Nelson Academy

Policy: Early Years Policy

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Date of Approval: September 2026

Review Date: September 2027

Related Policies: Safeguarding, SEND and Inclusion, Behaviour, Attendance and Nappy Changing Policy

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

1. Introduction

At Nelson Academy, we believe that the Early Years Foundation Stage is crucial in making the firm foundations that children are going to continue to build upon. It is our intent that the children who enter our EYFS develop physically, cognitively and emotionally whilst embedding a positive attitude to school and learning. We believe that all children deserve to be valued as an individual and we are passionate in allowing all children to achieve their full, unique potential. With all of this in mind, we have developed a curriculum that builds upon practical experiences that allow children to progress from their different starting points and looks at their individual needs.

2. Aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage

In EYFS 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.
• Fostering and nurturing children's self-confidence and self-esteem through their developing awareness of their own identity and role within the community.
• Teaching them to express and communicate their needs and feelings in appropriate ways.
• Encouraging children's independence and decision-making, 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 differ from 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.

3. The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework

Nelson Academy follows the requirements of the current Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage and any subsequent updates issued by the Department for Education.

The Early Years Framework includes 7 areas of learning and development that are equally important and inter-connected. However, 3 areas known as the Prime Areas are seen as particularly important for igniting curiosity and enthusiasm for learning as well as building children's capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

The 3 Prime Areas are: -

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

The Prime Areas are strengthened and applied through 4 specific areas: -

- Literacy

- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

These Areas of Learning and Development address children's physical, cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional development. No one aspect of development stands in isolation from the others as all Areas of Learning and Development are all closely interlinked. This ensures the delivery of a holistic, child-centred curriculum which allows children to make lots of links between what they are learning. All Areas of Learning and Development are given equal weighting and value.

Teaching and learning is planned to promote the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning:

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

4. Planning

Our Nelson EYFS Curriculum is planned using "Norfolk's 50 things to do before you turn 5." This means that every child starting their EYFS educational journey in our Nursery and completing it at the end of Reception will have participated in 50 valuable experiences. This will not only broaden their life experiences but develop confidence and a passion for learning new things. The staff at Nelson Academy will ensure these experiences are planned to enable children to learn and develop effectively, focusing strongly on the 3 Prime Areas.

Within these 50 experiences, staff will also consider the individual needs, interests and stage of development for each child in our care. We will use this information to plan challenging but enjoyable learning opportunities. Nelson Academy is committed to providing an inclusive environment where all children can achieve. Children with SEND are identified and supported in accordance with the SEND Code of Practice. Staff work closely with parents, the SENDCO and external professionals where appropriate to ensure individual needs are met.

In planning and guiding children's activities and learning, staff will reflect on the different ways that children learn and include these in their practice.

5. Teaching

Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play, as well as through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Within each experience we plan for, staff will respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through positive and encouraging interactions. The use of the "Norfolk's 50 Things" allows learning to be practical and playful and gives staff opportunities to provide both support and challenge in class sessions, small group sessions and working 1 to 1 with individual children.

There is a combination of adult-led, teacher taught sessions as well as a wealth of stimulating continuous provision opportunities. Throughout the year and as children become developmentally ready, the balance shifts towards more adult-led activities. However, we recognise the importance of children's play as 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 providing these active learning opportunities through play we understand the central position of play within the EYFS framework.

6. Assessment and Record Keeping

At Nelson Academy, ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development processes. All members of the EYFS team use observations of children in different teaching and learning contexts, including both adult-focused activities and child-initiated play to identify levels of achievement, interests and learning styles. These observations are then used to identify learning priorities and shape future planning. Staff at Nelson Academy also consider observations shared by parents/carers.

Learning Stories record children's progress over the academic year in all Areas of Learning and Development of the EYFS framework. Samples of children's work may be gathered, along with photographic evidence and observations but these will be kept to a minimal amount.

