental needs by:

- Recognising that all pupils are unique and special.
- Understanding that pupils develop in individual ways and at varying rates - physically, cognitively, linguistically, socially and emotionally.
- Providing a safe, secure and caring environment where pupils feel happy and know that they are valued by the practitioners looking after them.
- Fostering and nurturing pupil's self-confidence and self-esteem by developing their awareness of their own identity and role within the community.
- Teaching them to express and communicate their needs and feelings in appropriate ways.
- Encouraging pupil's independence and decision-making, supporting them to learn through their mistakes.
- Developing pupils' understanding of social skills and the values and codes of behaviour required for people to work together harmoniously.
- Supporting pupils to develop care, respect and appreciation for others, including those with beliefs, cultures and opinions different to their own.
- Understanding the importance of play in pupil's learning and development.
- Providing learning experiences in play which reflect pupil's personal interests and areas of curiosity in order to encourage and develop their natural desire, interest, excitement and motivation to learn.
- Providing experiences which build on pupil's existing knowledge and understanding in order to challenge, stimulate and extend their learning and development.
- Providing effective learning opportunities in a range of environments, inside and outside.

The Early Years Foundation Stage framework

Teaching in the Early Years settings at BFMAT is delivered in accordance with the Government's statutory document 'The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage' (March 2012 and updated Sept 2014).

The curriculum is centred on 3 prime areas of learning:

1. Communication and Language.
2. Physical Development
3. Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Providers must also support activities through four specific areas which strengthen the prime areas. These are:

1. Literacy
2. Mathematics
3. Understanding of the World
4. Expressive Arts and Design

Provision in Early Years involves activities and experiences from the prime and specific areas of learning. Provision for Nursery pupils is focused on developing the 3 prime areas, as a firm foundation for the specific areas.

These Areas of Learning and Development address pupil's physical, cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional development. No one aspect of development stands in isolation from the others as all Areas of Learning and Development are all closely interlinked. This ensures the delivery of a holistic, pupil-centred curriculum which allows pupils to make lots of links between what they are learning.

At BFMAT, we believe that Early Years education is important in its own right and should not be viewed simply as preparation for the next stage of pupil's education.

Active Learning through Play

At BFAT we recognise that young children learn best when they are active. We understand that active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve pupils for sustained periods. Therefore, we believe that Early Years education should be as practical as possible and our Early Years settings are centred around an ethos of learning through play.

We recognise the importance of children's play. It is an essential and rich part of their learning process, supporting them in all areas of development. Play is a powerful motivator, encouraging pupils to be creative and to develop their ideas, understanding and language. Play is also flexible and able to suit the preferred learning style of the pupil, therefore providing numerous ways for pupils to learn a variety of different skills and concepts. In the Early Years settings at BFAT schools, practitioners provide both structured and unstructured play opportunities inside and outside. These activities are designed to engage pupils in practical, first-hand experiences which will support pupils to discover, explore, investigate, develop their personal interests and areas of curiosity, and help to make sense of the world around them as they begin to understand specific concepts. Provocations or play opportunities are also set up to provide pupils with opportunities to apply newly acquired knowledge, demonstrating their skills and level of understanding. In providing these active learning opportunities through play we understand the central position of play within the Early Years framework.

Assessment and Record Keeping

Ongoing assessment is an essential aspect of the of all Early Years settings at BFAT, and involves all practitioners. Regular, planned and focused assessments are made of pupil's learning and individual needs. Early Essence is used to document each pupil's learning journey, achievements and attainment against Early Years Outcomes.

The main EYRS assessment method is through practitioners' observations of pupils in a variety of teaching and learning contexts, including both adult focused activities and pupil initiated play. Observations take place on a daily basis (both formally and informally) with practitioners making time to carry out planned observations of individuals and groups of pupils regularly. They also make spontaneous observations in order to capture significant moments of pupil's learning. Observations are recorded in different formats (e.g. activity sheets, objective led planning, photos) and the outcomes are collated on Early Essence. All practitioners are involved in observing pupils.

Practitioners use observations to support their developing knowledge of individual pupils. It informs them of pupil's abilities, needs, interests, play schemas and learning styles.

Observations are evaluated, pupil's learning priorities are identified and relevant learning opportunities are planned to support all pupils to make the next steps and progress.

