



# Thomas Russell Infants' School

## Early Years Foundation Stage Policy



*'Our children blossom through nurture and challenge.'*

**September 2022**

Review: September 2023

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## Vision & Aims

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) applies to children from birth to the end of the reception year. At Thomas Russell Infants School our Foundation Stage is for children from 4 to 5 years. Children join us in Reception in the September before they turn 5. In partnership with parents and carers we enable the children to begin the process of becoming active lifelong learners.

### Intent:

At Thomas Russell Infants' School, our Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum is designed to ensure a secure foundation is laid for future learning. Our children are exposed to a wide range of learning opportunities that capture their interest and imaginations. Our curriculum is ambitious and designed to give all learners, particularly the most disadvantaged and those with Special Educational Needs and/or disabilities (SEND) the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life. At the end of EYFS, we expect our children to leave us as happy, confident and skilful communicators who are curious about the world around them. Every child is recognised as a unique individual and we celebrate and welcome differences within our school community.

We intend:

- To work in partnership with parents and carers to encourage independent, happy learners who thrive in school and reach their full potential from their various starting point.
- To develop a unique child promoting resilient, confident, cooperative, curious and independent learners who want to discover the world around them.
- To create an indoor and outdoor environment which supports learning through play and first hand experiences. We want our children to be excited by the real world and develop their imagination.
- To provide a fully inclusive curriculum that embraces the rich and varied culture of our community.
- To provide a structured curriculum which builds knowledge and skills in all of our areas of learning and provide opportunities for children to practise and embed these through our continuous provision.
- To encourage children to become skilful communicators, who connect with others through language and play, ensuring that they play and learn in a vocabulary rich environment.
- To ensure that all children have the opportunity to be challenged and have access to challenge during their independent learning.

## EYFS Framework 2021

*“Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child’s experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.”*

The EYFS Statutory Framework seeks to provide:

- **quality and consistency** in all early years’ settings, so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind
- **a secure foundation** through planning for the learning and development of each individual child, and assessing and reviewing what they have learned regularly
- **partnership** working between practitioners and with parents and/or carers
- **equality of opportunity** and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is based on four guiding principles, which shape effective practice in our setting:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments with Teaching and Support from Adults
- Learning and Development

## **A Unique Child**

We recognise that children learn and develop in various ways and at different rates and this is reflected in our provision. The characteristics of effective learning support the child to become a motivated and effective learner. Children will play and explore and 'have a go' at using available resources, developing their language and experiences. Children will develop resilience and enjoy achievements through active learning and will make links, explore their ideas and strategies for problem solving through creating and thinking critically. Practitioners support children in developing all these characteristics through playing alongside children and where necessary, scaffolding and supporting their thoughts. Children are treated fairly regardless of race, religion, gender or abilities. We welcome all children and families into our setting so that they feel included, safe and valued.

## **Positive Relationships**

At Thomas Russell Infants' School, we recognise that children need to learn to form strong, independent and secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with the children and their families. (*see **Parent Teacher Partnership** section*)

## **Enabling Environments**

At Thomas Russell Infants' School our areas are thoroughly thought out to allow children to explore and learn securely and safely. We aim to provide an enabling environment that balances child led and adult guided provision. There are specific areas both indoor and outdoor where the children can be active, be quiet, be creative and be challenged. Our enabling environments are set up to support all learning areas, where children are able to find and locate equipment and resources independently. Children have the opportunity to work with adults during our guided teacher led activities, where children are taught specific skills, as well as opportunity to access our continuous provision. Our Continuous Provision offers a balance of child initiated play as well as other more structured activities. Free choice and child initiated activities allows our children to pursue their own interests and also to practise and apply knowledge and skills already taught. Furthermore, all children have the opportunity to access more challenging learning when choosing activities for themselves by accessing 'Pot of Gold' challenges. More structured areas provide spaces that support adults in their teaching and interaction with children and allow children to consolidate and rehearse what they know. Moreover, they ensure the continuation of learning in the absence of an adult.

Once a week, our children participate in an afternoon of Forest School where we aspire to develop our children's confidence and self-esteem via hands-on learning experiences in our forest area. Our sessions support our children's wellbeing by providing and implementing positive, outdoor, child centred experiences in a natural setting. We ensure that our children learn how to work as a team, build their resilience, confidence, friendships and many more transferable skills.

## **Learning and Development**

Our curriculum for the Foundation Stage reflects the learning aims and objectives set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum. There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational provision in all early years' settings. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected, and none can be delivered in isolation from the others.

