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**Parent /Carer Information Booklet**

**Early Years Foundation Stage**

**Updated September 2024**

**Welcome to the Foundation Stage at Winnington Park Primary School**

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) covers the education of children from birth to the end of the Reception year. It is a distinct stage, important both in its own right and in building the foundations for the rest of your child's learning as they progress through school.

In our school children aged from 3-5 years old work closely together in our Foundation Stage. This enables us to respond to individual needs, providing continuity and progression in your child's education through the provision of well-planned, high quality, "hands-on" learning experiences which take into account different learning styles.

There are three teachers, five teaching assistants and two play workers in our Foundation Stage. All staff members are first aid trained.

The four guiding principles of the EYFS shape our practice:

* Every child is a unique child who is constantly learning
* Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships
* Children learn and develop in enabling environments
* Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates

**Our aims:**

We aim to provide:

* A safe, secure and nurturing environment with a happy atmosphere, to promote confidence and increasing independence.
* A broad, balanced, creative curriculum
* Activities which are meaningful, challenging and fun!

The EYFS curriculum has three prime areas of learning and development:

* Personal, social and emotional
* Physical Development
* Communication and Language

And four specific areas:

* Literacy
* Mathematics
* Understanding the World
* Expressive Arts and Design

All areas are of equal importance and are inter-related.

Each area is underpinned by three Characteristics of Effective Learning:

1. **Playing and Exploring (engagement)**

Finding out and exploring

Playing with what they know

Being willing to ‘have a go’

2. **Active Learning (motivation)**

Being involved and concentrating

Keeping trying

Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

3. **Creating & Thinking Critically**

Having their own ideas

Making links

Choosing ways to do things

Your child will be working towards The Early Learning Goals (ELGs); a set of learning objectives, which set out what most children are expected to achieve by the end of the reception year. The curriculum emphasises the importance of learning through high quality play. Play underpins all development and learning for young children.

Your child’s day will consist of a range of child-initiated play activities, adult supported play and teacher-directed activities. The value of high-quality play experiences is recognised in our school and is given priority in the planning and provision of resources.

More information about how you can support your child at home is included later in this booklet.

**Please remember that all children do not develop and progress at the same rate, so do not worry if your child does not appear to be at the same stage as his/her friends. Let school staff know about any concerns you may have so that we can be ready to support your child.** **We are always happy to discuss any concerns you may have.**

**Reception Baseline**

All children in Reception will complete the national baseline assessment during the first few weeks in September. This comprises a series of short activities to assess skills and knowledge in Literacy and Maths and feeds into our knowledge of children’s starting points across the curriculum as we get to know them.

**Communication, Language and Literacy**

This part of the curriculum is based around the areas of:

* Listening and attention
* Understanding
* Speaking
* Reading
* Writing

Children also take part in a daily phonics session. We follow the Little Wandle Phonics scheme of work.

**Reading at home**

It is never too early to enjoy looking at books and sharing stories with your child. Children who are read to and enjoy books from an early age are most likely to become fluent and successful readers themselves in the future. It is important that children know that reading is fun and worthwhile so it is important that they see adults enjoying books, newspapers etc. There are lots of colourful and good quality picture books and stories for you to enjoy sharing with your child (your local library is a good place to begin).

When talking about letters always emphasise the correct sound each letter makes. Video clips demonstrating the correct pronunciation of each letter sound can be viewed in the Parent Section of the Little Wandle website <https://www.littlewandlelettersandsounds.org.uk/>

Children will also learn the names of the letters during their reception year.

Let your child sit close to you and hold the book, encourage him/her to turn the pages in the correct order, talk about what they can see happening in the pictures and what they think might happen next in the story. Identify the title and talk about what the book might be about. Sometimes you could point to the words as you read, reinforcing the left to right and top of the page to the bottom direction of the text. Your child may well enjoy "reading along" when the story is familiar.

Encourage your child to join in with nursery rhymes and songs and listen to audio stories. Above all, enjoy the time you spend reading with your child. When your child begins to bring home a reading book in their reception year, try to find a few minutes each day to share this with them. Short, regular reading sessions are more effective than infrequent but long ones.

Give lots of praise and encouragement and don't be tempted to hide the pictures. These are a very important part of early reading, giving valuable clues to help them make sense of the text. We encourage you to use the reading diary to record your comments about their reading. All these activities are important in developing pre-reading skills.

