



Medina House School

Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

Our School

Medina House is a special school for Nursery to Year 6 pupils and is located in the centre of the Isle of Wight in Newport. We cater for learners with wide range of special educational needs including global developmental delay, autism and moderate to severe learning difficulties. All children joining Medina House School will have an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP). The school provides a specialist learning environment with small classes and specially trained staff. Personalised learning is central to what we do and interventions are carefully planned to ensure that every pupil is the best they can be.

What is the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)?

"Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their potential. A child's experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow."

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile

Department of Children, Schools and Families 2012

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is a framework that sets the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five years old. All schools and Ofsted registered Early Years providers must follow the EYFS. The framework provides an integrated approach to early learning and is designed to be flexible so that staff can follow each child's unique interests and needs. It gives professionals a set of common principles and commitments to deliver quality early education and childcare.

Early Years at Medina House

At Medina House we recognise that every child is unique and our Early Years staff work relentlessly to develop enabling and responsive total communication learning environments which suit the learning styles and interests of each individual child. Early intervention and strong collaboration between a number of parties (including families, Portage workers, SEN caseworkers, previous settings and schools, speech and language team, other agencies and class teams) ensures that all pupils, regardless of their SEN, have the best start to school life. By working collaboratively, staff ensure that our pupils overcome their SEND barriers to learning.

Our Early Years staff aim to:

- ✚ Give each child a happy, positive and enjoyable start to school life
- ✚ Build upon prior learning by working in partnership with parents, carers, previous settings and the wide range of professionals working with the child
- ✚ Help each child to establish solid foundations for future learning and development, particularly with regards to functional communication, independence and self-care
- ✚ Provide each child with a wide range of new and exciting experiences, and give them opportunities to consolidate existing skills and to learn new ones
- ✚ Support each child to develop socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually through high expectations, positive praise and encouragement
- ✚ Celebrate each child's personal successes and achievements together with their families.

At Medina House we are guided by the four principles on which the framework is based:

1. **Unique Child:** We recognise that every child is a competent learner who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. We recognise that children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Children's attitudes and dispositions to learning are influenced by feedback of others; we use praise and encouragement, consistent reinforcement and graded prompting as well as celebration and rewards to encourage positive attitudes to learning.

2. **Positive Relationships:** We recognise that children learn to connect to the world and grow in strength and independence from secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful and professional relationships with all our children and their families.

3. **Enabling Environments:** We recognise that the environment plays a key role in scaffolding and extending child development. Through careful observation, we assess the child's interests, stages of development and learning needs before planning challenging, yet achievable activities and experiences which are designed to extend their learning.

4. **Learning and Development:** Our EYFS classes are set up to allow children to explore and learn securely. Areas are defined and resources are labelled so that children learn to locate equipment and resources as independently as possible. The majority of the pupils in our EYFS classes need a more structured approach to learning which requires a balance between adult-led play based focussed activities and opportunities to generalise learning through free play sessions.

The Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

Our EYFS classes follow the curriculum as outlined in the Statutory Framework. The framework identifies seven areas of learning and development, all of which are important and interconnected. Three areas (Prime Areas) are particularly important when it comes to building a child's capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. These are:

- ✚ Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- ✚ Communication and Language
- ✚ Physical Development

As children grow & develop, the Prime Areas enable them to develop skills in four "Specific Areas". These are:

- ✚ Literacy
- ✚ Mathematics
- ✚ Understanding of the World
- ✚ Expressive Arts and Design

Staff working in our EYFS classes support learning with these seven areas in mind and consider each child's unique needs, interests and stage of development when planning activities. Teaching and learning is delivered in a cross curricular way. It is well established that children in early years learn by playing and exploring, being active and through creating and thinking critically.

Because of the nature of our setting, a range of specialist pedagogy is used to support receptive understanding, expressive communication and attention. Approaches including PECS, Makaton Signing, Intensive Interaction and Shared Attention Activities are used extensively across the EYFS and wider school. Visual, touch and auditory cues are used to aid smooth transitions between activities, moving around the environment and to promote the understanding of the day's routines.

At Medina House staff work closely with all other professionals involved in the child's development to ensure that Individual Educational Plan (IEP) targets are fully integrated into the daily provision. Families play an important part in shaping teaching and learning and they are involved in setting targets and supporting their child's learning at home. Home visits are offered to all families and our Family Liaison Officer helps to support interventions and address any other issues that families may be experiencing at home.

Observation, Assessment and Planning

Each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Play is essential for a child's development as it enables them to build their confidence as they learn to explore, think about problems, and relate to others. EYFS staff make ongoing judgements about the balance between activities led by children and activities that are led or guided by supportive staff. Staff respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, and guide their development through warm, positive interactions.

The Characteristics of Effective Learning underpin learning and development across all areas and support children to become effective and motivated learners. Our staff in the EYFS keep the three characteristics in mind when planning all activities:

- ✚ **Playing and Exploring** - children investigate and experience things while "having a go".
- ✚ **Active Learning** - children concentrate and keep trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy their achievements.
- ✚ **Creating and Thinking Critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, they make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things.

