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Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

The Early Years Foundation Stage refers to children from the age of 0 through to 5 years old. These early years are important as they are part of the formative years in a child's life. They are also important as they prepare children for later schooling.

Aims

At Unique Academy, we are committed to offering children a secure and confident start to the early years in order to nourish their *fitrah* and foster a love for learning.

Unique Academy will comply with all current legal requirements contained in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework (DFE, 2024).

We are committed to the purpose, aims and intended outcomes of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework and Development Matters principles outlined below:

1. Unique Child: Every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured
2. Positive relationships: Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships
3. Enabling environments: The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children's development and learning
4. Learning and development: Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of learning and development are equally important and inter-connected

Guidelines

The Development Matters Guidance sets out the 7 areas of learning and development for children in the early years. These are split into three prime and four specific areas of learning, alongside three learning characteristics:

The prime areas of learning:

- communication and language
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development

The specific areas of learning:

- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design

The learning characteristics:

- playing and exploring
- active learning
- creating and thinking critically

Teaching and learning style

At Unique Academy, the features of effective teaching and learning are defined in our policy on teaching and learning. They apply to teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage just as much as they do to the teaching and learning in Key Stage 1.

The more general features of good practice which we aim to promote in the EYFS are:

- the partnership between teachers and parents that helps our children to feel secure at school, and to develop a sense of well-being and achievement
- giving children confidence in their own views and opinions, styles, personality differences and uniqueness
- the understanding that teachers have of how children develop and learn, and how this must be reflected in their teaching
- the range of approaches that provide first-hand experiences, give clear explanations, make appropriate interventions, and extend and develop the children's play, talk or other means of communication
- careful planning that helps children achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the EYFS
- the provision for children to take part in activities that build on and extend their interests, and develop their intellectual, physical, social and emotional abilities
- the encouragement for children to communicate and talk about their learning, and to develop independence and self-management
- the support for learning, with appropriate and accessible space and equipment
- observations of children's progress and future learning needs, which are regularly shared with parents
- regular monitoring of our work to evaluate and improve it
- the regular identification of training needs for all adults working at the Foundation Stage.

Play at the Foundation Stage

Through play, children explore and develop their learning experiences. They practice and build up their ideas, learn how to manage their behaviour, and begin to understand the need for rules. They have the opportunity to think creatively both alongside other children and on their own. They communicate with others as they investigate and solve problems. They express fears, take risks, or re-live anxious experiences, in supervised and safe situations.

Inclusion at the Foundation Stage

Every child is an *amanah* (a trust) and is valued. At Unique Academy, we aim to give children every opportunity to achieve their best. We will do this by taking account of our children's range of life experiences when we are planning for their learning.

At Unique Academy, our aim is to set realistic and challenging expectations to the needs of the children, so they achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the stage. Some children may progress beyond this point. We aim to help them by planning to meet the needs of both boys and girls, of children with special educational needs, of children who are more able, of children with disabilities, of children from all social and cultural backgrounds, of children from different ethnic groups, and of those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

At Unique Academy, we aim to meet the needs of all the children through:

- planning opportunities that build on and extend the children's knowledge, experience and interests, and develop their self-esteem and confidence
- using a variety of teaching strategies that are based on children's learning needs
- providing a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support children, and to help them to learn effectively
- offering a safe and supportive learning environment, in which the contribution of all children is valued
- employing resources that reflect diversity, and that avoid discrimination and stereotyping
- planning challenging activities for children of all abilities
- monitoring children's progress and providing or referring to additional support, as necessary.
- encourage children to take and manage risks

Planning in the Early Years Foundation Stage

At Unique Academy, the EYFS statutory framework provides the basis for planning throughout the Foundation Stage. Teachers use the national schemes of work, where appropriate, to support their planning for individual children. Our medium-term planning is completed half-terminally, and identifies the intended learning, for children working towards the Statements as well as Early Learning Goals for Reception children. We adapt ourselves in line with children's interests and abilities. We will try to make every experience a learning opportunity.

Assessment

At Unique Academy, staff will carry out regular observations of children's learning, assess their observations and then use this information to ensure that future planning reflects identified interests and next steps.

Teachers track children's progress by recording their assessments using our Maestro assessment platform, where they can record the objectives each individual child has 'met' and 'not met'.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile is the national assessment tool that enables teachers to record their observations at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, and to summarise their pupils' progress towards the Early Learning Goals and covers each of the areas of learning contained in the Early Years Foundation Stage. EYFSP data is a statutory requirement and is recorded in line with government requirements; the assessment at the end of the reception year is submitted to the local authority.

The child's next teacher will also use this information to make plans for the year ahead. We share this information at parental consultation meetings too.

Parents receive an annual report that offers brief comments on each child's progress in each area of learning. It highlights the child's strengths and development needs and gives details of the child's general progress. We complete these in summer and send them to our parents.

The Role of Parents

At Unique Academy, we believe that all parents are their child's first educator. Because of their significance in the lives of their child, we seek to work collaboratively with parents. We will do this through:

- communicating with parents about their child before their child starts in our school (e.g. daily feedback, parent meetings etc)
- provide opportunities to children to spend time with their teacher before starting school
- offering parents regular opportunities to talk about their child's progress with the class teacher
- encouraging parents to talk to the members of staff if there are any concerns
- offering a range of activities, throughout the year, that encourage collaboration between child, school and parents.

Formal parents' meetings will take place each term at which the parents discuss the child's progress with the practitioner. Parents receive a report on their child's attainment and progress at the end of each school year.

Resources

At Unique Academy, we aim to plan a learning environment that encourages a positive attitude to learning. We will use materials and equipment that reflect both the community that the children come from and the wider world. We encourage the children to make their own selection of the activities on offer, as we believe that this encourages independent learning.

Safeguarding

Only the school tablet (which are password protected) and other recording devices assigned to teaching staff will be used to record and store photographs of pupils as evidence for learning journeys and assessments.

Parents are asked to give permission for any photos to be uploaded to the school website or other publication media. All staff working within the EYFS environment will receive supervision each half term by the Headteacher.

A paediatric first aid trained member of staff will be in EYFS at all times including on any trips out of school. Supervision ratios will be adhered to at all times.

Personal data will be recorded, processed, transferred, and made available in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. For further information see Unique Academy's GDPR policy.

Staff will be trained on Safeguarding as part of their induction training.