



Keelman's Way School

Early Years Policy

Introduction

Education is an ongoing process from birth. Learning which takes place in the early years is very important for pupils at Keelman's Way School. We aim to provide a curriculum appropriate to the individual needs of the youngest children in school and an environment in which they are able to develop all their emerging creativity and skills.

Rationale

The early years curriculum is concerned with the child and the context or setting in which the learning takes place, as well as the content of teaching.

These are the principles which underlie the early years curriculum at Keelman's Way School;

1. Early childhood is valid in itself and should be a happy and fulfilling part of life, not simply a preparation for the next stage of education.
2. Each child at Keelman's Way School is unique and will develop at their own pace.
3. Learning is holistic and for the young child with learning difficulties it may not be possible to compartmentalise under subject headings.
4. Communication skills are fundamental to all areas of the curriculum in the early years.
5. Self-help and independence skills play an important part in the early years curriculum.
6. Young children learn most effectively through play, experimenting, investigating and first hand experiences.
7. Children learn through their own interests/pupil voice.
8. Children, particularly those with behavioural difficulties, need a consistent framework within the classroom organisation.
9. The adults and children to whom the child relates are of central importance. All adults working with the children should display positive attitudes towards them thus promoting high self-esteem.
10. Parents are recognised as the child's first educators.
11. Observations of the children are taken to track the children's progress.

12. Children in early years follow a sensory curriculum which is focussed around their needs.

Aims of Keelman's Way School and Early Years Education

1. That achievement is celebrated for everyone and by everyone.
2. To ensure an effective transition from home to school.
3. To work in partnership with parents based on shared responsibility, understanding, mutual respect and dialogue.
4. To continually assess each child's abilities in all areas of the Development Matters curriculum and to create individual education plans which will form the basis of the child's education.
5. To promote a happy healthy atmosphere of security, trust and respect.
6. To stimulate curiosity and develop communication skills through spoken language, symbols, signing and objects of reference.
7. To give opportunities for choice-making and independence.
8. To help the child to form positive relationships with adults and peers and to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance in the group.
9. To develop self-confidence whilst interacting and playing with others and making friends.
10. To encourage an awareness of own personal hygiene.
11. To provide opportunities to experiment creatively with a variety of materials and to use and explore the senses.
12. To provide opportunities for integration with older children throughout Keelman's Way School and other early years aged children in mainstream education.

Implementation

Environment and Resources

High quality equipment and materials which are appropriate to each child's needs and abilities are provided in the early years classroom. This includes the use of ICT to support all areas of the curriculum. The environment is stimulating, challenging and engaging; encouraging high levels of play and learning which will help the child to become more confident, self-reliant, responsible and motivated. However, many of our children are still developing the skills they need to self-initiate their play. We therefore offer our children opportunities for 'guided play'. The classroom and outdoor areas are set up with 'play scenarios' in all curriculum areas. These play

opportunities are supplemented by careful management of continuous provision which allows children to select their own materials whenever possible but also meets the additional needs of the children. Where possible we use a free flow environment so children can choose to play inside or outside.

In particular we try to keep our environment calm to avoid sensory overload. We ensure that our environment is safe for all children, including those who have a significant cognitive developmental delay and those who have physical difficulties and sensory deficits. Play scenarios are planned on a weekly basis, the planning is flexible and will often change to take into account the children's developing interests.

Curriculum

Keelman's Way School follows the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum, adapting it to meet the needs of our pupils. There are 7 areas of development and learning. This is split into 3 prime areas of learning and 4 specific areas of learning. The 3 prime areas, as the name suggests, are the most important for the young child's rounded development and link into the 4 specific areas.

The 3 prime areas of learning are:-

1. Personal, Social and Emotional Development
2. Communication and Language
3. Physical Development

The 4 specific areas of learning are:-

1. Literacy
2. Maths
3. Understanding the World
4. Expressive Arts and Design

We use the Development Matters curriculum to plan activities and targets for the children to enable them to develop and achieve within the above seven areas. It is important that all staff working with our children have a clear understanding of the aims and rationale for early years education, particularly the importance of play.

The Importance of Play

Play is of utmost importance in the early years environment because:-

- It provides an opportunity to develop language by the child interacting and co-operating, making sounds and expressing ideas with peers and adults.

- It provides opportunities for practising and developing basic skills such as manipulative skills.
- It allows children to be spontaneous.
- It encourages children to anticipate.
- It enables children to make choices.
- It provides children with space to practise physical movement, balance and to test their own limits.
- It helps children become self-confident and develop self-awareness.
- It helps to encourage independent thinking and problem solving strategies.
- It nourishes curiosity by allowing children to explore.
- It develops concentration.
- It gives pleasure and enjoyment.
- It helps children to make maximum progress towards achieving their individual targets

Admittance and Assessment

Children may be introduced to Keelman's Way School from the age of two years. They begin on a part-time basis. There is a flexible approach to admissions which caters for individual needs. Throughout the early years, close liaison is maintained between home and school through home/school diaries, stay and play, social events, wow moments, annual educational reviews and an 'open door' policy. We also use a program called 'Evidence for Learning' which is an online Learning Journal to securely record photos, videos, observations and comments in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. It allows us to work with parents and carers to view work from school and build up a record of each child's experiences during their time with us. It can also be accessed from home to record new understandings and developments outside of school.

Following a settling-in period, the children are assessed using Development Matters Guidance to give a baseline entry to school. This guidance documents the small stages of early childhood development. Reports from outside agencies are also used to build up a comprehensive profile of the child. An individual learning journey is then created for each child which is an ongoing record, both on Evidence for Learning and in a workbook, which includes observations, photographs and samples of work. This record is assessed using a tracking sheet. As the child progresses towards the end of the Reception year they are put into a learning platform of either Subject Specific, Semi Formal or PMLD where they continue on Evidence for learning or move onto PIVATS 5 system of assessment which is used throughout the rest of the school.

Personal Plans (PEPs) are written and reviewed each term to form the basis of the child's targets to which they work from and towards. These PEPs are based on information from the Education Health Care Plan and are shared with parents and other professionals. They are recorded on Evidence for Learning as PLG's.

Behaviour

For children to grow and prosper they need a warm, friendly environment which makes them feel safe, secure and appreciated. They need consistency from adults and a common set of expectations and boundaries. Most importantly, children at Keelman’s Way School need a great deal of praise and encouragement. Positive Handling plans are implemented on occasions and parents are consulted as appropriate.

Signed

Date.....

Head Teacher

Signed

Date

Chair of Governors

April 2021

To be reviewed April 2022