Thorndown Pre-School

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

At Thorndown, we value and respect everyone in our community and work as a team to:

- Provide learning experiences which support and inspire high achievement for all;
- Ensure a caring, safe and welcoming environment;
- Promote co-operative and responsible attitudes to make a positive contribution;
- Actively encourage independence and confidence to thrive in a changing world

Approved at Learning & Development committee meeting on 7th March 2024

Review Period: Every 2 years

Date for next review: Spring 2026

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the Reception year. At Thorndown Primary School, children are able to join Pre-School at the age of 3 years and start Reception during the academic year in which they turn 5 years old. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life, and not simply as preparation for the next stage of education.

Pre-School

Our Pre-School is a calm and welcoming place. We want children to feel safe, secure and happy, and this is achieved through the relationship children build with their Key Worker. Each child is assigned a Key Worker before starting at Pre-School and they meet this adult during their Stay and Play sessions. This adult is responsible for settling the child in to Pre-School and working with the family to plan and deliver a personalised plan for the child's care and learning. They will plan learning using the children's interests to engage them and with parents' support, set next steps for the children. Being part of our Pre-School supports the children's transition to school. Not only are they under the supervision of the school's Early Years Team Leader, they use school facilities, such as the dining hall and Discovery Suite, and spend time with the older children through our linked outdoor areas.

Reception

Our Reception classrooms are a hive of activity and learning. There are three class bases, each with their own class teacher and teaching assistant. Before beginning their Reception year, children are supported through a timetable of transition events. During these, they will meet their class teacher, who is responsible for ensuring a smooth transition to school. As part of this, families are offered a home visit. The Early Years Team Leader will endeavour to contact any setting that a child currently attends in order to gain information to support a successful transition to school.
During the school day, children will spend set times with their class teacher, engaging in planned activities, and will also spend time exploring the whole of the environment and the activities on offer. We call this time Busy Learning (play). This is carefully planned by the class teachers, and are linked to children's interests and next steps in their learning.

Seesaw

In our Pre-School and Reception classes, each child, with parental consent, has their own on line Seesaw page. This page will be used to capture parts of the child's learning and to enhance communication with parents about the child's learning. Seesaw will be used by class teachers and early years practitioners to help inform ongoing assessment of the child and it is accessible for the child, and parents, to look through so that they can see the progress that they have made. We welcome parents' contributions to Seesaw, for example swimming certificates, paintings and photographs.

Development Matters

In both our Pre-School and Reception classes, we use Development Matters as guidance to support practitioners' knowledge in the development of children's skills and in implementing an effective curriculum.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is based upon four fundamental principles.

A Unique child + Positive Relationships + Enabling Environments with teaching and support from adults = Learning and Development.

Our practice at Thorndown Primary School is underpinned by these four themes.

A Unique Child

At Thorndown Primary School, we recognise that every child is unique, constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

Inclusion

All children and their families are valued at Thorndown Primary School. Children are treated as individuals and have equal access to all provisions available. All children are encouraged to achieve their personal best. Staff understand and observe each child's development and learning, assess progress and plan next steps. Early identification of special needs is crucial to enable staff to support the development of each child. Concerns are always discussed with parents/carers at an early stage and the school's SENCO is called upon for further information and advice.

Positive Relationships

At Thorndown Primary School, we believe children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships. Staff at Thorndown Primary School are sensitive to the needs, feelings and interests of each unique child and are consistent in setting clear boundaries (as outlined in our school behaviour policy).

We recognise parents are the child's first and foremost educators and we work hard to develop strong links with them. We do this by:

- Offering parents Stay and Play sessions in Pre-school, where parents visit the setting with their child and spend time talking to their child's Key Worker. In Reception, we offer home visits with their child's key adults. (This is an important part of the transition to school package we offer all children.)
- Providing the opportunity for parents/carers to contribute to their child's assessment using Seesaw.
- Inviting parents/carers to come into school for Mother's and Father's Days celebrations when they are able to share their child's favourite activities.
- Holding two parent consultations a year (in Reception).
- Asking parents to contribute to setting children's Next Steps in Pre-School.
- Holding parent workshops to support their work at home.
- Sending home Next Steps in Pre-School.
- Providing an annual report.
- Sharing what the children are learning with parents via the Seesaw app.

Enabling Environments

We aim to create an attractive and stimulating learning environment, where children feel confident, secure and challenged. The children have daily access to indoor and outdoor environments, which are set up in discrete areas of learning with planned continuous provision. Effective learning builds and extends upon prior learning and follows children's interests. Effective planning is informed by our knowledge of the children's development of skills and by observations of the children to ensure we follow their current interests and experiences. Play based learning is paramount and children direct their own learning from carefully planned opportunities provided by staff. Staff enhance and extend play as needed to further individual learning. At the end of the year, children will be assessed against the Early Learning Goals.

Learning and Developing

There are seven areas of learning and development, which must shape educational provision in Early

Years settings. 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.

Prime Areas:

- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Staff will also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

Specific Areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

Play Based Curriculum

We deliver learning for all of the areas through purposeful play and learning experiences, with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Well planned play, both indoors and outdoors is one of the key ways in which children learn. It is the process through which children can explore, investigate, recreate and come to understand their world. It is not just imaginative play and role-play, but includes spontaneous, self-initiated lines of inquiry and exploration. Play is a vital component of children's lives. It is an important way that skills are developed and practised. Play is essential for physical, intellectual, linguistic, emotional, behavioural and social development.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

At Thorndown Primary School, we believe: *"What children learn is important, but how children learn is even more important if they are to become learners for life in today's society" (Helen Moylett, How Children Learn. The Characteristics of Effective Learning, 2011).* We ensure we plan for the three areas of Effective Learning as these underpin learning development across all the areas and support the child to remain an effective and motivated learner.

The three Characteristics of Effective Learning are:

- Playing and Exploring
- Active Learning
- Creating and Thinking Critically