

FINSTALL FIRST SCHOOL

EARLY YEARS POLICY

Our Vision

“Learning together, preparing for life”

Our Aims

- To provide a broad, balanced, relevant curriculum that meets the unique and varied needs of our pupils and enables all children to attain and achieve well in all subject areas in the National Curriculum.
- To enable all children to read well as Reading is at the heart of learning.
- To prepare children for life by developing their character – helping them to become more independent, organised, confident and resilient; to be good communicators, creative and able to solve problems; to be respectful, aware of differences, appreciative and reflective; to know how to keep themselves physically and mentally well and how to stay safe from a variety of risks.
- To recognise, accommodate and support the needs of all individuals.
- To provide a positive, safe and happy learning environment in which everyone is inspired and empowered to achieve the highest standard of which they are capable in all aspects of their life.
- To help everyone to make appropriate choices through praise, encouragement and by leading through example.
- To treat everyone with respect, encourage self-respect, listen to and value everybody’s opinions, contributions and ideas.
- To continually develop effective partnerships with parents and the wider community.
- To ensure that effective leadership and management enables us to continually improve all aspects of our school through systematic, rigorous self-evaluation.
- To make School fun for everybody.

Rationale

The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum at Finstall First School aims to develop the unique child, providing care and support in a safe environment in order to give them the best possible start in life. Positive relationships ensure that children feel secure, whilst a rich and varied learning environment allows children to discover the world around them and provides opportunities for challenge and to understand the management of risk whilst remaining safe.

Children are provided with opportunities to develop independence and self-confidence in an environment where they feel valued, respected and cared for. Clear rules help each child feel safe, whilst high but realistic expectations encourage each child to strive to achieve their best. All children develop at different rates and learn in different ways. Therefore, well planned experiences in all areas of learning and development are essential, with purposeful play underpinning the delivery of Early Years education.

A high-quality Early Years education lays the foundations for children, with a focus on developing the whole child and to ensure ‘school readiness’. The EYFS provides children with a broad range of learning opportunities with the aim to embed firm foundations in the knowledge and skills needed for strong future progress. A key priority of our EYFS curriculum is to maintain a determined approach to ensuring that children will be able to learn to read fluently at an age appropriate level.

Introduction

The Early Years Policy of Finstall First School applies to all children who join the school at the beginning or during the academic year in which they are five. This year group will follow the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum (EYFS).

The EYFS is part of the National Curriculum and prepares children for learning in Key Stage 1.

Children joining our school have already learnt a great deal. Family/Carers are their main educators and many have attended one of many Pre-Schools or Nurseries in our community. The early year's education we offer our children is based on the following principles:

- It builds on what our children already know and can do;
- It ensures that all children are included and have access to the whole curriculum;
- It offers a structure for learning that has a range of starting points, content that matches the needs of each individual child and activities that provide opportunities for learning both indoors and outdoors;
- It provides a rich and stimulating environment.

The Foundation Stage Curriculum

The curriculum of the EYFS underpins all future learning by supporting, fostering, promoting and developing the seven areas of learning;

Prime areas of learning:

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

Specific areas of Learning:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

When planning, we ensure that the activities and experiences that are offered (educational programmes) cover all seven areas of learning and that each area of learning are given appropriate emphasis. The Prime areas of learning ensure a strong foundation for children's development. The specific areas of learning provide a broad curriculum with opportunities to strengthen and apply the prime areas of learning.

Planning always remains flexible to take account of the interests and needs of individual children and to capitalise on unplanned events, particularly those initiated by the children.

Forest school takes place weekly in Reception during Autumn 2, Spring and Summer terms and is an excellent opportunity to give the children the chance to consolidate their learning in a completely different environment. Children are given the chance to initiate their own activities with natural resources, learn how to follow rules and manage their own risk, develop self-confidence, independence and resilience

and observe seasonal changes. They learn how to look after each other, themselves and the wildlife within their natural habitat.

Strengths of the EYFS at Finstall First

Below, we have listed some of the strengths of the EYFS at Finstall First School:

- Partnership between teachers and parents, which enable our children to feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement;
- Supporting parents to be able to support their children at home by providing Phonics and Math's workshops.
- Using our online learning platform, See-Saw to regularly showcase the learning that the children are doing in class to parents including key vocabulary.
- Providing parents with a half termly knowledge organiser, making clear the key knowledge, skills and vocabulary we are learning in school in all areas of the curriculum.
- The teachers' knowledge of how children develop and learn and the range of teaching strategies at their disposal;
- The teachers' abilities to provide an appropriate balance between play that is led by children (child initiated) with rigorous guidance from teaching staff, and activities that are guided by adults.
- The teachers' ability to become involved in children's play, to know how to extend and develop play and to promote communication by encouraging children to talk in full sentences and use and apply newly acquired vocabulary.
- A carefully planned curriculum that helps children achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage and ensures children's school readiness by having a greater focus on teaching essential skills and knowledge in the specific areas of learning as children move through the Reception year.
- Planning takes account of the different rates at which children learn and develop.
- Provision for children to take part in activities that allow them to play and explore, investigate and experience things through a "hands on" approach, whilst developing a 'have a go' ethos.
- Children are challenged through support, open ended questioning and independence to develop their resilience when they encounter difficulties. Subsequently, they feel a sense of pride and enjoy their achievements.
- Encouragement for children to communicate and talk about their learning, develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop strategies to develop their independence and self-management;
- Support for learning with appropriate and accessible indoor and outdoor space, facilities and equipment;
- Identification of the progress and future learning needs of children through observations and focus activities.
- Reading is high profile and is taught in daily phonics sessions using the 'Essential Letters and Sounds' synthetic scheme. Children are heard read regularly and reading at home is promoted and rewarded. Half termly assessments ensure that children who are not making the expected progress are identified and daily interventions are given in order for them to catch up.
- Good relationships between our school and the settings that our children experience prior to joining our school;
- Clear aims for our work and the regular monitoring to evaluate and improve what we do;
- Regular identification of training needs of all adults working within the Foundation Stage.
- Further communication between the Reception staff and year one staff when children are near to achieving the Early Learning Goals.