Our children's learning requires a balance of adult led and child-initiated activities in order for children to develop effectively and to give them the best chance of obtaining a good level of development at the end of their Reception Year. 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.

The three **Prime Areas** are:

- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** – children learn to self-regulate, manage themselves and their needs and build positive relationships.
- **Communication and Language** – children learn to listen attentively and respond appropriately showing a good level of understanding. They will develop their ability to speak with confidence to express their own ideas and feelings.
- **Physical Development** - children have opportunities to be active and develop coordination in both gross motor and fine motor skills.

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

The **Specific Areas** are:

- **Literacy** – children learn how letters link to the sounds and begin to use this knowledge when word reading and writing. They will also learn to develop their comprehension of both what is read to them and what they read themselves.
- **Mathematics** – children learn to have a good understanding of number to 10, including composition and some number facts. They will also learn to explore and recognise numerical patterns, e.g. odd and evens.
- **Understanding of the World** – children have opportunities to explore and learn about the natural world, people, cultures and communities as well about the past and present.
- **Expressive Arts and Design** – involves creating with a range of materials and techniques and being imaginative and expressive when telling stories and performing songs, rhymes and responding to music.

We extend children's learning through observing, getting involved in their play, supporting their thinking and asking open-ended questions. Children's development levels are assessed and as the year progresses, this information is shared with parents. 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 in order to agree how to support their child.

## **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 practice 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.

### **Play**

Children's play reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. In their play, children can be inquisitive, creative, questioning and experimental and will learn at their highest level. Playing with their peers is important for children's development. Through play our children explore and develop learning experiences, which help them make sense of the world. The adults model play and play sensitively with the children fitting in with their plans and ideas. The children are encouraged to try new activities and judge risks for themselves. We talk to them about how we get better at things through effort and practice and that we can all learn when things go wrong. They practice and build up ideas learning 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.

## **Curriculum**

Communication and language underpins all areas of learning within our early years curriculum and continues to be developed within our provision, teaching, learning and planning methods. Planned learning supports the progress and development of listening and speaking, enabling children to process information into thinking and understanding. Children practise their physical skills alongside developing social skills, which supports greater independence and higher levels of confidence.

The 4 specific areas of learning provide a context for development and reflect cultural knowledge and accumulated understanding. They are dependent on learning in the Prime areas. Our continuous provision demonstrates a strong emphasis upon supporting children's understanding of the world along with enabling them to express themselves imaginatively and creatively, using art and design. New learning and topics are adapted to reflect the needs of the children and their interests.

### **Planning**

The planning is based upon children's interests with discrete daily phonics, maths and literacy lessons being taught according to the needs of the children. Daily phonics lessons are based on the DfE Letters and Sounds document. Literacy lessons are taught through a class text, with additional one to one reading sessions. Maths lessons are linked to the White Rose document with careful steps of progression built in along with opportunity for immediate intervention to ensure a secure level of understanding of mathematical concepts. The 3 prime areas are also at the core of early years planning. Staff carefully plan activities which enable children to link personal experiences with new learning, providing a wide range of contexts in our continuous provision, both indoor and outdoor, to revisit, practise, apply, and develop transferable skills and understanding. Emphasis is placed upon the importance of using sensory play in the development of language skills, alongside enhancing provision for identified groups of children. Staff take into account the individual needs, interests, and stages of development of each child in their care, and use this information to plan challenging and enjoyable experiences. Where a child may have a special educational need or disability, staff consider whether specialist support is required, linking with relevant services from other agencies, where appropriate. Staff are reflective in their practice and systematically observe and evaluate the effectiveness

and value of planned provision within the inside and outside learning spaces. They respond to children's levels of interest and engagement, ensuring accurate pitch and pace for developing cognition and learning. Planning and interactions are supported by progressive sequences of questioning to develop thinking, understanding and language for reasoning.

## Teaching

Our Early Years practice demonstrates a balance between play and formal teaching. Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play, and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. As children grow older, and as their development allows, the balance gradually shifts towards more adult-led and carefully structured activities, to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for year 1. Staff interactions with children during planned and child-initiated play, provides rich opportunities for communicating and modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling, providing a narrative for what they are doing, facilitating and setting challenges. Staff understand that play is about much more than content, but helps to build flexible minds and an enquiring spirit. Staff respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction. They take into account the equipment provided and the attention to the physical environment as well as the structure and routines of the day that establish expectations. Staff understand that teaching is in every activity provided within all of the learning environments. There are no activities that occur in the setting which adults do not consider to be opportunities for teaching. It is the skill of the adults that enable them to readily recognise the 'teachable moments' when they arise and respond to them appropriately.

