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# Edna G. Olds Academy Early Years Policy

## Early Years

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## **Introduction**

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

This policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of the Early Years at Edna G. Olds Academy.

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

In the policy the term 'setting' refers to the Early Years educational provision at Edna G. Olds Academy.

At Edna G. Olds Academy we have an Early Years Unit where all our children in the Early Years Foundation learn together. The younger children (Nursery) attend a morning or afternoon session, with some children attending the unit full time. In addition we have one full-time class of older, (Reception) children. There can be up to 75 children in the Unit at any one time.

## **Aims for the Early Years**

In the EY setting at Edna G. Olds Academy we believe that all children 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 child's welfare, learning and developmental needs by:

- Recognising that all children are unique and special.
- Understanding that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates - physically, cognitively, linguistically, socially and emotionally.
- Providing a safe, secure and caring environment where children feel happy and know that they are valued by the practitioners looking after them.
- Fostering and nurturing children's self-confidence and self-esteem through their developing awareness of their own identity and role within the community.
- Teaching the children to express and communicate their needs and feelings in appropriate ways.
- Encouraging the children's independence and decision-making and supporting them to learn through their mistakes.
- Developing children's understanding of social skills and the values and codes of behaviour required for people to work together harmoniously.
- Supporting children to develop care, respect and appreciation for others, including those with beliefs, cultures and opinions that are different to their own.
- Understanding the importance of play in children's learning and development.
- Providing learning experiences in play which reflect children'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 children'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.
- Working together with parents/carers as partners in the education of their children.
- Fostering a love of learning, develop curiosity, decision making skills and the confidence to take risks so all children can become successful independent learners.

### **Admission and Induction - Nursery**

Children are admitted into our nursery from the term in which they have their third birthday. There is a waiting list, which is adhered to in birth order. Children attend either a morning or afternoon session. Depending on numbers there may be the availability of a full-time place, however full time places are not guaranteed. Allocation of full time places are determined by whether spaces are available, the age of the child, how well they have settled into the unit and are at the discretion of the Headteacher.

Parents/carers and their child are invited to visit the Early Years Unit prior to their child starting. This enables parents/carers and their child to familiarise themselves with the Unit, meet the staff, ask questions and complete admission paperwork and arrange further visits for their child to spend time in the Unit independently prior to starting nursery. Parents are also invited to complete an 'All About Me' sheet about their child in order to enable staff to find out about the child's likes and dislikes prior to starting nursery. Children are then settled into the unit at a pace appropriate to their individual needs.

### **Admission and Induction - Reception**

Edna G. Olds Academy provides a full-time place for children in the Reception Year, commencing the September that precedes their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. Before they start, all children are offered a series of visits during the summer term. The purpose of these initial visits is for the children to meet their new practitioners and start to become familiar with the setting environment. Practitioners, where appropriate will also go to visit the children in their current pre-school settings. The aim of these visits is to support practitioners develop their knowledge and understanding of each child, in order to make the transition period to Edna G. Olds Academy, as smooth as possible. In the summer term parents are invited into school to meet the setting practitioners. During this meeting, information regarding the induction process, school routines and expectations are shared. It also provides an opportunity for parents/carers to ask questions regarding their child starting their reception year. From September children attend the setting full-time. Every effort is made to make children feel safe, secure and happy. There is a relaxed and open ethos in the setting. Established routines, a calm atmosphere and encouraging talk are some of the strategies practitioners use to maintain children's positive feelings about school.

### **Our Approach**

"Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to their full potential. A child's experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances. A

secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right, and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up. 'When parents choose to use early years' services they want to know the provision will keep their children safe and help them to thrive. The Early Years is the framework that provides that assurance."

The Early Years education (EY) applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. In our school, most children join us, part time, when they are three. They then start full time school, in the September, of the year in which they are five.

### **The Four Early Years Principles**

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

#### **A Unique Child**

At Edna G. Olds Academy we believe that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways, at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback from others; we use praise and encouragement, as well as celebration and rewards, to encourage children to develop a positive attitude to learning.

#### **Inclusion**

At Edna G. Olds Academy we are proud to be a multicultural society, sharing and promoting the fundamental British Values. All children at Edna G. Olds Academy are treated fairly regardless of race, religion or abilities. All children and their families are valued, within our school. We, also, believe that all our children matter. We provide our children with every opportunity to achieve their best potential. We achieve this through planning personalised learning experiences, taking into account all children's range of life experiences, knowledge and understanding of the world. In the EY we set realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of all our children. There is planning adapted to meet the needs of children with Special Educational Needs, children who are more able, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children of different ethnic groups and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

We meet the needs of all our children through:

- Planning opportunities that promote the fundamental British values of Democracy, The Rule of Law, Individual Liberty, Mutual Respect and Toleration of Different Faiths;
- planning opportunities that build upon and extend children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence;
- using a wide range of teaching strategies based on children's individual learning styles and needs;
- providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children and to help them to learn effectively;

- providing a safe and supportive learning environment in which the contribution of all children is valued;
- using resources which reflect diversity and are free from discrimination and stereotyping;
- planning challenging and stimulating activities for children whose ability and understanding are in advance of their language and communication skills;
- monitoring children's progress and taking action to provide support as necessary.