Play in the Foundation Stage

Children at this stage do not differentiate between work and play and well-planned play is a key way in which children learn with enjoyment and challenge. It is also important that children have the opportunity to initiate their own play on a regular basis. They need time to become engrossed, work in depth and complete activities.

Through play, our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practice and build upon ideas and learn how to control themselves and understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively alongside other children as well as on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. They express fears or re-live anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations. They are able to take risks and make mistakes.

Equal Opportunities (Inclusion)

Resources and learning experiences will be accessible to all children. In the Foundation Stage we give all children every opportunity to achieve their best by taking account of their range of life experiences and abilities when planning for their learning. Some children with Special Educational Needs may be identified before entry to school through liaison with other agencies, pre-schools / nurseries and parents. Every child is valued and appreciated.

Assessment, Record Keeping, Reporting

Ongoing assessment of children's learning is used to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the EYFS takes the form of observation, focus activities and discussion carried out by the teacher, teaching assistant and other adults as appropriate. Target tracker is used to monitor the progress of children with each area of learning and gap analysis ensures targeted support is given to children when necessary. Point in Time Assessments (PITA) ensure that children are supported appropriately in order to make progress.

Staffing

- Each Foundation Stage class will be staffed by a Qualified Teacher.
- Each class teacher will have support from a Teaching Assistant (TA), all day, every day, to support the children in their learning.
- An SSA works across both Foundation Stage classes in order to support SEND children.

Resources

A range of equipment is available, both indoors and outdoors, providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children. The materials and equipment used reflect both the community and the wider world and are free from discrimination and stereotyping.

Children's independence is encouraged through a well-organised environment where resources are easily accessible and stored suitably. The children are expected to take responsibility for their own belongings and the environment wherever possible.

All staff are constantly aware of issues concerning Health and Safety and resources are constantly monitored before, during and after use.

Home/School Liaison

It is recognised that all parents/carers have an important role to play in the education of their child. All parents are given a welcome pack and are invited to an induction meeting, which takes place, in the summer term before their child starts school.

Within each child's first 5 weeks in School, as part of the Baseline Assessment process, parents are invited to a 10-minute appointment with the class teacher to discuss and contribute to this assessment. A further Parents' meeting is held early in the Spring term, where parents are provided with targets they could support their children with at home.

During the first half term, parents are invited into school for a phonics presentation and lesson to support parents understanding of phonics and how it is taught in school.

The class page of the website is used for photographs, links to activities that children can access to practice skills introduced in class, information such as snacks, PE days and uniform, book change days and also videos to support parents on the teaching of early Reading and Mathematics.

The See Saw learning platform is used for the setting of tasks to complete at home such as learning a nursery rhyme, handwriting practice and to ask for photographs to support a topic such as 'My Family'. It is also used to share photos of what the children are learning in school including topic activities and Mathematics activities with key vocabulary shared.

Knowledge organisers are sent to parents each half term. They set out what the children will be learning and the key vocabulary that we will be introducing.

Weekly phonemes and 'harder to read and spell' words that have been introduced in school are sent home for children to continue to practice at home.

Parents are also involved through the regular use of the communication book which is placed in a tray outside the classroom each morning if parents have a message they would like us to read.

Notices are displayed on the Reception notice board and emailed to parents. Parents are invited to our Christmas productions.

At the end of the year, parents receive a full written report, including their attainment against the EYFS Early Learning Goals. If parents wish, they may make appointments to discuss the report with their child's class teacher.

Parents are encouraged to talk to the class teacher as soon as possible if they have any queries or concerns and, throughout the child's first year at school, we ensure that staff are available to parents at the beginning (briefly) and end (for longer meetings) of the school day.

Induction

During the summer term the new cohort spend several sessions in their future classroom, with their new teacher.

There is a short-staggered intake to the new school year to help settle all children into school life and their new surroundings. The induction process is explained on the School website and at the New Parents' Evening in the summer term before their child starts school.

This policy was approved by the governing body on: 22.10.24

This policy will be reviewed in October 2025

Governor responsible: Martin Evans