## Curriculum overview

Our curriculum is taught through a range of broad topics tailored to the cohort. Our curriculum encompasses all areas of learning and has been planned to allow steps of progression throughout the year in each area to facilitate children achieving the Early Learning Goals by the end of Reception. A detailed overview showing these steps can be seen in a separate long-term planning document.

## Assessment

Accurate assessment is essential to high-quality early years education and care. It plays an important part in helping the school to recognise children's progress, understand their needs, plan activities, and assess the need for support to ensure that all children reach their full potential.

In Reception, 'Baseline Assessments' are completed within the first six weeks of the Autumn term. These assessments help to determine a baseline, or starting point, for their future learning and are completed using the government baseline test; however, staff will also make their own judgements based on the adults' observations of children during activities and play. Baseline assessments allow us to identify patterns of attainment within the cohort and to plan for individual children and groups of children.

Throughout Reception, the children's knowledge, understanding, skills and achievements are assessed and tracked using the checkpoints outlined in the new 'Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)' document. As part of our daily practice we observe and assess children's development and learning to inform our future plans. We record our observations in a variety of ways and all staff in our EYFS setting contribute to children's Learning Journals. Our assessment depends on us getting to know our children and, to this end, we gather information from a range of sources; observations of the children in play, in adult led activities, through discussions with parents and carers and through talking to the children. We keep written and photographic evidence to help us build up a picture of children's strengths and achievements and to help us to plan for children's next steps in learning. Every child has a 'Learning Journal' held on Tapestry in which we record our observations and keep samples of the children's work. Parents/carers receive a notification when an observation has been added to their child's Learning Journal and they can then view this observation and any related photographs/videos and assessments. Parents/carers are encouraged to add their own comments and also to upload their own observations to show us what their children are able to do at home.

Once a half-term, staff assess the pupils against half-termly 'On-track' statements generated in school. These statements are based on practitioner knowledge and experience of progress in Early Years, progression documents

and the necessary skills to work towards the Early Learning Goals. Any pupil who is not currently working at the expected level is offered additional interventions to support their progress and development.

At the end of the year the EYFS profile provides a summary of every child's development and learning achievements including whether they have reached a 'Good Level of Development' (GLD). Children are assessed against the Early Learning Goals (ELG) by the class teacher - who uses the exemplification documents, and their knowledge of the children to make a 'best fit' judgement.

The children are assessed as achieving a 1 or 2 against each area of the EYFS curriculum:

- 2 = Expected ELG – meeting the expected level
- 1 = Emerging ELG – not yet meeting the expected level.

This profile data is the statutory data that is sent to the Local Authority and used to help school benchmark and identify improvements. Parents/carers will be given information of their child's achievements in a written report at the end of the Summer term.

Whilst the Early Years Framework now stipulates schools do not need to assess children as 'Exceeding' the expectations set in the Learning Goals, at the end of Reception we will inform Key Stage One Staff and parents/carers of those children who have shown real depth and mastery in a particular area of the Early Years Curriculum.

## **Inclusion & SEND children**

Thomas Russell Infants' School is an inclusive school. The following information is complemented by our 'Inclusion and SEND Policy'.

During children's time in Early Years, staff will assess and monitor children's development, progress and achievements. On occasion it may become apparent that children have a specific barrier to progression/learning. Concerns will be shared with parents/carers and support will be undertaken by our Inclusion Department. The Inclusion Department will offer support mechanisms that will compensate for barriers and they may, if required, begin processes to ensure that children are identified and monitored before leaving the department and entering Key Stage One.

### **SEND Children**

At Thomas Russell Infants' School, we celebrate differences; everyone is always included regardless of culture, faith, identity or background. We are aware however, that some children may require additional support in their learning due to multiple factors including:

- English as an Additional Language
- Summer Birth Date (youngest in the year group)
- Speech and Language Development
- Early Childhood Experiences
- Vulnerability or Disadvantaged Background.

The more information shared with our staff in the department, the better personalised support can be given to your child. Hence our induction programme focuses heavily on getting to know families, children and their background.

### **Pupil Premium**

Whilst all children in Reception will qualify for FREE Infant School Meals, some children will qualify for extra funding that can be used by the school to increase resourcing and provide support both in school and out of school for families. Please review the Pupil Premium Document on our Website and contact the Office to seek support in making an application if you think there is a possibility you may qualify.