Other methods of assessing pupils in the EYRS settings include engaging alongside pupils in their play, annotation of pupil's written work or talking with pupils about their task or play.

There is continuous monitoring and assessment of each pupil's development working from a baseline assessment within the first few weeks that the pupil enters school. The schools have opted to use the Early Excellence baseline in September 2015, in addition to their usual baseline process.

Baseline assessment is carried out during the pupil's first weeks upon entering the setting. Judgments made on pupil's development are based on practitioners' evidence of their behaviour observed independently and consistently in their self-initiated activities across all Areas of Learning and Development.

Planning

The Early Years framework provides a long term plan to follow by ensuring that all Early Learning Goals are covered throughout the academic year. Class themes are driven by pupil's interests and provision enhanced to address any identified gaps in attainment, for both individual pupils and the cohort as a whole. Medium term planning is created with all early years practitioners involvement and takes into account the individual pupil's learning and developmental needs.

All Areas of Learning and Development are planned for and available to access within the settings. The learning opportunities provided include a range of adult focused and pupil initiated activities indoors. The setting also makes use of the outdoor environment whenever possible. educational visits within the local community and further afield are also planned to support pupil's learning within the classroom.

Parents as Partners

At BFMAT we place a high value on establishing positive and effective relationships with Parents and Carers. We understand that an effective partnership between school and home will have a positive impact on pupil's learning and development. Parent/Carer contributions are highly valued so practitioners endeavour to encourage the regular sharing of information about the pupils with parents.

We value the role of Parents/Carers as pupil's primary educators. Through questionnaires and informal chats at the beginning and end of the day, practitioners encourage parents to share their unique knowledge of their pupil, providing further insight into the pupil as an individual (e.g. characteristics, interests, experiences, likes, dislikes). This supports practitioners in establishing interesting and stimulating learning experiences, responding to pupil's needs and interests. Wow stars are used to record pupil's achievements at home and are celebrated in school.

Parents are kept informed of what is happening in the setting through regular letters, texts home and informal chatting at the beginning and end of the day. Whole school newsletters are also sent home on a weekly basis. Parents are invited to attend termly parents' evenings during the course of the academic year.

Other opportunities for practitioners to share pupil's learning, development and well-being with parents include end of year reports and Celebration assemblies where pupil's achievements are recognised. All Parents/Carers are provided with a log on to Early Essence to enable them to view and contribute to their online learning journey. School provides access to ICT equipment for families if required.

Parents are also invited to get involved with school life. There are opportunities for them to help with activities such as educational visits and reading, as well as offering their particular skills (e.g. cooking, art, music) to support pupil's learning. Parents may be invited into the setting on other occasions such as open afternoons where pupils show them their work and special events such as stay and play days, family craft sessions and information sessions. The setting has a friendly, open-doors ethos and practitioners are available to talk to parents at the beginning and end of the day. Parents and Carers are always welcomed into school and encouraged to discuss any concerns they might have.

Admissions and Induction

BFMAT provides full-time Early Years education for pupils in the Reception Year. This is for pupils who enter school from September of the academic year in which they will turn five years old. Nursery pupils are provided with their entitlement of 15 funded hours, starting the term after they turn 3.

Before they start in the setting, all pupils are offered a series of visits during the term prior to their start date. The purpose of these initial visits is for the pupils to meet their new practitioners and start to become familiar with the setting environment. Families are also offered a home visit with school staff prior to their child starting school. The aim of these meetings is for practitioners and families to get to know a little about each other prior to the child starting school, to ensure the transition is as smooth as possible.

In the summer term all parents are invited into school to meet the setting practitioners. At this meeting information regarding the induction process and the ethos of the setting is shared. There is also time for informal chat and parents' questions. School information packs will be distributed to parents at this meeting detailing school routines and expectations. 'All About Me' information sheets will also be given out to Parents and Carers as an additional way of supporting practitioners' knowledge and understanding of each individual pupil.

See admissions policy for more information.

Equal Opportunities

All practitioners at BFMAT have a responsibility to maintain positive attitudes to diversity and difference, ensuring that inclusive practice is delivered in the EY setting.

All pupils, irrespective of gender, ability, ethnicity, culture or religion, and social circumstances, have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development within the EY settings at BFMAT

See Equal Opportunities Policy for more information.

Special Educational Needs

See Special Educational Needs Policy.

Safeguarding

See safeguarding policy