It is important to us that all children in the school are 'safe'. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks, but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards.

We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all children. (See whole school Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy)

## **Welfare**

"Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them."

At Edna G. Olds Academy we understand that we are legally required to comply with certain welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2012. We understand that we are required to:

- promote the welfare of children.
- promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill.
- manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs.
- ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.
- ensure that the premises, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose.
- ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and experiences, tailored to meet their needs.
- maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.
- ensure that we follow the whole school safeguarding and child protection procedures.
- ensure that water is always available for the children to access throughout the day.
- ensure that parents understand that the use of mobile phones and cameras is not allowed in our school.
- ensure we have a paediatric first aider on site at all times.

We ensure we meet all these requirements.

## **Safeguarding and Child Protection (see school child protection and safeguarding policies)**

All staff within the Early Years Unit are aware of and follow the school policies for child protection and safeguarding. Each member of staff has DBS clearance and any other adults in the Unit are never left unattended whilst children are present. The early years staff attend regular safeguarding training and have completed the Channel General Awareness course for preventing radicalisation and training regarding FGM and Domestic Violence.

## **Use of Mobile Phones and Cameras**

The use of mobile phones in the Unit is prohibited when children are present. Staff should only have to use their mobile during break times in the staff room only and during working hours they must be kept out of the reach of children and parents, in a secure, locked area accessible only to staff. Taking photographs of children using a personal mobile phone/device is not permitted under any circumstances, including those belonging to parents. Photographs of children should only be taken using camera equipment owned by the school. This equipment should not be removed from the school premises unless being taken on class trips or visits. Photographs should be uploaded to the School's server and not saved on personal or home computers.

## **E-Safety**

The early years staff adhere to and follow on-line safety requirements in line with the School's E-safety policy and acceptable use policy. E-safety guidelines are displayed in the Unit and the children are taught about e-safety using age appropriate resources. Photographs for e-learning journeys are only be taken with school owned iPads. Photographs should be uploaded to the School's server and not saved on personal or home computers.

## **Positive Relationships**

At Edna G. Olds Academy we recognise that children learn to be strong independent learners when they develop secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families, at all times.

## **Parents as Partners**

At Edna G. Olds Academy we recognise that parents are children's first and most enduring educators and we value the contribution they make. We understand that an effective partnership between school and home will have a positive impact on children's learning and development. Therefore, practitioners endeavour to encourage the regular sharing of information about the children with parents. We do this through:

- Informal chats at the beginning and end of the day; practitioners encourage parents to share their unique knowledge of their child, providing further insight into the child as an individual (e.g. characteristics, interests, experiences, likes, dislikes). This supports practitioners in establishing interesting and stimulating learning experiences, responding to children's needs and interests.

- Parents are kept informed of what is happening in the setting through regular letters, newsletters, reading records and informal chatting at the beginning and end of the day. This also gives suggestions of how parents can support their children's learning at home; consolidating and building on what has been covered in the setting.
- Parents of children in the nursery and reception year are invited to attend a parents' evening in the autumn term, at which the practitioner and parent discuss their child's progress. These information sharing sessions, allow practitioners and parents to discuss how children have settled into the setting. Next steps for learning are also shared with the parents.
- 'Busy Bee' children's parents are invited to attend a special assembly; where they celebrate their child's success and are given opportunities to look at and contribute to their child's individual learning journeys. Several children are chosen each week to be Busy Bees. During the week the 'Busy Bees' are observed closely by all early years staff, and samples/ photographs of their play and activities are collected. Practitioners meet and discuss the evidence that they have gathered during the week and plan the child's next learning steps.
- Parents are also invited to get involved with school life. There are opportunities for them to help with activities such as educational visits, as well as offering their particular skills (e.g. cooking, art, music) to support children's learning. Parents may be invited into the setting on other occasions such as 'Stay and Play' sessions and Phonics meetings.
- Reception and Nursery 2 parents receive a full summative report at the end of the summer term relating to their child's progress and have an opportunity to discuss any issues or concerns raised by the report with the practitioner.

All staff involved with the EY's aim to develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them.

The setting has a friendly, open-door ethos and practitioners are available to talk to parents at the beginning and end of each school day. Parents are always welcomed into school and encouraged to discuss any concerns they might have.

### **Enabling Environments**

At Edna G. Olds Academy we recognise that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending the children's development. Through observation we assess the children's interests, stages of development and learning needs, before planning challenging, achievable activities and experiences to extend the children's learning.

### **Observation, Assessment and Planning**

The planning within the EY's is based around half termly and termly themes. These plans are used by the early years team as a guide for weekly planning; however, the team may alter these in response to the needs (achievements and interests) of the children. Each day the early years team plan for a specific area of the curriculum and deliver through adult directed focused activities across the unit. We also deliver short daily phonics and maths teaching sessions across both nursery and reception. A baseline assessment is completed for each child entering nursery and reception within the first few weeks of



them starting school. This information provides a starting point for the children and enables staff to track their progress and identify next steps in learning for the children. Further to this we make regular assessments of children's learning and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs. Assessment in the EY's also takes the form of annotated photographs, and observations, both planned and incidental, and all staff share responsibility to observe the children. We have daily discussions to inform our planning. We also consider children's learning styles when interpreting the information gained from our observations. These observations are recorded in a variety of ways and are used to inform our planned focused activities, and also the EY's Profile. We plan targeted support through intervention groups for both individuals and groups across our Early Years Unit. In addition we plan PLODs to meet the needs and extend the learning of the more able children. Evidence of learning is collated into individual Learning Journey books which are passed on to the Year 1 teacher at the end of the child's reception year.

### **The Learning Environment**

The Early Years Unit is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are areas where the children can be active, be quiet and rest. The Unit is set up in learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. The Early Years Unit has its own enclosed outdoor areas. The children are able to choose when they would like to play in this area. This has a positive effect on the children's development, and provides opportunities to learn in a style that is suitable to each individual child. Being outdoors offers the children further opportunities to explore, use their senses, develop their language skills and be physically active. We plan activities and resources both inside and outside enabling the children to develop in all the areas of learning.

### **Learning and Development**

At Edna G. Olds Academy we recognise that all children learn and develop in different ways and have their own unique learning styles. We value all areas of learning and development equally and understand that they are often linked.

### **Teaching and Learning Styles**

Our policy on teaching and learning defines the features of effective teaching and learning in our school. These features apply to teaching and learning in the EY's just as much as they do to the teaching in Key Stage 1 and 2. Features that relate across the early years are:

- the partnership between the early years team and parents, so that our children feel secure at school and develop a sense of well-being and achievement;
- the understanding that teachers have of how individual children develop and learn, and how this affects their teaching;
- the carefully planned curriculum that helps children work towards the Early Learning Goals throughout EY's and Y1.
- the provision for children to take part in activities that build on and extend their interests and develop their intellectual, physical, social and emotional abilities;
- the encouragement for children to communicate and talk about their learning, and to develop independence;

- the support for learning with appropriate and accessible indoor and outdoor space, facilities and equipment;
- the identification of the progress and future learning needs of children through observations, leading to further enhancement of the provision.

### **Active Learning through Play**

"Children's play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. In their play children learn at their highest level. Play with peers is important for children's development."

At Edna G. Olds Academy we recognise that young children learn best through when they are active. We understand that active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods. Therefore, we believe that early years education should be as practical as possible and our Early Years Unit has 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 children 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 child. It can provide multiple ways for children to learn a variety of different skills and concepts.

In the Early Years Unit at Edna G. Olds Academy, practitioners provide both structured and unstructured play opportunities inside and outside. These activities are designed to engage children in practical, first-hand experiences which will support children 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. Play opportunities are also set up to provide children 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 EY's framework. This is essentially a play based curriculum and pedagogy as the provision of play opportunities underpins its delivery within settings.

### **Creativity and Critical Thinking**

"When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, they discover connections and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. Adult support in this process enhances their ability to think critically and ask questions."

Children should be given opportunities to be creative through all areas of learning, not just through the arts. Adults can support children's thinking and help them to make connections by showing genuine interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open questions. Children can access resources freely and are allowed to move them around the classroom to both extend and enhance their learning.

### **Areas of Learning and Development**

There are seven areas of learning and development that shape our early years provision. 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. These **three Prime Areas** are:

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

We also support our children in **four Specific Areas**, through which the **three Prime Areas** are strengthened and applied.

- **English**
- **Mathematics**
- **Understanding the world**
- **Expressive arts and design**

Our educational provision involves activities and experiences for children across following **seven areas of learning**:

- **Communication and language**
- **Physical development**
- **Personal, social and emotional development**
- **English**
- **Mathematics**
- **Understanding the world**
- **Expressive arts and design**

None of these areas can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are equally important and depend on each other. All areas are delivered through a balance of adult led and child initiated activities. In each area there are Early Learning Goals (ELGs) that define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS.

### **Transition into Year 1**

During the Summer Term, the Year 1 teacher regularly visits the reception children in the Unit, including during their phonics lesson, in order to meet and observe the children in their familiar environment. The reception children then also visit the Year 1 classroom on several occasions, in order to begin to familiarise themselves with their new teacher and classroom. The children also share playtime with the Year 1 children on the Key Stage 1 playground. Children with specific needs have individualised programmes and their parents are also invited to discuss these transition arrangements with the class teacher, SENCO & other professionals during CAF meetings.

### **Monitoring and review**

It is the responsibility of the Early Years Lead to follow the principles stated in this policy.

All quotations included in this document are taken from the revised Early Years Foundation Stage Handbook

**Rowena Crabtree Early Years Lead**