**Reading in school**

In school we aim to help children develop a love of reading for life. We share a wide variety of high-quality stories, rhymes and non-fiction texts throughout the day. We teach reading skills alongside daily phonic sessions. These will initially consist of identifying sounds in words and linking those sounds to letter shapes, progressing to blending sounds to read words and segment words to spell words. Your child will also take part in shared reading around big books when the teacher models tracking the text from left to right and top to bottom, page by page, making correspondence between spoken and written words and looking for the features of books (title, front and back covers, author, page numbers, discussing the pictures etc.) We also identify high frequency and "tricky" words.

Children will also begin to take part in small group practise reading sessions. They will read books linked to the phonic knowledge they are secure in. They will read the book three times in school before it is sent home for you to practise. Activities at home to support the familiarisation of the words in their reading books include, hiding a few of the words around the house for a treasure hunt, choose a word to look for in a story you are sharing, make "snap" cards with the words on, draw pictures to match the words, "teach" them to a favourite toy.

Children are given daily opportunities to enjoy books of their own choice from the book areas in the classrooms. In the Early Years Foundation Stage environment there will be labels and signs to read around the classroom.

**Writing and letter formation at home and school**

Always encourage your child to hold pencils, pens and crayons correctly. The tripod grip is the correct and most comfortable to hold. The child holds the pencil between the index finger and thumb with the other fingers underneath and their hand resting on the paper. Children progress through a variety of pencil grips as they develop towards the correct tripod grip. Do not worry if your child is not able to hold the pencil in the correct grip at first. Do not worry if your child swaps hands as they discover their preferred hand, or if your child is left-handed.

At first children need a lot of time to explore making marks with a variety of writing tools. A lot of importance is given to this at school. We form letters in the air, in mud, sand, finger paint and shaving foam! We use large brushes and paint or water, chunky crayons, marker pens and chalk. Children are encouraged to use writing in their free play, for example, shopping lists and party invitations in the home corner, repair details at a garage and messages to put around the classroom. We always have a wide range of writing materials on offer and children are encouraged to use these throughout the day. These marks and scribbles have real meaning for your child, so it is important to praise and value each attempt. When practising writing your child's name with them, please use a capital letter at the beginning, followed by lowercase letters.

Children learn about the relevance of writing by observing others write and draw, let them help you write shopping lists, birthday cards or messages to someone. Point out print around you when out and about, for example, at the supermarket, in the post office and on signs in the street. They will begin to realise that the "writing" around them conveys meaning. This in turn will lead them to giving meaning to the marks they make. Try asking them to tell you what their writing says. Again, games like alphabet bingo and matching and sorting letters and word games, making their names with magnetic or foam letters will be of value. It must be stressed that these are fun ways to support your child's learning and they should not feel under pressure when participating. If your child does not seem interested at the stage do not push them, try again another time. We are happy to discuss any concerns you may have.

A copy of the handwriting style the school has adopted is included to show you the correct formation of each letter. It is very important that children learn to form letters correctly as "bad habits" can be difficult to correct.

**Mathematics**

This area includes:

* Number
* Numerical Patterns

Children enjoy counting and there are lots of opportunity to develop their skills. For example, counting the stairs on the way to bed, buttons on their clothes, apples as you put them in the bag at the supermarket, coins in their piggy banks.

Play games such as asking your child to do five claps, three jumps etc. Look for numbers in the environment, such as on buses, clocks, birthday cards, telephones, road signs and car number plates. Counting rhymes and songs are always a favourite!

Encourage your child to point to objects as he/she says the number name when counting, to develop accurate 1:1 counting skills. Ask them to get 5 forks, spoons or 3 cups or plates out. Ask them to share them between members of the family Look at one more/less than a given number and explore different ways to make 5/10 using objects.

Take opportunities to point out patterns when out and about. Children need to see patterns, to talk about what they can see, and to continue a pattern. At first, they will do this one item at a time, e.g. red cube, blue cube, red cube…verbalising the pattern helps. Children can then be asked to say what they would add next to continue it.

**Communication and Language**

The development of children’s spoken language underpins all 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 is crucial. Support your child by commenting on what they are interested in, are doing or can see/hear. Discuss what they have done each day with them. Echo back what they say with new vocabulary added to build children's vocabulary. In addition, share a broad selection of stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems.

