Group Principles & Approach to the EYFS

Introduction

At Forfar Education, we are committed to providing a nurturing, stimulating, safe and inclusive environment for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Our aim is to ensure that each child's early learning experiences are ambitious, engaging, balanced and promote holistic development. The EYFS, catering for children from birth to age 5, sets the foundation for lifelong learning, growth and success. This policy reflects the EYFS statutory framework effective from September 2026, including the continued importance of high-quality interactions, inclusion, safeguarding and children's welfare.

EYFS Framework Overview

The EYFS curriculum is based on the statutory framework outlined by the Department for Education, which is designed to help children achieve specific learning and developmental milestones. The EYFS framework is divided into seven key areas of learning, with three prime areas and four specific areas of development:

Prime Areas of Learning:

- **Communication and Language**: Developing children's ability to listen, understand, and speak.
- **Physical Development**: Encouraging fine and gross motor skills, balance, and coordination.
- **Personal, Social, and Emotional Development**: Supporting emotional intelligence, self-regulation, and relationships with others.

Specific Areas of Learning:

- **Literacy**: Developing reading and writing skills.
- **Mathematics**: Fostering an understanding of numbers, shapes, and basic mathematical concepts.
- **Understanding the World**: Encouraging curiosity and knowledge of the environment, people, and technology.
- **Expressive Arts and Design**: Promoting creativity, imagination, and self-expression through art, music, and movement.

By the end of the Reception year, children should have achieved the Early Learning Goals in each of these areas. Our curriculum ensures a balance between structured learning and the free play that children need to explore and understand the world around them.

Core Principles of the EYFS at Forfar Education

We believe in creating a supportive, stimulating, and caring learning environment where every child is encouraged to grow and develop to their fullest potential. Our approach is guided by the following four principles:

1. **Unique Child**: Every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, and confident. We celebrate each child's individuality, and we strive to create an inclusive environment that recognizes their unique learning style.
2. **Positive Relationships**: Secure, trusting relationships are at the heart of learning. We ensure that children feel safe, supported, and respected by their peers, teachers, and families. Our focus is on building a sense of belonging, which enables children to grow in confidence and independence.
3. **Enabling Environments**: We believe that the environment plays a key role in children's learning. Our classrooms and outdoor spaces are designed to stimulate curiosity, exploration, and creativity. We provide a range of opportunities for children to explore new ideas, challenges, and experiences in an environment that meets their developmental needs.
4. **Learning and Development**: Children learn in different ways and at varying paces. Our approach is flexible, ensuring that all areas of learning are interconnected and equally valued. We ensure a balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities, always responding to children's interests and developmental stages.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

In addition to the explicit skills taught in line with the seven areas of learning, our approach is underpinned by the following Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning:

- **Playing and Exploring**: Children are encouraged to explore, investigate, and try new things. We provide opportunities for them to experiment and engage in hands-on activities.
- **Active Learning**: Children are motivated to concentrate and persist with tasks, overcoming challenges and celebrating achievements.
- **Creating and Thinking Critically**: We foster problem-solving, creativity, and independent thinking. Children are encouraged to make links between ideas and apply new strategies to solve problems.

Curriculum Structure and Delivery

The Forfar Education EYFS curriculum is structured in accordance with the Learning and Development requirements outlined in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage and is further informed by the non-statutory guidance provided in *Development Matters* and *Birth to 5 Matters*. It offers an ambitious yet achievable pathway that supports the progressive development of knowledge, skills, and understanding, while ensuring that learning experiences are purposeful, engaging, and relevant to each child. The curriculum is delivered through a carefully balanced

combination of play-based learning and adult-directed instruction, enabling practitioners to meet the needs, interests, and developmental stages of all children, and to provide a broad and rich foundation for future learning.

Learning Through Play and Continuous Provision

Play-based learning is integral to the EYFS at Forfar Education. We believe that children learn best when they are actively engaged in play that promotes their cognitive, social, and emotional development. Continuous provision is carefully planned to create opportunities for children to practise and apply their learning. Areas of the environment are regularly adapted in response to children's interests and assessments to maximise opportunities for independent and adult-supported learning.

Digital Learning

We recognise the importance of digital literacy in today's world. Children at Forfar Education may be given opportunities to develop early digital skills using carefully selected tools, devices and resources, including educational software and programmable or remote-control toys. These resources are used purposefully to support learning and must not replace high-quality adult interaction, communication, play, physical activity or first-hand experiences.

Children's Screen Use

In planning the digital literacy curriculum, we have regard to government guidance on children's screen use in early years settings. Screen use in Forfar Education EYFS settings must be purposeful, limited, developmentally appropriate and linked to clear learning intentions. Practitioners should consider whether use of a screen adds value to the child's learning and should prioritise interaction, talk, play and exploration. Screen use should be reviewed through planning, supervision and leadership monitoring.

Enrichment and Personal Development

In addition to the core curriculum, we provide a variety of enrichment activities to broaden children's experiences and foster personal development. We emphasise the development of communication skills, confidence, and the ability to work collaboratively with others.

Pupil Voice

At Forfar Education, we believe in the importance of giving children a voice in their learning environment. Children are encouraged to express their opinions and contribute to decisions that affect their school life. Through regular meetings and discussions, we ensure that children's views are valued and considered in shaping their educational experience.

Assessment

Ongoing assessment is integral to our approach. In the EYFS, we use observations, professional knowledge and interactions with children to understand each child's learning, development and next steps. Assessment should be useful, proportionate and should not create unnecessary paperwork or take practitioners away from high-quality interactions with children. This includes:
- Regular observation and reflection on child-initiated and adult-supported activities.
- Tracking progress against Early Learning Goals where appropriate.
- Parental involvement in the assessment process to build a holistic view of each child's

development.
- Use of professional judgement, pupil progress meetings and proportionate records to identify and address gaps in learning.

- Regular observation and analysis of child-initiated activities.
- Tracking progress against Early Learning Goals.
- Parental involvement in the assessment process to build a holistic view of each child's development.
- The use of summative assessments, and pupil progress meetings, to identify and address gaps in learning.

Progress Check

The progress check at age 2 is a key milestone in the Early Years Foundation Stage, designed to assess and track the developmental progress of children between 24 and 36 months. This check provides an opportunity to identify any early signs of developmental delay, allowing for timely intervention and support. It also helps to ensure that children's individual needs are met, and that parents and caregivers are informed about their child's progress. By conducting this check, we aim to celebrate achievements, highlight areas for further growth, and foster a collaborative approach between practitioners and families to support the child's ongoing development.

Teacher Judgment in the EYFS

At Forfar Education, we believe that teachers play a crucial role in shaping children's learning and development, particularly within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Teacher judgment is at the heart of our assessment process, ensuring that each child's individual progress is accurately observed, understood, and supported. Through a blend of professional expertise, ongoing observations, and careful analysis of children's work and interactions, teachers can make informed judgments about where a child is in their learning and what support they may need to continue to progress.

Professional judgement should be supported by meaningful evidence, discussion and knowledge of the child. Practitioners are not expected to produce excessive written records; the focus should remain on understanding children well and using assessment to support learning, development and wellbeing.

The Role of Teacher Judgment in EYFS Assessment

Teacher judgment in the EYFS is not based on a single snapshot but is instead informed by ongoing, dynamic observation across a wide range of activities and interactions. Teachers use their knowledge of each child's development, personality, and learning style to assess progress and identify individual needs. This process is continuous, and teachers make their judgments by:

1. **Observation**: Teachers observe children as they engage in both adult-directed and child-initiated activities. These observations allow teachers to see firsthand how children approach tasks, interact with their peers, and apply their knowledge and skills in different contexts. Observations are documented regularly to build a clear picture of a child's development over time.

2. **Interaction**: Effective teaching in the EYFS involves constant interaction with children. Through questioning, prompting, and encouraging children, teachers can gauge the depth of a child's understanding and their ability to articulate thoughts and ideas. This active interaction also helps teachers to model new skills and provide the scaffolding children need to progress.

3. **Tracking Progress**: Teacher judgment is supported by the systematic tracking of children's progress. At Forfar Education, we utilise digital tools, such as Blossom, to record and analyse the data collected from ongoing observations. These records help teachers track each child's attainment against the Early Learning Goals and other developmental milestones, making it easier to identify patterns and areas where a child may need additional support.

4. **Contextual Understanding**: Teachers consider the context of each child's learning journey. This includes understanding their starting points, their personal experiences, and any external factors that might influence their development. The goal is to assess each child holistically, ensuring that teachers are aware of all aspects of a child's development, including emotional, social, and physical needs.

5. **Use of Professional Knowledge**: Teachers use their professional knowledge of child development to interpret what they observe and assess. They consider the interconnections between the prime areas (communication and language, physical development, and personal, social, and emotional development) and the specific areas (literacy, mathematics, understanding the world, and expressive arts and design). This broad understanding helps teachers assess children's development in a balanced way, recognizing that all areas of learning are interconnected.

6. **Collaboration with Colleagues**: Teacher judgment is not made in isolation. At Forfar Education, we encourage collaborative working among staff to ensure that judgments are informed and accurate. Teachers share insights about individual children during planning sessions, pupil progress meetings, and discussions with other practitioners. This collaborative approach ensures that each child's progress is monitored from multiple perspectives, and any necessary interventions or adaptations to teaching strategies are identified.

7. **Parental Involvement**: Parents and caregivers are essential partners in the assessment process. Teachers actively involve families by seeking their insights into their child's development and learning at home. This partnership ensures that assessments are based on a comprehensive understanding of the child's overall development and supports continuity between school and home. Teachers also encourage parents to contribute to their child's learning journey by sharing observations and experiences outside the classroom.

Inclusion and Equality

We celebrate the diversity of our children and are committed to providing an inclusive learning environment where every child's needs are met. We recognise the importance of respecting differences and promoting equal opportunities for all children, including those with SEND, additional learning needs, English as an additional language, medical needs or other barriers to learning and wellbeing. We acknowledge that not all children will meet the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) by the end of the Reception year; however, our systems for tracking and monitoring progress enable the early

identification of individual needs. This allows timely and targeted intervention, partnership with parents and carers, and support for children to make progress from their starting points and prepare for the next stage of learning.

Professional Development

At Forfar Education, we believe in the continuous professional development of our staff. Our team participates in regular training sessions, both in-house and externally, to stay informed about the latest educational practices and developments. This ensures that we maintain high standards of teaching and learning throughout the EYFS.

Wellbeing and Life Skills

We prioritise the social, emotional, and mental wellbeing of all children. Through our Personal, Social, and Emotional Development curriculum, we support children to develop resilience, self-regulation, and empathy. We encourage children to practice life skills such as collaboration, problem-solving, and communication, preparing them for success both in school and in life.

Safeguarding and Welfare in the EYFS
The curriculum is delivered within a safe and carefully supervised environment. Settings must ensure that learning, routines and care practices reflect current EYFS welfare requirements, including safer sleep, safer eating, appropriate supervision, staff suitability, attendance monitoring, paediatric first aid arrangements and the appropriate use of mobile phones, cameras and electronic devices.

Links with Other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- SEND Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Educational Visits Policy

Conclusion

At Forfar Education, we are committed to providing a high-quality Early Years education that fosters curiosity, independence, and a love of learning. We aim to nurture each child's development and provide a strong foundation for future success. Through a balanced approach that blends play, exploration, and structured learning, we ensure that all children are given the tools they need to flourish.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school and EYFS policies:

- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- SEND Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- Rest and Sleep Policy
- Food Safety, Safer Eating and Allergies Policy
- First Aid and Medicines Policy
- Attendance and Registration Policy
- Staff Supervision Policy
- Supervision of Children Policy

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