Staff in the our EYFS classes plan for each child's learning based on their interests and the assessments made about their stage of development linked to the Development Matters. Staff continually observe the children and record what they are doing, how they are learning most effectively and where to take the child's learning to next. This takes the form of long and short recorded observations including photographs of the children involved in their learning. These are then used to assess "best fit" against the Development Matter Statements of the child's current working level. Each term the children's progress is recorded on the Classroom Monitor to support staff in identifying children's working levels and areas for further development.

Throughout the EYFS, staff build up a profile on each child's observations and working levels. At the end of the Reception year, this is their final assessment of the EYFS and shows progress towards Early Learning Goals. This final assessment takes place in the summer term and a final summary of achievements is shared with the Local Authority and with parents. To ensure consistency of children's levels, staff attend local moderation events and in house moderation takes place termly.

Parental involvement in their child's EYFS Profile is vital. Parents can have access to their child's Profile at any time. Contributions from the parents build up a bigger picture of the child's development and therefore parents are requested to complete WOW notes on observations of their child's development at home. These are then included in the Profile.

At the end of each academic year, progress is reported to parents in form of a written report identifying the child's current working levels against the Development Matter Statements and the Characteristics of Effective Learning.

The curriculum for the EYFS classes follows a 4 year topic cycle used as a backdrop to the children's learning to promote interests in new experiences both inside and outside the classroom. The school environment supports the children's learning in many different ways. We are lucky to be able to offer the children new experiences in environments such as the swimming pool, soft play, dark room, white room, the Gym, external musical instruments, outside mud kitchen, sensory garden and a range of exciting visitors offering further learning experiences.

Classroom Organisation

At Medina House, the EYFS starts in Coral Class which is for Nursery aged children between 2 and 5 years old. As children enter the Reception year, depending on their specific individual needs they may be part of Dolphin, Seashell or Penguin class.

Each EYFS classroom is organised in a way that provided the children with experiences and activities linked to all seven areas of learning, taking into consideration the children's interests and needs. The spaces within the

classrooms are multi-functional and defined areas will be seen for different activities and opportunities for learning.

The classes will plan activities that meet all needs and interests and will include multi-sensory activities that allow the children to use all their senses and to get messy by experiencing new textures and medium. Areas within the classrooms will reflect the different areas of learning such as quiet spaces for relaxing, socialising and reading, busy areas for building constructive materials, identified work areas for mark making, communication activities and adult led focussed work and the loud, big environments for physical development.

All classes have access to their own outside areas which reflect the seven areas of learning, just bigger, louder, messier, and to allow outside experiences in all weathers.

Children's independence is encouraged in all classrooms. Children will have their own labelled pegs and/or storage areas. The use of communication aids support children to express their own needs and wishes. Self-help skills are encouraged where appropriate, and all staff are sensitive to the child's stage and development of personal care, following the school's policy on Be Safe.

Routine and structure is vital for many of our learners, therefore visual timetables and cues will be seen to support the daily routines. The classrooms are set up with careful consideration of the cohort's needs and as a result by differ from the "typical" EYFS learning environment.

Home and School Links

At Medina House we recognise that parents and carers are a child's first and most enduring educators and we aim for the school and parents/carers to work closely with out EYFS staff. This can have a very positive impact on a child's development. A successful partnership relies on a two-way flow of information and knowledge. We aim to work in partnership with our parents and carers by:

- ✚ Offering parents and carers a pre-visit to the school to discuss their child's current needs and to observe the school in action.
- ✚ A home visit will be offered to discuss the child in more detail and complete an "All About Me" Document outlining current needs, interests, communication skills, physical skills.
- ✚ Parents and carers will be encouraged to complete an admissions booklet outlining the child's contact details, medical needs and agreement to school policies and events.
- ✚ Transition visits will be offered. These are flexible around the family and the child's needs. We would expect the parent or carer to spend time with the child in the class setting and to build up the time the child stays on their own before initially starting officially.
- ✚ A home/school book will be provided. This helps the parents to pass information to the class team and for the staff to inform parents of the child's day at school.
- ✚ Half termly topic newsletters are sent out by individual class teams explaining the learning that will take place over the half term and how to support at home.
- ✚ Parents and carers will have regular opportunities to discuss their child's progress and to provide WOW notes of observations from home that can then be included in the EYFS profile.
- ✚ Coffee mornings and shared activity times are regularly offered to parents to spend time in their child's class.
- ✚ Range of opportunities to be involved in school activities including sports Day, Special Assemblies, concerts etc
- ✚ Opportunities for parents and carers to attend workshops relating to children's learning and development.
- ✚ Termly IEP meetings
- ✚ Six monthly EHC reviews
- ✚ Weekly school newsletter
- ✚ Regularly updated school website with individual class news.
- ✚ Written report of child's attainment and progress at the end of the school year.

In recognition of the importance of the EYFS and in light of the small steps of progress made by many of our pupils, the EYFS approach i.e. continuous provision and free flow activities continues into KS1. In addition, children continue to be assessed against the EYFS in KS1 where appropriate.

Policy approved by *Governors* on:

Signed _____ *Chair of Governors*

Review date: *May 2021*