**Personal, Social and Emotional Development**

Children’s personal, social and emotional development (PSED) is important to support children to lead healthy and happy lives. Encourage your child to play with friends or siblings/family members outside of school hours. Provide plenty of different materials and resources for them to choose from and get them working together to build things, solve problems and create things. Most importantly, promote sharing and turn-taking!
Ensure you have a consistent routine at home and explain any changes to them. Discuss rules and explain why the rules are in place. It is vital to affirm and praise positive behaviour, explaining that it makes children and adults feel happier. Support your child to learn to empathise with others by telling them stories about real life situations and asking them to explain how they feel and what they think and always ask your child plenty of questions about their feelings.

Support your child to develop independence by encouraging them to dress and undress, put on and take off their own coat, jumper/cardigan, shoes and socks. Manage their own personal hygiene such as handwashing, toileting, blowing their nose. Self hep skills such a peeling fruit, pouring a drink and opening the contents of their lunch box will also be beneficial.

**Physical Development**

Physical activity is vital in children’s all-round development. 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. Support your child’s gross motor skills by visiting parks and play centres, riding balance bikes and scooters. Give children the space to climb, run, hop, jump, dance and develop kicking, throwing and catching skills. To support your child’s fine motor development provide opportunities to explore and play with small world activities, threading, puzzles, playdough, using cutlery, arts and crafts activities including using small tools such a paint brushes, scissors.

**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 for example visiting parks, libraries, beaches and museums provide opportunities to discover, engage in conversation, describe, compare and contrast the world around them. Talk about important members of society such as police officers, nurses and firefighters. There are a wide range of activities to support this area of the curriculum at home. For example, going out for walks together, bug hunts, baking, making a weather chart, planting seeds, feeding the birds in the garden or the ducks at the park, making a family tree, looking at baby photographs/old toys and taking part in family celebrations.

**Arts and Design**

The development of children’s artistic and cultural awareness supports their imagination and creativity. The quality and variety of what children see, hear and participate in is crucial for development. Activities to support this area at home include drawing, painting, printing, collaging, building models, den building, dancing to music, singing familiar songs and making up your own words to nursery rhyme tunes, junk modelling, for example make a shaker with pasta or rice in a pot, make props for your favourite story and act it out together. Enjoy making up stories together using your child’s toys.

**Getting ready for school**

Here are some top tips for things you can do in the run-up to your child’s transition to Reception, so all they’ll have to concentrate on is learning something new and enjoying themselves with their new friends!

* It is a good idea to walk or drive the route to school before they start, look at the school from the outside, or drive past at the end of the school day and watch children coming out —it can be very exciting seeing all the other children in their uniform! This will help familiarise your child with the school environment and make it less daunting. It will also give time to talk and for them to raise worries or questions which is valuable in the lead up to starting school.
* Talk about school – especially all the fun things they will experience. After attending the settling-in visits, there might be something they particularly enjoyed playing with (the dinosaurs, playdough, the paints, the climbing frame).
* Support your child to learn the language of social skills. This will help them to initiate a conversation with someone else. You can use dolls and soft toys to practise greetings, asking to join other’s games or inviting others to join a game they are playing. Practise greeting relatives and friends when visiting. Support them to say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’.
* Choose toys which invite cooperative and social play with your children in addition to those toys which invite solitary play. This can be a great way give your child opportunities to practise negotiation and turn-taking.
* Sharing games such as snakes and ladders or snap provide plenty of opportunities for children to practise social skills and turn-taking. Be sure to use the language of turn-taking to reinforce this too, for example: 'First it is your turn, and now I will have a turn', or 'Whose turn is it next?' and 'Thank you for waiting for your turn'.

Turn-taking games such as snakes and ladders or snap are brilliant for developing social skills, especially when the adults don't always let the children win!

* After school, give them time to reflect on their day and share any highlights or concerns they are having about friendships (or in fact any element of school). These concerns can then be monitored by you and the staff, who will want to work with you to ensure your child thrives in the friendships they are making.
* Independence is one of the most important skills initially as children get used to doing things for themselves without you as the parent there to help them all the time. It is a big transition but increasing your child's confidence to have a try and getting them used to doing things for themselves will set them up to succeed.

For example, support your child to develop independence in dressing, putting coats, cardigans and sweatshirts on, going to the toilet and washing hands.

When your child asks for help, it’s worth giving them another opportunity to have a try themselves —perhaps breaking down the task for them (for example, "Why don't you put on one shoe, and I'll help with the other?").

**However, be assured we will always help your child when they need it!**