## Induction and Transition

At Thomas Russell Infants' School, we recognise that starting school and moving up classes has the potential to be a stressful time for both children and parents. To this end we have established a strong procedure for inductions and transitions to ensure that our children and parents are as confident and secure as they can be when facing the challenge of starting school for the first time and of moving up to a new year group.

We hold a meeting in the summer term before the children start school to provide parents with key information, school expectations, knowledge on our curriculum and assessment and advice on how they can help their child. We offer 'stay and play' sessions for the children in the summer term before they start school in September. This provides both children and parents the opportunity to meet their teacher and familiarise themselves with the school environment. It also gives parents time to ask questions and share knowledge or any concerns they have about their child. Reception staff also endeavour to visit children in their nurseries, pre-schools or childminders etc. during the summer term. If children do not attend any pre-school setting then arrangements will be made to meet children in their homes.

At the beginning of the school year, new children are given staggered, part-time entry times to ensure that they have the time to feel welcomed and to support them in exploring their new environment. This allows for a 'settling in' period in smaller groups enabling children to have the time to become secure and familiar with the new routines before starting school full-time. During this time, half of the children from each class attend school in either the morning or afternoon. Towards the end of the first week the children will stay for lunch either at the end of or prior to their half-day session. They will then all begin full-time with the whole class staying for lunch and staying for the whole day.

At the end of Reception, children have the opportunity to meet with their new teachers in their classrooms on two occasions prior to starting Year One. At the end of each school year, teachers have the opportunity to share their knowledge of each child including their personalities, friendship groups, attainment, knowledge, understanding and achievements, as well as end of year assessment data, with their next class teacher to ensure that all teachers have a well-rounded picture of the children prior to the new school year.

During children's time in Early Years, children make use of the whole school facilities, such as the hall, library and playing field for appropriate activities to ensure that children are confident and well prepared for moving around the school and for mixing with older children. Early on in the Reception year, when we feel the children are ready, they are gradually introduced to whole school activities such as assemblies and to using the big playground.

## Parent Teacher Partnerships

At Thomas Russell Infants' School, we value the importance of the three-way relationship between children, parents and staff. We believe that parents and carers are a child's first educator, and therefore work very closely to ensure they are involved in what their child does at school. We want parents to feel they can speak to us about their children and to feel comfortable in our setting.

We offer parents a curriculum evening in the autumn term to provide advice and information on how they can support their child's learning. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to share information about their child, to ask questions and to discuss their child's learning with the teachers. We believe that all parents have an important role to play in the education of their child. We provide every child in Early Years with a Tapestry account. This enables teachers to provide information on children's experiences in school, and parents can share information about their child's experiences and achievements outside school. This information helps to build a well-rounded picture of the child in for everyone. Parents are encouraged to join in with their child's education from the very start of their school journey. Parents are encouraged to support children's learning through completing reading records, simple homework activities and by sharing assemblies and whole class activities as well as sharing experiences on Tapestry.

Through twice-annual parent consultations, parents receive information about their child's assessment and

have the opportunity to speak with the teacher to discuss their child's progress and development and to share their next steps in learning. At the end of the year a formal written report Parents are always welcomed to discuss their children informally at the end of the school day.

Communication with parents is essential in order that we work in effective collaboration. Additional communication tools:

- Talking to parents/carers before their child starts school at induction meetings;
- Providing a 'Welcome Pack' of information about commencing school
- Outlining the school's expectations in the Home-School agreement
- School Letters – including weekly Newsletters
- School texting service – a messaging service for smart phones
- School emails
- Twitter – An informal method of updating and sharing learning and exciting news. Please install Twitter and follow @trisschool.
- Tapestry Observations & memos shared in Reception
- Parent Teacher Consultations (twice annually)
- End of Year Report
- Reception Reading Books (matched to sounds taught) and Reading Diary (where parental comment are welcomed)
- Bookbags
- Operating an open door policy for parents/carers with any queries or concerns. Conversely, if EYFS staff have concerns about the progress of a child, they will immediately approach parents/carers to discuss them;

## 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. We follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements detailed in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Guidance (2021) and we adhere to the school's safeguarding policy.

We are a healthy school and our children under 5 receive free milk. All children have access to fresh water and free fruit from a Government scheme. The children are all eligible for free school meals or can choose to bring in a healthy packed lunch.

Our safeguarding and welfare procedures are outlined in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

## Policy Review

This policy is reviewed every twelve months by the Governing Board and the Head teacher.

The scheduled review date for this policy is September 2023.