

Matthew Arnold Primary School



Early Years Policy

Dated: September 2024

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Within this document, the term Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is used to describe children who are in our 2 year old provision (MAPS), Nursery and Reception classes. The term 'parents' is used as shorthand but includes other carers responsible for the child.

In Matthew Arnold Primary School we have a 2 year old provision (40 part time places) , a Nursery class (52 part time places) and a full-time Reception class. We offer part time places of a three hour session ,either morning or afternoon. To ensure best practice and continuity our foundation stage classes work closely together and share planning, activities and learning environments.

For details on admissions to Nursery and Reception please see our admissions policy.

Aims

All children deserve the care and support they need to have the best start in life. Children learn and develop at a faster rate from birth to five years old than at any other time in their lives, so their experiences in early years 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 provide the foundation children need to fulfil their potential.

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, DfE 2023

At Matthew Arnold School, we aim to give each child a positive and meaningful start to their school life. We provide the children we teach with a warm, welcoming and nurturing learning environment. We want our children to establish solid foundations on which they can develop into independent, lifelong learners. We offer a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum which provides children with the life skills and knowledge they need to grow into well rounded individuals. We encourage children to develop confidence and independence within a secure and friendly atmosphere and environment.

We want all children to feel safe, secure and happy in our setting and support children in building positive relationships with children and staff. We encourage the children we teach to recognise their own strengths and achievements and to leave our EYFS confident, happy and secure learners.

The Curriculum

There are seven areas of learning in the EYFS curriculum. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. There are three prime areas that are crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning and for expanding their capacity to learn.

These are:

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

There are four specific areas through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

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

The EYFS is based upon four principles:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

At Matthew Arnold we use the Birth to 5 Matters guidance to support children to make progress throughout our EYFS. All areas of the curriculum are delivered through a story and theme led approach which allows flexibility to ensure that children's individual learning needs and interests are planned for. We deliver a well-planned, broad and balanced curriculum with a focus on play based learning.

We recognise the importance of supporting children in their development in the prime areas of the curriculum and acknowledge that play has an integral role in a child's development. We plan a balance of adult led and child initiated activities.

Throughout the foundation stage, our planning ensures that each child has the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in every area at the appropriate developmental level. Our curriculum ensures coverage so that all children have opportunities to work towards and achieve the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) that define the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the EYFS.

The EYFS includes the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning. The Characteristics of Effective learning describe the behaviours children use in order to learn. To learn well, children must approach opportunities with curiosity, energy and enthusiasm. Effective learning must be meaningful to a child, so that they are able to use what they have learned and apply it in new situations. These abilities and attitudes of strong learners will support them to learn well and make good progress in all the Areas of Learning and Development (Birth to 5 Matters). The three characteristics are;

1. Playing and Exploring – children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'
2. Active Learning – children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
3. Creating and Thinking Critically – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

Parent Relationships

At Matthew Arnold we believe that parents are a child's first educator and value the contribution they make. We work very closely with parents to ensure they are involved in what their child does at school. We want parents to feel they can speak to us about their child and encourage them to talk to us at the end of the day or call and make an appointment.

We want all children to feel safe, happy and comfortable in our setting and believe having positive relationships with parents plays an instrumental role in that. We recognise that children learn to be strong and independent through secure relationships. We aim to develop caring, respectful, professional relationships with the children and their families and carers. We recognise the role that parents and carers have played, and will continue to play, in educating their children.

- We give parents the opportunity to talk to us about their child before their child starts in our School
- We host several open evenings in autumn term and summer as an opportunity to meet potential new parents and any new to school families
- In MAPS the parent and child will be invited in for a short session to get to know the staff, the child will then start the following day.
- We give children an opportunity to spend time with their teacher before starting school in September during parents meetings;
- We invite parents and carers to an induction meeting during the term before their child starts school
- We offer parents regular formal and informal opportunities to talk about their child's development
- We do half termly 'stay and play' and invite parents in to play with their children in the setting and speak to the class teacher and LSOs
- Parents can look at their child's learning journey and will have the opportunity to discuss this

with the class teacher

- We have termly meetings with parents to discuss individual children's progress
- We provide parent's with an annual written report detailing their child's progress
- We encourage parents to share their child's progress with us and we celebrate them together

At our school the children are assigned a 'Key Person'. Children will have regular key worker time's with their Key Person.

Play

Learning through play underpins our approach to teaching and learning in the foundation stage. We know that young children learn best through play and we provide activities and experiences that interest and inspire them to learn. We plan and provide children with stimulating, active play experiences where they can explore, develop their learning and make sense of the world. Play takes place indoors and outdoors.

