

Caslon Primary
Community School,
Beech Tree SEMH Base,
Tree Acre and Beecher
Bear Daycare and
Nursery



Early Years Policy
September 2026

Introduction:

'Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their 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.'

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile - Department for Children, Schools and Families 2012

The Early Years Foundation Stage ('EYFS') applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. At Caslon Primary School, children are admitted from Daycare (2 years old) to Reception (the September following their fourth birthday).

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At Caslon Primary 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.

Statement of Intent

At Caslon Primary School, our EYFS curriculum is specifically designed to encourage independent, inquisitive and happy learners. Children's wellbeing is at the heart of our curriculum and a strong emphasis is placed upon children feeling safe and secure, whilst building positive relationships with teachers and peers. We recognise children's prior learning and various starting points, and create a holistic curriculum that maximises cross-curricular links, supports vocabulary and language development and builds strong foundations for their future. Every child is recognised as a unique individual and our curriculum provides them with the opportunities to follow their imagination and creativity.

This policy has been developed in conjunction with the relevant guidance and legislation to ensure that each child has a happy and positive start to their school life in which they can build a foundation for a love of learning.

We seek to provide:

- Quality and consistency, 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 child and are assessed and reviewed regularly.
- Partnership working between practitioners and parents.
- Equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.

Aims

Through the implementation of this policy, we aim to:

- Give each child a happy and positive start to their school life in which they can establish a solid foundation for a love of learning.
- Enable each child to develop socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally.
- Encourage children to develop independence within a secure and friendly atmosphere.
- Support children in building relationships through the development of social skills such as cooperation and sharing.

- Work alongside parents to meet each child's individual needs to ensure they reach their full potential.

Four overarching principles known as the 'Characteristics of Effective Learning', shape our practice:

- 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 with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between the school and parents.
- Learning and development is important. Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.

To put these principles into practice, our school:

- Provides a balanced curriculum which takes children's different stages of development into account.
- Promotes equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice.
- Works in partnership with parents.
- Plans challenging learning experiences, based on individual needs, which are informed by observation and assessment.
- Ensures that each child's learning and care is tailored to meet their individual needs.
- Provides a safe and secure learning environment.

Learning and Development:

"Effective education requires practitioners who understand that children develop rapidly during the early years – physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially. Children are entitled to provision that supports and extends knowledge, skills, understanding and confidence, and helps them to overcome any disadvantage"

Putting the principles into practise – Foundation Years

The EYFS Curriculum – Our curriculum for the Foundation Stage reflects the areas of learning identified in the Early Learning Goals.

There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational provision in Early Years settings. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. None of the areas of learning can be delivered in isolation from the others. Our children's learning experiences enable them to develop competency and skill across a number of learning areas.

They require a balance of adult led and child-initiated activities in order for most children to reach the levels required at the end of EYFS. 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.

Children should mostly develop the **3 prime areas** first. These are:

- **Communication and language** - 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 are helped to understand the importance of physical activity 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.

These prime areas are those most essential for a child's healthy development and future learning.

Staff will also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

Specific Areas:

- **Literacy** - involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children are 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 measures.
- **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.

Children's development levels are assessed and as the year progresses, the balance will shift towards a more equal focus on all areas of learning, as children grow in confidence and ability within the three prime areas.

However, if a child's progress in any of the prime areas gives cause for concern, staff will discuss this with the child's parents/carers and agree how to support the child.

Reception pupils also participate in daily phonics sessions, following the guidance in the "Read Write Inc" document and in line with school policy.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

We ensure that our environment and delivery of the curriculum incorporates the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning:

- **Playing and exploring** - children will have opportunities to investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.

'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.'

Through play, our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. They practise and build up ideas, 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.

- **Active learning** - children will have time and space to concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy their achievements.

'Children learn best through physical and mental challenges. Active learning involves other people, objects, ideas and events that engage and involve children for sustained periods.'

Active learning occurs when children are motivated and interested. Children need some independence and control over their learning. As children develop their confidence, they learn to make decisions. It provides children with a sense of satisfaction as they take ownership of their learning.

- **Creating and thinking critically** - we encourage and support children to have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

"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 the opportunity to be creative through all areas of learning. Adults can support children's thinking and help them make connections by showing interest, offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open-ended questions. Children can access resources and move around the classroom freely and purposefully to extend their learning.

Planning

The Early Learning Goals provide the basis for planning throughout the Foundation Stage. The class teacher uses the national schemes of work, where appropriate, to support their planning for individual children. The planning objectives within the Foundation Stage are from the Birth to 5 Statements document. The planning is based upon themes with discrete phonics, maths, writing and reading directed teaching. However, planning, which is based upon a different topic, which is identified as vehicle of interest to deliver the children's next steps in learning, also therefore responds to the needs, achievement and interest of the children. Our medium-term planning identifies the intended learning, with outcomes, for children working towards the Early Learning Goals, and also for those working towards National Curriculum levels.

