



The Southwater Infant Academy

“Growing, Learning and Succeeding Together”

What is the Early Years Foundation Stage?

The Early Years Foundation Stage focuses on the distinct needs of children from birth to end of the Reception year in school. The Early Years Foundation Stage has 7 areas of learning and is designed to foster 3 Characteristics of Effective Learning within the child.

3 Prime Areas

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

4 Specific Areas

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts & Design



3 Characteristics of Effective Learning

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

Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity both indoors and outdoors. Play is essential for children’s development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in activities planned and guided by adults.

Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and staff to recognise children’s progress, understand their needs, and to plan activities and support. Ongoing assessment is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves teaching staff observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child. At the end of the Reception year we use the ‘Early Years Foundation Stage Profile’ to report on the children’s achievements.

Families are kept up-to-date with their child’s progress, development and next steps through an online learning journal on the Tapestry platform and we encourage contributions from home so that we can share and celebrate achievements together.

The 7 areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Communication and Language Development

The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, adults will build children's language effectively. Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, story-telling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Children's personal, social and emotional development (PSED) is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives, and is fundamental to their cognitive development. Underpinning their personal development are the important attachments that shape their social world. Strong, warm and supportive relationships with adults enable children to learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others. Children are supported to manage emotions, develop a positive sense of self, set themselves simple goals, have confidence in their own abilities, to persist and wait for what they want and direct attention as necessary. They will learn how to look after their bodies, including healthy eating, and manage personal needs independently. They learn how to make good friendships, co-operate and resolve conflicts peaceably. These attributes will provide a secure platform from which children can achieve at school and in later life.

Physical Development

Physical activity is vital in children's all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives. Gross motor skills provide the foundation for developing healthy bodies and social and emotional well-being. Fine motor control and precision helps with hand-eye co-ordination, which is later linked to early literacy. Repeated and varied opportunities to explore and play with small world activities, puzzles, arts and crafts and the practice of using small tools, with feedback and support from adults, allow children to develop proficiency, control and confidence.

Literacy

It is crucial for children to develop a life-long love of reading. Reading consists of two dimensions: language comprehension and word reading. Language comprehension only develops when adults talk with children about the world around them and the books (stories and non-fiction) they read with them, and enjoy rhymes, poems and songs together. Skilled word reading involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words. Writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing).

Mathematics

Developing a strong grounding in number is essential so that all children develop the necessary building blocks to excel mathematically. Children learn to count confidently, develop a deep understanding of the numbers to 10, the relationships between them and the patterns within those numbers. By providing frequent and varied opportunities to build and apply this understanding children will develop a secure base of knowledge and vocabulary from which mastery of mathematics is built. In addition, the curriculum includes rich opportunities for children to develop their spatial reasoning skills across all areas of mathematics including shape, space and measures. Children develop positive attitudes and interests in mathematics, look for patterns and relationships, spot connections, 'have a go', talk to adults and peers about what they notice and not be afraid to make mistakes.

Understanding the World

Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community. The frequency and range of children's personal experiences increases their knowledge and sense of the world around them – from visiting parks, libraries and museums to meeting important members of society such as police officers, nurses and firefighters. In addition, listening to a broad selection of stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems fosters their understanding of our culturally, socially, technologically and ecologically diverse world. Enriching and widening children's vocabulary will support reading comprehension.

Expressive Arts and Design

The development of children's artistic and cultural awareness supports their imagination and creativity. Children have regular opportunities to engage with the arts, enabling them to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. The quality and variety of what children see, hear and participate in is crucial for developing their understanding, self-expression, vocabulary and ability to communicate through the arts. The frequency, repetition and depth of their experiences are fundamental to their progress in interpreting and appreciating what they hear, respond to and observe.

(Taken from The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2021)

We teach using a creative skills based curriculum. Learning each term is organised into a themed unit. This enables the children to develop, explore and learn in an exciting and stimulating way. The topics covered in the Early Years Foundation Stage at present, but subject to change based on the needs and interests of the cohort, are:

Autumn Term

Winston's World – meeting 'Winston the Wolf' (a friendly puppet!) who introduces us to a range of traditional fairy tales.

Spring Term

Southwater Stars – the roles of people who help in our community, what we might like to be when we grow up, and comparing our locality to a contrasting setting in Japan.

Summer Term

Into the Blue – exploring the oceans and the creatures that live in them and learning how we can help to preserve them.