Play gives our children the opportunity to pursue their own interests, inspire those around them and consolidate their understanding and skills. Learning through play gives the children fantastic opportunities to develop their communication and language skills and their imaginative play. The children learn to adapt, negotiate, communicate, discuss, investigate and ask questions. Our adults take an active role in child initiated play and are intentional about extending the children's learning through adult interactions.

Inclusion

Matthew Arnold is an inclusive school. We are welcoming to all children and want the children we teach to feel safe, happy, secure and valued in our school. We give all children every opportunity to achieve their best. We do this by taking account of our children's range of learning needs and life experiences when planning for their learning. We have realistic and challenging expectations that meet the needs of individual children in order to support all children in reaching their full potential. We offer a broad and balanced curriculum with lots of opportunities to learn about diversity and inclusion.

When a concern is raised by either parents or school staff in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) we will inform the school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) and observation, assessment and additional support are provided as appropriate. We use the graduated approach. If following intervention, a Special Educational Need is considered likely, referrals to outside agencies will be made with the support of the parent. If a child enters the setting with an already identified/diagnosed SEND, arrangements will be made as soon as possible and often before admission to ensure continuity.

Early Years Pupil Premium

We will endeavor to identify our least advantaged pupils and inform parents or carers of their opportunity to apply for their child's entitlement to extra funding in school. All extra funding we receive will be used to support areas in which we identify that the child will best benefit. We will track children's progress to ensure that they are making good progress and to ensure that support is adjusted to target specific areas as the child develops.

We adhere to the Equal Opportunity and Inclusion policies of the school.

Assessment

At Matthew Arnold we assess the children in our daily practice. Practitioners observe children to understand their development and interests and then shape learning experiences accordingly. We use WellComm throughout EYFS to assess the children's communication and language development. We then use this information to inform our planning and appropriate additional time for our children. Across the EYFS we use observations, photographs and recorded work to assess the children's development and plan our next steps to ensure that they have the most impact. The EYFS profile is completed for each child by the end of June in the Reception year.

The EYFS profile is a statutory assessment of children's development at the end of the early years

foundation stage (known as a summative assessment) and is made up of an assessment of the child's outcomes in relation to the 17 early learning goals (ELGs). It is intended to provide a reliable, valid, and accurate assessment of each child's development at the end of the EYFS.

Early Years Foundation Stage profile 2023 handbook

The profile provides information about each child's knowledge, understanding, abilities against expected levels and readiness for Year 1. The assessment is completed against the criteria set out in the Early Learning Goals. Practitioners must assess whether a child has met expected levels or whether they have not yet met the expected level of development. Profiles are completed for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) although reasonable adjustments are made as necessary.

Results from the profile are shared with parents who are provided with an opportunity to discuss the outcomes. Profiles and additional commentary on characteristics of learning are shared with Year 1 teachers to inform planning and preparation for entry to KS1. Outcomes from the EYFS profile must be reported to the local authority which then has a duty to return this data to the relevant government department. The local authority conducts moderation of the profiles on a regular basis.

Transitions

At Matthew Arnold we recognise that starting school and moving up classes has the potential to be a challenging time for both children and parents. To this end we have established a strong procedure for transitions to ensure that all children and parents are as confident and secure as they can be when starting school and moving on to the next year group.

MAPS, Nursery and Reception 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. Children starting in MAPS are offered 'Stay and Play sessions' to allow both parents and children an opportunity to visit the setting and meet the staff prior to their start date. If the children are moving from MAPS to Nursery they will have transition days with their key person before they start. We offer a phased start for our children depending on how they settle in and we would like them in school doing the full sessions as soon as they can.

At the end of reception children have the opportunity to meet with their new teachers in their classroom prior to starting Year One. At the end of each school year teachers have the opportunity to share their knowledge of each child's knowledge, understanding and achievements, including 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.

Community Links

At Matthew Arnold the foundation stage classes enrich learning by exploring our local area. We encourage strong links with the local area and invite in members of the local community during any appropriate topics. We work closely with the Children's Centre and will signpost parents to any courses or drop ins that we feel will help and support the parent with their child.

Health & safety and 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 and all children have access to fresh water and free fruit from a Government scheme. Healthy eating, hygiene and oral health are promoted as part of our curriculum. Parents are asked to inform the school about any dietary needs and any allergies.

Intimate Care

Please see our Intimate Care policy.

This policy is available in alternative formats on request.