Observations

Foundation Stage staff use observations as the basis for planning. Staff are skilled at observing children to identify their achievements, interests and next steps for learning. These observations then lead the direction of the planning. Relevant and significant observations are recorded in the children's online Learning Journeys on Tapestry.

Assessment

In Daycare and Nursery the children's level of development is recorded using the Birth to 5 age bands. Staff within Daycare will also undertake the 2-Year Progress Check with children who will enter Nursery in the September.

During the first term in Reception, the teacher assesses the ability of each child using a baseline assessment. These assessments allow us to identify patterns of attainment within the cohort, in order to adjust the teaching programme for individual children and groups of children.

The Foundation Stage Profile is the nationally employed assessment tool that enables teachers to record their observations at the end of the Foundation Stage, and to summarise their pupils' progress towards the Early Learning Goals. It covers each of the seven areas of learning contained in the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage.

We record each child's level of development against the 17 Early Learning Goals as Below or On Track. We make regular assessments of children's learning, and we use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified needs.

Assessment in the Foundation Stage takes the form of both formal and informal observations, photographic evidence and through planned activities. Assessment is completed regularly and involves both the teacher and other adults, as appropriate. The collection of assessment data in the Foundation Stage Profile is a statutory requirement.

The teacher keeps progress records, online learning journals and records examples of each child's work. These learning journeys contain a wide range of evidence that parents have the opportunity to look at as and when they wish to.

Tracking grids are updated at the end of each half term. This provides a summary sheet for each child, which feeds into the whole-school assessment and tracking process. We record each child's level of development to be below or on track working within the Birth to 5 age-bands and Early Learning Goals.

At the end of the final term in Reception we send a summary of these assessments to the LA for analysis. We share this information with parents at consultation meetings and in the end-of-year report. Parents receive an annual written report that discusses the child's characteristics of effective learning and offers brief comments on each child's progress in each area of learning. It highlights the child's strengths and development needs, and gives details of the child's general progress. We complete these in June, and send them to parents in early July each year.

Reasonable adjustments will be made to the assessment process for children with SEND as appropriate.

The class teacher and SENDCo will discuss any cause for concern in a child's progress with the child's parents, especially where this concern relates to the prime areas of learning. A strategy of support will be agreed upon and consideration will be taken as to whether the child may have SEND which requires additional support. The school takes reasonable steps to provide opportunities for children with EAL to use their home language in play and learning whilst also ensuring that these children have sufficient opportunities to reach a good standard of English. During assessment, if it is found that a child does not have a strong grasp of English language, the class teacher/headteacher will contact the child's parents to establish their home language skills to establish whether there is cause for concern about a language delay.

The Learning Environment

The Foundation Stage classroom is organised to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. There are specific areas where the children can be active, be quiet, creative etc. Children have access to both inside and outside areas across the day; this has a positive effect on the children's development. Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and in different scales than when indoors. The children can explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant. All areas of the curriculum can be explored outside.

Children have access to an enclosed outdoor environment, and daily access to the outdoor environment is free-flowing during Continuous Provision, unless circumstances, such as the weather, would make outdoor activity inappropriate and unsafe. Children access the outdoor environment through the outside classroom door, which is exclusively for Nursery and a separate outdoor area for Daycare and Reception, accessible through classroom doors.

An additional two spaces around school (one in Daycare and one outside of Reception) named 'The Snug' and 'The Den', are available for children to use should they need it. These are sensory and self-regulating spaces. An adult will always take 1 or 2 children to this space.

Tree Acre Early Inclusion Hub

Tree Acre supports pupils who have been identified by IEYS as requiring more specialised support than that which is offered in Beecher Bear Nursery and Daycare. The pupils here may already have an EHCP or are likely to need one prior to moving into Reception. Places at Tree Acre will be allocated at the discretion of the IEYS, in conjunction with the headteacher. The inclusive provision will support the individual needs of pupils but will also allow for integration into Beecher Bear Nursery so pupils can be around peers and form relationships with other members of staff. Where possible, every attempt will be made to meet the short-term needs of pupils in Tree Acre – specialist support may be obtained to ensure pupils' needs can be met.

Teaching and Learning Styles

The features of effective teaching and learning in our school are defined in our policy on teaching and learning. They apply to teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage just as much as they do to the teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 or 2.

The more general features of good practice in our school that relate to the Foundation Stage are:

- the partnership between teachers and parents, carers and other settings that helps our children to feel secure at school, and to develop a sense of well-being and achievement;
- the understanding that teachers have of how children develop and learn, and how this must be reflected in their teaching;
- the range of approaches that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions, and extend and develop the children's play, talk or other means of communication;
- the carefully planned curriculum that helps children achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage;
- 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 and self-management;
- the support for learning, with appropriate and accessible space, facilities and equipment, both indoors and outdoors;
- the identification, through observations, of children's progress and future learning needs, which are regularly shared with parents;
- the good relationships between our school and the other educational settings in which the children have been learning before joining our school;
- the clear aims of our work, and the regular monitoring of our work to evaluate and improve it;
- the regular identification of training needs for all adults working at the Foundation Stage.

