

POLICY FOR EARLY YEARS

At Birchwood Pre-school we have clear aims that set the foundations of all aspects of practice. Our aims are;

- >We aim to provide an environment where feelings of trust and respect are established with both the children and their families.
- >We aim to provide an environment which will enthuse and motivate the children to learn.
- >We aim to provide a challenging education programme that reflects the needs and the interest of the children.

'Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high-quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.'

(Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage, 2017)

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards that all early years' providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop, and that they are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life. Our settings aims, reflect the expectations depicted within the document.

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At Birchwood Pre-school, we greatly value the importance that the EYFS plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development. However, we also believe that early childhood is valid in itself as part of life. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

At Birchwood Pre-school, our practice reflects the guidance set out in the 'Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage' April 2017, setting the standards for learning, development and care for children.

The EYFS seeks to provide:

- ›Quality and consistency in all early years' settings, so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind.
- ›A secure foundation through learning and development opportunities which are planned around the needs and interests of each individual child and are assessed and reviewed regularly.
- ›To promote vital working partnerships between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- ›Equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.

The EYFS specifies requirements for learning and development and for safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. The learning and development requirements cover:

- ›The areas of learning and development which must shape activities and experiences (educational programmes) for children in all early years' settings.

›The early learning goals that providers must help children work towards (the knowledge, skills and understanding children should have at the end of the academic year in which they turn five).

›Assessment arrangements for measuring progress (and requirements for reporting to parents and/or carers).

The safeguarding and welfare requirements cover the steps that providers must take to keep children safe and promote their welfare. (See the 'Safeguarding Policy/File).

As part of our good practice, Birchwood Pre-school works to uphold the four guiding principles that shape early years settings. These are;

›***Every child is a unique child***, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

›Children learn to be strong and independent through ***positive relationships***.

›Children learn and develop well in ***enabling environments***, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.

›***Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates***. This is inclusive of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.

To ensure that we are working to uphold the requirements outlined in the statutory framework, Birchwood Pre-school use the learning programme, 'Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage' (EYFS). This is an educational programme that covers seven areas of learning, stating that;

' All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. Three areas are identified as being particularly crucial for

igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive'.

The three prime areas of focus are;

➤ **Communication and language development** involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations.

➤ **Physical development** involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity⁶, and to make healthy choices in relation to food.

➤ **Personal, social and emotional development** involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities.

We also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are:

➤ **Literacy development** involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children must be given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems, and other written materials) to ignite their interest.

➤ **Mathematics** involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces, and measure.

➤ **Understanding the world** involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to

explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.

›**Expressive arts and design** involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

In setting we operate on a free flow system that enables the children to move independently to areas/activities and access as they choose. We have 'hook' focused activities at varying times of the term, that will enthuse, or spark learning interests and we then follow the children's growing interest and follow their lead. As a result, we have a predominantly 'In the moment' ethos. We are a tool for the children to utilise in their play, prompting/suggesting play-based ideas to further extend knowledge.

We have small key-worker groups, and each key-work will monitor and plan to meet the children's individual holistic needs. Part of our monitoring is observation based, according the EYFS Statutory requirements;

'Practitioners must consider the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care, and must use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all of the areas of learning and development' (EYFS, May 2020).

All children begin Pre-school with a wide variety of experiences and learning and it is the privilege of the adults working in setting to accept the task of building upon the children's previous learning experiences. This is done through a holistic approach to learning ensuring that

parents/carers and staff effectively together to support the learning and development of the children in their care. Each child has a key-worker, their role is to help ensure that every child's learning and care is tailored to meet their individual needs.

We gain information about the child and their family before they start their time with us via the welcome registration pack; as well as offering a home visit and 2 one hour 'Stay and play' sessions in setting. During the 'Stay and play' sessions, the child and their family are welcomed as the key-worker joins them and opens communication building the relationship, whilst finding out likes/dislikes, educational knowledge already gained and social and emotional needs moving forward.

As the children begin with us, we conduct an array of observations, and these continue over their time with us. We begin with formative assessments, gaining information to use in baselining each child; we conduct many visual and recorded observations and use this information to ensure that future planning and activities reflect the identified needs. The children each have individual learning journeys that we build using written observations, as well as visual photographic observations. We use 'Family' and our families are kept up to date via notification system with their child's progress and development, as well as being able to see the fun learning experiences that their child engages in daily. They are also able to put on their own family experiences that their child has outside of Pre-school, which is a vital element in sharing and developing the essential parent-keyworker link.

We conduct summative assessments at the points through-out the term. These are in the form of a written report that is shared with the parents. We share a 'Settling In' report at the end of the first 6 weeks with us, and then further end of term reports at the end of each term. They cover all areas of learning as appropriate for age and stage of development. The final report before leaving for Primary school is more in-depth and covers the areas of learning, as well as school readiness information. Each term and through-out, we produce/monitor data that depicts the holistic progress that each child is making. From this, we plan

to support each child accordingly; this can be via interventions, small group planning, adult supported, or through provocations to inspire learning.

Good planning is the key to making children's learning effective, exciting, varied and progressive. Effective learning builds on and extends what children know and can already do. Our small group-time planning shows how the principles of EYFS are put into practice and is always informed by observations we have made of the children, in order to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning needs. As we work 'In the moment' within our main rooms, our planning is predominantly the same week by week; continuous provision is the base with the children able to access all resources to support their play as their interest is shown, and we are the tools for extended their play, or the means to provide 'hook' ideas to spark learning.

The statutory requirements identify the need for there to be a balance of child-initiated play and adult led play,

'Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity'

(Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage, 2017)

At Birchwood Pre-school the children are involved with both group and individual play, predominantly initiated by themselves and some by the adults. Through play, children will develop intellectually, creatively, socially, emotionally and physically. Learning through play gives children the opportunity to take risks, make mistakes and learn from their mistakes.

Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals and solve problems. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults' (Early Years Framework 2020)

*Children need the freedom to play. Play is not luxury. Play is a necessity
(Kay Redfield Jamison)*

This policy was reviewed by Claire Davis and Samantha Boone, May 2020

Staff signatures.....(Hard copy only).

Next review date, May 2021