

“What is the Foundation Stage?”

The Foundation stage is the first stage of the National Curriculum focusing on the distinct needs of children aged 3 to the end of the reception year in primary school. The Foundation Stage is delivered in a range of settings. These include pre-schools groups, early years centres accredited childminders, nursery and reception classes in schools, and private nurseries.

The Foundation stage has six areas of learning;

These are

- Personal, social and emotional development;
- Communication, language and literacy;
- Mathematical development & Problem Solving;
- Knowledge and understanding of the world;
- Physical development; and
- Creative development

Each area includes early learning goals. These set out the skills, understanding, knowledge and attitudes which it is thought children will reach or exceed by the end of their Foundation Stage. All Children will be at different levels of progress towards these goals depending on their ages and stage of development. Stepping stones describe a child’s typical progress towards these goals from age three to the end of the Foundation Stage. Of course children are individual and not all will fit into this typical pattern of progress. Staff understand this and take this into account when planning activities and experiences.

“Happy children will become effective learners”

This period of life is really important both in its own right and also in preparing children for later learning. From the age of three to five, children grow, develop and learn rapidly. Most children go through similar stages but each child is different. They develop their own preferred ways of learning, just as they also begin to choose their favourite toys and friends.

Children aged three, four and five are constantly encountering new experiences which they try to understand. As they do so they explore the world around them, asking questions, extending their skills, developing their confidence and building on what they already know. Well planned play is central to a child’s learning in the Foundation Stage. In this way learning is both challenging and fun.

The indoor and outdoor ‘classroom’ are organised to give children plenty of space to move around, to work on the floor and on table tops, individually and in smaller and larger groups. Resources are well-organised and labelled so that children know where to find what they need and can develop independence. This means adults can spend more time joining in with children’s learning, extending their language, thinking and helping them to make progress. The role of the adult is crucial in supporting a child’s learning through planned play and extending and developing their child spontaneous play. Through this supported play children can explore, develop and use their curiosity and imagination to help them make sense of the world in a secure environment. They practise skills, build up ideas and concepts, think creatively and imaginatively and communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems.

Giving children opportunities to learn, become independent & feel confident

An adult working in the Foundation Stage plans a wide range of opportunities for children to learn both indoors and outdoors. What they plan should be based on what children already know about and can do. It should recognise a child's different interests and needs. Sometimes adults will plan activities to do with particular groups of children based on their particular learning needs and interests. Sometime they will plan time and resources for children to initiate and develop their own learning. Both are important. Both provide opportunities for children to learn to work together and share resources including the attention of adults.

Although the Foundation Stage Curriculum is organised into six areas of learning, one learning experience may help develop a number of competences, skills and concepts across several of these areas. For example, in preschool role-play, social, physical, language and literacy skills can be developed. This role-play also gives children the opportunity to learn more about different people in the world around them and be prepared for new experiences. Good planning preparation and evaluation by Early Years staff will ensure that every child engages in a wide enough range of activities so that all six areas of learning are covered in the course of time.

Parents have a key role

Where parents and early year's settings work closely together children do better. Parents are their child's first and enduring educators. They understand their children better than anyone else. By sharing information about their child's interests, strengths and needs, parent help the adults who work with them to plan experiences and activities that will capture their interests and fire their imagination and enthusiasm. This helps children to make good progress in their learning. By talking about what they plan to do and sharing their observations of children with parents, the adults who work with them can help parents to build on learning at home in ways that are fun. This is done through written information, talking with parents and by parents spending time in the setting.

Like early years settings we offer a wider range of parents and family support. We welcome parent who are able to spend time helping in the setting whether on a regular basis or when circumstances allow.