Transition:

Starting school can be a difficult time for young children; we therefore plan this time carefully to support children with the transition and to ensure it is as smooth as possible for each child and that they settle in to their new class quickly and happily. Starting Reception – Parents of all children starting in the next academic year will be invited to an Induction Meeting in the Summer term to meet their child's new teacher and other key staff and learn more about the Reception curriculum.

This is an opportunity for staff to;

- To go through the school handbook
- Explain about uniform, PE kit and school dinners/ free school meals
- Explain about holidays and absences
- Explain the arrangements for the gradual induction in to Reception new class sessions- The children are given three opportunities to come in to school to meet their new class teacher and other children in their class. They will have an hour and a half to spend in their new class. Parents can leave their child during this session. This means that before they join their new class the Reception environment is already a familiar place to them.
- September Intake - When children join the school in September the following procedures will apply in order that they can gradually adjust to their new surroundings:
- During the first week, children will begin school gradually; during the first day they will spend the morning. During the second day they will stay until lunch. Following on from this, children will spend all day in their class.

Starting in Key Stage 1 (Year 1) - Throughout the Reception year, each child's involvement in whole school life will have been built upon; many of the teaching and support staff will already be familiar people to them. They will have taken part in Key Stage and whole school assemblies as well as sharing playtimes with the Key Stage 1 children. Children have the opportunity to meet their new class teacher and spend a morning in their new class during the summer term.

Home and School Links

We recognise that parents and carers are a child's first and most enduring educators and we aim for the school and parents and carers to work closely in Early Years. This can have a very positive impact on a child's development but relies on a two way flow of information and knowledge. We will develop this working relationship between the school and carers as follows;

- We will outline the schools expectations from the start of the year.
- We will hold Parents Consultations early in the year to establish how the child is settling into the school environment. Parents will then also have another two throughout the year so they can be informed about their child's progress
- Teaching staff are available at the end of the day and on Dojo for parents to share any queries or concerns if needed. Conversely, if Early Years staff have any concerns about the progress of a child, they will also approach parents and carers to discuss this with them.
- Parents will have access to Tapestry and Class Dojo to record any achievements the children make at home as well as seeing achievements they have made in school.
- 'Inspire' sessions will be held for parents and carers to come into the school and participate in activities that will aid their children's learning.
- Parents and guardians are invited to assemblies where your child will demonstrate some of the things they have learnt over the term.

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.’

Statutory Framework for EYFS 2014

At Caslon Primary School, we understand that we are legally required to comply with welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2014.

- To provide a setting that is welcoming, safe and stimulating where children can grow in confidence;
- Promote good health;
- Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children’s stage of development and individual needs
- To ensure that all adults who look after the children, or who have unsupervised access to them, are suitable to do so;
- Ensure that the setting, furniture and equipment is safe and suitable for the purpose it was intended for;
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for the safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

Keeping Safe

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. We encourage children to take risks and highlight the importance of keeping themselves safe by teaching them how to recognise and avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well being of all children. (See Caslon’s Safeguarding Children Policy).

Good Health

All children are provided with a healthy snack each day as well as being given the choice of milk. They always have access to water.

Children also take part in tooth-brushing daily as part of the EYFS Framework. They are provided with their own toothbrush and toothpaste. These are changed half termly to maintain a high level of hygiene. Toothbrushes and toothpaste are kept in individual cases in the classroom in Reception. Within Daycare and Nursery, these are stored in individual pots for the children to access during toothbrushing time.

Inclusion and Equal Opportunities

Children with special educational needs will be supported as appropriate to enable them to access the curriculum fully. This includes children that are more able and those with specific learning difficulties and disabilities. Individual Support Plans identify targets in specific areas of learning for those children who require additional support corresponding with the schools SEND Policy. The schools SEND Coordinator is responsible for providing additional information and advice to staff and parents and for arranging external intervention and support as necessary. In line with the schools Equal Opportunity’s Policy, we will provide all children, regardless of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability with equal access to all aspects of schools life to

ensure that every child is valued as an individual. All staff are role models and are aware of the influence they have in promoting positive attitudes and use that influence to challenge stereotypical attitudes.

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of those working in Reception, Nursery and Daycare to follow the principles stated in this policy. The Headteacher and EYFS co-ordinator will carry out monitoring on EYFS as part of the whole school monitoring schedule. The Curriculum Committee of The Governing Body will also be part of this process. This policy will be reviewed as and when necessary.

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Fire Safety Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Intimate Care Policy