When a child starts at Nelson Academy, staff will administer the Reception Assessment (RBA). This must be completed within the first 6 weeks of their start date and parents are able to request the report that is generated from this. More information about this can be found at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reception-baseline-assessment-information-for-parents

At the end of the EYFS, staff complete the EYFS profile for each child. All pupils are assessed against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELGs) indicating whether they are: -

- Meeting expected levels of development
- Not yet reaching expected levels, "emerging".

The results of this profile are shared with parents/carers in the pupil's end of year report. However, parents will be aware of the journey to this profile through termly parents' meetings and daily conversations when necessary.

At Nelson Academy, the profile is moderated internally with all members of the EYFS team as well as in partnership with other local schools. This ensures consistent assessment judgements that are robust before they are submitted to the Local Authority.

7. Parents as Partners

At Nelson Academy we recognise the importance of establishing positive relationships with parents, as highlighted by the EYFS framework. We understand that an effective partnership between school and home will have a positive impact on children's learning and development. So, staff will endeavour to encourage the regular sharing of information about the children with parents.

We value the role of parents as children's primary educators. We 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 staff in establishing interesting and stimulating learning experiences, responding to children's needs and interests. Each child is assigned a Key Person who helps to ensure their learning and care is tailored to meet their needs. The Key Person supports parents/carers in guiding their child's development at home. The Key Person also helps families to engage with more specialist support if and when necessary.

Parents are kept informed of what is happening in the setting through regular letters, reading records, use of Class Dojo and informal conversations at the beginning and end of the day. This also involves giving suggestions of how parents can support their children's learning at home; consolidating and building on what has been covered in the setting. Parents are invited to attend termly parents' meetings during the course of the academic year. The first of these takes place during the Autumn term to allow practitioners and parents to discuss how children have settled into the setting. Another parent's meeting takes place during the Spring term where practitioners will feedback on children's learning and development progress. In the Summer term parents have an opportunity to review their child's year at a third meeting when end of year reports come home.

Other opportunities for practitioners to share children's learning, development and well-being with parents include Learning Stories sessions, Reading Cafes etc. Parents are also invited to get involved with school life. There are opportunities for them to help with activities such as educational visits and reading, as well as offering their particular skills (e.g. cooking, art, music) to support children's learning. Parents are invited into the setting on other occasions such as Special Lunches and Sport's Day.

8. Admissions and Induction

Nelson Academy provides 15 hours/30 hours Early Years education for children in the Nursery Class and full-time Early Years education for children in the Reception Year. This is for children who enter school from September of the academic year in which they will turn five years old. Before they start either setting, all children are offered a series of transition sessions and home visits. The purpose of these initial visits is for the children to meet their new staff and start to become familiar with the setting environment. Staff will also go to visit the children in their current pre-school settings, if they do not attend our nursery. The aim of these visits is to support staff in developing their knowledge and understanding of each child in order to make the transition period to Nelson Academy as smooth as possible.

Effective transition arrangements are in place between home, Nursery, Reception and Year 1 to ensure continuity in children's learning and development.

9. Health & Safety and Safeguarding

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. All staff receive safeguarding training and understand their responsibilities under Keeping Children Safe in Education and the EYFS Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements.

We are a healthy school and our children in EYFS receive free milk, have access to fresh water and free fruit from a Government scheme. Reception children are eligible for free school meals or can choose to bring in a healthy packed lunch.

Each Foundation Stage classroom has access to their own toileting facilities, and we teach the children the importance of hygiene, hand washing techniques and throughout the year we plan cooking activities to give children experiences of a range of healthy food. Nelson Academy works in partnership with families to support children's toileting needs. Where children are not yet independently toilet trained, staff will work with parents/carers to develop an appropriate support plan which promotes dignity, independence and inclusion.

10. Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of the EYFS staff led by the EYFS/KS1 Assistant Principal to follow the principles stated in this policy. A named Academy Committee member (to be confirmed) will be responsible for the EYFS. This Academy Committee member will discuss EYFS practice with the staff regularly and provide feedback to the whole Academy Committee raising any issues that require discussion.

The Principal and Assistant Principals will carry out monitoring on the EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule.